



Conservation Message of Hackberry Flat:

- understanding that sportsmen & women pay for wildlife conservation
- understanding the values of wetlands & wetland restoration
- understanding the wet and dry management techniques of the wetland
- understanding the wildlife dependent on this wetland and how they use the habitats created
- understanding the historical events associated with Hackberry Flat

Hackberry Flat Annual Report, July 2010—June 2011

Frederick, Oklahoma



Going In Style into the Wetland!

Thanks to a lot of creativity, ingenuity and just plain hard work, Shorty Davis, Bret UMBER and Kelvin Schoonover were able to build Hackberry Flat's Bird Blind Trailer. With an idea borrowed from the Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge, we now have the ability to transport visitors down into the wetland as one group. This ability has already greatly enhanced the programs we offered this year at Hackberry Flat including the many school groups that took a field trip to the wetland. The bench down the middle of the trailer allows visitors to look out into area as opposed to being seated along the edge looking into the trailer. The rail is a great safety feature, as is the ramp on the back of the trailer. The shade cloth can be removed if not

needed but it sure makes for a much pleasanter ride being shaded from the sun.

During the spring bird migration, it appeared that the birds became accustomed to the trailer and as long as we kept our hands and feet within the trailer, they would stay close by for great viewing of such birds as the black-necked stilt, blue-winged teal and white-faced ibis.

We look forward to using the bird blind trailer for future programs and events.



Eventually 12 benches like this will be installed around the trail below the Center.



Participants of the Bird Identification program offered through the Saturday Morning Program series are ready to take the first "maiden voyage" of the bird blind trailer

Staff at Hackberry Flat

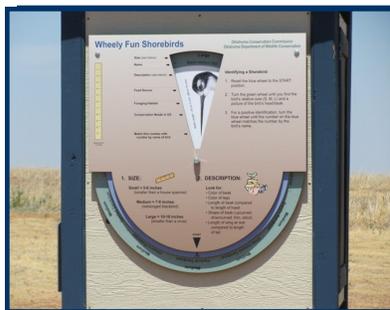
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This year the focus was on the areas out and around the Center. The "Wheel-y Fun Shorebirds" interactive sign

Enhancements at the Center

was added onto one side of the trailhead kiosk. This sign is intended to help visitors identify shorebirds that they may have seen on the trail or in the wetland. The shorebird wheel provides color illustrations of eleven of the more common shorebirds at Hackberry Flat during the spring and fall migration periods. By turning the 2 wheels on the sign,

and lining up the information and numbers you can narrow down the choices until you find your shorebird. Be sure to come try this "wheel-y" fun sign!

Along the trail that leads down to the boardwalk, we are starting to install benches that will give the visitor opportunities to just sit back and relax and enjoy the wetland.



Perhaps someday, Osprey will be using the nesting platforms

Enhancements con't.

A new conservation feature was added to the Hackberry Flat Area. In March, Eagle Scout Candidate Christian Givens, a member of Boy Scout Troop 220 in Frederick managed the construction and installation of two Osprey Nesting Platforms on the west side of the reservoir.

Also known as the "Fish Hawk", the Osprey feeds almost exclusively on fish. In Oklahoma, the Osprey is primarily a spring and fall migrant but there have been 2 nesting records in the state, one at Salt

Plains National Wildlife Refuge, the other at Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge. It is our hope that having the nesting platforms will encourage the migrating Osprey over time to stay and nest at Hackberry Flat.

In the interim, other species could use the nesting platforms including Bald Eagles, Great Blue Herons, Red-tailed Hawks, and Owls.

Southwest Rural Electric installed the platforms.



Maintenance and Upkeep

- Lawn around Center was treated with herbicide
- 1 AC Unit repaired
- Plumbing repairs to inside restrooms
- Outside bathrooms cleaned once a week; Center cleaned once a month
- Lawn mowed as needed & flower beds were removed and replaced with river rock
- Cedar Elm trees were watered as needed.

Wildlife Management on Hackberry Flat July, 2010– June, 2011

July started off with a bang and approximately 10 inches of rain fell in a matter of just a few days. Water control structures were tested and some fields were flooded for the first part of summer. Native wetland plants and summer crops got a boost as the fall migration approached.

Dove season started with a light rain at daylight that quenched the normal steady gun fire, but a few birds were harvested as a little thunderstorm passed by and the sun popped out.

Native vegetation was manipulated, preparing wetland units for flooding. Approximately 400-500 acres were flooded for waterfowl season while balancing wetland unit water vs. refuge roosting water in the reservoir. Very little rain fell between November-January (< 1

inch) providing slight relief from a dry spell that will later go down in history as one of the worst.

The annual Mid-Winter Waterfowl survey was down a little from last year with approximately 28,000 Geese and 16,000 ducks. February and

dry cycle at Hackberry Flat. A dry spring allows access to areas that need special attention when otherwise we couldn't. For instance over the past 2-3 years cattails have been growing profusely in the reservoir creating a huge seed source. With the reservoir at a low elevation we were able to burn and plow these cattails setting back succession and eliminating them. Also several water control structures were repaired in areas that almost never dry out.

May brought 5.5 inches of rain overnight replenishing Hackberry Flat with precious water. Some of the species that nest at Hackberry Flat like, the Black-necked Stilt and the American Avocet were going to get their chance at nesting. However, the moisture did not last long. Extreme heat and high winds sucked the water out almost as fast as it came. In a matter of a few days Hackberry Flat went from green and wet to parched and brown.



Photo by Carol Stayer



Despite our concerns that school budgets would probably

Wetland Classroom Visitations

not allow for field trips, the wetland classroom was used by several school groups during the 2010-2011 season.

-1st graders from Hobart (75) visited in the fall and again in Spring. Students observed birds in the wetland and saw the “bugs” the birds were eating in the wetland classroom

-PreK—1st graders from Frederick Schools learned about crayfish (25)

-Cache Advance Placement biology class (10) sampled 5

different wetland units, assessed habitat variables and learned about the connection between timing of flooding for vegetation and invertebrate production.

-5th graders from Frederick (75) learned about bird use in the wetland and bird beak adaptations

-4th graders from Snyder got to hear and see close-up two very rare birds—the Sora and King Rail. (45)



Crayfish are the main food source for many birds that use Hackberry Flat as a refueling stop during migrations. They are also one of the favorite “critters” of the school children that Visit the wetlands.

Photo by Carol Stayer

Events—Saturday Morning Programs

For the last two years, the Hackberry Flat Center has been open on the second Saturdays of each month. Hunters and birders alike stop by to see the Center and to ask questions. This year the staff scheduled programs during those Saturdays. The February program was on waterfowl identification. Jeff Neal, waterfowl technician for ODWC, provided a fun and informative program on identification tips, including a quiz. Afterwards, participants drove around the area to test their new identifi-



cation skills. In March, an 8-hour hunter education class was offered by Game Warden Ted Hastly. Sixteen Oklahomans became hunter education certified! The April program was a particularly special event as the newly constructed bird blind trailer took its “maiden voyage”. The program covered bird identification tips with an emphasis on shorebirds.

Hackberry Flat Day took place in May (more about this event on next page) and June was a quiet Saturday with the beginning of the heat advisory warnings.



What a surprise! The Scarlet Tanager (above) is a bird of the eastern deciduous forests so southwest Oklahoma is far outside its normal range.

Photo by Lou Truex

Birding and Birding Tours

Traditionally, formal birding tours at Hackberry Flat are offered during the annual Hackberry Flat Day and on some of the Saturday morning programs. However, Lou Truex and Kurt Meisenthal, from Lawton, by request, will provide informal birding tours throughout the year.

This year the Truexs conducted several informal birding tours for visitors from throughout Oklahoma including the

Texas Panhandle Audubon Society. Kurt Meisenthal provided a special birding tour for a participant from California. Attending the Lesser Prairie-Chicken Festival.

Many birders visit Hackberry Flat during the winter for waterfowl, raptor, and occasionally Bald Eagle sightings. The most visitation however occurs during spring migration.

Though there is no accurate method at this time to deter-

mine how many birders visit Hackberry Flat, monitoring the Oklahoma Bird Listserve provides an understanding through the postings that birders are visiting on a regular basis. Birders also leave a list of the notable birds observed on the message board at the Center.

A new bird species was added to the Hackberry Flat when Lou Truex found a Scarlet Tanager in one of the few stands of trees found in the wetland basin.

**Birds Seen on
Hackberry Flat Day**

- American White Pelican
- Double-crested Cormorant
- Great Blue Heron
- Black-crowned Night-heron
- Yellow-crowned Night-heron
- Canada Goose
- Mallard
- Blue-winged Teal
- Cinnamon Teal
- Northern Shoveler
- Hooded Merganser
- Ruddy Duck
- Turkey Vulture
- Red-tailed Hawk
- Swainson's Hawk
- Northern Harrier
- American Kestrel
- Northern Bobwhite
- King Rail
- American Coot
- Snowy Plover
- Semipalmated Plover
- Killdeer
- Black-bellied Plover
- American Golden Plover
- Black-necked Stilt
- American Avocet
- Greater Yellowlegs
- Lesser Yellowlegs
- Spotted Sandpiper
- Upland Sandpiper
- Semipalmated Sandpiper
- Least Sandpiper
- White-rumped Sandpiper
- Baird's Sandpiper
- Pectoral Sandpiper
- Stilt Sandpiper
- Long-billed Dowitcher
- Wilson's Phalarope
- Least Tern
- Mourning Dove
- Great Horned Owl
- Common Nighthawk
- Chimney Swift
- Ladder-backed Woodpecker
- Western Kingbird
- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
- Horned Lark
- Cliff Swallow
- Bank Swallow
- Barn Swallow
- Northern Mockingbird
- Loggerhead Shrike
- Yellow Warbler
- Dickcissel
- Clay-colored Sparrow
- Chipping Sparrow
- Lark Sparrow
- Savannah Sparrow
- Grasshopper Sparrow
- Lincoln's Sparrow
- Red-winged Blackbird
- Yellow-headed Blackbird
- Eastern Meadowlark
- Great-tailed Grackle
- Common Grackle
- Brown-headed Cowbird
- Bullock's Oriole

Hackberry Flat Day—May 14, 2011

Over 130 visitors visited Hackberry Flat and braved a windy and somewhat chilly day to participate in many outdoor and indoor activities provided by ODWC and many of our amazing partners. First, we appreciate our fellow ODWC employees: Ron Smith for helping with shotgun, Ryan Ryswyk for the sportfish of Oklahoma aquarium, Greg Sexton for the OK Archery in the Schools program, and Ted Hasty for conducting 2 beginner's birding tours. We would also like to thank the following partners for helping make Hackberry Flat Day a success: Alabaster Caverns State Park, Quartz Mountain Nature Park, Washita Battlefield National Historic Site, OK Wildlife and Prairie Heritage Alliance, the OK Conservation Commission and the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge for providing fun, interactive exhibits. The Friends of Hackberry Flat acted as hosts to the visitors and Dr. Greg Howard provided the cut wood for bluebird house make-n-takes. The Red River Transport provided excellent bus drivers and touring vans that really added so much to the birding tours! The Hackberry Flat Foundation provided refreshments and lunches for all the volunteers and exhibitors! Lou & Mary Truex and Kurt Meisenthal conducted the early morning birding tours. And a special thank you to Carol Stayer for capturing Hackberry Flat Day by camera!



The Wichita Mountain NWR's exhibit really attracted visitors to their table.



Ryan Ryswyk (above) visited with visitors about sportfish production and fisheries management.



Charlotte McPherson (below) always has fun showing visitors the interesting and sometimes weird wetland critters.



Sue Hokanson (Quartz Mountain) sets up interactive fun in the Center. (above left) Archery is always a popular activity!



Visitors and biologists alike never know what will be seen when we ride the bird blind trailer into the wetlands, safely pulled by Bret Umber (left).



Ever been mud-buggin'? Karla Beatty (OK Conservation Commission) had as much fun as the visitors trying to catch craw dads with bacon on a string.



Kurt Meisenthal, Sharon Bennett and Dennis Stayer, Friends of Hackberry Flat not only helped visitors enjoy the day but they too seemed to enjoy their time at Hackberry Flat!



Mike Caywood (Alabaster Caverns) set up this photo board (left) that was incredibly popular with visitors AND friends! Above, Kelvin Schoonover and Ron Smith are ready to help visitors improve their shotgun technique.

Alabaster Caverns State Park