

# Spring Creek Watershed Landowners Summer 2015 Newsletter



Est. 1994

THE MOST PRISTINE  
LARGE OZARK STREAM  
IN OKLAHOMA  
MANAGED AND  
PROTECTED BY  
PRIVATE  
LANDOWNERS

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## Salamander Outing Great Fun

Spring Creek Coalition (SCC) hosted amphibian expert Ron Bonett on April 25th for a Salamander Outing. Bonett, an Associate Professor of Biology at the University of Tulsa, has been studying these magnificent animals for more than 15 years. His most interesting subject is the Oklahoma Salamander, a species that can take on very different body forms.

We started the day with a 40 minute presentation by Dr. Bonett at the Peggs Community Center.

We learned that where salamanders live greatly influences their body forms and life cycles. In some streams larvae of the Oklahoma Salamander undergo metamorphosis and live their adult life on land. In other streams, like Spring Creek, they forgo metamorphosis and reach adulthood without ever leaving the water.

Spring Creek geology consists of silica-containing limestone that doesn't dissolve easily. It breaks down into same-size pieces of chert gravel providing spaces where water and animals can survive. When portions of the creek dry up, salamanders still have access to subterranean water.

Bonett passed around samples of chert gravel and, for comparison, gravel formed from clastics - rocks that break down into different-size pieces that compact and provide no spaces. Bonett also had a microscope set up so that we could see the vertebrae of Oklahoma Salamanders. OK Salamanders have extra vertebrae which help them swim better. They are long and slender which allows them to swim eel-like through chert crevices.

We spent the second hour of our Salamander Outing at the creek.

We dug in gravel and found an Oklaho-



Casey Ferguson digs for salamanders  
© Sydney Van Wyk, Tahlequah Daily Press

ma Salamander right away. "Wow. He's longer and thinner than I expected," noted one SCC member. The water was crystal clear and we could easily see the chert gravel and spaces it formed.

Cheryl Cheadle, SCC Board member and Director of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission Blue Thumb program, led the group in seining activities. We uncovered crayfish, Madtom catfish, hellgrammites and more. Six-year old Layne Spencer had on his high boots, but when his mom Jessica looked around she exclaimed, "He's wet up to his T-shirt!"

*Ron Bonett grew up in Pennsylvania and has been interested in amphibians ever since he found his first red-backed salamander in a Philadelphia woodlot at the*

*Mission: to unite as citizens and  
actively engage in the preservation  
of the Spring Creek Watershed*

*Please contact SCC to be removed  
from or added to this mailing list*

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## Tick Season

age of 10. Thank you, Ron, for leading us on a magnificent indoor/outdoor outing.

### Tick Season—Take Precautions

Most of the time, ticks are just a nuisance. Often we feel them before they attach and quickly pick them off. Sometimes we don't notice them until we feel that itch and that familiar hard spot when we go to scratch, maybe as we're lying in bed at night ready to fall asleep. We remove the tick. Life goes on. The welt itches for a few days. No harm done.

In May 2013, SCC member Alicia Osborne carefully removed a tick that had been attached for at least 24 hours, placed it in a dated medicine bottle, and didn't give it another thought. About 10 days later she had various symptoms – soreness, painful urination, and later fever, nausea and fatigue. She never suspected the tick, as there was no rash. When her symptoms kept on and her fever spiked she went to the emergency room in Pryor, then by ambulance to St John's in Tulsa. They diagnosed her with Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever.

"The doctors said that if I had been one day later coming to the hospital I would have died", says Osborne.

It is important that we know the risks of tick bites, but most important to know how to minimize those risks. We shouldn't let ticks prevent us from having a great time outdoors and at the creek. We do need to take sensible precautions.

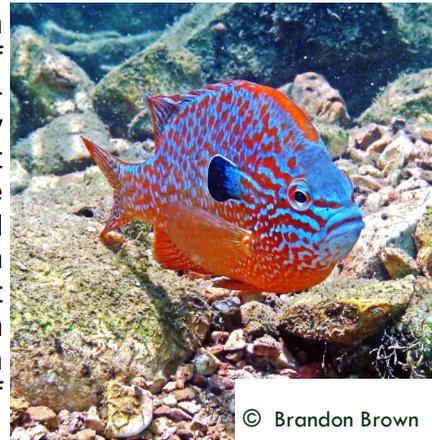
Kelly Bostian, Outdoor Writer for the Tulsa World, presented a comprehensive article

## German Collectors

on ticks in the May 11 issue. We couldn't say it better. [TulsaWorld.com](http://TulsaWorld.com).

### German Hobbyists Collect Our Fish

Longear Sunfish are found throughout most of the eastern United States and are the most common sunfish in northeast Oklahoma streams. They spawn nearly continuously from late May through August and breeding males are among the most colorful of North America's fishes. This is especially true for longear sunfish in southwest portions of the Ozarks, which have a distinctive red stripe extending along the nape from the dorsal fin to the top of their foreheads. They also exhibit brilliant blue and red hues, with an intensity not found in longears in other parts of their range.



Because of their beauty, they sometimes attract attention from hobbyist and fish collectors, and Spring Creek is a well-known collection location. Spring Creek has even gotten the attention of aquarists as far away as Germany. The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation has received two inquiries from overseas collectors and has had a report of a German collector who collected several bags of longears from Spring Creek.

Although there is nothing wrong (legally or ethi-

## Secondary Water Source for PWC

cally) with keeping a fish or two for personal use, history has shown that when a wildlife species become valuable, it sometimes has undesirable effects on the resource. Current collecting pressure is likely very light, though it may become more common. Specimen collectors often fish with hook and line or seine. They transport their catch in inflated plastic bags or aerated buckets, whereas bait fishermen traditionally use minnow buckets.

Spring Creek visitors are urged to contact the Spring Creek Coalition if they observe anyone who they think might be collecting fish.

### Planned Secondary Water Source Should Take Pressure Off PWC/Spring Creek

Peggs Water Company (PWC) pumps water from a spring that flows into Spring Creek. It is located a few yards from the creek banks on private property about a mile upstream from the low water bridge at Cave Springs. The pumps provide water to the entire Peggs community through 815 residential and business water meters, 5 active high usage meters, as well as 26 fire water hydrants. PWC currently take 5.6-8 million gallons/month from Spring Creek.

For ten years PWC has been actively working with the Tenkiller Utility Authority (TUA) on a water plant project that will provide wholesale water to retail water districts and companies. This project is currently in the DEQ approval stage. Once approved and fully funded, the contract will go out for bid for a 460 day construction phase. Completion is expected in three years. At that time, PWC is contracted to take a minimum of 2 million gallons of water per month. It can take more as needed.

## Where to Swim

The TUA will not only provide the Peggs community with a back-up water source, but a supplemental source which should significantly decrease the amount of water being pumped from Spring Creek.

"This is great news for Spring Creek landowners, especially those downstream of the PWC pump station," notes Beth Rooney, SCC President. "We on the board have been concerned about the potential impact of taking more water from the creek as the Peggs area grows."

"I grew up on Spring Creek and have enjoyed it for 58 years," says Robin Culie, PWC Manager. "Myself and anyone with Peggs Water Co. do not want to see any harm come to the creek. Being a part of TUA we will have to upgrade to stay within EPA guidelines, but we should not have to enlarge our treatment system to keep up with demand."

### Summertime! Where Can I Swim?

See [springcreekok.org](http://springcreekok.org) for locations and fees for public access to Spring Creek.

# Unlitter

## Begins with U

Take out more than you bring in.