

THE SNIPE

*The Newsletter of the
Audubon Society of Central Arkansas*



Photo by Charles Mills

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www.ascabird.org

September – November 2007

Warren Prairie Natural Area and Little River Bottoms Recognized As Important Bird Areas

by Dan Scheiman, Ph.D.

Bird Conservation Director, Audubon Arkansas

On August 2nd the Important Bird Areas Technical Committee recognized Warren Prairie Natural Area and the Little River Bottoms as the state's 27th and 28th Important Bird Areas (IBAs). They join the more than 75,000 IBAs worldwide and over 1,800 in the US. Audubon Arkansas manages the IBA program in the state. A site can be recognized if it consistently supports a significant population of a bird species of conservation concern or groups of species that congregate in large numbers such as wintering waterfowl, migrating shorebirds, or breeding wading birds.

One of the special places within the system of Natural Areas owned and managed by Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission (ANHC) is Warren Prairie. It stands out because of its unique array of habitats such as saline soil barrens and the significant population of wintering Henslow's Sparrows they support. Saline soil barrens scattered throughout the site support over three-fourths of this species' known wintering population in the state. Surrounding pine-oak woodlands are managed through prescribed burns and thinning for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, Red-headed Woodpeckers, Brown-headed Nuthatches, Northern Bobwhite, and Bachman's Sparrows. Though only one Red-cockaded Woodpecker has been documented on the site in recent years, ANHC has received permission from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to reintroduce a population of this species to the natural area. Thus, Warren Prairie will one day have a

viable population of its own. Thanks goes to Bill Holimon, Chief of Research for ANHC, for filling out the nomination form, surveying birds, and guiding management at this important site.

The Little River Bottoms in Hempstead County is a stronghold for plant and animal species of conservation concern. Its 18,000 acres of contiguous, relatively undisturbed bottomland hardwood forest have been protected as wildlife habitat by private landowners for over a century. It supports the largest known wading bird rookery in the state (over 11,000 birds), as well as a significant proportion of the state's breeding Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, Anhingas, Snowy Egrets, Little Blue Herons, Tricolored Herons, Cattle Egrets, Black-crowned Night-Herons, White Ibises, Purple Gallinules, and Common Moorhens. Thousands of wintering waterfowl gather in the cypress stands as well. This area was also recognized by the Arkansas Pollution Control and Ecology Commission as an "Ecologically Sensitive Waterbody," and by the National Park Service as a potential "Natural National Landmark." The biotic diversity of this area is among the greatest of any place or ecosystem in Arkansas. Thanks goes to the landowners for working with Audubon Arkansas to survey and nominate this unique natural area.

For more information about Arkansas's IBA program visit <http://www.ar.audubon.org/BirdSci.html>.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

BILL SHEPHERD

ASCA OFFICERS

President:

Bill Shepherd
501-375-3918
stoneax63@hotmail.com

Vice-president:

Dan Scheiman
501-280-9024
birddan@comcast.net

Recording Secretary:

Susan Hardin
whizcats@sbcglobal.net

Treasurer:

Barry Haas
501-821-4097
bhaas@sbcglobal.net

Newsletter Editor:

Dottie Boyles
ctboyles@aristotle.net

Board:

W. F. "Bill" Hailey
501-225-2848

D. DeLynn Hearn
delynnh@iwon.com

Ed Laster
501-868-6004
elaster523@sbcglobal.net

Sherry Phillips
501-228-5245

Drew Phillips
501-228-5245
drewmilp@yahoo.com

Bill Saunders
501-664-2539
wasaunders@aristotle.net

Christmas Bird Count

Compiler:

Dan Scheiman
501-280-9024
birddan@comcast.net

Conservation:

Barry Haas
501-821-4097
bhaas@sbcglobal.net

Hospitality:

Sherry Phillips
501-228-5245

Rare Bird Alert:

D. DeLynn Hearn
501-771-4686
delynnh@iwon.com

ASCA Webmaster:

J. Lyndal York
501-663-2192
lrj@delray@sbcglobal.net

Field Trip Coordinator:

Open

Several months ago, as the newly elected president of ASCA, I sensed a desire among those who had elected me to have more people participating in chapter activities and to build a stronger corps of leaders. If we were going to grow, we needed a plan. In order to develop a plan, we needed input from members. Believing that the best way to grow is to build on one's strengths, I asked the members to write and tell me what they see as our chapter's strong points.

Below is a compilation of the responses that I received. The first column summarizes each point briefly, and the second indicates how many respondents mentioned it.

Comments from Chapter Members	Number of respondents
1. Our active members (Barry Haas in particular) "our most fragile asset"	7
2. Opportunities to learn about nature	5
A. Programs—interesting and informative	2
B. Field trips—well planned and praised by participants	6
C. Our newsletter, <i>The Snipe</i> —full of interest and attractive	2
D. Web site—full of interest and attractive	2
3. The fun of sharing our experiences with nature	2
4. The chapter's history of nurturing young people who have gone on to become professional ornithologists	2
5. The ability to address conservation issues collectively	1
6. Our urban location—with a large population of potential members and supporters	1
7. Our central location—with easy access to officials of state and federal government	1

Of course, the next step is to develop strategies for building on the strengths here identified. So put on your thinking caps and be prepared to discuss your thoughts at the chapter's September meeting.

See you there!

Bill Shepherd

Wings over Arkansas Awards Program

The "Wings Over Arkansas" awards program is part of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission's "Watchable Wildlife" program. It is a free service to the residents of Arkansas. The program offers six levels of achievement with full color certificates and lapel pins awarded to birdwatchers who report their list of Arkansas Birds to the Arkansas Game & Fish Commission. For more information you can go to the AR Game & Fish Commission's web site at <http://www.agfc.state.ar.us/>. The new Watchable Wildlife Coordinator is Kirsten Bartlow.

This year the program was expanded and the Swallow-tailed Kite Level was added for persons reporting 300 or more birds on the Arkansas Bird Checklist.

Congratulations to ASCA's own Dan Scheiman for being the first to achieve this level with the sighting of a Marbled Godwit at Treadway's Fish Farm, in Prairie County, on August 12th. Dan moved to Arkansas in 2005, he is the Bird Conservation Director for Audubon Arkansas. When asked what his next goal was, Dan answered "301".

Conservation News

Barry Haas

Update on Protecting Lake Maumelle and its Watershed

In mid-July the Central Arkansas Water (CAW) Commission voted to approve a settlement agreement with developers Waterview Estates and its partners to allow construction of about 80 houses on 179 acres adjacent to and uphill from the Lake Maumelle water intake pipes. That land, along with an additional 122 acres, had been condemned by CAW and only the price to be paid was left to be determined. The settlement reversed existing CAW policy of more than 10 years that there would be no development in this critical area, known as Critical Area A.

In response to the CAW Commission vote, Citizens Protecting Maumelle Watershed along with several individuals filed suit against CAW and the developers to overturn the agreement and force CAW to complete its acquisition through condemnation of this 301 critical areas so near the intake pipes. CAW recently spent \$1.2 million of ratepayers money to hire a professional consultant, TetraTech, who helped central Arkansans draft and then get approved a comprehensive Watershed Management Plan for Lake Maumelle.

The Plan essentially bans development in Critical Area A, the 4% of the watershed closest to the intake pipes, and allows controlled development (large lots, limits on impervious areas, types of driveway and road materials, etc.) in the remaining 96% of the watershed, called Critical Area B and the Upper Watershed. This compromise Plan allows landowners in the watershed to build on their property, but not to build so many houses that Lake Maumelle water quality would drop to unacceptable levels over the years.

It is much less expensive to keep pollutants out of our drinking water rather than treat the water after it gets polluted. Lake Maumelle provides about two-thirds of the drinking water for almost 400,000 central Arkansans. As former CAW Board Chairman Craig Wood was quoted as saying in "Arkansas Business" in June 2004, "high-quality water at a low price for families and businesses is a cornerstone to the metropolitan area's economic potential". He could not be more right!

How many of you know that Lake Maumelle wins regional water quality

awards from the Environmental Protection Agency? Or that our cost for that extraordinarily high-quality water is much lower than the cost paid by folks in surrounding metropolitan areas?

Only about 80 houses would be built on this critical 179 acres. Any pollution produced by either home construction, the homeowner families after they move in or construction of a concrete diversion ditch more than three miles long would jeopardize our water supply which serves one out of every six Arkansans. Is it worth the risk? What was the CAW Commission and its newly hired Chief Executive Officer Graham Rich thinking?

If you would like to stay up to date on this issue, go to:

<http://www.protectarkansaswater.org>

That's the web site for Citizens Protecting Maumelle Watershed where you can get the latest Lake Maumelle happenings, make a donation or show your support for protecting your drinking water in other ways.

Proposed BFI Landfill Expansion

By the time you read this, the Pulaski Co. Solid Waste Management District may have already voted on August 30 whether or not to approve an expansion of the BFI landfill on Mabelvale Pike in Little Rock. This landfill, which is in a critical wetlands area, where Coleman and Fourche Creeks come together, should never have been permitted in this location. And it should not be allowed to expand now so that garbage from a number of other counties can continue to be dumped inside the Capitol city's borders.

Little Rock Mayor Mark Stodola, who will be one of the six people to cast a vote on August 30, has publicly indicated he is opposed to the expansion and will vote 'no' and urge other Board members to do the same. The public comment period ended in early August. If the vote August 30 favors approval of the expansion, BFI must still go before the Arkansas

Department of Environmental Quality and the Little Rock Board of Directors for additional approvals. The Little Rock Board would have to approve a zoning change.

This landfill is not needed and should be closed when it reaches its currently permitted capacity in the next few years. Then Audubon Arkansas, the Little Rock Parks & Recreation Department and others should work to reclaim this important wetlands area which can then be transformed from an eyesore to an asset. By doing so we can create an exceptional wetlands park to educate urban youth about nature and our need to protect it.

Stay tuned to media reports to learn what is happening on this important issue in your community.

ARKANSAS AUDUBON SOCIETY CALL TO CONFERENCE

October 26-28, 2007

Crowne Plaza Little Rock

The 2007 fall conference of the Arkansas Audubon Society (AAS) will be held October 26-28 in Little Rock, Arkansas. Friday registration will be at the Crowne Plaza Little Rock from 4:00-6:00 pm.

For accommodations, please contact **Crowne Plaza Little Rock** at **1-866-276-6648**. Be sure to mention Arkansas Audubon Society to get the special reduced room rate of \$119.00 + tax.

Conveniently located at 201 S. Shackelford Road, near the intersection of Interstates 630 and 430 in west Little Rock. Meals and programs will be at the Crowne Plaza Little Rock.

Complete the form below (or a copy) and mail to: Jason Luscier, AAS Vice President
Dept. of Biological Sciences SCEN 632
1 University of Arkansas
Fayetteville, AR 72701-1201

Mail by October 5th to qualify for the **Early Bird discount** and subtract \$5 per person from the registration fee. For questions contact Jason at (479) 871-9199 or jluscie@uark.edu

AGENDA

Friday, October 26

Board Meeting 1:00 – 4:00 pm
Registration 4:00 – 6:00 pm
Dinner 6:15 – 7:15 pm
Evening program 7:30 – 9:00 pm
**“Life and Times of the Willow Flycatcher
– an Update from the Southwest”**
Speaker: **Rob Doster**, past president of AAS,
Bureau of Reclamation, Albuquerque, NM
Door prizes and descriptions of Saturday’s Field Trips

Saturday, October 27

Field trips Details at registration
Committee Meetings As needed—chairs will designate time and place
AAS Trust Meeting 2:00 – 4:00 pm
Trust/Camp Reception 5:00 – 6:00 pm
Dinner 6:15 – 7:15 pm
Evening Program 7:30 – 9:00 pm
“The Forgotten Cerulean Warblers of the Mid-South”
Speaker: **Paul Hamel**, Center for Bottomland Hardwoods Research, Stoneville, MS
Weekend checklist, door prizes and discussion of Field Trips for Sunday

REGISTRATION FORM

Name(s) _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____
Phone # _____ e-mail _____

Please place an “X” on the line if this is your first AAS meeting or if you have not attended for some time. _____

Meeting registration # _____ @ \$20/person \$ _____
* **Early Bird:** October 5th or before = \$15/ person
* *Children under 16 with adult = free*
Friday evening meal # _____ @ \$22 per person \$ _____
Saturday evening meal # _____ @ \$22 per person \$ _____
Donation to help pay meeting costs \$ _____
Total \$ _____

Make checks payable to **Arkansas Audubon Society**

FIELD TRIPS – Saturday, October 27

- A – Two Rivers Park:** Depart at 7:00 a.m. from Crowne Plaza parking lot. Located along the Arkansas River and offers several different types of habitat including: woods, wetlands and grasslands. Easy walking.
- B – Bell Slough:** Depart at 6:45 a.m. from Crowne Plaza parking lot. Woodlands and marsh. Easy walking.
- C – Lonoke:** Depart at 7:15 a.m. from Crowne Plaza parking lot. Explore the fish ponds for shorebirds and ducks. Mostly by car with little walking.
- D – Murray Lock & Dam/ Cooks Landing:** Depart at 7:15 a.m. from Crowne Plaza parking lot. Ducks, gulls and other water birds are possible here with very little walking.
- E – David D. Terry Lock & Dam/ Willow Beach:** Depart at 7:00 a.m. from Crowne Plaza parking lot. Little walking.

Upcoming Programs

The ASCA meets at 7:00 PM the second Thursday of each month at the John Gould Fletcher Library, 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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### **September 13, 2007 – Birds and Insects**

Guest Speaker: **Dr. Don Steinkraus**  
Program: **Insects in the Lives of Birds**

Dr. Don Steinkraus, Department of Entomology, UA-Fayetteville will discuss the role of insects in the lives of birds.

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October 11, 2007 – Winter Sparrows

Guest Speaker: **Dr. Dan Scheiman**
Program: **Winter Sparrow Identification**

Our Vice President and Bird Conservation Director for Audubon Arkansas, Dr. Dan Scheiman will teach us how to identify those tricky little brown birds, the sparrows. This is the first of an (ir)regular series titled the "Occasional Educational Ornithological Series" geared to helping us become better birders and ornithologists. Birders of all levels will benefit.

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### **November 8, 2007 – Diana Fritillary**

Guest Speaker: **Dr. Bill Baltosser**  
Program: **The Diana Fritillary in Arkansas**

Dr. Bill Baltosser, Department of Biology, UALR, will discuss his research on Diana Fritillary conservation and genetics.

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December 13, 2007 – Potluck and Arkansas Wildflowers

Guest Speaker: **Craig Fraiser**
Program: **Arkansas Wildflowers**

Craig Fraiser is an amateur photographer who specializes in Arkansas wildflowers, and has made it his goal to photograph all of the state's rare and endemic wildflower species. He'll talk about his search for his subjects and show beautiful slides throughout the evening.

We will have our annual Potluck and Silent Auction that evening as well. This fun event is a great opportunity to enjoy wonderful food, spread some holiday cheer and exchange stories with fellow birders. Our **Silent Auction** is always fun and a critical source of funds for ASCA. Auction items can be purchased or hand made. Watch for details in the next issue of *The Snipe*.

Thank You from Rodney Paul

I would like to thank everyone who came out to visit our rehab facility on Thursday, July 19th. More visitors came out than expected, which was great!

I hope everyone enjoyed their visit and learned something about raptors and the rehab process. I want to also thank everyone for their very generous donations to help us continue the work we do.

We hope to have our eagle flight pen and permit by late fall, and hopefully, we will be ready should the need arise.

If you missed the trip or would like to come back give us a call. You're more than welcome to stop by. We can be reached at (501) 450-2653.

Thanks again to everyone!
Rodney
El Paso, AR



Rodney Paul, holding a Mississippi Kite recovering from a broken wing.

Photo by Ed Laster

The Search Continues

The search continues as several birders are working on their AR Big Year and AR State List. As anyone who has ever tried to achieve this knows, it takes a lot of dedication and a little bit of insanity to accomplish this. It can not, however, be achieved without the help and eyes of fellow birders. So if you find or know of a rare or unusual bird, please let the following people know.

As of August, here are the numbers of birds reported for each birder.

State List

Bill Hailey – 226
Ph: (501) 225-2848

Dan Scheiman – 300
Ph: (501) 366-0840
Email: birddan@comcast.net

State & Big Year

Doris Boyles – St: 293 Yr: 247

Dottie Boyles – St: 293 Yr: 249
Ph: (501) 224-0302
Email: ctboyles@aristotle.net

Big Year

Dennis Braddy – 293
Ph: (501) 772-7633
Email: dmbbraddy@comcast.net

Sightings from Around the State

May 29th – Kenny Nichols reported seeing 11 **Fulvous Whistling-Ducks** at Bald Knob NWR

June 2nd – a pair of **Swallow-tailed Kites** were seen at the White River NWR by Dan Scheiman, Dennis Braddy and others

July 26th – a **Roseate Spoonbill** was seen by Kenny Nichols at Bald Knob NWR

August 12th – Dennis Braddy and Dan Scheiman found a **Marbled Godwit** at Treadway's fish farm in Prairie County.

August 18th – an **Olive-sided Flycatcher** was seen on Mt. Magazine by Don Simons.

August 20th – Dennis Braddy reported **Roseate Spoonbills, Wood Storks, American Golden-Plover, Black-bellied Plover, American Avocets** at Bald Knob.

August 24th – Two **Ruddy Turnstones** were seen at Treadway's fish farm by Dennis Braddy, Karen Holliday, Doris and Dottie Boyles.



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. Check out the web site at www.ascabird.org for more information about upcoming field trips.

September 29, 2007

Wapanocca National Wildlife Refuge

Lying only four miles west of the Mississippi River, the refuge is an important stopover for migrating waterfowl and songbirds traveling the Mississippi Flyway. We'll have a (slightly) increased chance of seeing eastern migrants such as Cape May Warbler. **We will leave at 6:00 AM from the Prothro Junction commuter lot** (immediately southeast of exit 157 off I-40). We should arrive at the refuge headquarters a little after 8:00 for those who wish to meet us there. Bring lunch, plenty of water and bug spray. Contact Dottie Boyles or Dan Scheiman for details.

October 26 – 28, 2007

Arkansas Audubon Society Field Trips

There is no ASCA field trip this month. Instead we HIGHLY encourage our members to attend the AAS meeting and associated field trips during October 26-28. The meeting is in Little Rock and all trips will be within 30 minutes of town. It is a chance to meet and bird with birders from across the state, friends you may know only through ARBIRD-L. You don't have to be an AAS member to attend. See page 4 for more information and registration or visit www.arbirds.org

November 17, 2007

Lake Dardanelle

We will meet at the **Commuter Parking Lot at I-630 and Shackelford Road at 7:30 AM** and carpool to Lake Dardanelle. Waterfowl will be the main attraction. Lake Dardanelle always has the opportunity to attract something unusual. Bring a lunch and plenty of water. Contact Dottie Boyles for more information.

December 2007

Little Rock and Lonoke Christmas Bird Counts

The Little Rock CBC covers one of the state's major urban areas while the Lonoke count takes place in a much more rural setting and includes numerous fishponds. Both CBC's are interesting in their own way and important citizen science is taking place. You do not have to be an expert birder to take part or to be a valuable contributor. Watch for details in the next issue of *The Snipe*.



Field Trip Reports

Stuttgart Airport

June 16, 2007

Thirteen birders visited Stuttgart Airport, including three who had never been on an ASCA outing before. Our target birds were Painted Bunting and Bell's Vireo. We quickly found one species, then the other, and then had both species singing at the same time! Everyone got great looks at both birds. They couldn't have been more cooperative! We tallied 23 species in two hours. Highlights included: **Northern Bobwhite (3), Common**

Nighthawk (3 flying and perching in plain sight), Bell's Vireo (5), Yellow-breasted Chat (1), and Painted Bunting (1 stunning male). After lunch we went to Roth Prairie Natural Area where Bill Shepherd taught us a lot about the history of the prairie patch and its plant life. We also observed butterflies, dragonflies, and robber flies at both locations. --Dan Scheiman

Mount Magazine State Park

July 14, 2007

Eleven bird & butterfly enthusiasts gathered at Mount Magazine State Park (Important Bird Area) in search of **Rufous-crowned Sparrows** and **Diana Fritillaries**. We found 2 of the former but none of the latter. After six hours of fun we saw 30 bird species and 19 butterfly species. Those who needed certain species for their state or life list saw them.

Highlights included: **Wood Thrush, Black-throated Green Warbler, Ovenbird, Hooded Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Great Spangled Fritillary, Juniper Hairstreak, and Funereal Duskywing.** --Dan Scheiman

Rodney Paul – Raptor Rehabilitator

July 19, 2007

Fourteen Birders visited raptor rehabilitator Rodney Paul in El Paso, AR. ASCA had made a donation of \$500 to help Rodney construct a flight pen meeting the requirements for large raptors, like eagles, and this visit was to let those interested in this effort see the operation and the start of construction of the pen.

and **Eastern Screech-Owls** up close (very close). A number of the raptors we saw were released the following week. The construction of the pen has been started with work just starting on the upper tier.

Rodney gave us an overview of his activities in both raptor education and rehabbing. It was a great opportunity to see **Mississippi Kite, Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks, Barred, Great Horned, Barn**

Generous donations were made during the visit and when combined with other donations sent to ASCA came to \$785. Thank you for joining ASCA in this effort and we look forward to seeing its completion sometime this fall. --Ed Laster

Bald Knob National Wildlife Refuge

August 18, 2007

Thirty-two birders converged around the shorebird impoundment of Bald Knob NWR (Important Bird Area). ASCA claimed at least 18 of them as participants of our field trip. Among the masses of waders and shorebirds, highlights included: **3 Black-necked Stilts, 1 American Avocet, 3 Buff-breasted Sandpipers, 2 Upland Sandpipers, 1 American Golden-Plover, 3 Roseate Spoonbills, 10 Wood Storks, 2 Lark Sparrows, and 1 Wilson's Snipe.**

Around 11:00, a strong thunderstorm scattered our flock, but some of us managed to reconvene at Treadway's Fish Farm. There, we gathered 'round with books, binoculars, scopes, eyes and ears open to catch pearls of shorebird ID wisdom from Jeff Wilson. Highlights included: **34 Black Terns, 8 Forster's Terns, 1 Piping Plover, 1 leucistic Semipalmated Plover** (that looked like a Piping at first), and **9 White Ibises.**

Then we headed back to Bald Knob where we picked up **1 Baird's Sandpiper** and a **Wilson's Phalarope.** I know I didn't record every shorebird that was seen that day, but by the time we parted company, Jeff and the Nichols had 23 shorebird species for the day and were aiming for 25. --Dan Scheiman

Audubon Society of Central Arkansas

300 S. Rodney Parham Road, Suite 10
Little Rock, AR 72205

Forwarding and return postage guaranteed.
Return service requested.



Several birders were able to hold 'Cheyenne' when they attended the July field trip to Rodney Paul's
Photo by Ed Laster

Audubon Society of Central Arkansas
Chapter Only Membership Application

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Membership Level:	Student/Senior	\$10 per year
(Check One)	Regular	\$15 per year
	Family	\$25 per year
	Supporting	\$35 per year
	Patron	\$50 per year

Make check payable to "ASCA" and mail to treasurer Barry Haas, 804 Konrad Ct., Little Rock, AR 72223-9201. Please note that "Chapter Only Members" will not receive *Audubon* magazine. To receive *Audubon* magazine, you need to join the National Audubon Society (NAS).

Changes in address should be sent to the following. If a chapter only member, notify Jetletter at 300 S. Rodney Parham, Suite #10, Little Rock, AR 72205. If a NAS member, notify both Jetletter and the NAS at P. O. Box 51001, Boulder CO, 80322-1001

The Snipe is published quarterly by the Audubon Society of Central Arkansas. Our mission is to encourage programs and activities supporting all things natural, wild, and free, especially birds, bird habitat stability and improvement, as well as to promote fellowship among members, educate and inspire the public, and champion the highest standards of ethical outdoor conduct.

Who to contact if you find an injured bird

For a listing of an AR Game & Fish Commission authorized Migratory Bird Rehabilitator in your area, you can visit their website at:

<http://www.agfc.com/wildlife-conservation/rehabilitators.aspx>

or

http://www.agfc.com/pdfs/rehab/migratorybird_rehablist.pdf

*****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. It is the only white page listing with the last name Audubon.