

Wildlife Spotlight

Tim Goss and the Collared Lizard Show By Rachel Bradley, wildlife diversity information specialist

Tim Goss of Anadarko has turned the mountain boomer, or collared lizard, into a hobby for himself and his family and provides an educational show for local children.

At five years old, Goss began catching mountain boomers in Weatherford creeks.

“In the summers I would go catch lizards, snakes, and turtles and make a little zoo for neighborhood kids,” Goss said. “They always seemed to be more enthused by the lizards because they have a social structure to them, especially the mountain boomers.”

When Goss was 16, Governor Bartlett dubbed the mountain boomer the state reptile in 1969.

Goss has been building terrariums for the mountain boomers he catches so Oklahomans can view them until their release for winter hibernation.

Despite the high summer temperatures, a nearby Anadarko childcare center has taken multiple walks to visit Goss’s exhibit. The exhibit has previously been viewed in the Hinton Travel Plaza.

According to Goss, this hobby allows him the honor of educating kids and encouraging them to appreciate Oklahoma’s wildlife.

Mountain boomers can be found in most areas of Oklahoma, excluding the coastal plain region in southeastern Oklahoma.

A hunting license is required to collect or keep mountain boomers in Oklahoma. Some reptiles and amphibians cannot be possessed. See hunting regulations for details.

To share your Oklahoma wildlife story please send an email to info@odwc.state.ok.us (subject: Wildlife Spotlight) including your name, phone number, email address, photo and a brief description of your experience.



Photos from left: Goss with day care kids at feeding time, female and male collared lizard, collared lizard eating grasshopper for lunch. Photos by Rachel Bradley.

Biology Report

Leopards in Oklahoma? By Rachel Bradley, wildlife diversity information specialist

Did you know there are leopards in Oklahoma? That's right, Oklahoma has leopards. This particular species is only found in the southeast corner of Oklahoma near Broken Bow and in southwestern Arkansas. These leopards do not inhabit the wooded hills one would expect. Oklahoma's leopard species is endemic to the Little River system, a tributary of the Red River.

The leopard darter, listed as a federally threatened fish in 1978, can be identified by the round black spots that line the midside and upper side of its body. Thus having the appearance similar to a leopard's coat.

"This is a rare species. Annual surveys began in 1992 and by 1998 permanent surveys began in which we annually monitor a few of the same exact sites yearly," said Richard Standage, forest fisheries and aquatic threatened and endangered biologist for Ouachita National Forest.

Leopard darter surveys are typically more labor intensive than most other fish surveys. These counts are based on a catch (or sighting) per unit (minute) of effort, which allows for comparison between sites and years.

"Surveys show the population has been the third lowest since 1998, until last year, showing the third highest," Standage said.

To conduct leopard darter surveys, biologists snorkel for the small (about two inches in length) fish.



Leopard Darter .

"This method is better for the fishes because it is less stressful than using a seine and pulling them out of the water," said Buck Ray, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation environmental biologist. "It's exciting because we get to see their behaviors in their natural habitat. This darter tends to swim more gracefully between rocks rather than dart like others in the darter family."

"These are curious fish," said Standage. "They find you from the side of rocks, look at you for a moment, and then swim away."

Together, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the United States Department of Agriculture's Forest Service conduct leopard darter research to protect the ideal habitat for the threatened species. Their efforts include reducing sedimentation from logging companies, creating box culverts to maintain natural water flow for fish to swim upstream, and numerous other means which maintain the rare population.



Standage snorkeling for leopard darters. Photos by Rachel Bradley.

Watchable Wildlife

Take a Hike: Explore Oklahoma's Hiking Trails

By Rachel Bradley, wildlife diversity information specialist

"After the brutal summer, all I can think about are fleece jackets, campfires, college football and perfect hiking weather," proclaimed Pam Cherek, coordinator of Backwoods Hiking Club.

Hiking is an activity fit for family and friends of all ages, even pets! Get active this fall and experience the Sooner State's diverse wildlife species and terrain at some of Oklahoma's beautiful hiking trails.

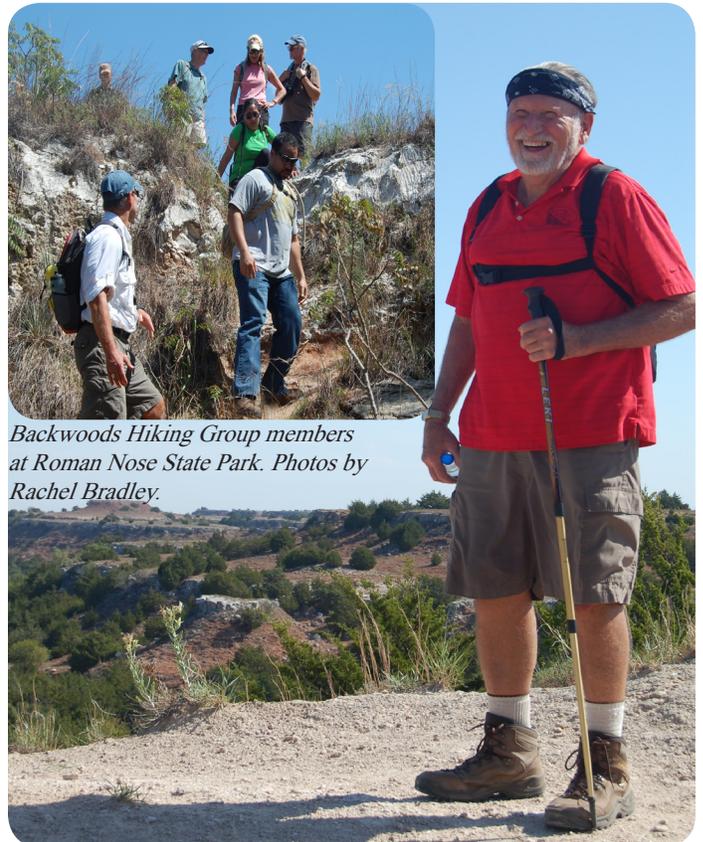
"It's important to escape your daily routine and get connected with nature," said Cherek. "Everyone can hike, and just like anything else, you get better the more you practice."



A few of Backwoods Hiking Club's most frequented trails are Greenleaf State Park, Chickasaw National Recreation Area, and Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge due to their proximity to Backwoods' Norman outdoor store location. However, there are diverse trails in all regions of Oklahoma, including urban parks.

To join the Backwoods Hiking Group email Cherek at slsmgrnor@backwoods.com.

See the next page for tips on what to take, hiking safety, and more information on the three parks listed above and the wildlife species to view.



Backwoods Hiking Group members at Roman Nose State Park. Photos by Rachel Bradley.

Watchable Wildlife

What to Bring!

- **Hiking shoes** – Better stability and sole protection from stone bruising.
- **Socks** – Steer clear of cotton. Cotton takes longer to dry when wet. Wear wool or synthetic fibers.
- **Water** – LOTS OF WATER. Take three liters or more!
- **Clothing** – Adapt with the weather since you can hike year-round in Oklahoma. Long garments can help deter insect bites.
- **Lightweight backpack** – For day trips take a small backpack. Fill it with water, snack bars/salty foods (ex: pretzels or nuts), bug spray, sunscreen, compass/GPS, pocketknife, flashlight, first-aid kit, and a fully-charged cell phone.

Safety Tips!

- **Trailhead** – Make sure you find the true beginning of the trail.
- **Map** – Always carry a site map of the trail you are hiking. Know how to get back from where you are going.
- **Groups** – Hike in groups. If you do hike solo, notify someone where you are going and carry a cell phone.
- **Park openings/closings** – Notify park rangers of your trip and check for trail openings and closings.
- **Be flexible!** – Have a plan B for weather, trail closures, maintenance, and fire danger.
- **Return home** – Check for chiggers and ticks! Plan your next trip!

Trail Highlights and Wildlife Viewings

Greenleaf State Park

- Cherokee County
- Much of the 10 mile loop lies within Cherokee Wildlife Area.
- Wildlife Viewing - Deer, wild turkey, Canada Geese.

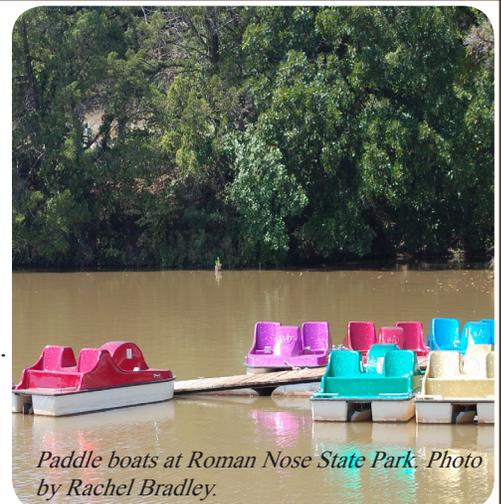
Chickasaw National Recreation Area

- Murray County
- Rock Creek Multi-use Trails – Some trails (4 small trails) are inside the park and some lie outside the park grounds (8 miles out and back).
- Park Rangers are very interactive and friendly.
- Wildlife Viewing - horseback riders, diverse birds, deer, and turkey.

Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

- Comanche County
- 3 Hiking Trails – Charons Garden (5 miles out and back), Elk Mountain (2 miles out and back), Dog Run, Hollow Trail System (8 miles out and back).
- Wildlife Viewing – Prairie dogs, elk, deer, American bison, collared lizard, longhorn cattle.

** All information was gathered from Pam Cherek and *Oklahoma Hiking Trails* by Kent F. Frates and Larry Floyd.



Paddle boats at Roman Nose State Park. Photo by Rachel Bradley.

About Us

Our Mission

The Wildlife Diversity Program - a program of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation - monitors, manages and promotes rare, declining and endangered wildlife, as well as common wildlife not fished or hunted. Oklahomans help fund the Wildlife Diversity Program through the purchase of wildlife conservation specialty license plates, product purchases, individual donations or annual state income tax check-off.

Please send comments to info@odwc.state.ok.us.

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Outdoor Calendar

October

14-15: Oklahoma Biological Survey's BioBlitz! 10th anniversary at Chickasaw National Recreation Area. For more information, click [here](#).

November

1: School land lease auction for Cleveland, Lincoln, Oklahoma and Pottawatomie counties Gordon Cooper Technology Center. For more information <http://www.clo.ok.gov/>

5: Sooner Retriever Club Training Day. For more information contact Bill Blochowiak at labske@aol.com

19: Byron Hatchery Watchable Wildlife Area Nature Center will be open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The biologist on duty will visit with visitors about wildlife in the area or take a walk with you on the nature trail. For more information about these events email mhickman@zoo.odwc.state.ok.us or 405-990-4977.