

# Registry News

From the Oklahoma Natural Areas Registry Program

Year 2000 Issue



The  
Nature  
Conservancy®  
Saving the Last Great Places



# Natural Areas for the New Millennium

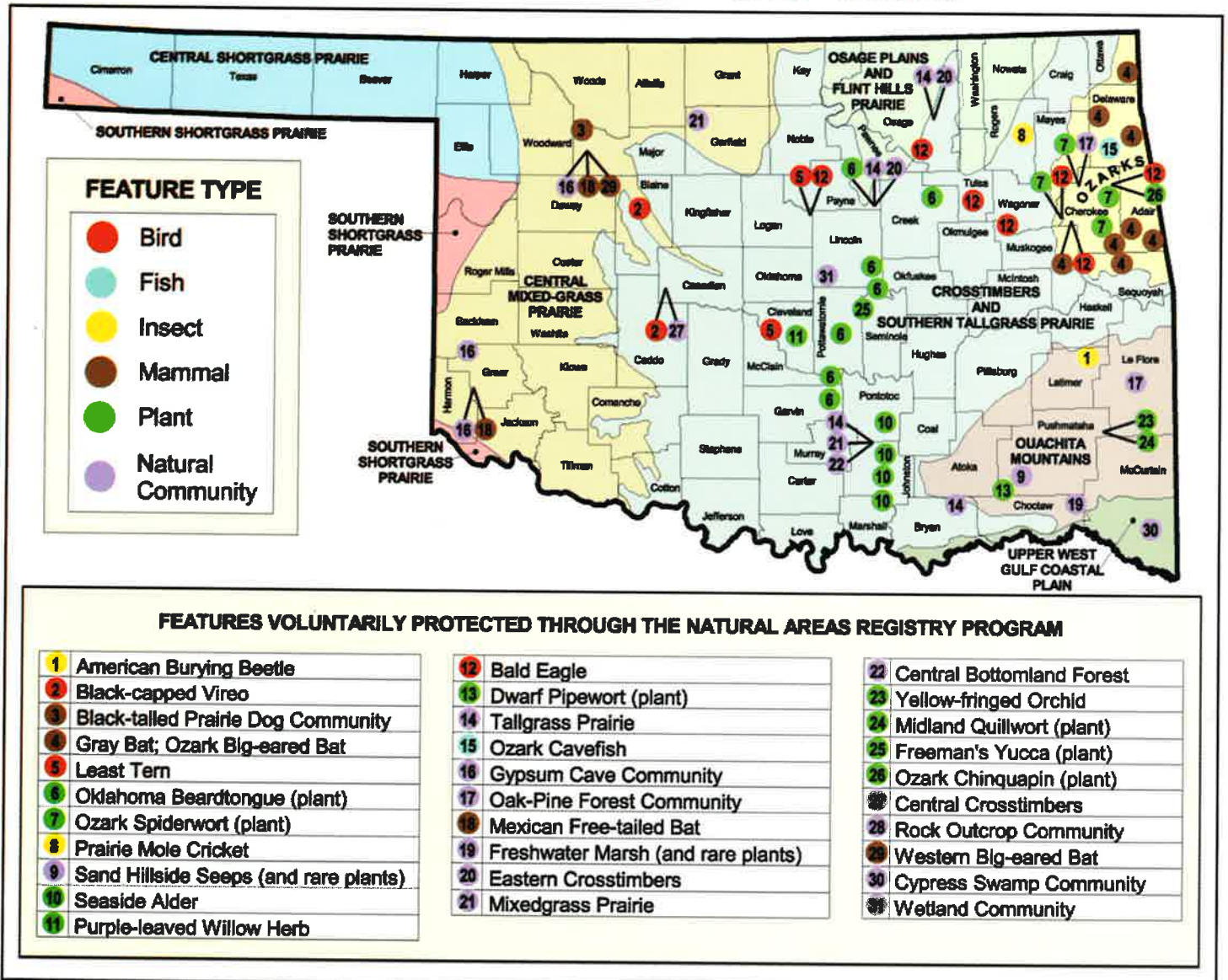
This issue of the Registry News highlights a variety of new sites that have been added to the Registry Program during the last year across Oklahoma. In our previous issue, sites were listed based upon the rare plant or animal species found at those sites. In this issue, sites are listed based upon the natural ecoregions that are found across Oklahoma.

An ecoregion is a large area of land that is defined by its similar climatic conditions and vegetation types. There are eight ecoregions in Oklahoma that include Central Shortgrass Prairie, Southern Shortgrass Prairie, Central Mixed-Grass Prairie, Osage Plains/Flint Hills Prairie, Crosstimbers and Southern Tallgrass Prairie, Ozarks, Ouachita Mountains and the Upper West Gulf Coastal Plain (see map).

Oklahoma is a "crossroads" for many of these ecoregions, meaning that these ecoregions (such as the Ozarks, Ouachita Mountains, and Southern Shortgrass Prairie) are at their distributional limit within the borders of our state. Typically, these ecoregions that are at their distributional limit within Oklahoma represent larger portions of other states.

Newly Registered Natural Areas are found in the Ozarks, Crosstimbers and Upper West Gulf Coastal Plain. These three ecoregions are described on the following pages along with the new Registry sites located within them. As always, we are greatly appreciative of the efforts of our Registrants to protect the beautiful natural areas across the state in all of our ecoregions.

## REGISTERED SITES OF THE OKLAHOMA NATURAL AREAS REGISTRY PROGRAM



On the cover: Purple coneflower (Echinacea) flourish at the Pontotoc Ridge II Natural Registered Area.



# Ozark Natural Registered Areas

*The Ozark Plateau extends into the northeastern corner of Oklahoma from Arkansas and Missouri. The Ozarks are well known for their beautiful forests, their many caves, and an abundance of springs and streams. The combination of these factors makes for natural communities that provide habitat for a variety of state rare plants and animals.*

## Clear Creek Farm and Gardens

One of our newest Registry sites is the property owned by Kirk and Loretta Bowers.

Many of you may be familiar with the Bowers and their native plant nursery business. The Bowers sell native Oklahoma and wildlife plants at a variety of events across Oklahoma throughout the spring, summer and into the fall. Their nursery is also open to the public for a few short weekends each year. Their interest in native plants and the propagation of them began about nine years ago when they purchased their Ozark property. They sell many species of native annuals, perennials, shrubs and trees along with some herbs and heirloom tomatoes. The Bowers also offer slide presentations on topics such as butterfly gardening, wildlife habitat gardening and native plants, and trees and shrubs.

The Bowers property in Cherokee County is a prime example of Oklahoma's Ozark Mountains. The valleys and steep hills are covered with an Oak-Pine forest. It is this forest that is home to the state rare plant, the Ozark spiderwort (*Tradescantia ozarkana*). As seasons progress into the new year, we hope to find more rare plants on their property.

The Bowers property is also important because of the numerous springs that flow into Clear Creek and other creeks. Water quality is always of great importance for any natural community, especially those sustaining rare plant and animal species.



*The Bowers property is named for this creek, Clear Creek. The creek is an important source of high quality water for both wildlife and the people of the area.*



*Both Loretta and Kirk Bowers (pictured here) keep busy with their native plant nursery business. They travel across Oklahoma to events such as the annual Wildflower Workshop shown here.*





*The Ozark spiderwort is a spring-blooming perennial that prefers rocky, well-drained hillsides. Its color ranges from white to pink to blue to purple.*

## Camp Lutherhoma

Also situated in Cherokee County, along the Illinois River, is another new Registered Natural Area. In May of 1999, John Busch, the camp director, registered the 120-acre camp on behalf of its owner, the Oklahoma District of the Lutheran Church.

The grounds of Camp Lutherhoma are a combination of cabins, offices, recreational areas and natural areas. The natural areas at this church camp are important because they provide habitat for the Ozark spiderwort (*Tradescantia ozarkana*). Along with this state rare plant, it is possible that there may be state rare aquatic species in or near the stretch of the Illinois River that flows through the camp's property. Further investigation at this site will hopefully uncover more species that are important to Oklahoma's diverse natural heritage.

This year the Registry Program assisted with the yearly training of the camp counselors. Kim Shannon led a tree and plant identification workshop for the counselors so that they were able to better instruct camp participants about which plants should be avoided (such as poison ivy!) and which are safe.

## Crosstimbers Natural Registered Areas

*The Crosstimbers ecoregion is best described as a transition zone. The Crosstimbers is Oklahoma's largest ecoregion and it is a mixture of Tallgrass prairie intermingled with Post oak/Blackjack oak woodlands.*

*Interspersed in this vast ecoregion of oak woodlands and prairies are areas that represent very unique communities.*

*One of these communities, the granitic outcrop community, which can be found at Devil's Den, is described on the following page. No less important are the extensive areas of prairies and woodlands that represent a vast portion of Oklahoma.*



*The Illinois River provides essential habitat for many plant and animal species. It also offers recreational and learning opportunities to the campers and staff of Camp Lutherhoma.*



## Devil's Den

Along a beautiful stretch of Pennington Creek is a site that is owned by John and Elaine Bruno. This site is special due to the combination of large granite boulders and outcrops along with the clear-running Pennington Creek. While this site is part of the Crosstimbers ecoregion, it is situated in the Arbuckle Mountain uplift of south central Oklahoma.

The Precambrian granite found at the Bruno's site is typical of the Arbuckle uplift. This granite is unique for Oklahoma as there are only two places in the state where Precambrian granite is exposed, sites within the Arbuckle uplift and along portions of Spavinaw Creek in northeastern Oklahoma. This exceptionally hard rock can be dated to 1.05 to 1.35 billion years old.

The site was registered in April 1999 in order to recognize the Brunos for their protection of a state rare natural community, the granitic outcrop community, and a state rare plant, the Seaside alder. The granitic outcrop community is home to a variety of endemic plants. The Seaside alder, *Alnus maritima*, is a shrub or small tree that is found in Oklahoma only along a few clear-running creeks in Johnston and Pontotoc counties.

Larger populations of this plant are found in similar ecosystems in eastern Maryland and southern Delaware. The disjunct Oklahoma populations are unexplained but have been documented as being present for more than 150 years.



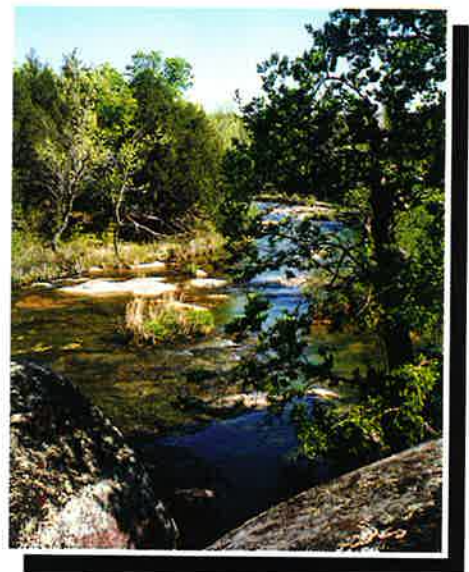
*Devil's Den has a large concentration of Precambrian granite formations along the banks of Pennington Creek.*



*This granite outcrop formation is called "the bread basket."*

This beautiful site was at one time a privately owned park. After more than 50 years as a popular recreational area, the property is getting a well-deserved break from human disturbance.

While the Brunos enjoy their unique piece of Oklahoma, the Registry Program is able to recognize them for their hard work in the recovery and protection of this diverse and unique site.



*Overlooking Pennington Creek at Devil's Den.*



*John and Elaine Bruno sign their Registry agreement, making Devil's Den a new site of the Oklahoma Natural Areas Registry Program.*



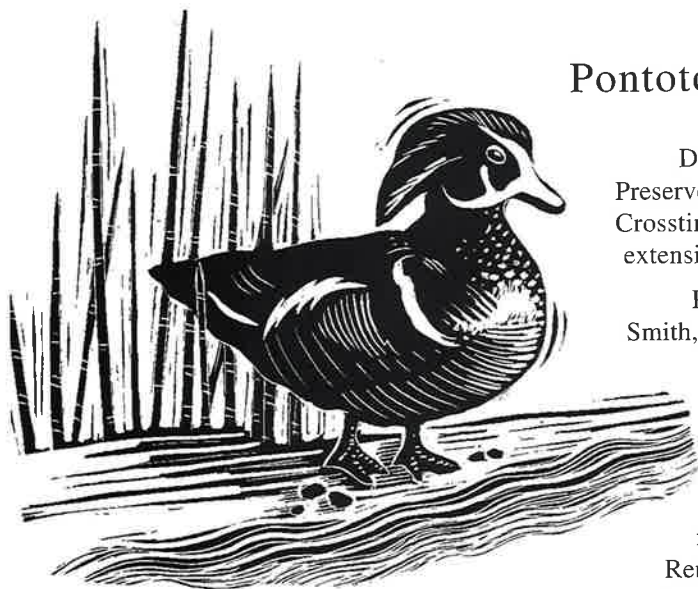
## Pontotoc Ridge Registered Natural Area

Directly to the south of The Nature Conservancy's Pontotoc Ridge Preserve is an important Registered Natural Area. The 646 acres of Crosstimbers is owned by Renee Smith Harden and is an important extension of the Pontotoc Ridge Preserve.

Pontotoc Ridge is a special place to Renee. Her father, Buddy Smith, donated the property that comprises the core of the preserve to The Nature Conservancy.

Renee's property is special to us, also. We are always especially excited about registering property that is adjacent to one of the Conservancy's preserves. When we are able to protect a large, continuous piece of land, more plants, animals and natural communities benefit.

Renee's property is featured on the cover of this issue.



*Hal Deitz,  
co-owner of T.O.W.E.R.*

## T.O.W.E.R.

A very new addition to the Registry Program is a wetland site that offers important habitat for waterfowl, Bald eagles and migratory birds.

The Thousand Oaks Wildlife and Environmental Refuge (a.k.a. TOWER) covers approximately

85 acres in Lincoln County. Sharland Deitz gave the property its unique name not too long after she and her husband, Hal, acquired the site two years ago.

The main attraction on their property is a 20-acre lake that is fed by an artesian spring. The clear water attracts birds throughout the year but it is

especially important during the spring and fall months when many birds are migrating.



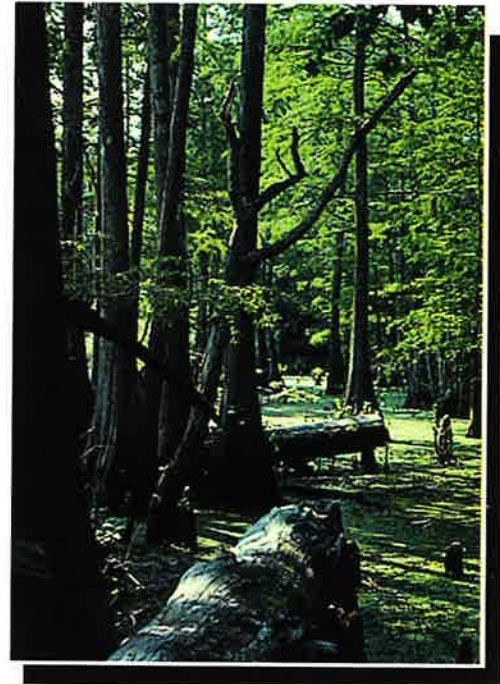
*The large pond at TOWER provides habitat for many duck species, Bald eagles and Belted kingfishers.*



# Upper West Gulf Coastal Plain Registered Natural Areas

*This ecoregion is located in the southeastern corner of the state and stretches west along the Red River.*

*This portion of the state is home to Cypress swamps, pine forests and oxbow lakes. Natural communities in this ecoregion are important to us because this area of southeastern Oklahoma is the northern-most extension of the Gulf Coastal Plain. Therefore the plants, animals, and communities found within this ecoregion are relatively rare in Oklahoma.*



*A bald cypress community.*

## Forked Lake Bottom



*Directly adjacent to the Registered property of Ruth Wiley is Forked Lake, an important wetland habitat that influences all the surrounding forested properties.*

Located in the far southeastern portion of McCurtain County, Forked Lake Bottom is adjacent to the Little River National Wildlife Refuge. The site includes a small oxbow lake called Forked Lake that is formed by a cut-off meander on the Little River floodplain.

Forked Lake Bottom is a bottomland forest that includes a Bald cypress community. Twenty-one tree species have been recorded in the canopy, making it a rare natural community for the state.

The Bald cypress occurs along the standing water of narrow sloughs and small wetlands found within the site. The lakes throughout the area provide important habitat for migratory waterfowl.

In June of 1999, Ms. Ruth Wiley registered her 160-acre tract adjacent to Forked Lake. She has owned the tract for more than 25 years and currently lives in Clyde, Ohio. Ms. Wiley has enjoyed the natural qualities of her property and back in 1991 she became involved in the Oklahoma Forest Stewardship Program. One of her reasons for becoming involved in the program was to provide a safe, desirable habitat for wildlife.





*The Registry Program has expanded! We have a new office at Pontotoc Ridge Preserve. Watch your mailbox for an invitation to our open house in the near future. The address is Route 2 Box 72 B, Stonewall, Oklahoma 74871. Phone and fax us at (580) 777-2224.*

Questions? Comments?  
Need more information about the Oklahoma Natural Areas Registry Program?  
You can contact us at:

### *Oklahoma Natural Areas Registry Program*

*The Nature Conservancy, Oklahoma Chapter*

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Tulsa, OK 74114

*Phone: (918) 585-1117*

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Free Registry boundary signs are available for all Registry participants. They can be obtained through an Oklahoma Natural Areas Registry Program representative. The signs measure approximately 11" x 11" and are made of white plastic with green lettering, like the one to the right. If you would like signs for your property, please call the number above.



*Stories in this issue of the Registry Newsletter were compiled by Kim Shannon and Holly Farris Erwin.*