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Wonders of Waterfowl: 4-H members get bird's eye view of wildlife management

Learning takes on new dimensions when the classroom is the great outdoors. That was the case for 50 Arkansas 4-H members who gathered at the Five Oaks Agriculture Research and Education Center on a cool February Saturday to learn about one of Arkansas' star attractions — the ducks, of course.

The center, situated in the heart of the Mississippi Flyway on 6,000 acres of flooded timber and rice fields, offered the perfect setting for the Wonders of Waterfowl program, which brought together 4-H members from a dozen counties — Arkansas, Conway, Crittenden, Drew, Grant, Greene, Johnson, Mississippi, Pike, Pope, St. Francis and White — for a day of learning about the ducks and other wintering waterfowl on Feb. 11.

The program, now in its second year, is a collaboration between Five Oaks, the University of Arkansas at Monticello and Arkansas 4-H, the youth leadership program offered by the Cooperative Extension Service.

Students in UAM's waterfowl habitat and recreation management graduate certificate program taught 4-H members about waterfowl habitat, ecology and conservation and demonstrated banding. During the day, several ducks were caught and a thin aluminum band was placed around the leg of each bird. Bands are engraved

with a unique number, and the UAM students recorded the number with each bird's species, age and sex. Later, if that duck is captured or killed, the band can provide information on its migration, age, and other data useful in waterfowl management.



Drew County 4-H member Cruz Gonzals holds a newly banded duck before releasing it back into the wild during the Wonders of Waterfowl program Feb. 11, 2023, at the Five Oaks Ag Research and Education Center in Humphrey, Ark.

At the end of the day, the 4-H members helped release the newly banded ducks back into the wild.

"It's a great opportunity for them to learn hands-on from the experts," said Grant County 4-H volunteer leader Josh Beach, who brought three 4-H members to the event.

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Save the Date!

Don't miss a chance to see some of your favorite familiar faces at the largest annual gathering of CES retirees! The **Cooperative Extension Retiree Luncheon** is March 30, 2023 at the Benton Event Center.

10AM - Registration & Visiting

11AM - Program & Scholarship Presentation

12PM - Lunch & Visiting

THE INSIDE STORIES

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Arkansas PTAC program changes name to APEX Accelerator

The Arkansas Procurement Technical Assistance Center—part of the Cooperative Extension Service—is changing its name to Arkansas APEX Accelerator, but its mission to boost small businesses remains the same.

Melanie Berman, extension program director of Arkansas APEX Accelerator, said the name change reflects the program's purpose to help small businesses in the state thrive through government contracting.

"'Apex,' by definition, means the highest point of something, and we hope to achieve that in the level of service our program provides to Arkansas businesses in the field of government contracting," Berman said. "We will accelerate Arkansan entrepreneurship through the technical assistance we provide to businesses in our home state."

The name change coincides with the program moving

from the Defense Logistics Agency to the Department of Defense (DOD) Office of Small Business Programs under a memorandum of understanding, which was signed between the DOD and the Small Business Administration last December.

More than 95 centers around the country will change to the new name. Berman said the APEX Accelerators program "plays a critical role in the department's efforts to identify and engage with a wide range of businesses entering and participating in the defense supply chain."

"The program provides the education and training that all businesses need to participate in to become capable of securing DOD and other government contracts," Berman said.

Read more [here](#). ■

Message from the director



Spring is in the air around the Cooperative Extension Service — well almost! This means plant sales and meetings for Master Gardeners are just around the corner. Check out our website and event calendar ([UADA Events Calendar](#)) for meetings and events near you. Spring also continues

to be the time for county meetings - [Row Crop Production Meetings](#) and [Livestock and Forage Production Meetings](#). We have a bunch of those left to go through early March. The ones I have attended have had quality presentations, been well attended, and had good food! It's nice to see some old friends when I travel to these, especially in the Delta and River Valley.

I am excited to announce that we are continuing our Extension internship program for college juniors and seniors this summer. We had 33 applications this year for what ended up being 15 positions. You may find it interesting to note that I told the district directors originally that I would pay for 9! Not sure what happened, but I guess like any good Extension program, it has grown. I want to thank the retirees for their involvement with this effort last year, and I look forward to introducing the new interns to some of you again this year. The internship program is meant to fully immerse the students in what it would be

like to be an Extension agent and is geared toward those who not only excel in school but have an aptitude for Extension work. We are looking for the "Extension gene" - that willingness and heart for service and education. I look forward to getting to know Class II.

I think most of you are aware that we have been building a new Extension Center building in Jackson County. This building will be home to the Jackson County Extension Service as well as some program technicians and at least one state faculty. I am pleased to report that county agent Matt Davis and the Jackson County staff hosted the first spring production meeting in the new building in January.



Dr. Scott bids farewell to Brian Helms, who recently retired from his position in the development office.

Division of Ag, Bumpers College recognize extension, research, teaching excellence at ag awards

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture and the Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food, and Life Sciences recently recognized excellence in the three land grant disciplines of extension, research and teaching at their annual Agriculture Awards ceremony.

- **John W. White Outstanding Research Award** — Sami Dridi, department of poultry science.
- **John W. White Outstanding Teaching Award** — Christopher Estep, department of agricultural education, communications and technology.
- **John W. White Outstanding Extension State Faculty Award** — Yi Liang, department of biological and agricultural engineering.
- **John W. White Outstanding County Educator Award** — Mike Andrews, Randolph County Extension Office
- **John W. White Outstanding Team Award** — Soil and Water Conservation Virtual Field Trip team: Mike Daniels, professor and extension soil and water conservation scientist; Lee Riley, environmental science and crop management program associate; Rita Watson, virtual education program associate; Mike Hamilton, irrigation educator; Julie Robinson, associate professor of leadership; Bill Robertson, retired extension cotton agronomist; Kerry Rodtnick, extension videography specialist; Samantha Barker, interactive communication coordinator; and Diedre Young, program manager.



Read the full article [here](#). ■

Extension offers tips for tax preparation and filing

Tax seasons officially started Jan. 23, when the Internal Revenue Service began accepting and processing 2022 tax year returns. For those who haven't started preparations yet, now is the time to collect documents and understand the changes to tax credits and deductions that may affect their finances.

"For tax year 2022, some tax credits that were expanded in 2021 will return to 2019 levels," said Laura Hendrix, an accredited financial counselor and associate professor of personal finance with the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture. "This means that some tax filers could receive a smaller refund than last year."

Be aware of changes for credits and deductions

- Unlike 2020 and 2021, there were no new stimulus payments for 2022 so taxpayers should not expect to get an additional payment in their 2023 tax refund.
- During COVID, taxpayers were able to take up to a \$600 charitable donation tax deduction on their tax returns.

However, for tax year 2022, taxpayers who don't itemize and who take the standard deduction, won't be able to deduct their charitable contributions.

- If you bought a new, qualified plug-in electric vehicle in 2022 or before, you may be eligible for a clean vehicle tax credit.

Get your refund fast

- One of the fastest ways to get your refund is to file electronically and use direct deposit. The IRS discourages people submitting paper forms to avoid potential delays. Tax refunds can be deposited in up to three accounts, and Hendrix recommends people deposit some of their refunds into a savings account to build financial security. Use IRS form 8888 for direct deposit.
- Filers should also avoid using advance refund loans, which often have high fees.

For more tips, read the full article [here](#). ■

March Birthdays

Ralph Tyler Jr. - March 1
Lynn Whitlock - March 1
Janet L. Hill - March 3
Glenda Rushing - March 5
Sandra Schlinker - March 5
Barbara Tompkins - March 9
Bobbie Floyd - March 10
Alene Bates - March 10
Bonita Mueller - March 10
Mark Cochran - March 11
Dorothy Rodgers - March 12
Danny Allen - March 14

Sue Seevers - March 14
Katie Reddick - March 14
Judy Drewrey - March 14
Dorene Wills - March 16
Lydia Guffey - March 16
Doris L. Markle - March 17
Chris Russell - March 18
Nina Boston - March 19
Juanita Sherman - March 19
Danny O. Walker - March 21
Steven Seideman - March 22
Charlie E. Parsons - March 23

Mary Barrentine - March 23
John F. Robinson - March 24
Ronnie Bateman - March 24
Kathy Y. Rawlingson - March 25
Ocsie Barnes - March 26
Thomas D. Moody - March 27
Debbie B. Henry - March 28
Celia Boon Shireman - March 29
Eddie Hubbell - March 29
Patsy Hall - March 29
Shelly D. Johnson - March 30
Karen L. Fite - March 31

Waterfowl, cont.

Some of the 4-H members signed up for the Wonders of Waterfowl program because they like ducks and wanted to learn more, while others, like 15-year-old Brooke Duvall of Conway County, are interested in ecology and environmental conservation as a potential career.

"The program is helping recruit the next generation of natural resource professionals," said Tiffany Osborne, a UAM-based extension wildlife instructor who coordinates Wonders of Waterfowl. "So many students are just into their iPad or their iPhone. This gets them outside, out into nature and connected to natural resources. When they have a good connection with their environment, they become better stewards of the earth and have an appreciation for the place where they live."

Some of the participants also are involved with the 4-H Wildlife Habitat and Education Program, a competitive event for 4-H members interested in wildlife management.

"This is a good preparation for them," said White County agent Jan Yingling, who brought a group of five 4-H members to the event. Some of the concepts they learn in Wonders of Waterfowl — satellite imagery, map reading and identification — are applicable, she said.

View a video of the workshop [here](#). ■



WALK ACROSS ARKANSAS
March 13 - May 14
Register online at walk.uada.edu
#WalkAcrossAR

Registration opens Feb. 27!
Register at walk.uada.edu. Read more [here](#).

Message from the director, cont.

This building will be a great resource in the county and to the Jackson County Extension Center in general. For me personally, this is the culmination of efforts that started almost a decade ago, and it is very satisfying to see it come to fruition.

Finally, I will mention that most of you know that Brian Helms retired from his position in the development office. We have begun the search for a new director and have made plans and delegated duties to cover that office until a new director is found. We are pleased to welcome Khaliah Coleman as the new executive assistant in the development office. Join me in welcoming her to her new role in Extension (kcoleman@uada.edu). ■

