

The Nature Conservancy  
Oklahoma Chapter

**Award of Merit**

The Oklahoma Chapter of The Nature Conservancy is this year's recipient of the OAS **Award of Merit** to an organization. Officially established in 1986, the Oklahoma chapter is committed to preserving a variety of natural places in our state.

The Nature Conservancy is an international organization dedicated to preserving the diversity of our natural heritage, including plants, animals, and natural communities. The Conservancy works through private enterprise, eliciting contributions of money, land, resources, and time from the communities surrounding the natural areas it wants to preserve.

TNC identifies four parts to its mission. First is protection of natural areas - by identifying, with the help of basic scientific research, those areas that include rare or endangered plants, animals, or communities.

Second is stewardship; The Nature Conservancy designs, administers, and monitors conservation programs on their preserves.

Third is education. By providing Oklahoma educators with supplemental educational materials about our environment, The Nature Conservancy is helping educators produce the conservationists of the future.

Fourth is outreach. Through a speaker's bureau and with the help of docents, The Nature Conservancy helps to educate the public about Oklahoma's natural resources and their protection and preservation.

The Oklahoma chapter of The Nature Conservancy has made great strides in preserving the natural diversity of our state by establishing 16 preserves within the state. Probably the most well know of these is the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve in Osage County. In 1989, The Nature Conservancy bought 30,000 acres of prairie that was once the Barnard Ranch. Through their management programs, The Nature Conservancy has brought the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve back to the days when fire was a common force on the land and bison wandered freely (see photo below).

In addition to the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve, The Nature Conservancy has acquired such well-known Oklahoma landmarks as Redbud Valley. And Charlie Owl Cave in Adair County now is part of the Oklahoma Bat Caves National Wildlife Refuge, providing a protected place for a large maternity colony of gray bats. The Arkansas River Least Tern Preserve, established in 1989, keeps the tern nests safe and provides the Tulsa Audubon Society a place to study these birds.

Through the contributions of the people of Oklahoma, The Nature Conservancy has, in the last 11 years, been able to preserve some of the state's most beautiful and unusual natural resources. We commend The Nature Conservancy on its program and are pleased to recognize its contributions with this Award.



