

## Inhabitants of Town Branch Creek

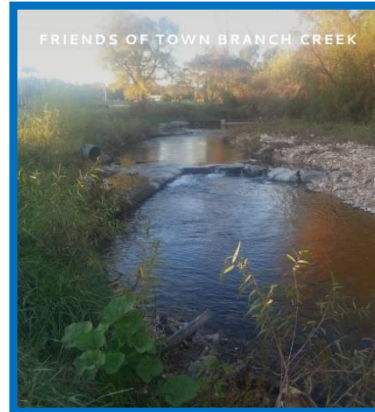
Jon West  
Oklahoma Department of Wildlife  
Fisheries Biologist



**Orangethroat Darter**  
(*Etheostoma spectabile*)

This rainbow-hued darter can be found throughout Town Branch Creek, if you know how and where to look. The males (pictured above) can be uncommonly striking during their breeding season which ranges from February to May. Orangethroats prefer clear, gravel-bottomed streams so they can hide under rocks in riffles and feed on insect larvae and fish eggs. To catch a glimpse of one you would have to use a kick seine in a riffle or, as an alternative, by donning your mask and snorkel and submerging into their world. With a maximum length of 2.5 inches they aren't winning any trophies for size, but what they lack in size, they make up for in beauty.

## Friends of Town Branch Creek



Jahna Hill  
City of Tahlequah  
Stormwater Manager

Our mission is to educate citizens about water quality issues, preserve the biological integrity of the natural resource, and promote the aesthetic value of the creek. Our group is part of the City of Tahlequah's Stormwater Program. It is important to recognize that rain water drains to Town Branch Creek, as well as Ross Creek and Pecan Creek. Stormwater is not treated before it enters these waterbodies; therefore, it is important to keep stormwater free of trash, debris, and pollution. Town Branch Creek is impaired by *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*), which may pose health risks to people fishing and swimming in the stream.

The current status of *E. coli* is currently being researched by Friends of Town Branch Creek and the Stormwater Program.

## NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, July 11, 2017  
5:30 PM

Brookside House  
124 N. Brookside Ave.,  
Tahlequah, OK



## CONTACT US

### Facebook

Friends of Town Branch Creek

### Email

[TownBranchCreek@gmail.com](mailto:TownBranchCreek@gmail.com)

### Instagram

TownBranchCreek

### Website

[http://friendsoftownbranchcreek  
.weebly.com](http://friendsoftownbranchcreek.weebly.com)

## Town Branch Creek Ecology

Terry McDonald

*Fisheries and Wildlife Biologist*

At the head of Town Branch Creek, water bubbles cool and clean from underground springs starting its journey through Tahlequah into the Illinois River. The alternating dense and sparse habitat provides refuge for animals and birds. The great blue heron can be seen wading in shallow waters hunting its next meal. Vast numbers of amphibians and reptiles thrive along the creek's banks, filling the night air with their peeping and croaking songs. Daylight hours see squirrels, ground hogs, and rabbits drink from the creek's cool waters and feed on its ample vegetation. As night falls, the nocturnal animals emerge.

The water teems with a variety of fish species. Sunfish hide in sunken trees in the many shady pools along the creek. Fast riffles provide the perfect home for small minnows like Darters, Sculpin, and Stonerollers. One last notable species that can regularly be seen on the creek's banks are humans. We use the creek for a place to cool off on a hot day, enjoy its beauty, and study its unique ecology and organisms.



As humans, we have the ability to recognize the creek's biological diversity and environmental importance to so many species.

With this realization comes a responsibility to the creek and all its inhabitants. We must do our part to minimize and eliminate harmful conditions that negatively impact the creek.

Human influenced erosion and pollution must be identified. City wide policy backed with action must be set in place to ensure our creek doesn't continue to degrade and become more unsafe.

This valuable resource must be protected and purified thus contributing to our city's economic growth and eye catching beauty. JOIN US!!!! We only get one shot to save Town Branch Creek.

## An Emotional Connection

Christi McDonald

*Tahlequah Public School Teacher*

Town Branch Creek offers a unique study of many organisms that can't be found in any other body of water. Northeastern State University frequently utilizes the creek for the study of plants, fishes, invertebrates, and other organisms. My nine-year-old daughter sums it up well when asked what the creek means to her, "Mom, we need to clean the creek, so the fish can always have a place to live."

Town Branch Creek, with all its parks, provides hours of family entertainment. Our families need to be able to safely delight in the waters of Town Branch Creek! I have always been leery of swimming in its seemingly beautiful waters. Sadly, my suspicions as to the health and safety of the creek's waters have been confirmed. As a member of Friends of Town Branch, I am doing my part to discover the level of bacterial contamination by collecting monthly *E. coli* samples and working to eliminate the source.

The bottom line is we all love Town Branch Creek. Join us at our next meeting to begin doing your part to help Town Branch Creek!