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Lynda Loucks



The WildSide - Nov 2012

Dear Wildlife Enthusiasts,

You know that burning sensation you get in your ears when someone is talking about you? Well, I think a single, subadult male whooping crane had that feeling a few weeks ago, so he paid us an early visit to Lake Overholser.

A few weeks ago, I sat down with Mark Howery, wildlife diversity biologist for the Department to discuss this year's whooping crane migration, which wouldn't occur for weeks later. Ironically, I left his office to head back to Headquarters and received a call from Mark stating he had an email of a whooping crane sighting at Lake Overholser. I quickly turned around the truck and headed to meet Mark to see if we could confirm the sighting.

We saw many American white pelicans as we scanned the dam for the tallest bird out there. After a few scans, I hear Mark exclaim, "well my goodness it is a whooping crane - come look Rachel."

And there it was, the tallest bird

in North America standing peacefully on a mud flat at Lake Overholser. This was a first. My first time seeing an endangered bird, and the first time one has been confirmed on the urban, Lake Overholser. What a treat.

Connect with us!



Enjoy,

Rachel

Rachel Bradley
Wildlife Diversity Information
Specialist



Whooping crane in Canadian County. Photo by Lanie Hale.

Rare Bird Pays an Early Visit

In mid-October, a reported sighting of a young adult, male whooping crane was confirmed by the Wildlife Department at Lake Overholser in Oklahoma City. This rare, federally endangered bird is one of about 300 whooping cranes left in the wild, which pass through the state on their way to winter on the south-central Texas coast. Typically, they do not pass through until about mid-November. This single bird spotted at Lake Overholser was the first documented on that lake,

and was an earlier sighting than normal. It may be a sign that the larger flock may arrive earlier as well, so the Wildlife Department is asking you to report your sightings this season.

"Sighting reports from the public are very beneficial for the Wildlife Department, and we greatly appreciate them," said Mark Howery, wildlife diversity biologist for the Department. "They help us monitor the time of migration and those areas of the state that may be more or less important to the migrating flock."

Whooping cranes typically migrate in groups of one to six birds during the daytime. Howery advises Oklahomans to keep watch for the cranes around shallow wetlands, marshes, river bottoms and partially flooded pastures and grain fields in the western half of the state.

"They can be identified by their large size, as they stand at nearly 5-foot tall, bold white plumage, black tips on their feathers, red and black markings on their heads, and their long legs extending beyond their tail feathers while in flight and their long, stretched neck during flight," said Howery.

Despite their distinct appearance, they are often confused with the white pelican (short legs with a large band of black feathers along the trailing edge of each wing - not just the tip), snow goose (short legs not visible beyond tail feathers, usually flies in large flocks of 30 or more birds), and great egret (no black feathers on its wings, holds its neck in an S-shape when in flight). Also, during low light or backlit conditions, whooping cranes and sandhill cranes will both appear dark and can look similar.

The Department received just over a dozen reports last year from Woodward, Alfalfa, Blaine, Caddo, Canadian, Stephens, Jefferson and Tillman counties. Most sightings were seen near reservoirs and rivers.



Adult and juvenile (right) whooping crane. Photo by Steve Nesbitt, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

To report a whooping crane sighting in Oklahoma, contact Howery by email mhowery@zoo.odwc.state.ok.us or by phone 405-424-2728. The Department requests information such as the date, time, approximate location, number of birds and habitat they were using at the time of the sighting.



Whooping cranes land in western Canadian County as they migrate through Oklahoma. Photo by Lanie Hale.



Whooping cranes enjoying a stop in Canadian County. Photo by Lanie Hale.

Help Please!

I've had so much fun sharing my love of the outdoors with you for over a year now. But now, I could really use your feedback!

I believe The WildSide would be even better if I knew more about your interests and preferences. For example, what type of articles do you like to read? Dislike? How do you enjoy spending time engaged with Oklahoma's wildlife? Are you a seasoned enthusiast or newly introduced to exploring nature? How can I make this newsletter more enjoyable for you?

I would greatly appreciate it if you will give me a few minutes of your time, by completing the survey below to help me improve your WildSide experience. As an added bonus, after completing the survey you may choose to enter your name in a drawing for a free Oklahoma field guide (\$25 value).

To take the survey, simply click the following link or copy and paste it into your browser or simply click the link: <https://s.zoomerang.com/s/WildSide>

I truly appreciate your help and loyalty.

Gourmet Game Holiday Recipes

The fall is full of holiday cheer with family and friends. It's also a great time to show off that fall turkey that was harvested by your family. No matter the holiday you celebrate, I bet at least one gathering you'll need a turkey dish! Enjoy these recipes from the [Wild Ohio Cookbook](#) published by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

Stuffed Midwestern Wild Turkey

This is an easy-to-prepare recipe that will look beautiful on your special table this fall, or any other time of the year. Enjoy!

- 14 slices bacon, divided
- 1 cup chopped onion
- ¼ cup chopped celery
- ½ cup water
- 1- 8-ounce package cornmeal stuffing mix
- 1 chicken bouillon cube
- ½ cup hot water

1 cup dry red wine, divided
1- 10-to-12-pound wild turkey

Fry 8 slices bacon until crisp. Drain bacon, crumble and set aside. Sauté the chopped onion and celery in bacon drippings. When the vegetables are tender, add ½ cup water, and simmer for 5 minutes. Stir in stuffing mix and crumbled bacon. Dissolve bouillon cube in ½ cup hot water. Add ½ cup red wine to bouillon. Add the bouillon-wine mixture to the stuffing mixture, and stuff the turkey. Transfer the turkey to a roasting pan. Lay 4 slices of bacon across the breast, and wrap a slice of bacon around each leg. Cover pan with foil; then place lid on pan. Bake in a 300°F oven for 4½ hours. Remove cover and foil. Pour remaining wine over the turkey. Baste every 10 minutes while cooking an additional 40 minutes. Yield: 12 to 15 servings

Leftover Turkey and Veggie Flatbread Pizza

By Wild Ohio (Ohio Department of Natural Resources)

2 Tbsp olive oil
½ cup leftover turkey
½ cup parmesan cheese
½ cup mozzarella cheese
¼ cup of onions, chopped
¼ cup green pepper, chopped
¼ cup broccoli, chopped
¼ cup chopped mushrooms
1 flatbread pizza crust

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Spread olive oil on the flatbread and bake for 5 minutes. Take out of the oven and turn the oven up to 400°F. Cover with turkey, mushrooms, onions, pepper, broccoli and cheeses. Bake for 10 to 15 minutes and the cheese is melted.



Photo by wildlifedepartment.com.

First Cedar Waxwing Sighting

By Mark Howery, wildlife diversity biologist

I have many favorite birds, but the cedar waxwing is one that has stood out since my earliest days. My interest in wildlife began at the age of about six or seven. I was fortunate to be born into a family with an

appreciation of the outdoors. We lived in town, but had a family farm just a few miles away and everyone in my extended family was engaged in some aspect of the natural world - fishing, farming, hunting and camping. I've had two bird books (I still have them) for as long as I can remember and in those books there are certain birds that always caught my attention. The cedar waxwing is one of them, but the list also includes the purple finch, greater roadrunner, prothonotary warbler and painted bunting.

By the time I saw my first cedar waxwings, around the age of 11, I was already well familiar with them. Cedar Waxwings are very distinctive songbirds because each bird has a soft crest on the top of its head and a band of yellow on the end of its tail. And, of course, many - but not all - of them have the red drops of wax at the tips of some wing feathers from which they get their name "waxwing."

My first encounter with Cedar Waxwings came on a mid-winter, Saturday afternoon in Norman. I had ridden to the store with my mother and on the way home she drove down a quiet side street to avoid road construction. We passed an empty lot with three cedar trees and I recognized a busy flock of well over 100 Cedar Waxwings flying in and around the trees eating blue berries. We were able to stop on the road and watch the waxwings from just 15 feet away. We could clearly hear their high-pitched calls. They were so busy eating the berries that they didn't seem to pay any attention to our car. We were overwhelmed by their



Cedar waxwing. Photo by Bill Adams.

activity, their apparent tameness and the sheer number of birds because neither of us had ever knowingly seen a waxwing flock before. In the 35 winters that have passed since then, I've seen literally tens of thousands of cedar waxwings, but I've always felt fortunate that my first encounter with them was so unexpected and close.

In Other Words

-Plan your outdoor holiday activities with the Wildlife Department's [Outdoor Calendar](#).

-Free admission to the [Oklahoma City Zoo](#) November 21 in celebration of Thanksgiving. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

-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 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 tri-colored bat is one of many species that hibernates in Oklahoma. Photo by Lynda Loucks.

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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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