

THE SNIPE

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SCOTT'S ORIOLE SPOTTED IN STORY, ARKANSAS

Arkansas recorded its first ever **Scott's Oriole** in Story, Arkansas this year! This rare visitor was first spotted in the backyard of Keller and Mary Deal around mid-February. He stayed for several weeks eating on fruit before moving on sometime in April.

Several birders from around Arkansas, and neighboring states, were able to catch a glimpse and photograph this beautiful Oriole.

Many thanks to Keller and Mary who, not only let us know about the Scott's, but were so gracious to host the many birders who flocked to their home to see this magnificent bird. Many of whom either came before the Deal's were out of bed in the morning or camped out for hours in their backyard with cameras waiting for a photograph. Thanks to their hospitality, several people were able to add the Scott's Oriole to their life lists. Story is located just north of Mt. Ida.



Photo by Charles Mills

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

DREW PHILLIPS

Greetings,

Wetlands protection has come roaring to the forefront of ASCA's agenda on conservation. Three issues have been front-page news in statewide paper's with one of them being of global importance. The City of Little Rock's Battle with developers over the Lake Maumelle watershed occurred first. It appears that our drinking water watershed is safe for the time being. Attempted legislation to allow residential development in that watershed failed in the Arkansas Legislature earlier this year and the courts have ruled against one of the developer's plans to build subdivisions in the watershed. We can be proud of the job Central Arkansas Water has done to protect our drinking water with the help of our local elected officials and civic leaders.

The second issue concerns the Bass Pro Shop's effort to fill in 40 acres of Dark Hollow Swamp in North Little Rock to build their store on the southeast corner of I-30 and I-40. The Corps of Engineers have issued a Conditional Use

Permit to allow this travesty! These wetlands filter most of North Little Rock's storm runoff before it enters the Arkansas River. It also provides flood protection for the lowest and poorest area of North Little Rock. If allowed to occur, this project will cause polluted water in the river and likely flood two of the poorest residential areas in North Little Rock. The ASCA Officers and Board of Directors elected to join the Arkansas Nature Alliance as a plaintiff in a lawsuit against the Corps of Engineers to force them to withdraw the permit and complete a full Environmental Impact Study before any construction is allowed. We strongly feel if this is done the project will not be allowed and Dark Hollow will be saved.

Finally, I don't have to tell you about the third and most wonderful event. That is the discovery of the existence of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker in the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge. Our own Bill Shepherd was on the project team that has spent the last year and half confirming the

IBWP's existence and working to protect the habitat before the announcement was made. Also, one of our members, David Luneau, captured the IBWP on film shown around the world. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife service and The Nature Conservancy have done a masterful job planning protection of the habitat. They have also been either buying or entering into partnerships with landowners to reclaim the land back to bottomland hardwoods. ASCA has been invited to join with other conservation groups to be in the Big Woods Conservation Partnership. This discovery makes even more urgent stopping projects like the Corps' White River Irrigation Project. Judge Willard Procter ruled the pump station could continue to be built just this last week. After the ruling David Carruth, President of the Arkansas Wildlife Federation, stated "We have lost a battle, but not the war." It has never been clearer than now, that we must do everything we can to save our wetlands.

Drew M. Phillips
ASCA President

The Ivory-billed Woodpecker Still Lives!

Long believed to be extinct, the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, the largest woodpecker in North America, has been rediscovered in the Big Woods of eastern Arkansas. More than 60 years after the last confirmed sighting of the species in the United States, a research team announced that at least one male ivory-bill still survives in vast areas of bottomland swamp forest.

Evidence was gathered during an intensive year-long search in the Cache River and White River national wildlife refuges involving more than 50 experts and field biologists working together as part of the Big Woods Conservation Partnership, led by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell University and The Nature Conservancy. "The bird captured on video is clearly an Ivory-billed Woodpecker," said John Fitzpatrick, the *Science* article's lead author, and director of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.

Although the majestic bird has been sought for decades, until now there was no firm evidence that it still existed. The rediscovery has galvanized efforts to save the Big Woods of Arkansas, 550,000 acres of bayous, bottomland forests and oxbow lakes.

While kayaking in the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge on February 11, 2004, Gene Sparling of Hot Springs, Arkansas, saw an unusually large, red-crested woodpecker fly toward him and land on a nearby tree. He noticed several field marks suggesting the bird was an Ivory-billed Woodpecker.

A week later, after learning of the sighting, Tim Gallagher, editor of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's *Living Bird* magazine, and Bobby Harrison, associate professor at Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama, interviewed Sparling. They were so

convinced by his report that they traveled to Arkansas and then, with Sparling, to the bayou where he had seen the bird.

On February 27, a large black-and-white woodpecker flew across the bayou less than 70 feet in front of Gallagher and Harrison. The sightings by Sparling, Gallagher, and Harrison led to the formation of a search team, which later became the Big Woods Conservation Partnership. Researchers would spot the bird fifteen more times over the next year.

On April 25, David Luneau, associate professor at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, captured four seconds of video footage showing an Ivory-billed Woodpecker taking off from the trunk of a tree. And the rest they say is history!

Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Formation of Ivory-billed Woodpecker Recovery Team

Press Release – May 25, 2005

Fish and Wildlife Service, Partners, Announce Formation of Ivory-billed Woodpecker Recovery Team

Contacts: Connie Light Dickard, Jim Rothschild

Less than a month after the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its partners announced that the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge is home to the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, the agency said today it has named the first members of a range-wide recovery team that will craft a roadmap for the conservation of this extraordinary bird.

At the same time, the Service's Southeast Regional Director Sam Hamilton, announced the team's leaders would have their initial meeting in Brinkley, Arkansas, at the end of June. The team will include representatives from state fish and wildlife agencies, conservation organizations, and universities.

"This recovery team brings together some of the best minds in ecology, conservation biology, forestry, and ornithology, from a wide spectrum of organizations who can contribute knowledge and resources toward this magnificent bird's comeback," Hamilton said. "We likely won't get a second chance to do this critical job, and we need to move effectively and quickly."

The recovery team convenes in June, and our goal is to have a completed recovery plan by Summer 2007. The recovery effort will cover the bird's historic range and will focus on the Big Woods corridor of Central Arkansas, Eastern Texas' Big Thicket, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, southern Georgia, and the Carolinas.

The Ivory-billed Woodpecker once ranged from the coastal plain of North and South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, large portions of Alabama, Mississippi and Arkansas, Louisiana, eastern Texas, west Tennessee, and small areas of Illinois, Kentucky, Oklahoma and Missouri. The range became smaller by the late 1800s and the woodpecker was no longer found in Oklahoma, Missouri, Illinois or Kentucky. Ivory-billed numbers continued to decline and by the mid 1940s, most people believed all the birds were gone. Until now, there had been no confirmed sighting of an Ivory-billed Woodpecker in more than 60 years. "Arkansans should be proud of their conservation ethic and the work they've done to restore the Cache and White River basins, and the benefits to the woodpecker as well as waterfowl, wild turkey, deer and many other species of wildlife," Hamilton said.

On April 28, the Interior and Agriculture Departments announced that \$10.2 million would be redirected to conservation efforts benefiting this woodpecker's recovery. This funding is in addition to the \$10 million already committed to research and habitat protection efforts by private sector groups and citizens.



Bald Knob NWR Becomes Arkansas' 22nd IBA



Dan Scheiman, Ph.D.

Bird Conservation Director, Audubon Arkansas

On May 13 the Important Bird Areas Technical Committee approved Bald Knob National Wildlife Refuge as the state's 22nd IBA. Technical Committee members are state and federal employees, university professors, and private citizens who represent all areas of the state. Likewise, the IBA's represent various types of ownership, and represent all regions of the state. Anyone may nominate a site.

Thanks goes to Kenny Nichols and Bill Alexander for submitting this nomination. Although final approval of the site awaits the Audubon Arkansas Board meeting on June 10th, there is little doubt the Board will support the Committee's recommendation; the nomination is well written and solidly supported.

Inclusion of the refuge into the IBA program should come as no surprise to those who bird there. Proper water level management on hundreds of acres of rice and moist soil vegetation provides wintering habitat for over 300,000 ducks, including Northern Pintail, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Wood Duck, and Northern Shoveler. During the typically dry late summer and early fall, refuge personnel create mudflats and shallow water to attract thousands of migrating shorebirds. Peak shorebird use occurs around August 15th.

Great Blue Herons breed on the refuge, with at least 25 pairs in the rookery. At various times of the year, one can find Arkansas Birds of Conservation Interest, including White Ibis, Wood Stork, Mottled Duck, Northern Bobwhite, Buff-

breasted Sandpiper, Acadian Flycatcher, Prothonotary Warbler, and Rusty Blackbird. Keep your eyes and ears open!

Last but not least, the refuge is important because of its proximity to the Big Woods. Perhaps someday, through land acquisition and conservation easements, this refuge can be connected to the corridor of prime bird habitat.

Audubon's involvement with a site doesn't end with IBA designation. The IBA program serves to identify not only those sites that are critical for birds, but also the threats to the site and its birds. Clearly, refuge personnel are doing an outstanding job restoring habitat and the natural flood cycles, and no serious threats were identified in the nomination. Furthermore, Bald Knob is a good example of how farming, hunting, fishing, birding, and other uses can coexist with each other and with birds.

Audubon may best serve the refuge through volunteer monitoring efforts. Annual, targeted surveys can prove that Bald Knob continues to provide important bird habitat. Data on bird abundance and habitat use can help refuge managers choose best management practices. With 22 designated IBA's, Audubon Arkansas is poised to begin this next step.

Stay tuned for more information on how you can help...as if you really needed an excuse to go birding!

Upcoming Programs of ASCA

The ASCA meets at 7:00 PM the second Thursday of each month at the John Gould Fletcher Library, which is located at 823 Buchanan Street, on the corner of Buchanan and H Streets, just off North University Ave. The programs are free and open to the public

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## June 9, 2005 – What to Do When it's Too Hot to Bird-Watch

**Mel White** will be the guest speaker for our June program. His topic will be: "**An Introduction to Arkansas Butterflies, or, What to Do When It's Too Hot to Bird-Watch.**"

Mel will present a slide presentation on some of the most common butterflies in Arkansas, along with a brief look at how to get started butterfly watching.

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July 14, 2005 – Dragonflies of Arkansas

Herschel Raney, M.D. will present a program on "**Dragonflies of Arkansas**"

Dr. Raney's – A birder's introduction to the major groups of Arkansas Dragonflies, with attention to field marks, state distribution and habitats, will focus mainly on adult forms only. Should allow any birder to begin spotting the state species by binocular observation while out birding in spring and summer in our state.

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## August 11, 2005 – Grassland Bird Conservation

**Dan Scheiman, Ph.D.**, Bird Conservation Director, Audubon Arkansas will present: "**Grassland bird conservation: problems and potentials**"

According to Audubon's State of the Birds, a higher proportion of grassland bird species are declining than any other group of birds in North America.

Threats include decreasing habitat quantity and quality. But the outlook is not all bad. Dr. Scheiman will talk about his research on grassland birds in North Dakota and Indiana, and highlight some of the challenges facing conservationists today.

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# *ASCA Field Trip Schedule*

The ASCA sponsors numerous field trips throughout the year. The trips are open to all and carpooling is available for trips outside of Little Rock. This is a great opportunity for novice birders to meet and learn their birds from more experienced birders. Perhaps a chance to get a life bird for those dedicated birders.

Contact Drew Phillips for more information about upcoming trips.

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June 18, 2005

Mt. Magazine State Park

Mt. Magazine is the best place in Arkansas to find the **Rufous-crowned Sparrow**. It is one of the most eastern places in the United States where they are found, most of the time. We are not always successful in locating it, but will give it our best effort. **Ovenbirds** and **butterflies** are abundant on the state's highest mountain. **We will meet at Christ the King Catholic Church parking lot at 7:30 AM** and carpool to the mountain for those interested. We should arrive at the park around 10 AM. Bring water and a sack lunch.

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*July 16, 2005*

## **Lorance Creek Natural Area and Tar Camp Park**

**We will meet at the commuter parking lot at I-630 and Shackleford Road at 7:30 AM.** **Lorance Creek Natural Area** is a deep swamp area with a boardwalk trail to the heart of the swamp. We will arrive there around 8:15 AM. We will look for **Prothonotary Warblers**, **Louisiana Waterthrush** and other deep swamp species. After exploring **Lorance Creek** we go to **Tar Camp Park** in Redfield. **Tar Camp** is a Corps of Engineer park on the Arkansas River. There a nice trail that parallels a forested bluff giving us eye level view of the tops of a hardwood forest. Bring water, a sack lunch and insect repellent.

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August 27, 2005

Bald Knob National Wildlife Refuge

This month we will search for shorebirds and other waders. **Bald Knob NWR** is a great place to find both. We might encounter **Black-neck Stilt**, **Ibis** or **Wood Storks**. Anything is possible in the refuge this time of year. **We will meet at the Other Center Parking lot behind McDonald's on McCain Blvd in North Little Rock at 7:30 AM.** We should arrive at the refuge between 9:00 & 9:30 AM. Bring water and a sack lunch or eat lunch in Bald Knob.

Drew M. Phillips
ASCA President



Field Trip Reports

Bell Slough Wildlife Management Area

April 16, 2005

It was a beautiful day as 13 ASCA birders attended the field trip to Bell Slough WMA. Not long after we arrived a **Marsh Wren** was spotted singing to the top of his lungs. Warblers were everywhere: **Northern Parula, Common Yellowthroat, Tennessee, Black-and-White, Orange-crowned, Blue-winged, Nashville, Prothonotary** and **Yellow-rumped** were among the species seen. A **Kentucky Warbler** put on quite a show for us, thanks to Dan Scheiman for bringing along his scope and allowing everyone an “up close and personal” view of this beautiful bird. Other highlights were **Red-eyed** and **White-eyed Vireos, Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher, Eastern Towhee,** and **Field Sparrow**. A total of 38 species were tallied for the day.

Sherry Phillips and Dottie Boyles
Field Trip Leaders



Spring Picnic at Gilliam Park

May 7, 2005

Ken and Mary Smith of Audubon Arkansas joined 14 ASCA birders for an early morning bird walk of Gilliam Park. Dan Scheiman, Audubon Arkansas’ new Director of Bird Conservation served as our field trip leader. Dan did an excellent job helping us record 63 species of birds. We started in the large field behind the College Station Community Center Audubon Arkansas is returning to a natural prairie. There were many **Blue Grosbeaks** and **Swamp Sparrows**, very likely migrating flocks. We moved down the Gilliam Park woods for a thorough walk of the park. The highlights were **Thrushes** and **Warblers**. We had very good looks at **Wood, Swainson’s** and **Gray-checked Thrushes**. We sighted 10 species of warblers including **Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Kentucky, Hooded** and **Northern Waterthrush**. The **Blackburnian Warbler** really put on a show for us. We were rewarded with a total of 63 species by the end of our walk. After the walk we enjoyed a nice picnic in a very large and nice pavilion in the park. We appreciate Audubon Arkansas hosting us. I apologize to anyone who may have tried to join us, but met a closed entrance gate. I assure you it will not happen again.

Drew Phillips
ASCA President

Arkansas Rare Bird Alert (RBA)

The RBA lists rare and unusual birds found throughout the state, and if possible directions to these birds. To report or hear the latest sightings, call **(501) 753-5853**. The number is listed as J.J. Audubon in the phone book, the only white page listing with the last name Audubon