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Well, it's a bittersweet time now that the 2012 Wildlife Expo has come and gone. I want to say thank you on behalf of the entire Wildlife Department to all of the generous sponsors, wonderful volunteers and lastly, the amazing attendees. We could not do this event if it weren't for all of you, and for that, we are grateful.

The weather has cooled, so there's no excuse to stay indoors! The holiday seasons are soon to be in full swing, which is a great time to take the family on a staycation. From driving the Great Plains Trail to walking beautiful hiking trails in state parks and wildlife refuges, or even taking a stroll through a city park while taking in the charcoaled aroma of fried wild turkey and venison, this is a heartfelt time of year to share with loved ones.

Don't know where to go? Visit travelok.com for many suggestions on low-cost, convenient trips around the state and find a map of the Great Plains Trail on wildlifedepartment.com.

Send us your family's outdoor holiday photos to be featured in this newsletter, "Outdoor Oklahoma" magazine and television show, or on our social media sites!

Connect with us!



Enjoy,

Rachel

Rachel Bradley
Wildlife Diversity Information Specialist



Freshwater Turtle Time

By Michael Bergin, information and education specialist

Dr. Tim Patton, associate professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at Southeastern Oklahoma State University, recently spoke to the Wildlife Conservation Commission on the status of freshwater turtles in eastern Oklahoma. Freshwater turtles are in decline worldwide, yet there is still a high demand for turtle meat in commercial markets.

"This has actually been identified as perhaps one of if not the most imperiled groups of vertebrates right now," Patton said.

Fifty-five percent of the turtle species worldwide are currently considered threatened. Two major reasons for the declines include habitat loss and harvesting for meat and the pet trade.

Turtle populations are more abundant and diverse in the United States and Oklahoma than in other regions. However, Patton notes that areas with high demand for turtle meat look to the U.S. for that food supply. Patton said, 32 million turtles were exported from the U.S. to Asia from 2002 through 2005.

"The species diversity of turtles in Oklahoma plays many roles in our state's aquatic ecosystems, some of which we may not even be aware," Curtis Tackett, aquatic nuisance species biologist for the Wildlife Department.



Alligator snapping turtle. Photo by Dan Moore.

In May 2008, the commission implemented a temporary ban on commercial turtle harvesting in public waters of Oklahoma and partnered with SEOSU and OSU to conduct population studies. The research was conducted in the eastern third of Oklahoma and, in order to establish comparable data, was modeled after research done in the late 1990s.

"As the state agency responsible for the conservation of fish and wildlife populations in Oklahoma, it is our duty to ensure that these turtle populations are sustainable for future generations," Tackett said.

Patton said it is impossible to accurately estimate the number of turtles in Oklahoma, so instead a measurement called "catch per unit effort" is used as an indication of abundance. Similar efforts used by biologists in Oklahoma to understand trends in abundance of wildlife populations without providing exact counts include deer spotlight surveys, roadside quail calling counts and electrofishing surveys.

The research showed declines in catch per unit effort at 80 percent of the locations used in the 1990s, and there was a 64 percent reduction overall in the catch. Additionally, while aquatic turtle license sales

increased in Oklahoma from 2001 to 2007 just prior to the ban, total reported harvest still declined by about 55,000 turtles per year.

"Harvest has gone down despite an increase in license sales," Patton said.

The current ban allows turtle trapping in private waters. It will expire in 2013. Patton and his research team have recommended permanently prohibiting commercial turtle harvest in most public waters while still allowing private harvest and removal of turtles from private farm ponds and property. Citizens should expect to hear a presentation on the matter at public hearings in January. Before the ban, the Wildlife Department sold fewer than 100 aquatic turtle licenses per year.

"We have a great working relationship with Dr. Patton that goes back years, and we appreciate their important research efforts on this topic," said Barry Bolton, chief of fisheries for the Wildlife Department.



Alligator snapping turtle. Photo by Dan Moore.

Winter Wildflowers

Driving along Oklahoma roadsides, you're sure to see bountiful colors of deep red, bright yellow, soft purple, pure white and other beautiful wildflower spectacles in the spring and fall. The Great Plains state of Oklahoma is one of only four states with more than 10 ecoregions, ranging from tallgrass prairies, shortgrass prairies, crosstimbers, Rocky Mountain foothills and more, experiencing variable temperatures, elevations and rainfall. This diversity ensures that Oklahoma is host to hundreds of species of wildflowers, yet no guidebook to these botanical riches has been available in recent years. Patricia Folley's beautifully photographed and carefully compiled "Guide to Oklahoma Wildflowers" fills this gap.

Folley photographed and described the 200 wildflower species that are most commonly seen along roadsides and in parks throughout the state. The photos on each species show the entire plant as it occurs in the wild, outside of cultivation, along with a close-up of its flower. Each plant is keyed to a particular geographical location and a particular family, and an index to colors is a further aid to identification. A text box is also included with each species profile stating time of bloom, size and color of blooms, preferred habitat, as well as common and scientific names for all species. Native plants are also noted in the quite brief, yet thorough, descriptions.

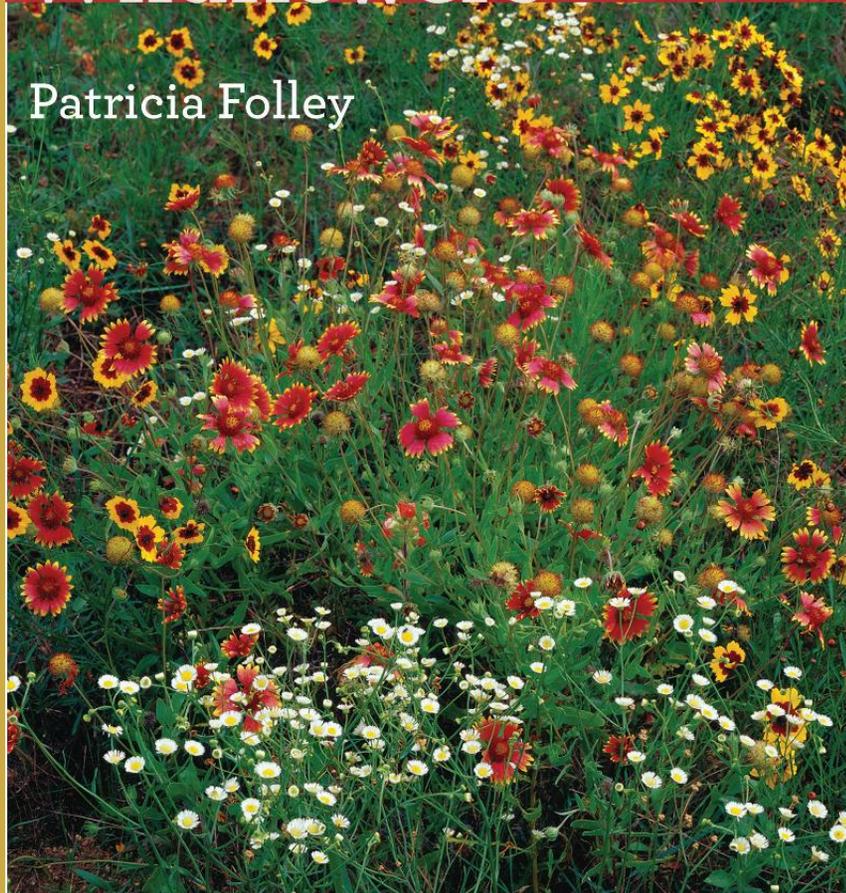
Oklahoma native Folley has been identifying wildflowers in the field for more than 30 years. Formerly a logistics management instructor at Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City, she is currently a herbarium assistant at the University of Oklahoma's Bebb Herbarium, a member of the "Flora of Oklahoma" editorial board, and co-author of this evolving online project. Folley is a two-time former president of the Oklahoma Native Plant Society, she writes a monthly nature column for the Norman Transcript and is a technical editor for the "Oklahoma Native Plant Record." She has won the Oklahoma Native Plant Society's Anne Long and Service awards, as well as the Conservation Award from the Oklahoma Chapter of The Nature Conservancy.

The Guide to Oklahoma Wildflowers is available for sale at bookstores, directly from the University of Iowa Press, by calling 800-621-2736 or at www.uiowapress.org.

THE GUIDE TO

Oklahoma Wildflowers

Patricia Folley



This publication may be purchased at bookstores, from the University of Iowa Press, by calling

DIY Pumpkin Bird Feeder

If you're like me, you always wonder what to do with your old pumpkin - if it makes it through the seasons without getting smashed. Well, thanks to Pinterest, I've found a great way to bring the outdoors inside as the weather cools off and you need to dispose of a pumpkin. Make a pumpkin bird feeder from Martha Stewart's website.

Materials needed:

- 3 to 5 lb. pumpkin
- 3 twigs
- Black oil sunflower seed
- Twine

Directions:

Cut a pumpkin in half. Scoop out insides, leaving a ½-inch wall. Poke holes one inch from opening and insert twigs for birds to perch. To hang, knot two lengths of twine together in the center and tack knot to feeder bottom. Fill with birdseed and hang near a window for easy viewing.



Make a bird feeder with your leftover pumpkins this month. Photo by marthastewart.com.

American White Pelican Migration

Weighing about 16 pounds with an impressive 9-foot wingspan as an adult, American white pelicans are among the largest birds in the world. There are about 10 species of pelicans distributed worldwide, which mostly inhabit warmer climates. However, this fall, look out for one of three pelican species inhabiting North America, the American white pelican, to soar across Oklahoma.

One must look closely at the birds as they ride the thermals on clear days to realize they are pelicans. Pelicans are often mistaken for snow geese, swans and whooping cranes by the novice birder. Their distinct black primary and outer secondary feathers are sure indicators as to what they are. At a closer view, you will notice they have a tucked neck and an orange bill, legs and feet. The final distinguishing characteristic is their stocky build, giving them an altogether different profile than other birds.

While flying, pelicans seem to soar in unison, each flapping their wings at the same time. Watching white pelicans in flight is truly an amazing sight. They fish in groups by floating atop the water and use their feet and wings to

corral fish. Instead of diving, they dip their heads below the surface to troll for rough fish such as gizzard shad, then scoop up the fish in their elastic pouch. Most feeding takes place during the early morning and early evening hours. An average pelican consumes 3-pounds of fish per day.

Each year, avid and novice bird watchers flock to the Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge to see the birds. Approximately 50,000 to 70,000 white pelicans use the Salt Plains as a rest stop during their fall migration. Everyone should see it at least once!



American white pelican wading in the water. Photo by Bill Horn.

Picture Perfect

Texas resident Mike Langille was visiting Love and Jefferson counties a few weekends ago and spotted a large group of Swainson's hawks migrating south for the winter. What a sight!

Thanks for sharing, Mike!

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.



A flock of Swainson's hawks migrating south near Love County. Photo by Calamity Creek Designs (Mike Langille).

In Other Words

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

-Go green this Halloween and participate in the [OKC Zoo's Halloween Costume Swap](#) on Oct. 13 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

before [Haunting the Zoo's](#)
Oklahoma Trail Oct. 26 through 31
from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

-[Leopold Education Project](#)
[Workshop](#) at Discovery Cove
Nature Center at Lake Thunderbird
State Park. Registration begins
Oct. 27 at 8:45 a.m. and the
workshop starts at 9 a.m. and runs
until 5 p.m. Bring your own lunch,
and drinks and dessert will be
provided. Workshop cost is \$40.
Preregistration is required and can
be completed via email to
lsw045@aol.com, subject line
"LEP workshop." For more
information contact Luann Sewell
Water at (405) 642-9232.



Juvenile alligator snapping turtle at Tishomingo National Fish Hatchery. Photo by Rachel Bradley.

-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 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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