



## The Wild Side!

January 2016

A northern mockingbird perches on an icy deciduous holly bush. Photo by Jena Donnell.

### Upcoming Events

#### TNC Winter Bird Counts

[J.T. Nickel Preserve](#)

Jan. 23, 2016  
8 am - 2 pm

Experience the peaceful serenity of nature during winter at the Annual Nickel Preserve Winter Bird Count. Newcomers are very welcome and can contact Mia Revels at [revels@nsuck.edu](mailto:revels@nsuck.edu) or (918) 444-3824 for information and directions.

[Pontotoc Ridge Preserve](#)

Jan. 23, 2016  
7:30 am - 3 pm

Get outdoors this winter! Join The Nature Conservancy for the 9th annual Winter Bird Count at Pontotoc Ridge Preserve. Maps and directions to the preserve will be provided to [registrants](#) one week prior to the count.

### Identifying Backyard Woodpeckers

Whether skillfully scaling a tree trunk searching for insects or hanging awkwardly from a feeder, woodpeckers can provide hours of backyard entertainment.

All of Oklahoma's woodpeckers - 11 species in total - have a vertical posture and a stiff tail that helps propel them upwards. They also have a strong chisel-shaped bill that allows them to forage between pieces of bark for insects and crack hardened seeds.

Many of our woodpeckers have taken advantage of human development and are found in rural and suburban areas. Here's a look at four woodpecker species that may be frequenting your wildscape:

#### Downy Woodpecker

The smallest of the woodpeckers found in the United States, the downy woodpecker is black and white with heavily barred wings. Look for two white lines on the head, and a broad white patch on the back. Males have a small red tuft on the back of their head.

### Oka' Yanahli Preserve

Feb. 6, 2016  
7:30 am - 3 pm

Oka' Yanahli just grew from 490 acres to 3,600 acres. This will be the first avian count on the new land acquisition. You will get to see it before-almost-anyone else. (The first chance to see the new property will be at a [volunteer work day on January 30th](#). Come to that too!) Maps and directions to the preserve will be provided to [registrants](#) one week prior to the count.

### **Monarchs, Pollinators and Natives**

OSU-OKC Campus, OKC  
Feb. 6, 2016  
9 am - 3 pm

Attend the [Oklahoma Native Plant Society's](#) 2016 Indoor Outing to learn more about monarch butterflies and efforts to enhance their habitat in Oklahoma. [Register now for the program and meal.](#)

### **Birds of Prey Program**

Hackberry Flat Center  
February 13, 2016  
9 am - Noon

Learn how to identify Oklahoma's wintering hawks, falcons and owls in the classroom and then test your newly acquired skills during the field trip. Contact Melynda Hickman at [melynda.hickman@odwc.ok.gov](mailto:melynda.hickman@odwc.ok.gov) or (405) 990-4977 for more information.



*Size: 6.75 inches long*

[Listen to the downy woodpecker.](#)



### **Red-headed Woodpecker**

With its striking red head, black back and white rump, the red-headed woodpecker practically flashes as it flies from tree to tree. Commonly found in western Oklahoma during spring and summer, these populations often migrate eastward where their winter diet of acorns is more plentiful.

*Size: 9.25 inches long*

[Listen to the red-headed woodpecker.](#)



### **Red-bellied Woodpecker**

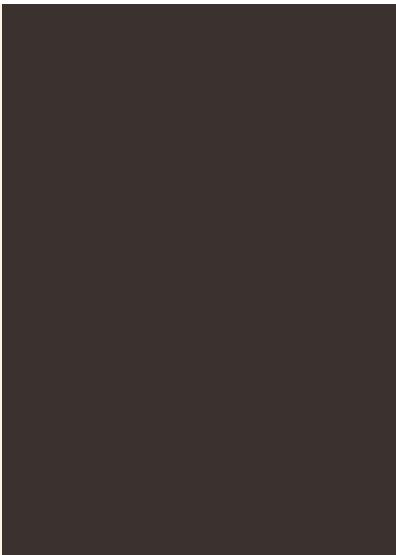
Regulars to backyard feeders, red-bellied woodpeckers can be identified by their bright red cap, tan belly and black and white barred back and wings. This woodpecker is named for a small patch of red feathers found on the belly.

*Size: 9.25 inches long*

[Listen to the red-bellied woodpecker.](#)

### **Northern Flicker**

One of Oklahoma's larger woodpeckers, the northern flicker is often seen foraging for ants on the ground. Northern flickers have a multitude of identifying characteristics. Their breast is adorned with a thick necklace, their belly with spots. Their large white rump patch and



bright yellow or red underwing feathers can be seen as the bird flies past.

*Size: 12.25 inches long*

[Listen to the northern flicker.](#)

## Species Profile: Cave Salamander



With its bright orange body and scattered dark spots, the cave salamander is one of Oklahoma's most striking and recognizable salamanders. Beyond the bold color pattern, cave salamanders can be readily identified by their flat head topped with large eyes and their distinctively long tail.

**Diet:** Like other salamanders, cave salamanders are carnivorous and feed primarily on invertebrates. Adult cave salamanders are known to prey on at least 73 species of invertebrates found both on the surface and inside caves. They seem especially fond of flies, mosquitos, gnats and midges. The aquatic salamander larvae feed on small crustaceans that live at the bottom of the stream.

## Where to find cave salamanders



Despite the name, cave salamanders aren't restricted to caves. While this species is often associated with the entrances or "twilight zone" of limestone caves, they are also regularly found under rocks in damp areas, near spring-fed swamps and climbing damp rock walls. Though an adept swimmer, this salamander is primarily terrestrial. Cave salamanders inhabit limestone areas from Virginia to Oklahoma, but are only found in our state's Ozark Mountain region.

**Reproduction:** Cave salamanders have an extended breeding season, running from late summer through fall with most reproduction occurring between August and October. This timing coincides with the typical cave's seasonal patterns, when internal temperatures are modest compared to surface temperatures and stream flow is low. Females deposit fertilized eggs in small cave pools where they are protected from the main stream's current. Eggs may be attached to a rock in clumps, or found singly at the bottom of the pool. Multiple clutches of eggs are often laid during the breeding season, with each female averaging 70 eggs a season. When the salamander larvae hatch, they may move into the cave's main stream within a few weeks, or remain in the pool for months.

Learn more about Oklahoma's salamanders, including the cave salamander in "[A Field Guide to Oklahoma's Amphibians and Reptiles](#)".

## Three Years, 15 Streams

The Nature Conservancy's efforts to approach conservation in a pragmatic, collaborative way has served them well for more than two decades. It is for that very reason they are applying this philosophy to their stream work across the state, through their freshwater program. Since the launch of the program in 2012, program director Kimberly Elkin completed a three-year monitoring plan on 15 streams at



various Conservancy preserves. With the help of Wildlife Department staff and Conservancy volunteers, she collected aquatic data on the biology, water quality, hydrology, and geomorphology. These data will be utilized to refine conservation strategies and track conservation results in the future.

Find more information about The Nature Conservancy's projects in their [2015 Annual Report](#).



Follow Wildlife Department biologists as they help with The Nature Conservancy's stream monitoring program.

## Wildlife Department to Participate in Bald Eagle Research

Eagle-watching is a favored winter pastime for many Oklahomans. In fact, Oklahoma is considered one of the top 10 eagle viewing states in the nation. But where do these wintering birds go while in the state, and which routes do they choose when returning to their summer homes? The Wildlife Department hopes to find answers to these questions and many more with an upcoming research project.

This winter, Wildlife Department biologists are joining forces with the [U.S. Geological Survey](#) to capture a small number of bald eagles in central Oklahoma. The eagles will be fitted with a satellite tracking collar and released on site. The USGS will then monitor the individual bird's movements and share the information with the Wildlife Department.

Biologists began preparing for this project in late December, 2015 by baiting study sites with road kill deer carcasses on a weekly basis and monitoring the sites with game cameras. Several eagles and other raptors have already started visiting the areas.

Get photographs and updates for this research project in next month's issue of the Wild Side.



Two adult bald eagles visited one of the project's study areas on Jan. 3.



MOULTRIE



CAMERA 4

03 JAN 2016 11:50 am

An immature bald eagle (left) flies over the bait station as an adult eagle (right) retreats.



MOULTRIE



CAMERA 4

03 JAN 2016 12:24 pm

Two immature bald eagles visit the bait station on Jan. 3.



Two red-tailed hawks try to defend the bait station.

## In Other News...

Check out these Wildlife Diversity news stories:

- [Bat Monitoring and Surveillance Efforts Underway](#)
- [Support Wildlife by Purchasing a Conservation Plate](#)

**follow**

**tag your ride**

**support**



The Wild Side e-newsletter is a project of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's Wildlife Diversity Program. The Wildlife Diversity Program monitors, manages and promotes rare, declining, and endangered wildlife, as well as common wildlife not fished or hunted. It is primarily funded by the sales of Wildlife Department license plates, publication sales and private donors. Visit [wildlifedepartment.com](#) for more wildlife diversity information and events. For questions or comments, please email [jena.donnell@odwc.ok.gov](mailto:jena.donnell@odwc.ok.gov).

[Disability Disclaimer](#)

