



The Wild Side!

August 2016

Toads like the Great Plains Toad and Texas Toad are characteristic of Oklahoma's southwestern shortgrass prairie. These toads are active at night and may burrow in the sandy soil to avoid extreme temperatures.

Upcoming Events

Botany Walk

August 27, 2016
9:30-11 a.m.
Oxley Nature Center, Tulsa

Wildlife Expo

Sept. 24-25, 2016
Lazy E Arena, Guthrie

OKC Zoo Monarch Festival

Sept. 24, 2016
OKC

BioBlitz! 2016

Sept. 30-Oct. 2, 2016
Kingston

Prepare Your Bird Feeders: Install a Grackle Log Roller

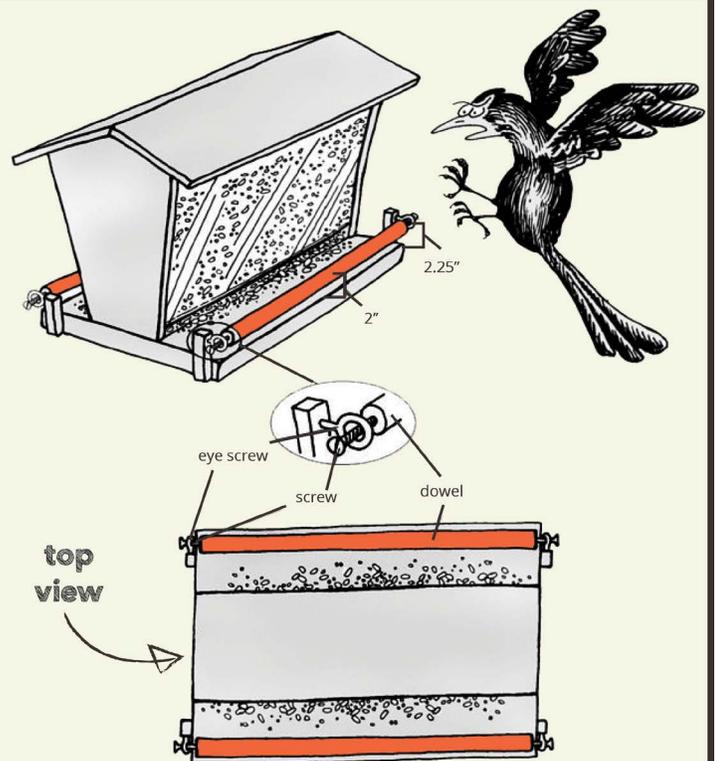
Get ready for the traditional winter bird feeding season - and the large flocks of birds that may overwhelm your feeders.

Whether you welcome any and all wildlife guests to a free meal at your backyard feeder or favor certain species, large droves of visiting blackbirds can regularly deplete feeders and leave homeowners feeling drained of seed and energy.

To help deter the flocks of larger blackbirds like common grackles, Dr. Bernie Daniel of Cincinnati, Ohio developed the "log roller" design for hopper style feeders. Attaching a ½-inch-diameter wooden dowel rod 2-inches above the perching ledge of your feeder might keep larger birds away from selected feeders when they finally move in this winter.

Add a Grackle Log Roller

to your bird feeder to discourage large birds like common grackles. Smaller birds like finches and chickadees will still be able to perch between the dowel and the feeder to reach the food. Woodpeckers can still perch on the feeder's ledge.



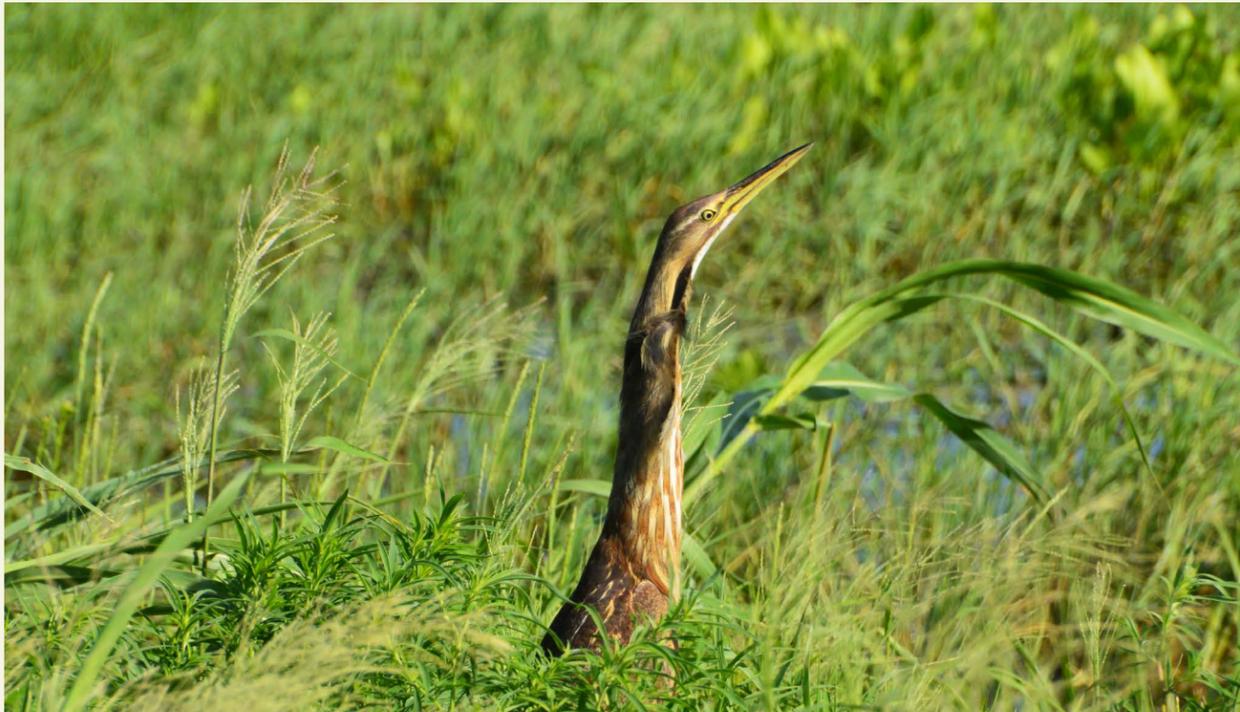
Prepare Your Bird Feeders: Install a Grackle Log Roller, Continued:

How to Add a Log Roller to Your Feeder:

- Treat dowel rod with wood preservatives to increase their useful life.
- Insert an eye screw or cotter pin into the corner of the feeder.
- Cut the dowel so that it fits loosely just inside the two eye screws.
- Drill a small hole into the center of each end of the rod with a bit that is slightly smaller than the screws.
- Insert each screw through the eye screw and into the hole in the dowel.
- Ensure the dowel spins freely and is 2-inches above the edge of the feeder where smaller birds will stand.

Find more wildscape project ideas in "[Landscaping for Wildlife: A Guide to the Southern Great Plains.](#)"

Species Profile: American Bittern



A master of camouflage, the American bittern uses its streaked and freckled feathers to easily slink into reeds, cattails and other wetland vegetation. Though difficult to spot, their distinctive booming call thunders across their marsh homeland.

The American bittern's obscure plumage not only helps this bulky wading bird stalk its prey of fish, crayfish, insects, reptiles and amphibians, but also helps it evade predators. A "concealment pose" helps the bird further blend into the background. When startled, bitterns often extend their long, heavily-streaked neck and point their bill skywards. Birds even sway their body in tune to the surrounding vegetation to stay hidden. During their spring and summer breeding season, bitterns are easily identified by their loud "[Plunk-a-lunk](#)" call.

Like many other wetland birds, bitterns build their nests on raised platforms of dead reeds, sedges and cattails. Most nests are built in dense stands of vegetation and are only inches from the water. Eggs hatch within 24-28 days and the chicks leave the nest about two weeks after hatching. To help conceal the nest location, adults may use separate paths for entering and leaving the nest.

American bitterns and other members of the heron family are often spotted at two southern Oklahoma Wildlife Management Areas, Red Slough WMA and Hackberry Flat WMA. Hopeful observers have the best chance of spotting these cryptic birds by patiently scanning the edges of tall (greater than two feet in height) reeds and cattails in the morning and evening.

Snorkeling for Threatened Fish

Biologists with the Wildlife Diversity Program join the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and the Arkansas State Parks each July to monitor leopard darter populations.

The clear, shallow waters of the Ouachita Mountain's small rivers presents biologists with a fantastic opportunity to visually monitor a number of fish species, including the federally threatened [leopard darter](#). Three inches in length, this fish is only found in Oklahoma and Arkansas and lives in clear pools of water among basketball-sized cobbles.

A team of state and federal biologists meet each July, don snorkel gear, slip into the cool water and begin counting the number of leopard darters and other fish species encountered. Sixteen sites across the threatened darters range are monitored each year; nine additional sites are visited on a rotational basis.

"Leopard darter numbers were up from site to site this year," said Curtis Tackett, wildlife diversity biologist for the Wildlife Department and member of the survey team. "Habitat and flow conditions were favorable this March and April - the darter's reproductive season - and a majority of the leopard darters we saw during the survey were hatched this year."

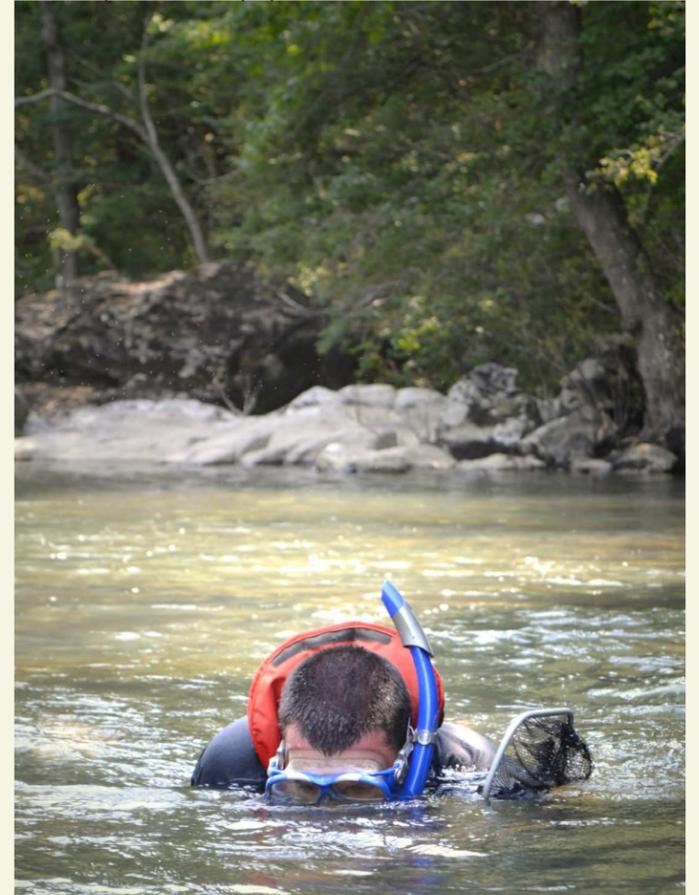
The team spent additional time surveying Arkansas's Cossatot River. "We surveyed two stretches of the Cossatot, snorkeling in great leopard darter habitat pool after pool," said Richard Standage, forest fisheries and aquatic T&E biologist for the U.S. Forest Service. "Based on this and past year's survey efforts, we suspect that even though habitat remains, the leopard darter population in the Cossatot River is extremely small."

To help recover this threatened species, the partnering biologists are considering a translocation effort to boost smaller populations, like those found in the Cossatot River, and increase genetic diversity across the range. Biologists are working on a plan that will successfully increase gene flow across the range without impacting the source population.

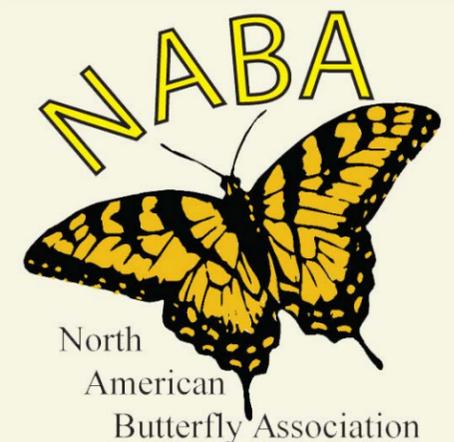
North American Butterfly Association Strives to Elevate Conservation Efforts

The clear, shallow waters of the Ouachita Mountain's small rivers presents biologists with a fantastic opportunity to visually monitor a number of fish species, including the federally threatened leopard darter. Three inches in length, this fish is only found in Oklahoma and Arkansas and lives in clear pools of water among basketball-sized cobbles.

The crown jewel of NABA's efforts is the [National Butterfly Center](#) in Mission, Texas. The 100+ acre facility is home to native plant gardens with more than 200 species of butterflies present. The climate of the site makes visiting year round a spectacular experience. The Center allows the organization the ability to educate the general public about butterflies while providing a laboratory to researchers. The site will be home to the 2016



Wildlife diversity biologists team up with other state and federal biologists to survey leopard darters, a federally threatened fish. (Donnell/ODWC)



North American Butterfly Association Strives to Elevate Conservation Efforts, Continued:

Biennial Members Meeting in conjunction with the Texas Butterfly Festival.

[NABA Chapters](#) work locally to institute projects that benefit butterflies, hold nature walks, collect data, study ecology and bring the natural world into the classroom. [NABA's Butterfly Garden and Habitat Program](#) can help you create a paradise for butterflies while encouraging habitat restoration, no matter the size of your area.

- Plan your garden with the [Basics of Butterfly Gardening](#).
- Learn which native plants are suitable for gardening in your location with [Regional Butterfly Garden Guides](#).
- Show your commitment to increasing butterfly populations and educating others through [NABA's Butterfly Garden Certification Program](#).
- Explore essential native [butterfly garden plants](#) selected by NABA's butterfly gardening community with Butterfly Garden Plants.

Census information about the population size and distribution of butterfly species is collected each year. [Butterfly Count](#) data are used to determine shifts in range and quickly identify any butterfly declines. The organization continues efforts to document native and non-native plants used by butterflies in North America and study the relationship between invasive species, disease, predators, pesticides and other sources of mortality. NABA's Names Committee is the leader in standardizing how species scientific and common names are assigned. Consensus on naming is important to improve consistency and accuracy of taxonomy.

NABA is involved in partnerships, like the [Monarch Joint Venture](#), intended to enhance science-based management of migratory and resident butterfly species. Sharing the latest scientific knowledge and providing evidence in threatened or endangered species listing decisions is something NABA feels is important. Identifying funding and implementing a real strategy to recover rare butterfly populations is paramount. NABA is ramping up on-the-ground conservation efforts through applying for grants and soliciting donations to support mission-driven projects.

Article by Marcus Gray, Executive Director for the North American Butterfly Association



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

This program operates free from discrimination on the basis of political or religious opinion or affiliation, race, creed, color, gender, age, ancestry, marital status or disability. A person who feels he or she may have been discriminated against or would like further information should write:
Director, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, P.O. Box 53465, Oklahoma City, OK 73152,
or Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of Interior, Washington D.C. 20240