

NE CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION OF NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

A photograph of two wild turkeys standing in a grassy field. The turkey in the foreground is facing right, while the one behind it is facing left. They have dark, iridescent feathers and blue-grey heads. The background is a soft-focus landscape with trees and a building.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER
LOCAL AUDUBON CHAPTER REVIVED

NOVEMBER 2024



Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives

NE CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION OF NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Northeast Connection is published monthly to communicate with the members of Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative.

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VINITA HEADQUARTERS

27039 South 4440 Road, Vinita, OK 74301

GROVE OFFICE

600 South Main, Grove, OK 74344

BUSINESS HOURS

Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Offices are closed Saturday, Sunday and holidays.

DISPATCHING AVAILABLE 24 HOURS AT

1.800.256.6405

If you experience an outage:

1. Check your switch or circuit breaker in the house and on the meter pole to be sure the trouble is not on your side of the service.
2. When contacting the cooperative to report an outage, use the name as it appears on your bill, and have both your pole number and account number ready.

Please direct all editorial inquiries to Public Relations at 800.256.6405 or email publicrelations@noec.coop

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A PRINCIPLED BUSINESS

Leslie Taylor
Director of Accounting

Why do we call ourselves an electric *cooperative* here at NOEC? Aren't we just an electric *company*? Does it even matter?

The answer to that last question is a resounding YES. It does matter. Electric cooperatives distinguish themselves from *investor-owned* or *municipal* utilities in that we are guided by seven principles.

Cooperatives around the world operate according to core principles and values that set them apart from other business models. We can trace the roots of these principles back to the first modern cooperative founded in Rochdale, England in 1844. One of those principles is known as **Members' Economic Participation**. This principle states that "*Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative.*" This economic participation allows members to accumulate patronage capital and have any margins (profits) returned to them in the form of capital credits.

Every time you pay your bill, you not only pay for your electricity usage, you solidify our cooperative. Once our yearly expenses are paid and the financial strength of the organization has been confirmed by our board of trustees, leftover money is then allocated to members as patronage capital. The cooperative maintains a record of your patronage over the years of your membership.

Patronage capital is retired after a period of time as determined by the board and returned to qualifying members in the form of capital credits. If the credit amount totals \$10 or more, a check will be mailed to the qualifying member. If amount is below the \$10 minimum, then the credit will be held until it exceeds \$10 and returned in a future retirement.

Should you ever discontinue service with NOEC, your patronage capital account will be available until the full amount is paid to you through general retirements. It is important that the cooperative has your **current address** on file to ensure you receive all future capital credit refunds. Contact us at **918.256.9313** should you need to update your address.



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MAYES COUNTY RECIPES

\$100 IS HIDING!

Search the pages of *Northeast Connection* for a 6-digit account number with an asterisk on each side. For example: *XXXXXX*. Compare it to your account number, which appears on your monthly electric bill. If they match, contact the cooperative at 918.256.6405, by December 1, 2024, to claim a \$100 credit on your electric account.

NOVEMBER EVENTS

Heritage Days & End of Season

Nov 1-2 | Grove

Har-Ber Village Museum

2nd Annual Boutique Shop Hop!

Nov 2 | Disney

Dam Hotel & Disney Island Outfitters

Grove Merchants' Open House

Nov 8-9 | Grove

Downtown

Jay Veterans Day Parade

Nov 11 | Jay

Main Street

Coleman Holiday Market

Nov 15-16 | Miami

Main Street

Women in Business Luncheon

Nov 21 | Miami

Miami Civic Center

Lights on Downtown Pryor

Nov 21 | Pryor

Main Street

Morning Brew

Nov 22 | Miami

Salvation Army

Thanksgiving

Nov 28

Winter Wonderland Christmas Tour

Nov 28 - Jan 1 | Afton

Pine Lodge Resort

Santa's Ozark Mountain Village

Nov 29 - Dec 21 | Grove

Har-Ber Village Museum

Happy Thanksgiving!
November 28

Events are published as space allows and must be submitted at least 60 days in advance. Send information to Northeast Connection Events Calendar, PO Box 948, Vinita, OK 74301 or email: publicrelations@noec.coop

On the cover: native Oklahoma turkey hens, photographed by Kimberly Chaps

REC DAY 2024

MEMBER REGISTRATION TOPS 2,000

Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative extended its streak of 2,000-plus member registrations at REC Day to five consecutive years September 12 during its 86th annual meeting. NOEC registered a total of 2,133 members at three drive-thru sites to easily satisfy the five percent quorum requirement during its annual membership meeting. Quorum was officially met this year when the 1,525th member registered at 3:56 p.m., a little less than two hours after the official start of the event.

The event was held at the Craig County Fairgrounds in Vinita, the Mayes County Fairgrounds in Pryor, and the Miami Fairgrounds. The **Vinita** site led the way with **816** members registered, followed by **Pryor** with **663** registrations, and **Miami** with **654**. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the site reserved in Delaware County became unavailable prior to the event.

Since the 2019 adoption of the drive-thru format, which has allowed NOEC to bring REC Day closer to its membership, the cooperative has consistently hit the 2,000-member registration benchmark, twice establishing registration records. The cooperative's all-time registration record of 2,590 was set two years ago during the first-ever Thursday afternoon drive-thru.

"Even without the availability of a Delaware County registration site this year, members across our system once again made it clear that they are loyal to our organization," remarked NOEC General Manager/CEO Daniel Webster. "They showed up in force when given an opportunity to participate in the unique democratic process that cooperatives have long offered their members. We certainly appreciate this allegiance and will continue working hard to exceed not only those expectations but also the high standard to which we hold ourselves here at NOEC."

Along with an opportunity to cast an **electronic ballot** in the trustee election, each registered member received a **\$20 electric bill credit** for attending. Members were also presented with a **souvenir NOEC hat** and entered into the big REC Day 2024 **prize drawings**—all without leaving their vehicle. During the general election portion of the meeting, members approved the proposed bylaw revision and confirmed the nominated candidates vying for a seat on the cooperative board of trustees. Incumbent trustees **Dr. John L. Myers** of Vinita (District 4), **Sharron Gay** (District 6), and **Nancy Kimbrell** (District 8) all retained their seats unopposed.

Incentives were plentiful at the 86th REC Day. More than **\$25,000** in electric credits and cash were divided among **38 winners** following the event. The \$5,000 cash grand prize was awarded to one lucky winner. Electric credits of \$1,000, \$500, and \$250 were awarded to winners in each of the cooperative's nine districts. A \$500 electric credit was presented to a member from each district who registered using the barcode page included with their August bill. A bonus \$500 cash drawing was held for members who completed the survey form on the back of their September 2024 Northeast Connection publication and brought it with them when they registered at REC Day.

A complete list of REC Day 2024 prizewinners can be found accompanying this article at right.

A member attends REC Day in a vintage Mitsuoka Viewt



REC DAY WINNERS

Grand prize winner - \$5,000 cash

Matthew Lunn

Survey winner - \$500 cash

Curtis Collins

Barcode winners - \$500 electric credit

District 1: Cynthia Stanley

District 2: Susan Wilson

District 3: Katina Williams

District 4: Cole Owens

District 5: Earl Matthews

District 6: Paul Miller

District 7: Thomas Goertz

District 8: Dennis Chancellor

District 9: Susan Thomas

\$1,000 electric credit

District 1: Jerry Tibbetts

District 2: Brenda Doney

District 3: Todd Small

District 4: E W Jolly

District 5: Jimmie Larue

District 6: DJ Troyer

District 7: Shirley Johannesen

District 8: Bart Williams

District 9: Kenneth Steele

\$500 electric credit

District 1: Llyod Parker

District 2: Don Larmon

District 3: Tim Andris

District 4: Patti Pearsall

District 5: Jedidiah Rahi

District 6: Linda Biscorner

District 7: Melissa Cagle

District 8: Charles Smith

District 9: Carl Wolfe

\$250 electric credit

District 1: Dan Hudenall

District 2: Jimmy Bloyed

District 3: Cody Cook

District 4: Dustin Beeson

District 5: Brenda Coots

District 6: Jonathan Scheffel

District 7: Ralph Cancellor

District 8: Eurette Glass

District 9: Timothy Burr



Grand prize winner Matthew Lunn



A member shows off their adorable Welsh Corgi in the drive-thru



Member and retired NOEC employee Arinda Williams steals a hug

A white egret with a long yellow beak stands on a weathered, light-colored log. The background is a dense thicket of green foliage and thin tree branches. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

BIRDS

of a feather

Perhaps it stems from our fascination with flight, but mankind's preoccupation with birds is well-documented. Fowl have been hunted, studied, and collected for much of recorded history.

Article photography by Kimberly Chaps

Birdwatching today is a popular pastime that involves observing and identifying birds in their natural habitat. It is enjoyed by individuals of all ages and backgrounds and is both a hobby and a science, with many birdwatchers making important contributions to research and conservation efforts. With the help of modern tools and techniques, birdwatchers can observe and study these amazing creatures in greater detail than ever before.

The emergence of optics and field identification guides in the late 18th century helped popularize the observation of birds in their natural habitat. The 20th century saw a significant rise in the popularity of birdwatching as a recreational activity, as well as a scientific pursuit.

The founding of the **National Audubon Society** in 1905 was instrumental in promoting birdwatching as a recreational activity while advocating for the protection of birds and their habitats. The NAS and its members have played a key role in bird conservation efforts here in the U.S.

Over time, birdwatching has evolved into a beloved hobby for millions of people around the world. It has also become an important tool for scientific research, as observations of bird populations can provide valuable insight into the health of ecosystems. As the popularity of birdwatching continues to grow, it is important to remember the impact it can have on birds and their habitats.

► **Question: What is Oklahoma’s state bird?**

Answer: The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher.

Designated as Oklahoma’s official state bird in 1951, the elegant Scissor-tailed Flycatcher is actually considered economically valuable since its diet consists almost entirely of non-useful and/or harmful insect species such as grasshoppers, crickets, and beetles. It even collects many human-produced materials like cigarette filters, cloth, and paper to construct its nests. One study found that artificial materials accounted for 30% of its nest volume.

Feathered friends

Oklahoma is a birdwatching paradise. If you don’t believe that, just ask **Kimberly Chaps** president of the newly-organized **Friends of Grand Lake Audubon Society**. Chaps has been instrumental in spearheading the revival of the Audubon Society’s presence in the area. Several other local bird enthusiasts have since joined Chaps in resurrecting the organization from its dormancy.

Chaps arrived in Oklahoma earlier this year by way of Cedar Hill, Texas, where she served as center coordinator for the National Audubon Society’s Dogwood Canyon facility. When that contract ended, Chaps reunited with some good friends in Grove and decided to stay put.

“I was looking for a place to call a homebase,” said Chaps. “Very dear friends who have become my family over the years invited me to discover the area while I finished my summer online classes. The next thing I knew, I was purchasing a small home and settling into Oklahoma life. I absolutely love it here. The speed, the vibe, the people, and nature.”

Chaps is a 53-year-old mother of two grown sons. She brings a background in real estate, teaching, and public speaking and spent time in Michigan, Florida, and Texas during her career before making Oklahoma her home this past April.

“When my sons grew of age and left the nest, I was able to pursue my passions, which is all things conservation with a focus on birds,” said Chaps. “I had spent the past year at two different National Audubon facilities in Texas. My roles spanned from caretaker of a 1,200-acre nature preserve where I lived alone in the wilds, to being offered the position in Cedar Hill. The experiences I had were some of the most defining and beautiful moments of what will shape the rest of my life path.”

► Chaps has made it her lifelong goal to pursue the advancement of her education and field experience is an active member of the Association of Field Ornithologists, has completed the USGS certificate course on passerine bird banding, and volunteers in bird rehabbing (specifically raptors) whenever she can. She is currently enrolled in Avian Biology courses through Cornell Labs.

Upon her arrival in northeast Oklahoma, Chaps hit the ground running in search of local birders.

"I tried looking for a local Audubon Chapter so I could find my people and found that it had disbanded years ago," she said.

Anyone who knows Chaps knows that the absence of a bird club was simply not acceptable.

"The previous chapter was a group of friends who were birders, but the group was small and not especially diverse in age," she said. "Members had passed, aged out, or stopped participating. They dissolved their corporation and ended all efforts. Of course, I was not content with learning this and started talking to anyone who would give me time and an ear about the benefits of having an Audubon chapter again. I was careful to respect the efforts of the original group but also pointed out the differences there would be under new leadership."

The persuasive and persistent Chaps won and thus was born the **Friends of Grand Lake Audubon Society**. The chapter was incorporated by The State of Oklahoma on June 12, 2024. A board was appointed the following week. The group received a 501c3 exemption on June 25 and was officially welcomed by the City of Grove with a ribbon cutting on July 25.

With Chaps at the helm, the new chapter is off and running and built to last. The first meeting was held September 14 with 32 attendees of all ages, including former board members from the previous chapter.

"We currently have eight board members who believe in the mission," said Chaps. "We are all volunteers paid in birdsong and smiles. Our goal in the community is to offer conservation-based activities, events, and classes—to build a birding community, one feather at a time."

The chapter's next membership meeting will take place at Har-Ber Village on November 9. The meeting will begin at 10:30 a.m. and is open to the public.

"We are open to hearing the voices in our community and tailoring our programs to suit those needs," Chaps said. "We believe birding is for everyone. Recruiting volunteers is our main focus, we have some pretty big goals and need the man/woman power to achieve them. The diversity of our flock—the current and new Audubon Chapter—will ensure longevity in the community."

Chaps says the new chapter has received a warm welcome.

"We have been overjoyed by the reception we have received in our community," she said. "We are committed to the work we are doing. Everyone we speak to is excited to see what comes next."





► **Question: How many different bird species call Oklahoma home?**

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Answer: The latest edition of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society's formal checklist documents 488 bird species can be found in our state. Of those, 355 occur regularly, 181 are nesting species, and 83 reside here permanently.

Interested birders can connect with the new Friends of Grand Lake Audubon Society on Facebook, email: grandlakebirders@gmail.com, or text/call Chaps at 239.265.2736.

The chapter encompasses all of the Grand Lake area as sanctioned by the National office, including surrounding towns Miami, Commerce, Vinita, Wyandotte, Fairland, Afton, Grove, Monkey Island, Bernice, Jay, Disney, Langley, Ketchum, North Miami, and Cleora.

"I plan to foster group activities and raise up leadership in all of these areas," Chaps said, adding "I am absolutely immersed in the culture of advocacy, education, inclusion, and community building. I know that the longevity of the new chapter depends on diversity in age, background, and culture."

Chaps is also immersed in birdwatching. And, she says, Oklahoma is a great place to do just that.

"Oklahoma is one of my favorite states to go birding, and should rank high on everyone's list," she said. "The diversity of habitat here draws so many different birds, both resident and migratory. Between the foothills, prairies, plains, forests, swamps, rivers, and lake shorelines, you have the opportunity to see a vast variety and number of birds just about anywhere in the state."

There is more than one way to watch birds, according to Chaps. There is a casual, more observational approach called "slow birding." A more scientific method that uses apps like eBird and Merlin Bird ID to record activity is also an option.

"Some days I do not keep track at all and instead practice what has been coined slow birding, which is less about lists and more about being in tune with your environment and simply enjoying bird behavior."

Ultimately, says Chaps, Audubon is about more than simply watching birds. It is an active and important advocate to protect their future, the habitats in which they live, and engage the community in the love of birding.

"Protecting and conserving nature and the environment transcends political, cultural, and social boundaries,"

she said. "Respect, inclusion, and opportunity for people of all backgrounds, lifestyles, and perspectives will attract the best ideas and harness the greatest passion to shape a healthier, more vibrant future for all of us who share our planet. This is who Audubon is today."

Supporting Area Schools

THROUGH TAX DISTRIBUTIONS

Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative paid gross receipts tax totaling \$1,680,600.27 in 2024 and This total was divided among the 32 schools in the cooperative service area.

Not-for-profit electric cooperatives are **exempt** from paying federal income tax. However, they **do pay** fuel, state and federal unemployment tax, Social Security, Medicare and **gross receipts tax**, in lieu of the ad-valorem tax paid by for-profit utility companies.

Gross receipts tax collected for a given year represents two percent of each member's electric bill. Ninety-five percent of this tax is paid directly to schools within our service area, based on the miles of line the cooperative maintains within each school district. The remaining five percent of the collected gross receipts tax is withheld by the state for collection and handling fees.

By paying a percentage of the cooperative's gross income to support area school districts, Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative members are sharing in the responsibility of educating today's youth. **The table provided below lists the school systems and the amounts they received.**



YEAR TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS
\$1,680,600.27

AMOUNT RECEIVED: BY SCHOOL 2024

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Adair | \$83,715.52 | Inola | \$3,786.39 | Pryor | \$49,242.91 |
| Afton | \$43,342.18 | Jay | \$165,411.34 | Quapaw | \$41,414.90 |
| Bluejacket | \$99,737.81 | Kansas | \$79,853.83 | Salina | \$56,249.79 |
| Chelsea | \$68,877.76 | Kenwood | \$11,331.75 | Sequoyah | \$1,088.50 |
| Chouteau Mazie | \$47,503.90 | Ketchum | \$42,348.57 | Turkey Ford | \$20,712.70 |
| Cleora | \$32,916.01 | Leach | \$25,108.78 | Vinita | \$52,715.97 |
| Colcord | \$72,269.14 | Locust Grove | \$36,287.72 | Welch | \$100,037.39 |
| Commerce | \$22,109.00 | Miami | \$41,595.19 | White Oak | \$41,577.42 |
| Fairland | \$61,452.23 | Moseley | \$29,668.45 | Wickliffe | \$17,369.20 |
| Foyil | \$288.53 | Oaks | \$14,733.21 | Wyandotte | \$87,380.14 |
| Grove | \$217,349.64 | Osage | \$13,124.40 | | |



Ready Your Home FOR WINTER

Prepare your home for winter now to ensure safety, efficiency, and comfort.
Here's a checklist you can use:

● INSPECTING HEATING SYSTEM

- Have your heating system professionally **serviced**.
- **Replace** air filters if needed.
- Ensure vents and radiators are **unblocked** for efficient heat distribution.

● TEST & MAINTAIN SMOKE AND CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS

- **Replace** batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.
- **Test** detectors to ensure they function properly.

● INCREASE ENERGY EFFICIENCY

- **Seal** gaps at windows and doors with weatherstripping or caulk.
- Set ceiling fans to **rotate clockwise**.

● PREPARE PIPES & WATER SUPPLY

- **Insulate** exposed pipes to prevent freezing.
- **Drain and shut off** outdoor faucets and irrigation systems.
- Know the **location** of water shut-off valve in case of emergency.

● PREPARE YOUR HOME'S EXTERIOR

- **Clear** gutters and downspouts to prevent ice dams.
- **Trim** trees away from the house to avoid damage.
- **Ensure** downspouts extend away from the foundation.
- **Service and store** equipment such as lawnmowers and trimmers.

SCAN ME TO LEARN MORE!

Or use this URL to visit:
[www.noec.coop/energy-services/
together-we-save](http://www.noec.coop/energy-services/together-we-save)



FEATURED RECIPES

from Mayes County



EASY CROCK-POT BRISKET | ANGELA ZINSIOUS OF PRYOR



INGREDIENTS

- 1 brisket
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp onion powder
- 1 tsp paprika
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- Lipton onion soup mix packet
- 1 cup beef broth
- 1 cup BBQ sauce

Step 1: Mix together dry ingredients and rub on brisket then pack in Crock-Pot.

Step 2: Add beef broth and BBQ sauce to Crock-Pot and cover, cooking on high for 6 1/2 to 8 hours until brisket falls apart.



CHEESY BASIL POTATOES | CINDY VICTORY OF CHELSEA



INGREDIENTS

- 2 lbs frozen hash browns
- 8 oz sour cream
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 3 cups fancy shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 tbsp minced onion (dehydrated)
- 1 tbsp dried basil leaves
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp pepper

Step 1: Mix all ingredients together and spoon into a greased 9x13 inch pan. Refrigerate overnight and then bake uncovered at 350°F for 45 minutes.

Have a recipe to share? Send it to publicrelations@noec.coop for a chance to be featured in an upcoming edition of *Northeast Connection*.

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