



# Traveling the Great Plains Trail of Oklahoma

By Melinda Hickman, Wildlife Diversity Biologist

Throughout the heart of western Oklahoma weaves a series of auto-driving loops designed for putting travelers in position to view native wildlife, experience unique landscapes, and enjoy the hospitality of historical small towns.

Known as the Great Plains Trail of Oklahoma, the series of 13 loops positions tourists so they have the chance to spot everything from deer and turkeys to prairie chickens, great horned lizards, scissortail flycatchers and even prairie dogs.

Each loop provides the traveler with three days of accessible wildlife species, unique geologic features, large-scale prairies, and gorgeous sunsets and sunrises. For more information, visit [greatplainstrail.com](http://greatplainstrail.com). The site provides road maps of each of the 13 loops, along with what species of wildlife travelers may expect to see.

To request printed copies of road maps detailing the Great Plains Trail, contact Melinda Hickman, wildlife diversity biologist for the Wildlife Department, at [mhickman@zoo.odwc.state.ok.us](mailto:mhickman@zoo.odwc.state.ok.us) or call (405) 424-0099. Upcoming issues of Outdoor Oklahoma will feature timely, seasonal details on various loops of the Great Plains Trail to help tourists plan a drive across the captivating landscapes of western Oklahoma.

## What's Happening on the Loops this Winter

Due to fairly temperate weather, winters in Oklahoma can still offer the nature explorer many opportunities to view wildlife and enjoy the prairie scenery. Many migratory bird species stop in Oklahoma to take advantage of open water, a lack of snow cover, and an abundance of food resources. This issue highlights unique winter wildlife species and landscapes with the loops that offer the best opportunities for encountering and experiencing these outdoor sightings in western Oklahoma. Be sure to dress warmly for your Trail adventure.



## Ducks, Geese & Sandhill Cranes in Large Numbers

See the sky darken with overwhelming numbers of waterfowl along one of these loops.

- Salt Plains Loop**
- Hackberry Flat Loop**

Recommend sites on this loop: Hackberry Flat WMA

- Playa Lakes Loop**

Recommend sites on this loop: Optima Lake, but do not expect sandhill cranes

- Black Kettle Loop**

Recommend sites along this loop: Washita National Wildlife Refuge



## Bald Eagles

See a symbol of American independence right here in Oklahoma.

- South Canadian Loop**

Recommend sites along this loop: Canton Lake

- Salt Plains Loop**
- Black Kettle Loop**

Recommend sites along this loop: Washita National Wildlife Refuge

### Hackberry Flat Loop

Recommend sites along this loop: Wichita National Wildlife Refuge – occasionally have Golden Eagles

### Quartz Mountain Loop

Recommend sites along this loop: Lake Altus-Lugert at Quartz Mountain Nature Park



KRISTEN GULLMAN

### Hibernating Bats

Tour a cave and see bats spending the winter in Oklahoma.

### Bats & Bluffs Loop

Recommended sites along this loop: tour the Alabaster Caverns to see clusters of sleeping bats.



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### Birds that Only Spend the Winter in Oklahoma

White-crowned sparrows, dark-eyed juncos, savannah sparrows, mountain blue-

birds and more are all possible sightings along these stretches of the Great Plains Trail.

### Sand Hills Loop

Recommend sites along this loop: Boiling Springs State Park

### Quartz Mountain Loop

Recommended sites along this loop: Mountain bluebirds can be spotted at Sandy Sanders WMA

### Caddo Canyon Loop

Recommend sites along this loop: Red Rock Canyon State Park



Hunters all over Oklahoma got in on the deer hunting action in 2010, including country music star Blake Shelton.

“Making music is my livelihood, and I love it, but when it comes to my time I head to the woods,” Shelton said. “I can’t wait to be in the deer woods. Deer season is like early Christmas around our place.”

Shelton took this trophy buck Nov. 12 in southcentral Oklahoma. --X



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### Trails Boasting Amazing Landscapes in Winter

#### Black Mesa State Park

This is a good time to hike the nine-mile round trip trail on Black Mesa.

#### Gloss Mountain State Park

Try the Cathedral Mountain Trail.

### Off the Beaten Trails with Spectacular Winter Landscapes

#### Cimarron Loop

Recommended sites along this loop: Cimarron Scenic Route and Curtis Hill Scenic Route

#### Sand Hills Loop

Recommended sites along this loop: Antelope Hills Scenic Route

—Melinda Hickman is a wildlife diversity biologist for the Wildlife Department. Hickman plays an active role in conserving wildlife in Oklahoma as well as in educating Oklahomans on the value of wildlife to our quality of life.

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### Prescription

Outdoor Oklahoma  
Television Show and Magazine

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation promotes the lifelong benefits related to playing outdoors.

Get Outdoors for at least one hour a day:  
Climb, hike, fish, run, ride a bike, jump,  
smile and discover  
the world around you!

Refills: Unlimited

Feeling tired, worn out, bored, mundane? Want to change things up a little from the day-to-day? Look in every issue for a simple solution from the Wildlife Department on how to get outside and enjoy the outdoors.