



Dear Wildlife Enthusiast,

My family is always fascinated by the adventures I get to take for work. In my families eyes, I am playing in nature, and just so happen to write about it too. In my eyes, I am working - following the research biologists conduct so I can tell you all about it (however, it is quite fun if I do say so myself).

I recently told my mother and grandmother that I was headed to western Oklahoma to look for horny toads, they were ecstatic. My ears were flooded with stories of seeing them in the garden at their home in Norman as my mother was a child. Yes, I know what a Texas horned lizard is, but unlike them, I cannot recall seeing any outside when I was little. My siblings, cousins and I were always outside together in the summertime. We would walk to the neighborhood pond to fish, catch bullfrogs and turtles in the neighborhood creeks and ride bikes through the woods, but never do we recall seeing horny toads.

Read the articles below and see why my generation's encounter with horny toads may vary from my mother's generation, and also learn about what one Oklahoma City resident is doing to bring this decline to light.

As always, share your summer wildlife fun with the Wildlife Department on our Facebook and Twitter. Read below to learn how your photos can be featured in the next issue of *The WildSide*.



Enjoy,

Rachel

Rachel Bradley

Wildlife Diversity Information Specialist



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail enjoying a buttonball bush, which can be found in moist to wet areas. Photo by wildlifedepartment.com.

WildScaping: Attracting butterflies

June is a great month to plant native, nectar-bearing plants in your garden to attract butterflies. It is important to include host food plants for caterpillars and nectar plants for adults.

Butterflies undergo four distinct life-cycle stages: egg, larvae (caterpillar), pupa (chrysalis) and adult. Soon after eggs hatch, the emerging larval caterpillars begin voraciously eating specifically selected plants. Once they have grown large enough, they enter the pupa stage where caterpillars' worm-like appearance seems to magically transform from a strange-looking chrysalis into a winged adult.

After stretching and drying their wings, the new adult butterflies are attracted to red, orange, pink and

purple flowers. Arrange the flowers in clusters in sunny areas of your yard. Butterflies also prefer blossoms with large petals that provide a stable feeding platform. The best butterfly gardens combine annual and perennial flowers blooming at various intervals to provide a continuous nectar supply.

Many native plants also serve as host plants for their earlier life stages. A single native plant bed carefully designed and planted with larval host plants and nectar flowers can be a center attraction for both butterflies and butterfly watchers. By providing larval food plants in your garden, you can easily observe the caterpillars and see for yourself the lifecycles of various butterfly species. Butterfly gardens can be as simple as a few nectar plants. Just remember, creating butterfly habitat requires more than one season of planting, so be prepared to add additional plant species as time goes on.

Nectar Plants

Butterfly bush (*Buddleia davidii*)
 Glossy abelia (*Abelia grandiflora*)
 Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)*
 False indigo (*Amorpha fruticosa*)*
 Lanatana (*Lantana* spp.)
 Engelmann daisy (*Engelmannia pinnatifida*)*
 Indian blanket (*Gaillardia pulchella*)*
 Joe-pye weed (*Eupatorium fistulosum*)
 Blazing star (*Liatris phycnostachyan*)*
 Mexican sunflower (*Tithonia rotundifolia*)
 Pentas (*Pentas lanceolata*)
 Purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)*
 Showy sedum (*Sedum spectabile*)
 Snowy bergamot (*Monarda didyma*)
 Summer phlox (*Phlox paniculata*)*
 Tuber verbena (*Verbena rigida*)



Indian blanket is a native, nectar plant in Oklahoma. Photo by Steve Webber.

Larval Host Plants

Trumpet Honeysuckle*
 Milkweed*
 Indian Paintbrush
 Sweet Clover
 Lantana/Thistle
 Parsley/Dill/Carrot
 Sweet Alyssum
 Lamb's Quarters*
 Violet*
 American Elm*
 Hackberry/Sugarberry*
 American Plum*
 Passionflower*
 Rose of Sharon
 Hollies

Apple

*Denotes native Oklahoma species

[Click here to publish a butterfly identification book.](#)



Butterfly milkweed at Pushmataha Wildlife Management Area. Milkweed comes in a wide variety of species. Photo by Mark Howery.

Sites to See this Summer

Oklahoma Trails Exhibit at the Oklahoma City Zoo

By Will Gibson, information and education intern

The Oklahoma City Zoo has been a local attraction for decades, bringing joy to many citizens. Now, Oklahomans can see part of their heritage at the recently renovated Oklahoma Trails exhibit featuring nearly eight acres of over 800 animals, 700 plants and 11 ecoregions native to Oklahoma.

The trail features animals that were once in Oklahoma and no longer exist, such as grizzly bears in the cross timbers region. It also features rare animals, like the ringtail. Also see a variety of deer, quail and other common native animals.

If you have not frequented the Zoo lately, take a hike and experience the Oklahoma Trails this summer to explore our great state's wide array of ecosystems and wildlife.

Visit the OKC Zoo's website to learn more about the exhibit, summer camps and more.



Flying squirrels are not rare in Oklahoma, but are not commonly seen. Photo by Jennifer Bengé.



Sandhill crane in the Oklahoma Trails exhibit at the OKC Zoo. Photo by Jennifer Bengé.

Oklahoma Aquarium

See what you're swimming with in Oklahoma waters this summer at the Oklahoma Aquarium's Fishes of Oklahoma exhibit. From prehistoric paddlefish to 7-foot long gars and a 120-year-old alligator snapping turtle, the Oklahoma Aquarium has it all.

Join the Wildlife Department at the Jenks casting pond located at the Aquarium for free fishing clinics. You will learn casting safety and technique, fish identification, and how to tie fish knots followed by a grand fishing experience.

Click learn more for Aquarium hours and fishing clinic information.



Families enjoying the Oklahoma exhibit at the Oklahoma Aquarium. Photo by Daniel Griffith.

Where Did the Horny Toad Go?

Many adults in the southwestern United States share the fond memory of finding Texas horned lizards, or horny toads, as they explored the great outdoors when they were young. With each passing decade, that memory tends to fade as the Oklahoma native species hit a decline in the '60s.

"The decline occurs across much of the horny toad's range," said Mark Howery, wildlife diversity biologist. "There are many possible causes for the decline: insecticide use, imported fire ants, habitat alteration, highway mortality and commercial exploitation."

The horny toad is a species of special concern in Oklahoma and is protected by state law, so legally it may not be removed from the wild.

"This lizard is unlike any other lizard in Oklahoma," said Howery. "It looks sort of prehistoric with a flat body, fringed scales on its sides and horns on its head. The background color varies with different soil colors, which are typically tan, reddish, yellow, gray or brown. It has a light colored stripe down the midline of its back, which is said to resemble a stick to help camouflage from predators."



Texas Horned Lizard basking in the sun. Photo by Stefanie Leland.

A Texas horned lizard's behavior is also somewhat different compared to other lizards. The horny toad relies on cryptic coloration, or camouflage, to avoid predators, whereas other lizards will try to outrun their predator. It displays a remarkable behavior when threatened by dog-like predators - it squirts blood from its eyes.

"This unique lizard can be found in the western three-fourths of Oklahoma in dry, sandy areas with sparse or moderately-vegetated grassland," said Howery. "It prefers to eat harvester ants, but will eat small beetles or other small insects or spiders as well."

A local Oklahoman, Stefanie Leland, director, producer and writer for Jar of Grasshoppers Productions, took it upon herself to create an

educational documentary unraveling the history and decline of this prehistoric-looking creature, and how you can help in its conservation efforts.

"I wanted to make a film about horned lizards in order to bring attention to their decline," said Leland. "I grew up playing outdoors, seeing these creatures and then I started noticing I had not seen one in about 20 years. I hope this film motivates people to explore wildlife and become more involved in species conservation."



Juvenile Texas horned lizard. Photo by Stefanie Leland.

Check out her film, "Where Did the Horny Toad Go?," on Saturday, June 9 at 1:30 p.m. at Harkins Theatre as part of the 2012 deadCENTER Film Festival. In the meantime, stay up-to-date with the film's latest news on their Facebook and website.

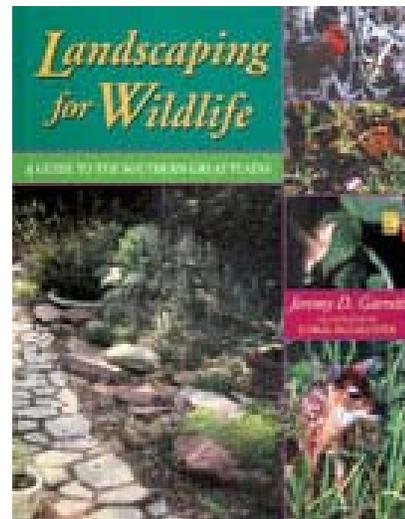


Constituents' Corner

Wildscaping

Congratulations to Kenneth A. Laubenstein of Muskogee County for his new wildscape certification #459.

Order the *Landscaping for Wildlife* book and get your landscape wildlife friendly this summer. For technical support and certification, contact Melynda Hickman, wildlife diversity biologist, at mhickman@zoo.odwc.state.ok.us or (405) 990-4977.



Picture Perfect



Yellow headed blackbirds at Hackberry Flat Wildlife Management Area. Photo by Randy George.

Randy George, Cleveland County, captured this stunning photo of two yellow headed blackbirds a few weeks ago when he and his wife visited Hackberry Flat Wildlife Management Area.

"We went to Hackberry Flat on a whim for something to do on a beautiful spring day," said George. "I like to go exploring and to do 'organized' events, like the annual open house at Hackberry Flat, to see something out of the ordinary. I love driving the backroads, too. I always keep some guide books handy (birds, trees, butterflies, minerals, roadside history, etc.) to make the most of wandering off the beaten path."

Mr. and Mrs. George are novice birders that ended up in the right spot at the right time.

Below is another photo from his collection. As a meteorologist for 27 years, he also enjoys weather photos. This photo is a beautiful Oklahoma sunset he captured in Bixby displaying clouds in a Kelvin Helmholtz Billows formation.

Thanks for sharing your photos with us!

Have photos you would like to share with *The WildSide* subscribers? Send them to info@odwc.state.ok.us with the story of how you captured the photo. Please write "WildSide Photos" in

the subject line.



Oklahoma sunset displaying Kelvin Helmholtz Billows cloud formation. Photo by Randy George.

In Other Words

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

-Pack a sack lunch and your sunscreen and help biologists count and inventory butterflies on the [Byron Hatchery Watchable Wildlife Area](#) Saturday, June 16 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. This event is free to the public; however, participants must RSVP to Melynda Hickman at mhickman@zoo.odwc.state.ok.us to participate.

-Enjoy two [free fishing days](#) June 2 and 3 across the state. No fishing licenses or permits are required; however, some city permits may still apply. See [where to fish](#) in your area!

-Sign-up for the [Oklahoma Bat Watch](#) this summer and see a million bats fly. Registration begins May

29 and tours begin July 6.

-Calling all teachers grades K-8! OSU is hosting a [STEM Teacher's Institute](#) June 15. Teachers will learn fresh ideas to implement science, technology, engineering and mathematics into their classrooms.

-Participate in a [Great American Clean Up](#) around Oklahoma this spring to help improve habitat and outdoor areas near you.



Millions of Mexican free-tailed bats flee their cave during the Selman Bat Watch.

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.



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