Turtle! Flathead snake! Frogs! Lizard over here! TIMBER RATTLESNAKE!

Each time a species was called out, I quickly ran over to see what was spotted. I was so anxious to find any species that I had never seen before in person. However, I didn't have much luck two weeks ago, especially in comparison to the Wildlife Department wildlife diversity biologists with me. I am a very competitive person, so I wanted to find as many species as I could in our allotted time for the first evening of the reptile and amphibian survey we were conducting on Cross Timbers Wildlife Management Area. Unfortunately, that didn't happen.

I knew there were many species at my fingertips, right under my nose. But why wasn't I seeing anything that they were finding? Obviously they have more experience than I do, but that's not a good enough excuse. I wanted to find some kind of snake, a skink, something!

Timber rattlesnake spotted at Cross Timbers WMA during a reptile and amphibian survey in July. Photo by Darrin Hill

Often, as a wise mentor once noted to me, we tend to only see what we know. So is that it? I don't know every species that could potentially be seen on Cross Timbers, so I don't know what to look for during the survey? In a way, it makes sense because each species has behaviors, sounds, and habitats that make it that much easier to find if you know some simple characteristics.

Maybe it was not my day or I was simply not seeing anything because I did not know it, but either way, I was at least pleased to see what everyone else found - despite my competitive nature.

Sometimes wildlife does not cooperate, but if you never get outside, you definitely will never see a thing. Use these next few months of warm weather wisely. Grab some sunscreen and water and get outside to learn about the wonderful world that often goes unnoticed!

Enjoy,

Rachel

Rachel Bradley
Wildlife Diversity Information Specialist

Public Land Report

Cross Timbers WMA is comprised of 8,135 acres located 15 miles west of Marietta in Love County. The habitat is a mixture of oak and hickory woodlands, prairie grasses and many wildflowers with a scattering of small ponds, so it is beneficial for a variety of wildlife species.

There are only a few roads on the property, but there are many parking areas from which to walk. Walking the area gives you the best perspective as to what species are on the property, because you may come across white-tailed deer, greater roadrunners, many songbirds such as painted buntings, summer tanagers and

white-eyed vireos, cricket frogs, box turtles, ribbonsnakes, raccoons and more during one outing.

Wildlife Diversity Biologists (from left) Buck Ray, Curtis Tackett and Mark Howery examining a juvenile Blanchard's cricket frog on Cross Timbers WMA while conducting a reptile and amphibian inventory survey. Photo by Rachel Bradley.

The area is fairly new to the Wildlife Department (acquired in 2011), so some management programs are just beginning. Biologists use prescribed burning and brush hogging to encourage and maintain native prairie communities and to control exotic and invasive plants. Strip disking is used in some areas to encourage the growth annual wildflowers.

Be sure to check out this new area in the coming year. And remember, you must have a valid hunting or fishing license or conservation passport to enter the area. For more information about the area, or to maintain a hunting or fishing license or conservation passport, visit the License and Facts/Maps pages on wildlifedepartment.com.

Wildlife Department employees administer a prescribed burn at Cross Timbers WMA in July to control weeping love grass. Photo by Darrin Hill.

Stop. Listen. Record.

By Caleb Thyer, wildlife diversity intern

It's 5 a.m. and the alarm is going off,

leaving just enough time to grab a bite to eat and get dressed to meet my fellow intern, Michael, and biologist, Mark Howery, by 5:20. Still dark, we make the quick journey to where our route begins by 5:40 a.m.. We get out of the car at the first light of dawn and begin the first three-minute stop of 50 stops.

Mark Howery and Michael Leitch listening and looking for birds during the 2012 Breeding Bird Surveys on a route at Black Kettle WMA in western Oklahoma. Photo by Caleb Thyer.

We listen for various songbird calls at each stop and ask if Mark heard the same. Or, as we watch, we quickly ask him, "What's that bird over there?" as we point and describe the bird we see or the sound we heard, which Mark usually knows exactly which bird we describe.

Going birding with a seasoned birder is the best way to learn about and identify various birds. My first time out, I only knew what a hand-full of birds looked like and the call of a bobwhite quail and mourning dove. I have only been on two surveys, and I now know the call of several birds such as the summer tanager, indigo bunting, cardinal, prairie warbler, and roadrunner - just to name a few. But now, I can also identify twice as many by sight. I have learned how to identify a brown thrasher, the various hawks and the colorful painted bunting.

Painted Bunting perches at Pushmataha Wildlife Management Area. Photo by Rachel Bradley.

The route is mapped to stop every half-mile so we stop at every section road and at half sections. Because the state is broken into townships and sections, this puts us on the main property lines. We can potentially have four different habitats based on different land management practices. On the Black Kettle WMA survey route in Roger Mills County, one stop could have a wheat field to the northeast, grazed pastureland to the northwest, a wooded area to the southeast, and an un-

grazed pasture with shrub brush to the southwest. However, this depends on the location of the survey route, because a route like the Pushmataha WMA is mostly in forested areas or pine savannas. It's really interesting to see the difference in abundance of birds in just a half miles based on the differences in habitat. There are many birds that have a specific habitat in which the will almost solely be found, and then there are birds, such as the mockingbird, that are found in almost any habitat.

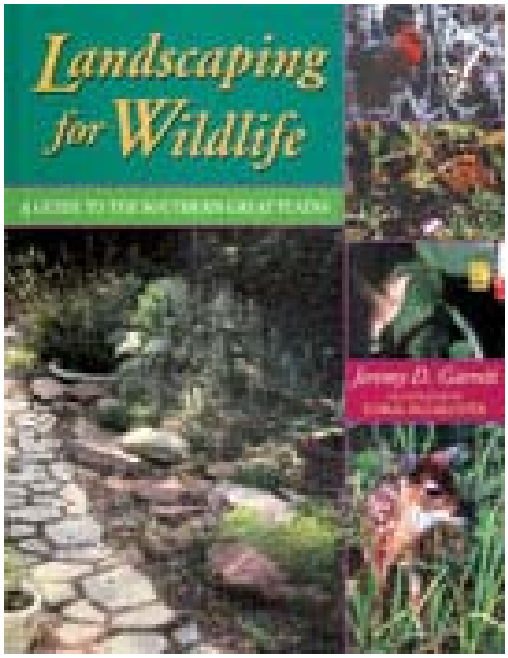
Sunset at Pushmataha Wildlife Management Area. Photo by Rachel Bradley.

Wild Maps
By Rachel Bradley

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is one of my absolute favorite websites. It has an abundance of information on birds. You can learn to identify birds, how to feed birds and better attract them to your yard, and anything else you want or need to know, including fun DIY activities.

Right now, families can learn how to build a yardmap of their very own backyard. This is a citizen science project to help understand bird habitats and go further to improve them. The website has a step-by-step tutorial on creating a map of your yard, which is simple and fun. Try it today at birds.cornell.edu!

Also, purchase the *Landscaping for Wildlife* book to assist your map in guiding you to the most beneficial backyard for wildlife. Visit wildlifedepartment.com to order Landscaping for Wildlifeand receive a one-year subscription to *Outdoor Oklahoma* award-winning magazine for free.



Order your copy today on the Facts and Maps page of wildlifedepartment.com.

Picture Perfect

Bonne Karim, Cleveland County resident, captured these stunning photos of a juvenile Mississippi kite whom fell into her backyard pool.

"The kite is one of the last birds to nest," said Mark Howery, wildlife diversity biologist. "They do not typically leave the nest until the last week of July or first two weeks of August, so this kite probably fell in the pool while trying to look for water after it fledged."

Karim stated that the bird was able to fly away after it dried its wings.

Young kites are identified by their banded tail, which they hold through the first summer.

Adult kites are usually seen in flight with a white body, contrasting dark wings with a whitish secondary patch and a pale, gray head.

Thank you, Bonne for sharing the fabulous photos!

Have photos you would like to share in The WildSide? Send them to info@odwc.state.ok.us with the story of how and where you captured the photo (200 words or less). Please write "WildSide Photos" in the subject line.

Young Mississippi kite. Photo by Bonne Karim.

In Other Words

A killdeer displays the broken-wing act to lead predators away from its nest. Photo by Rachel Bradley.

-Get ahead of schedule and plan your summer activities with the help of the Wildlife Department's Outdoor Calendar.

-Explore the Prairie at Night at Byron Hatchery Watchable Wildlife Area on Saturday, August 18. Learn more about the activities of wildlife at night, particularly after a hot August day. Try to communicate with owls, capture bats in mist nets and sniff spiders. This activity will be limited to 20 people. There is no fee, but reservations are required. Children must be at least 8 years old to participate. Call Melynda Hickman at (405) 424-0099 to reserve your spot today.

-Take time the next few weeks before schools start to enjoy all of the fabulous fishing locations in Oklahoma!

-Looking for wildlife activities in the OKC Metro Area? Visit Martin Park Nature Center's Facebook page for updated events and news. Martin Park Nature Center is located in northwest Oklahoma City.

-Visit the Oxley Nature Center in the Tulsa metro area for many close-to-home adventures such as Botany Walks, Earth Science Walks, Butterfly Walks, Night Walks and a variety of workshops for individuals and families.

The WildSide e-newsletter is a project of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's Wildlife Diversity Program. The Wildlife Diversity Program is dedicated to all species in Oklahoma that are not hunted or fished. It is primarily funded by the sales of Wildlife Department license plates, publication sales and private donors.

Visit wildlifedepartment.com for more wildlife diversity information and events. For questions or comments, please email info@odwc.state.ok.us.

Like us on Facebook Follow us on twitter

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.

Forward this email

SafeUnsubscribe

Trusted Email from Constant Contact FREE

Try it FREE today.

This email was sent to kgillman@odwc.state.ok.us by info@odwc.state.ok.us | Update Profile/Email Address | Instant removal with SafeUnsubscribe™ | Privacy Policy.

Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation | PO BOX 53465 | Oklahoma City | OK | 73152