



## The Wild Side!

February 2016

### Quartz Mountain Nature Park

in Greer County is a great place for a late winter adventure. Learn more about this park and other destinations of the Great Plains Trail of Oklahoma at [greatplainstrail.com](http://greatplainstrail.com)

### Upcoming Events

#### After Work Beginning Birding Walk

[Ray Harrah Nature Center](#)

Broken Arrow  
March 2, 2016  
4:30 - 5:30 pm

#### Oklahoma Biodiversity Forum

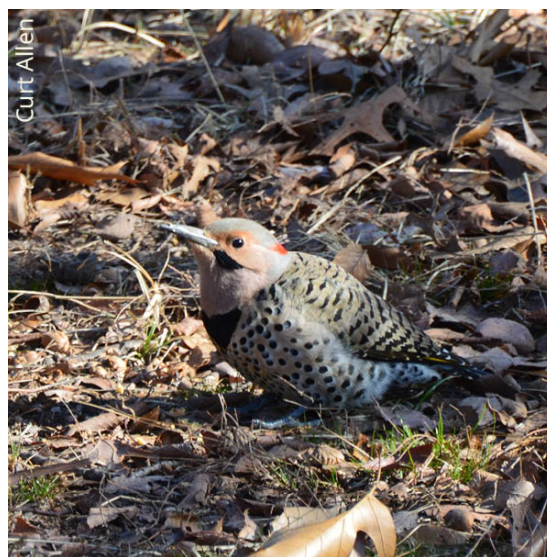
University of Oklahoma  
Norman  
March 5, 2016

## Citizen Scientists Count 19,839 Birds

Backyard bird-watchers rallied together this January for the Wildlife Department's annual Winter Bird Feeder Survey. Together they reported 19,839 birds from 51 species during the four-day survey.

As expected, the top five reported species did not change from last year. In fact, the American Goldfinch has been the top most reported species since 2008!

We sifted through this year's data to find where Oklahoma's citizen scientists are located, which birds were seen most (and least) frequently, and who's feeding what.



**Citizen scientists counted 117 northern flickers during this year's survey.**

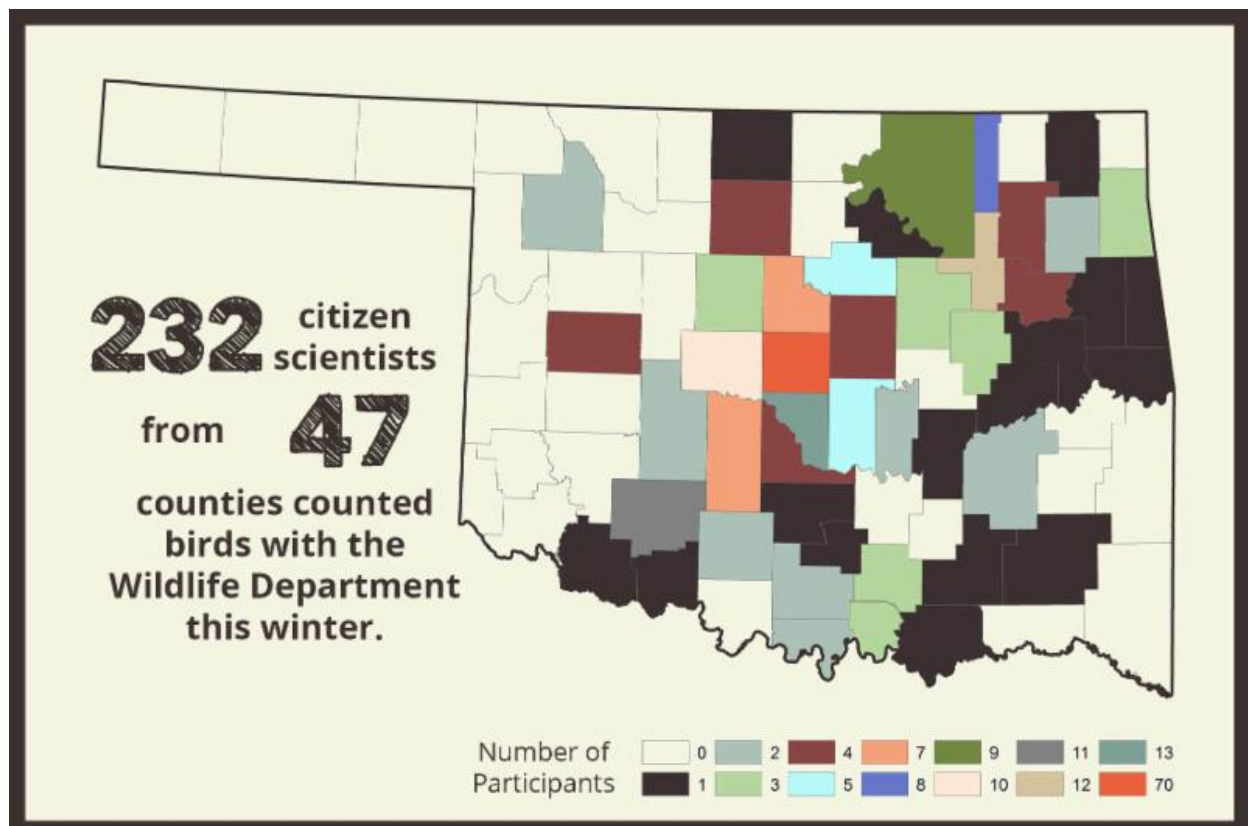
Join the Oklahoma Biological Survey for a series of interactive discussions and explore ideas for important research, obstacles to accomplishing goals, and solutions that involve network collaboration. [Free registration.](#)

### Red Slough Birding Convention

Idabel  
May 7-10, 2016

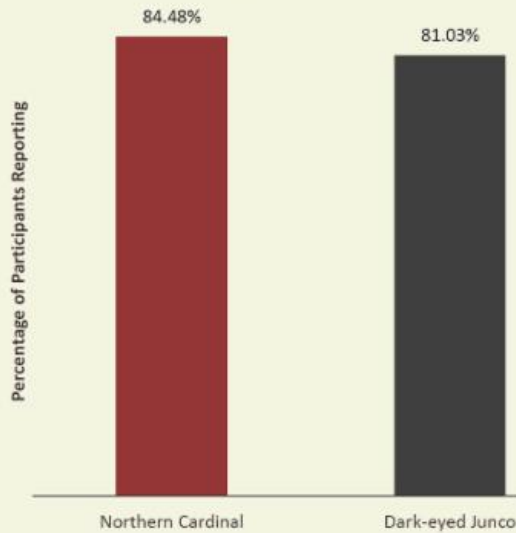
[Registration is now open](#) for the 8th Annual Red Slough Birding Convention. Sign up for bird-watching tours of three conservation areas for your chance to see unique birds and their habitats. Last year 155 species of birds were spotted during the convention!

Get involved in other citizen science efforts at [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com).





A majority of this year's participants reported Northern Cardinals and Dark-eyed Juncos visiting their feeders.



## Feeder Frequency

**1**  
participant  
(Comanche  
County)  
reported  
Rusty  
Blackbirds.

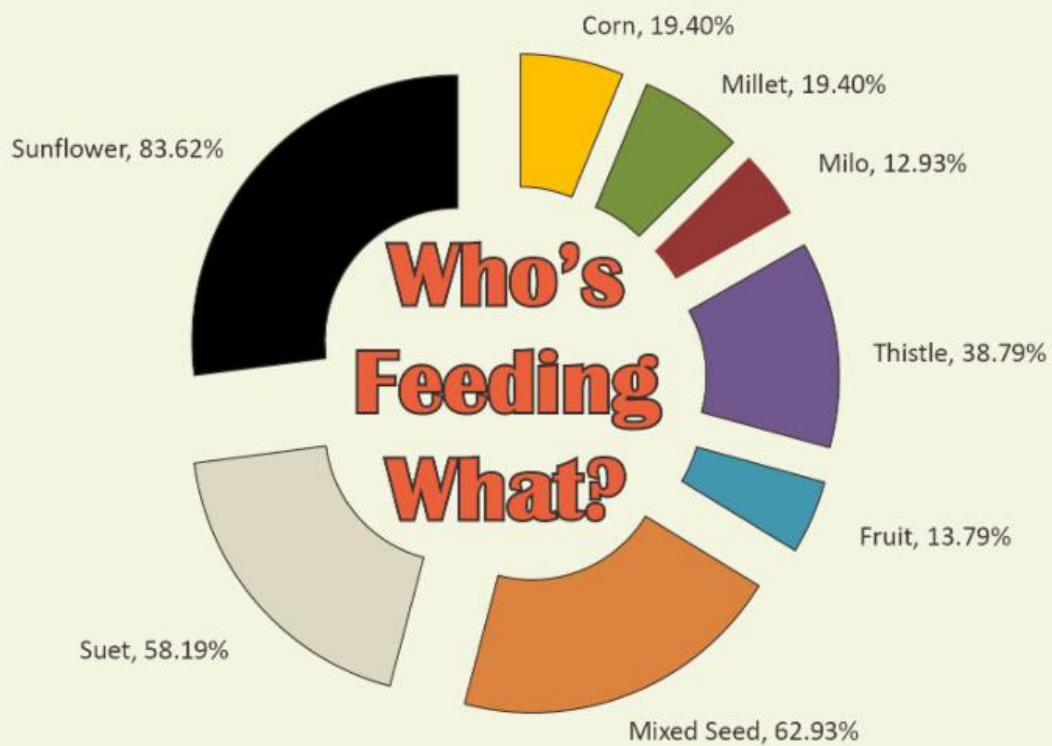
0.43%

Rusty Blackbird

**1**  
participant  
(Canadian  
County)  
reported  
Inca Doves.

0.43%

Inca Dove



## Species Profile: Crawfish Frog



An amphibian of frequently-flooded fields, crawfish frogs are speckled and secretive. Their nocturnal behavior and tendency to dive into water when approached makes them a rare and exciting find.

Crawfish frogs can be identified by the series of dark spots along the head, back and legs. Each spot is ringed in light brown or white. A ridge of skin runs from each eye down the back and to the thigh.

**Diet:** Insects and spiders are the primary source of food for crawfish frogs. In addition to feeding on crickets, beetles and spiders at night, this frog will also readily forage for roly-polies. They may occasionally eat crayfish.

**Reproduction:** In early spring, crawfish frogs migrate up to three-quarters of a mile to fishless ponds to breed and lay eggs. Recent rainfall may be an important driver in this migration. Once at the ponds, males begin their nasal, snore-like calls to attract females.

A recent State Wildlife Grant project in Atoka County found that crawfish frogs in the study area called most frequently between 8 and 9 p.m. when temperatures were between 53 and 62 degrees.

Crawfish frogs have a very brief breeding season (February to April). After mating, they return to their burrows and stop calling.

### Where to find crawfish frogs



As the name implies, crawfish frogs are found in and around crawfish burrows. They prefer burrows in grassy areas, hay meadows and woody areas near streams that pass through grasslands. They are typically not found in forested landscapes or in rocky, hilly areas.

Crawfish frogs are found in the eastern one-third of the state.

Learn more about Oklahoma's frogs, including the crawfish frog in "[A Field Guide to Oklahoma's Amphibians and Reptiles](#)."

## Western Oklahoma Winter Bat Surveys Underway

Hibernating bat populations in five of six gypsum caves scheduled for annual monitoring have been surveyed this winter. To date, 92,325 bats have been counted.

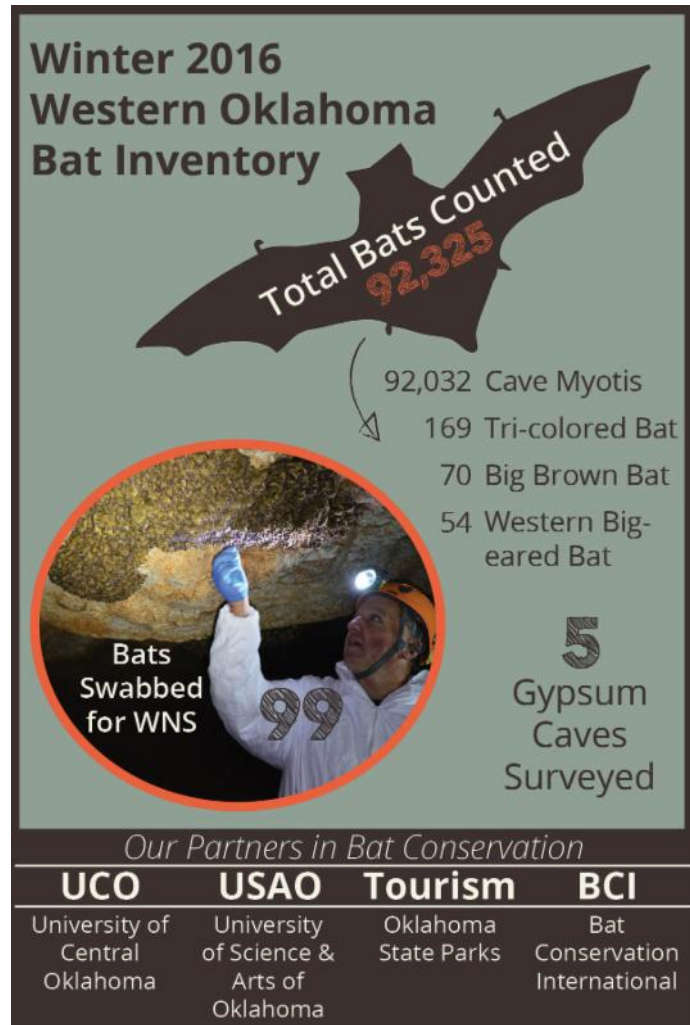
A majority of these bats - 99.7 percent of the total - were cave myotis. This small brown bat can be found hibernating alone, in groups of two or three, or they can form large clusters with thousands of other cave myotis.

Instead of counting the individual bats in the larger clusters, the square footage is estimated and multiplied by the average number of bats found in a single square foot. This year, clusters averaged 150 bats per square foot!

In addition to cave myotis, surveyors found three other species, tri-colored bats, big brown bats and western big-eared bats, hibernating in the caves.

[A similar monitoring effort is underway in eastern Oklahoma's limestone caves.](#)

Learn more about Oklahoma's bat species in the "[Bats of Oklahoma Field Guide](#)."







Dr. Jason Shaw from the [University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma](#) counts large clusters of cave myotis during the annual survey.

## Counting Continues at Cookson WMA

Earlier this month, staff from the [Oklahoma City Zoo](#) joined the Wildlife Diversity team at [Cookson Wildlife Management Area](#) in northeastern Oklahoma to count wintering birds.

The surveyors searched high and low for three days; driving along the WMA roads, stopping to [pish](#) in brush piles and survey along the creeksides. Thanks to their efforts, 11 species of winter birds were added to the WMA species list. The team not only added species like the [ruby-crowned kinglet](#), [swamp sparrow](#) and [American robin](#), they also

documented three bird species of greatest conservation need. Thirty-four [red-headed woodpeckers](#), one [Le Conte's sparrow](#), and one [golden eagle](#) were documented during the trip.



Staff from the Oklahoma City Zoo walked this grassy field while conducting flush counts for wintering sparrows.

In addition to wintering birds, the team also documented 12 species of mammals, seven species of amphibians and three species of fish. Northern spring peepers were heard [calling](#) each night, 20 [Oklahoma salamanders](#) (formerly lumped with gray-bellied salamanders) were documented in free-flowing creeks and five eastern chipmunks were seen scampering across rocky bluffs.

Find more survey results from this State Wildlife Grant project in future issues of this e-newsletter.



**Wildlife Diversity Biologist Matt Fullerton shows staff from the OKC Zoo an Oklahoma Salamander.**

## High Flows Suspend Mussel Surveys

Late December, 2015 surveys for the federally endangered [Ouachita rock pocketbook](#) were suspended due to flooding in southeastern Oklahoma. Biologists may be able to survey for pocketbooks later this month, but flows may still be too high to safely check for the mussels.

The surveys are associated with a [Missouri State University](#) research project that intends to raise newly-



hatched mussels in a laboratory setting in hopes of increasing survival rates. If any female mussels are found, they will be collected and transported to the captive-rearing facility in Springfield, Mo.

The Ouachita Rock Pocketbook often congregates in large "mussel beds" composed of more than 30 other species. These mussels are relatively immobile, spending most of their life on the bottom of creeks and rivers. They filter algae, microscopic animals and bacteria from the surrounding water.

Charles S. Lewallen



**The Ouachita Rock Pocketbook is found only in the Ouachita Mountain streams of Oklahoma and Arkansas and is federally endangered.**

Because the mussels are only pregnant, or gravid, for a short period of time and flows may be too high to safely conduct surveys this month, researchers may have to wait until December, 2016 before attempting the survey again.

More information about this mussel research project can be found in the January/February 2016 issue of "[Outdoor Oklahoma](#)."

## In Other News...

*Check out these Wildlife Diversity news stories:*

- [Does Your Nest Box Have What It Takes To Be Successful?](#)
- [State Nest Box Program Has Staunch Supporter](#)

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The Wild Side e-newsletter is a project of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's 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 Wildlife Department license plates, publication sales and private donors. Visit [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com) for more wildlife diversity information and events. For questions or comments, please email [jena.donnell@odwc.ok.gov](mailto:jena.donnell@odwc.ok.gov).

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