

## Foreword

Continuing our goal of publishing historical and current floristic surveys of the different areas of Oklahoma, this 2002 edition features Comanche County and the Wichita Mountains of southwestern Oklahoma. These beautiful pink granite remains of ancient high mountains are completely contained within our state and have an interesting history from the viewpoints of Native Americans and the later European settlers.

Several decades ago a young botanist named Paul Buck spent summers sleeping on concrete picnic tables at the Wichita Wildlife Refuge while making the best-known specific survey of the flora of that site. The resulting list of plants is still in use by visitors to the refuge and others interested in the plants of that region. We have published that survey for you here, for use whenever you visit the Refuge. More recently, the U.S. Army at Ft. Sill, which adjoins the refuge, contracted with the Oklahoma Biological Survey to make a similar study of the flora of the military reservation. From voucher specimens taken during those surveys and from many other botanists who visited the area for the love of its wild beauty, the Oklahoma Natural Heritage Inventory has compiled a floristic list for the whole of Comanche County. Dr. Bruce Hoagland, at the Oklahoma Biological Survey, has provided that list. We hope it will inspire today's botanists to continue to monitor extant species on the Refuge and surrounding areas.

The Wichita Wildlife Refuge was established by President William McKinley in 1901, with 57,120 acres of land. Currently, about 22,500 acres are open to the public. The Refuge is a part of the National Wildlife Refuge system, and maintained by the federal government. A visitors' center provides assistance, educational material, and a library and gift shop. But a remarkable organization of volunteers manages the prodigious task of everyday contact with the many visitors who enter the Refuge every day of the year. By planned tours, educational programs, and hours of labor maintaining trails, the Friends of the Wichitas have made the Refuge a comfortable place for people without reducing the quality of the environment for wildlife. A sister organization of ONPS, the Friends and we share many members. Through the years Oklahoma Native Plant Society volunteers, especially Dr. Buck, have helped staff the field trips. In the process, some of us who might not have made the trip to Comanche County quite so often before, have come to love it as part of our 'home state'.

Next year, we hope to feature another, and very different section of this varied state: the Ozarks. All who have, or know about, material on that area that might be suitable for this publication, should contact our editor, Sheila Strawn. Also planned for future issues are lists of the plants reported at specific sites by our intrepid teams of field-trippers. Help us make this publication grow!

Patricia Folley  
President, ONPS  
August, 2002