



## The Wild Side!

July 2016

Hackberry Flat WMA's wetland units are filled with growing chicks this month. Many species, like this young grebe, are precocial and are able to swim shortly after hatching.

### Upcoming Events

#### **Bug Collecting and Bug Bottles**

August 6, 2016

3 p.m.

Martin Park Nature Center  
Oklahoma City

Become an amateur entomologist by learning to collect and study bugs using easy how-to techniques. Bring a plastic water bottle to learn how to start observing on your own. \$5/ person.

#### **Wetland at Night**

August 13, 2016

7:30 - 11 p.m.

Hackberry Flat Center  
Frederick

Explore Hackberry Flat WMA by guided tour. Reservations required. Must be 14 years of age or older to attend. Contact Melynda Hickman at 405-990-4977

### **Hit the Trail: Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge**

*The Great Plains Trail of Oklahoma has been directing nature enthusiasts to beautiful landscapes, scenic drives and wildlife-watching destinations in western Oklahoma since 2006.*



One popular destination on the Great Plains Trail of Oklahoma is the Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge. Designated as the "largest such saline flat in the central lowlands of North America," the 11,200-acre salt flat is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and provides diverse habitat - and great wildlife-watching opportunities. The exposed salt flats attract a number of shorebirds, the wooded creeks are home to many songbirds and the open waters appeal to thousands of geese, ducks and sandhill cranes in the winter.

Birds aren't the only animals attracted to the Refuge's salt flats, grasslands and woodlands. Turtles, lizards and toads are often seen along the many ponds and trails. Ornate box turtles, prairie racerunners, and Great Plains toads are common. Find lists of birds, fish, mammals, reptiles and amphibians documented on the Refuge at [fws.gov](http://fws.gov).

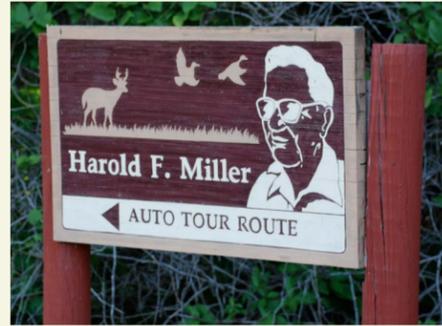
Two walking trails and an auto tour route are located near the visitor center and offer the chance to experience and enjoy the amazing landscape. Observation decks with spotting scopes and interpretive panels are available along the various routes.

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## Hit the Trail: Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge, Continued:

In addition to providing great wildlife-watching opportunities, Salt Plains NWR also provides a unique chance to dig for selenite crystals. Crystal digging is permitted from April 1 through October 15, sunrise to sunset. Get directions to the crystal digging area and tips for a successful dig at [fws.gov](http://fws.gov).

Salt Plains NWR is just one of the many destinations located on the Great Plains Trail of Oklahoma's Salt Plains Loop. Make the most of your time in this area by planning your trip at [greatplainstrail.com](http://greatplainstrail.com).



## Species Profile: Thirteen-lined Ground Squirrel



At home in prairie dog towns, cemeteries and parks, the thirteen-lined ground squirrel can be recognized by the alternating light and dark lines running lengthwise down the body. Each dark line is dotted with white spots. The base color varies from red to light brown, depending on the surrounding soil color.

Ground squirrels use a series of burrows to hide, nest and hibernate. Most burrows are 2 inches in diameter and extend four feet in length. (Some burrows can be up to 23 feet long.) Outside of the burrows they forage for grass, seeds and insects.

Most active during the day, thirteen-lined ground squirrels spend only a few months above-ground. They spend an average of 240 days - two-thirds of the year - underground! Some individuals may begin their hibernation as early as July. Older males often enter a state of inactivity before females. Juvenile ground squirrels are active the longest; younger individuals may not enter hibernation until after August.

Ground squirrels mate a few weeks after they emerge from their burrows in March. A litter of 2-13 young are born a month later, blind, and without hair or teeth. The young surface five weeks later and are independent at six weeks of age.

Thirteen-lined ground squirrels have been documented in the western three-quarters of the state.

## Oklahoman Documented 3,516 Species of Beetles in Latimer County

Most wildlife enthusiasts have a special interest, and for Karl Stephan that special interest was beetles. A self-taught entomologist, Stephan's "unceasing enthusiasm for natural history interests" led to his reputation as an international authority on several families of beetles.

German-born, Stephan began collecting animals before age 10. His focus shifted to insects as World War II drew to a close and his family moved to a smaller house with limited resources. When the family moved to Canada in 1952, his collection of beetles traveled with him. Throughout his life, Stephan manufactured aircraft body parts in Canada, was a tool and die maker in Arizona, and an operator for the Latimer County, Okla. Rural Water District. Regardless of his occupation, beetle collecting remained his hobby. He is fondly remembered for always having a vial of alcohol in his shirt pocket to preserve insects.

Stephan's legacy has been preserved in many institutions, including [Eastern Oklahoma State College](#), the [Texas A&M Insect Collection](#) and the [Florida State Collection of Arthropods](#). While living in Red Oak, Okla., Stephan collected, processed, and donated 10,000 to 20,000 insects a year for the latter. Because of his work, Latimer County has been regarded as "one of the most thoroughly documented pieces of real estate in the U.S. for beetle diversity." Twenty-two species of beetles have been named in his honor. Stephan passed away in 2005.

Learn more about Stephan's life story [here](#).

## Citizen Scientists Tracked Hummingbirds for 27 Years

The Wildlife Diversity Program would like to extend a huge "Thank You!" to all the citizen scientists that participated in the Hummingbird Feeder Survey. For 27 years, these dedicated outdoor enthusiasts have helped the Wildlife Department track the first and last appearance of hummingbirds at backyard feeders.

From 1988 to 2015 (the project's final year), 961 records were submitted from 54 counties, documenting five species of hummingbirds! As expected, ruby-throated hummingbirds were the most commonly reported species. But this project also captured a range expansion of the black-chinned hummingbird, a hummingbird of the western United States.

Hummingbirds weren't the only wildlife to enjoy the efforts: participants also recorded other wildlife species that used their feeders. Nine species of birds, 13 species of insects, 2 species of mammals and 1 gray treefrog visited the feeders during the survey.



Learn more about Stephan's impressive collection and the beetles found within at [bugguide.net](http://bugguide.net). (Mike Quinn)



More than 90,000 insects collected by Karl Stephens have been donated to learning institutions like Eastern Oklahoma State College in Wilburton. (Pat Ratliff/EOSC)

## Plants for Hummingbirds

Survey participants reported hummingbirds using these plants:

- Red Honeysuckle
- Salvia
- Petunias
- Lantana
- Cannas
- Morning Glory
- Four O'Clocks
- Bee Balm
- Buttonbush
- Pentas
- Cypress Vine
- Cardinal Climber
- Butterfly Bush
- Trumpet Vine

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## Citizen Scientists Tracked Hummingbirds for 27 Years, Continued:

Though the official survey has come to an end, we still encourage your involvement in hummingbird conservation! Three simple ways to do this are: maintaining a healthy feeding program, considering hummingbirds in your wildscape plantings, and sharing your hummingbird stories with family and friends!

# Oklahoma's Hummingbird Feeder Survey

## What:

Citizen scientists from 54 counties tracked arrival and departure dates of hummingbirds to their backyard feeders.

## Species Reported:

Ruby-throated Hummingbird = RTHU  
 Black-chinned Hummingbird = BCHU  
 Rufous Hummingbird = RTHU  
 Broad-tailed Hummingbird = BTHU  
 Green Violet-ear = GRVE

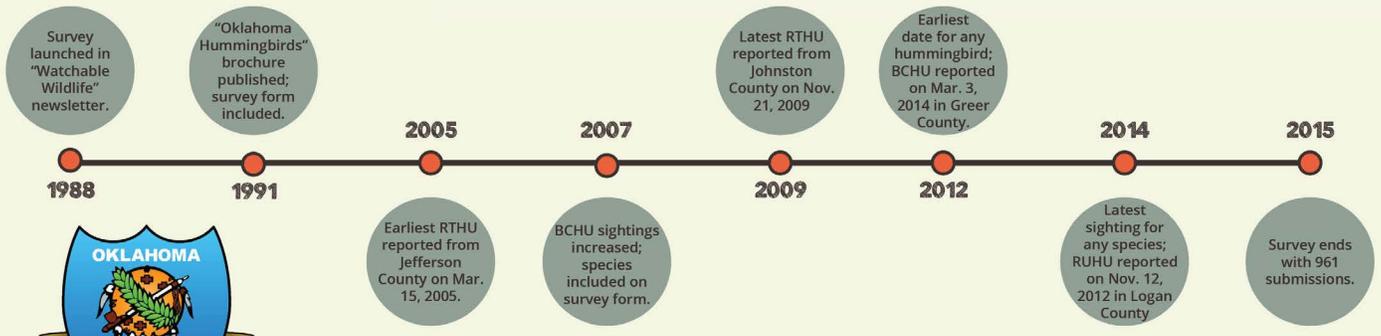
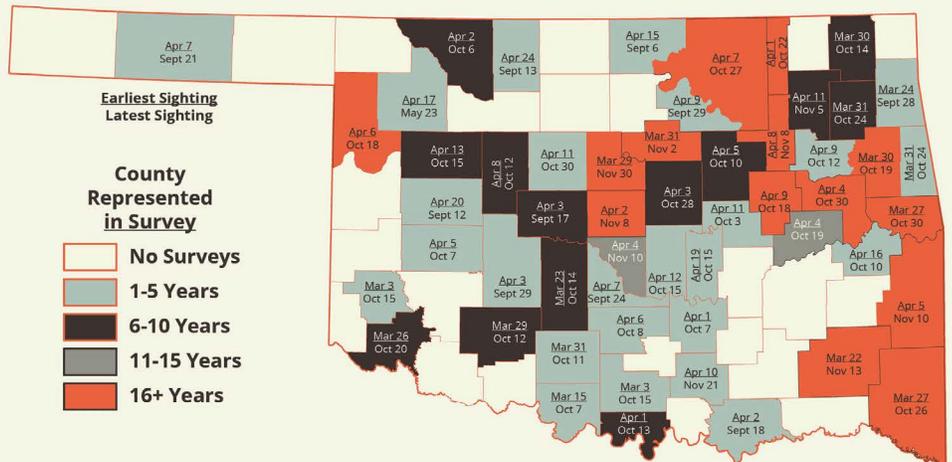
## Sugar Stats:

Some participants tracked the amount of sugar used in their feeders. Maximum estimates for a season are:

Weight..... 177 lbs.  
 Measurements..... 169 cups  
 Sugar water..... 12.5 cups/day

## When and Where:

(Results from 1997-2015)



The Wildlife Diversity Program, a program of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, manages, monitors and promotes the rare, declining and endangered species as well as the common species not hunted or fished.

Find each year's arrival and departure dates - as well as participant comments and photos - in the annual reports. Additional reports are available at [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com).

- [2015 Hummingbird Feeder Survey Report](#)
- [2014 Hummingbird Feeder Survey Report](#)



The Wild Side e-newsletter is a project of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation 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 Department of Wildlife license plates, publication sales and private donors. Visit [wildlifedepartment.com](http://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)

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