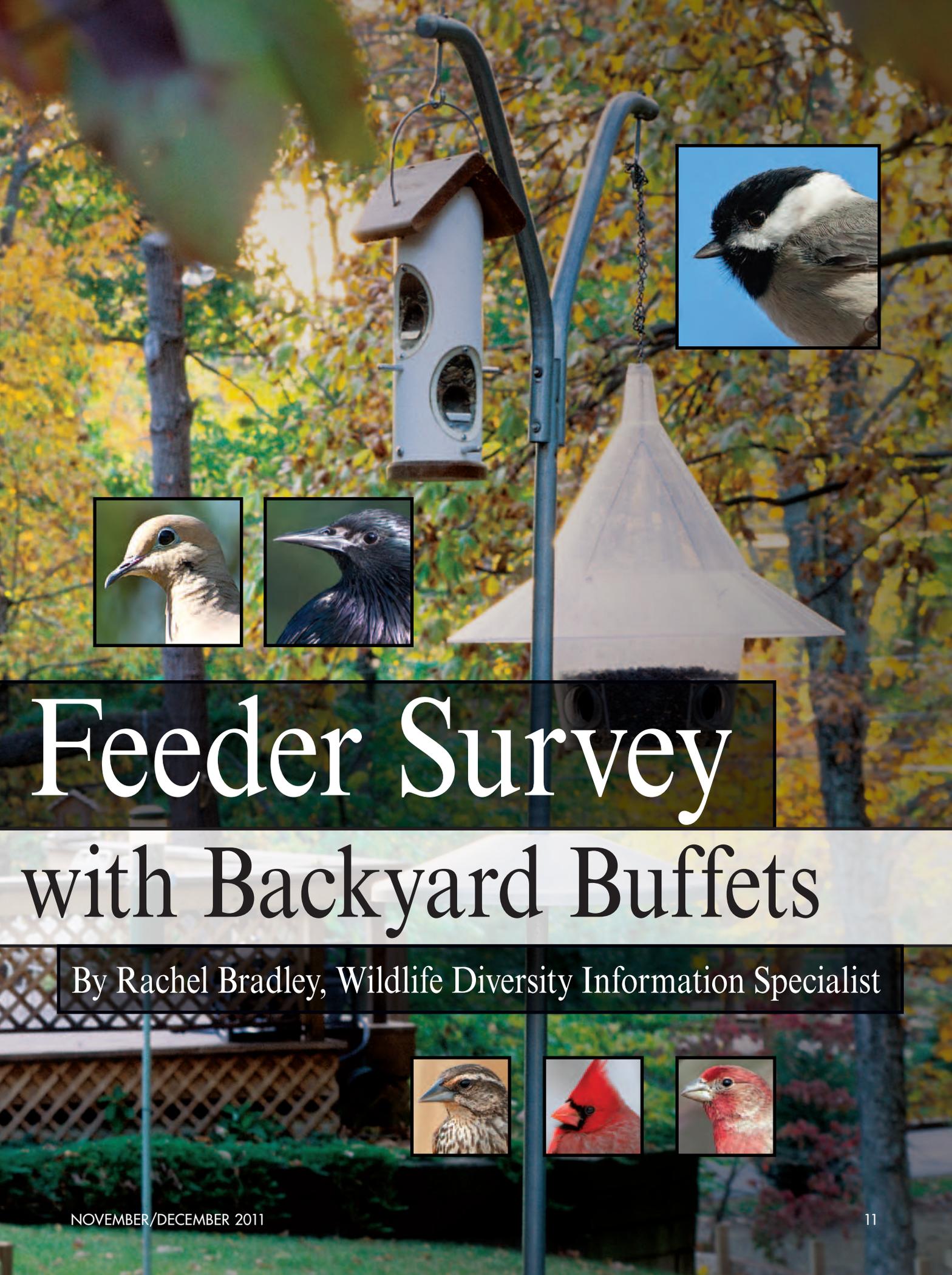




2012 Winter Bird Benefitting Birds





Feeder Survey

with Backyard Buffets

By Rachel Bradley, Wildlife Diversity Information Specialist





The American goldfinch was the most spotted bird in last year's Winter Bird Feeder Survey, at 3,879 sightings.

Upper Right: House finches are seen year-round in Oklahoma, often nesting in floral hanging baskets during the spring and feeding at winter bird feeders in the colder months. Males have an attractive red plumage on their face, neck and breast.

Right: A dark-eyed junco dines on seeds. Juncos were the second-most common bird documented during last year's Winter Bird Feeder Survey, with 2,773 counted.



Oklahoma's relatively mild winters attract a rich, diverse culture of birds each winter that benefits from birders' help as birds seek out winter habitat.

You can help by becoming a citizen scientist and participating in the Wildlife Department's 2012 Winter Bird Feeder Survey January 5 through 8. The

Birding is easy to learn, fairly inexpensive, and fun for all ages, especially if you do it in your own backyard, where you can enjoy it every day.

Winter Bird Feeder Survey allows bird enthusiasts the opportunity to contribute to bird conservation while enjoying a pastime that brings them closer to nature and nature closer to them. Experienced birders may even experience the thrill of checking a bird off of their "life list" of birds they hope to spot.

To conduct the Winter Bird Feeder Survey, simply watch a backyard bird feeder for any two days during the survey period. Count birds at least four times a day, and record the highest number of each species that you count feeding at one time during the day. For example, if you see five dark-eyed juncos at 8 a.m. and a few hours later you see seven, then record "seven" dark-eyed juncos. This ensures you do not count the same bird twice.

Survey forms and complete instructions for completing and returning your survey results are available online at okwinterbirds.com. Be sure to download the form, save it to your computer (you must complete this step for proper return), fill it out as thoroughly as possible, and return it as an e-mail attachment.

Birding on the Go

Smartphone Apps for Birders

Do you wish you could identify birds by their sound? There's an app for that! Smartphone applications are now allowing people to enjoy bird watching on the go.

To enhance your bird identification skills, we suggest trying out the following apps:



iBird Explorer Pro: This interactive field guide consists of 924 species found in North America.

Search birds by song, conservation status, flight pattern, genus, species, color, size, shape, bill shape or length, and more with color illustrations in perching and flight

views. Access the range map if you think you see an unusual species. Available for iPhone and Android



BirdCountr: Leave the pen and paper at home and keep records of bird sightings all over North America by plumage and GPS location, then catalog by family on your phone.

Available for iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad



BirdsEye: This application hosts a map of 25,000 birding hotspots, keeps record of your life list, and notes about the species in North America.

Available for iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad



Wildlife Department



iBird PRO



BirdCountr



BirdsEye

Type of Bird	Food Preference
Blue Jay	Sunflower seed, safflower, cracked corn, peanuts, suet, bread, peanut butter, lard mixes, seed mixes
House Finch	Mixed seed, peanuts, fruit, suet, niger, sunflower, safflower, thistle
Goldfinch- all species	Thistle/niger, sunflower seed, hulled sunflower, millet, fruit, suet, peanuts
Wren- all species	Suet, suet mix, peanut butter, bread, apples
Flicker- all species	Suet, peanut butter, sunflower seeds, fruit, meat, bread
Pine Siskin	Nuts, rolled oats, thistle, mixed seeds, sunflower seeds, sunflower chips, millet, suet
Purple Finch	Sunflower seeds, thistle
Blackbird- all species	Bread, cracked corn, mixed seeds, sunflower seeds, sunflower chips, millet, suet
Robins & Bluebirds	Apples, sunflower seed, bread, grapes, suet, mealworms, berries, raisins, nut meal, seed mixes
Evening Grosbeak	Sunflower seeds, grapes, orange halves
Northern Bobwhite	Sunflower seeds, seed mixes
Brown-headed Cowbird	Bread, cracked corn, sunflower seeds, seed mixes
Cardinal	Cracked corn, nuts, sunflower seeds, safflower, millet, peanuts, apple, bread
Starling	Millet, milo, safflower
Crow	Bread, scraps, corn, suet
Grackle- all species	Sunflower seeds, bread, scraps
Tufted Titmouse	Sunflower seeds, suet, bread, safflower, peanuts, peanut kernel
Carolina Chickadee	Peanut kernel, sunflower seeds, suet, bread, safflower
Nuthatch- all species	Suet, suet mix, sunflower seeds, nuts, cracked corn, bread
Brown Creeper	Suet, suet mix, sunflower seeds, nuts, cracked corn, bread
Mockingbird	Halved apples, fruit, bread, suet, sunflower seeds, nuts
Cedar Waxwing	Berries, raisins, sliced apple, canned peas, currants, grapes
Sparrow- all species	Sunflower seeds, seed mixes, bread, thistle, millet
Dove- all species	Cracked corn, sunflower seeds, milo, bread, thistle, nuts
Woodpecker- all species	Insects, fruit, sunflower seeds, suet, nuts, sugar water
Junco- all species	Millet, sunflower seeds, cracked corn, peanuts, bread, nut meats, thistle, suet
Towhee- all species	Millet, sunflower seeds, peanuts, grapes, cracked corn, suet
Brown Thrasher	Orange halves, cracked corn

Birding is easy to learn, fairly inexpensive, and fun for all ages, especially if you do it in your own backyard, where you can enjoy it every day.

Habitat, be it natural or created, is the key to attracting diverse species to your backyard, and providing a good food source is the best place to start.

If you give birds a buffet, be sure to include black-oil sunflower seeds. The high protein and oil content allow birds to store more body fat to keep warm. Suet is a good source of fat and protein as well, made commonly from lard and peanut butter. Nijer (thistle) and safflower also are preferred seeds. Safflower is generally more expensive but is less attractive to non-native birds like house sparrows.

The least preferred food — but often the least expensive — are some of the seeds found in store-bought mixtures. These are often less nutritious and low in protein or oil and include seeds such as oats, wheat and milo. The birds that eat these seeds are ground-feeding species, so these should not be placed in hanging or pole-mounted feeders. Try making your own mix of preferred foods and even throw in some leftover apples, oranges, or other fresh or frozen fruits. This will also discourage house sparrows from visiting your feeders and harassing other birds.

Recommended feeders are low platform (for ground use), hanging/tube, and hopper feeders. Nijer seed may best be offered in a unique, mesh feeder made specifically to prevent the small seeds from falling out. Unique feeders are available for offering suet as well. Chickadees, titmice and finches prefer to eat higher off the ground, but cardinals, juncos, harris sparrows and mourning doves tend to eat at ground level. To cater to a variety of birds, hang three feeders at various heights near your viewing area, with one being near the ground.

Providing a good water source for drinking and bathing also will attract birds, because water sources may be difficult to come by in the winter months. The cleaner a bird's feathers, the better they keep warm and fly. Be sure to change the water frequently to keep it clean and from freezing. Bird bath heaters also are an easy way to prevent freezing water.

Place bird feeders and bird baths at least 10 feet from the cover of trees. Evergreens can act as a good cover if they are a few feet away from the food source.



Often the male member of a bird species is more colorful than the female, as demonstrated by the Red-winged blackbird (male left, female right).

Bottom Right: Though not native, the European Starling was one of the top 10 birds seen at feeders during last year's Winter Bird Feeder Survey. Since non-native birds compete with native species, biologists can use results from the survey to help constituents focus their feeding efforts on birds that are native to the state.



Miracle Meal Recipe

Flour
 Yellow cornmeal
 Lard (not shortening)
 A log
 A drill
 Peanut butter
 Raisins (optional)

This tasty treat is sure to entice birds that eat fruit and insects. Check out the Wildlife Department's Winter Bird Feeder Survey website at okwinterbirds.com for more details on what to feed birds in your own yard.

1. Mix one part flour to three parts cornmeal and two parts lard
2. Add peanut butter (optional)
3. Add raisins (optional)
4. Roll mixture into firm balls
5. Drill 1.5" holes into the log
6. Stuff the holes with the miracle meal mixture
7. Suspend the log from a tree limb
8. Watch for birds



Feeding areas and water need to be kept clean. Clean high-activity feeders at least once a month in the winter to decrease the chance of disease, bacteria, and mold. Bird baths, houses, and feeders and the areas immediately around them are common places for birds to contract and spread disease. Keep them clean!

Here are a few extra tips to remember as you participate in the 2012 Winter Bird Feeder Survey.

Fly-bys do not count! Birds counted toward the survey should be those utilizing your bird feeders.

Please note if you see a bird that is not listed on the survey or an unusual sighting.

Top 10 Birds Seen	
American goldfinch	3,879
Dark-eyed junco	2,773
Red-winged blackbird	1,748
Northern cardinal	1,693
House sparrow	1,397
European starling	949
Mourning dove	905
House finch	813
Carolina chickadee	651
Blue jay	542

We enjoy hearing about interesting sightings and seeing photos.

The results of your survey will help the Wildlife Department better manage Oklahoma's feathered friends year round.

2011 Results

This year's results accounted for 21,476 of Oklahoma's winter birds. Results vary annually due to weather conditions, food availability, geographical differences around Oklahoma and various species around the feeders.

Each year, there are somewhat unusual sightings at bird feeders, which may be the cause of any of the aforementioned conditions. Some of the unusual birds spotted during the 2011 survey were the wild turkey, golden-crowned kinglet, ruby-crowned kinglet, orange-crowned warbler, yellow-rumped warbler, and chipping sparrow.

Birds that were viewed in yards but not actually using a bird feeder include the red-tailed hawk, red-shouldered hawk, sharp-shinned hawk, cedar waxwing, greater roadrunner, American robin, merlin, brown thrasher, and Eastern bluebird. 🌿

A bird bath with clean water is attractive to winter birds, especially if you keep it from freezing over by changing it frequently during freezing temperatures or by employing an electric bird bath water heater (pictured).



DAVE AND STEVE MASLOWSKI

OK Winter Birds: A birder's favorite website



Boost your winter bird know-how as you search photographs, range maps, diet and behavior notes for 52 winter birds commonly found at Oklahoma bird feeders and on the Winter Bird Feeder Survey at OKwinterbirds.com.

OKwinterbirds.com is managed by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and is designed to assist new backyard bird watchers and 2012 Winter Bird Feeder Survey participants. Even experienced birders will discover helpful tips to better identify and attract beautiful winter birds to their feeders. Check it out this winter.

Other Helpful Birding Links

National Audubon Society

audubon.org

Oklahoma City Audubon Society

okc-audubon.org

Tulsa Audubon Society

tulsaaudubon.org

Oklahoma Ornithological Society

okbirds.org

Birds of Oklahoma

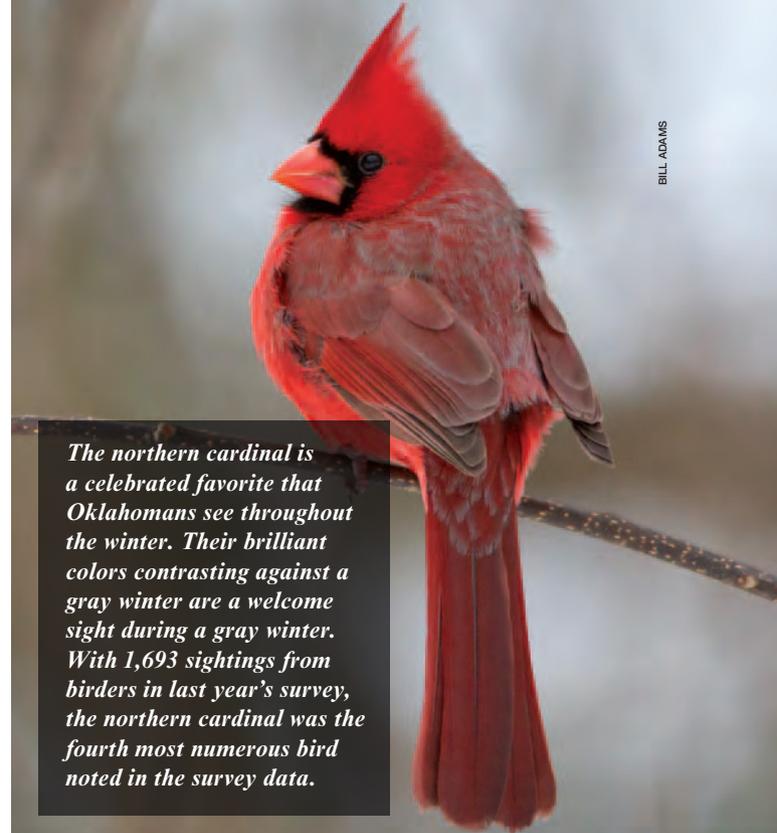
birdsofOklahoma.net

Sutton Avian Research Center

suttoncenter.org

Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory

rmbo.org



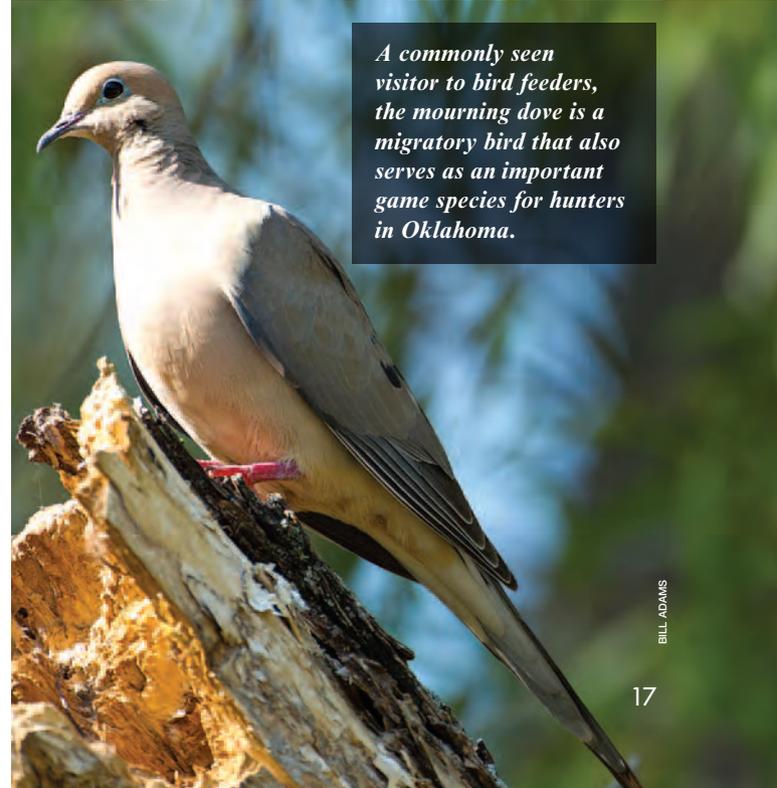
BILL ADAMS

The northern cardinal is a celebrated favorite that Oklahomans see throughout the winter. Their brilliant colors contrasting against a gray winter are a welcome sight during a gray winter. With 1,693 sightings from birders in last year's survey, the northern cardinal was the fourth most numerous bird noted in the survey data.



BILL ADAMS

There is a good chance that a Carolina chickadee will come to your yard this winter if you provide an arrangement of attractants in your yard, particularly seeds.



BILL ADAMS

A commonly seen visitor to bird feeders, the mourning dove is a migratory bird that also serves as an important game species for hunters in Oklahoma.