



The Wild Side!

December 2014

Cover Photo

Be sure to take advantage of wildlife watching opportunities on warm winter days! Wondering where to go? Try one of the many destinations on the [Great Plains Trail](#)! Photo taken at Cimarron Bluff Wildlife Management Area by Jena Donnell.

Upcoming Events

Eagle Watches Statewide

Dec. 2014 - Feb. 2015

This is your opportunity to see our nation's symbol soar over Oklahoma and learn more about Bald Eagle ecology and their recovery story! Check out our [flyer](#) for specific locations, dates and contact information!

Winter Bird Feeder Survey Your Backyard!

Jan. 8-11, 2015

Let us know about your feathered visitors! Download the [data sheet](#) and record the highest number of each species visiting your feeders. Return surveys by Feb. 8, 2015.

Star Party

Hackberry Flat WMA

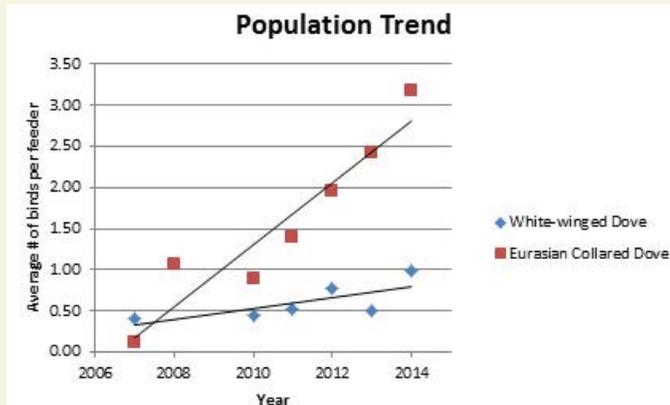
Jan. 10, 2015

Clear sky or cloudy, you are invited to come learn about the night sky, constellations and planets with Mike Caywood, Manager of Alabaster Caverns State Park.

Greetings Wildlife Enthusiasts!

Mark your calendars! The [Winter Bird Feeder Survey](#) has been set for Jan. 8-11, 2015!

Each winter, the Wildlife Diversity Program encourages you to participate in this citizen science project. Why? Not only is this survey a fun way to share your love of wildlife with friends and family, but it's also a valuable tool that helps biologists monitor our winter bird populations! When surveys from across the state are compiled, biologists can use information about your backyard birds to identify unusual population changes and monitor the range of bird species. As an example, we've been able to track the expansion of two dove species in Oklahoma with Winter Bird Feeder Survey data!



The Eurasian collared-dove (shown with red squares) is an Old World species that became established in Florida in the late 20th century and rapidly spread throughout North America. The white-winged dove (shown with blue diamonds) is historically native to North America, though originally restricted to a small area of the Rio Grande River Valley in southern Texas. Conservation

efforts have restored this species population, and it has adapted to urban habitats and expanded into Oklahoma.

In addition to detecting range expansions, biologists are able to check the pulse of those species that frequent backyard feeders. Be sure to contribute information about your backyard birds to help biologists better understand our winter birds!

2014 Results!

Last year 109 citizen scientists returned data sheets, reporting nearly 9,000 birds! Which species dominated Oklahoma feeders in 2014? Click [here](#) to see the top five contenders and learn how to attract them to your feeder!

Be sure to let us know about your backyard birds this Jan. 8-11! Survey results will be revealed in the February 2015 Wild Side.

Article by Jeff Tibbits, wildlife diversity intern

Species Profile: *Rufa* Red Knot

Imagine making a 3,000-mile grocery trip, twice a year. Though seemingly impossible for us, the red knot (*Calidris canutus*), a small shorebird with a 23-inch wingspan, makes this journey in just three days.

Red knots are most easily identified when in their late spring and summer breeding plumage. During this time, the bird earns its name with its rusty head, neck and belly. The back is mottled gray, black and brown, and the tail and wings are pale gray. In the fall, this sandpiper molts and turns pale gray with white flanks. Red knots have dull yellow or olive-green legs and a straight, dark bill. The sturdy bill is used to probe mudflats for mollusks, insects and seeds.

Most knots winter along the Chilean coast and migrate to the Canadian arctic breeding grounds by way of the Atlantic Coast. Some of these birds travel 18,000 miles a year! These birds often use Delaware and New Jersey's Delaware Bay area as a stopover, refueling on horseshoe crab eggs. But a small red knot population winters along the coast of Texas and migrates to the breeding grounds by way of the Great Plains. Even though this population passes over Oklahoma, these birds are often flying thousands of feet above the ground, seldom making landfall in our state. To date, only 40 birds have been reported in Oklahoma. Of those birds, 85% have been reported during the fall migration. It is suspected that inclement weather, inexperience of younger birds or weakened physical condition forces these birds to land during migration.

Red knots have experienced severe population declines, with reduced food availability cited as the primary cause. These declines triggered the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's listing of the rufa red knot (the North American subspecies of red knot) as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. This decision was announced Dec. 11, 2014.

Article by Matt Fullerton, endangered species biologist



The *rufa* red knot was listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act this month. Photo by Gregory Breese, USFWS

Donor Recognition

A sincere thanks to the following Wildlife Diversity Program donors:

- Dr. Pat and Mrs. Carmelitta Garrison, Norman
- Larry Barnett, Choctaw
- Michael Silkebakken, Oklahoma City

Donors like these help fund the conservation of Oklahoma's rare and declining species as well as those species not hunted or fished. If you'd like to donate to the program, download our [Outdoor Store Order Form](#). All donations are tax-deductible.

State Wildlife Grant Action Report: The Oklahoma Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy

The State Wildlife Grants Program is a method of addressing the nation's ever-growing number of threatened and endangered species.

It has been said that good plans shape good decisions.

One way Wildlife Diversity Program biologists ensure good wildlife management decisions are being made is through the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. This strategy not only identifies fish, wildlife and invertebrate species in greatest need of conservation, but also takes a close look at the status of key habitats and landscapes.

The value of a plan is best seen when put in action.

In addition to this critical inventory of our state's resources, the strategy also identifies knowledge gaps and research needs that help guide future studies and State Wildlife Grant projects. Organized by conservation landscape, the CWCS focuses on the steps needed to enhance regional habitats for species of greatest conservation need. To do this, region-specific issues are outlined with detailed conservation action items, indicators of success, and regional partnerships that can further conservation efforts. Prioritization of these action items allows biologists to make the most of limited time and funding.

The Oklahoma CWCS is currently being revised to update the status of species of greatest conservation need, regional issues and conservation action items.

In Other News...

Check Out These Wildlife Diversity News Stories

- [Get Great Holiday Gifts From ODWC Outdoor Store](#)



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 for more wildlife diversity information and events.

For questions or comments, please email jena.donnell@odwc.ok.gov

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