

THE SNIPE

The Newsletter of the
Audubon Society of Central Arkansas



Photo by Charles Mills

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Share Your Birding Spark to Ignite the Passion within Youth

by Samantha Holschbach

Igniting passions that truly resonate within the heart, special people in one's life can create impacts that last a lifetime. Whether they are an influential teacher, a kind-hearted grandparent, a lifetime companion, or someone else, such people often polish the parts of us that remain dormant and undefined until they are finally unearthed, reflecting us in our essence, or alternately they create facets that wouldn't have been realized had these special souls not entered our lives. Out of the several that have influenced my life in momentous ways is my dad, whose love for nature and thus the birds has left me with a similar, insatiable zeal for the same.

Dwelling upon my upbringing, I can now see how his outdoor-minded influence oriented my inner compass to look to nature for inspiration and joy. One of my most cherished activities with him was deer spotting, in which he and I would embark on cold autumn nights with a large spotlight, searching for deer, owls and raccoons. After a time we developed our favorite locations to spy nighttime wildlife, including a field along a road aptly named "Deer Road," where hordes of deer often congregated; we once witnessed two bucks ramming their antlers together in a heated battle. In addition to spying this unforgettable happening, I'll always treasure my experience of encountering my first Great Horned Owl perched atop a tree, its ear tufts distinctly accenting the silhouetted figure. Seeing this stoic, mysterious creature in real life apart from photographs in books undoubtedly deepened my appreciation for encountering wildlife in their element.

So, too, did encountering birds in our backyard kindle within me a respect especially for our winged wonders. When I was in elementary school, Dad had erected many bluebird houses on our property. Accompanying him as he checked each nest box for activity, I was astounded when a flash of vibrant blue color rushed out of one box as Dad lifted the door—a male Eastern Bluebird! Understandably, I was quite enthralled at the magnificence of this bird that graced our ordinary backyard. In roughly the same time period, I was also blessed to hold a male Ruby-throated Hummingbird within my hand, another backyard jewel. The poor fellow had entered our open garage and, trapped, had ascended to the ceiling and remained there, buzzing about. Afterwards Dad had caught the bird with a butterfly net and gently allowed us kids to hold it until it regained its strength. Examining the iridescent feathers glistening more beautifully than any of my Barbie doll's dresses, I again, awed, could scarcely believe that this creature existed, and yet there it rested within my palm.

Today, these memories with Dad serve as far more than beautiful recollections of my past—they stand as the stepping-stones on which I have walked to reach my continually escalating love for nature and, in a more focused respect, the birds. Through birding I have connected on a deep level with my uncle Jim, my co-worker Mark, my cousin Aaron, my friend Jessica, my boyfriend Dan, and of course, my dear Dad. Through birding and spending time in picturesque locations my adoration of my Creator too has deepened. All in all,

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Effective Strategies

ASCA's meeting of May 8 was devoted solely to considering strategies for making ASCA more effective. As a first result, our June 12 meeting will be different in terms of how we go about doing things.

Those present and participating in the May meeting spent an hour-and-a-half evaluating each other's ideas and reached several decisions. Not surprisingly, we ran out of time before we had made even a good start at the four-page list of ideas generated by the membership in 2007. So there is much more left to do.

We'll make a decision at the June 12 meeting about when to pick up where we left off in May. Everyone has unique perspectives to bring to our deliberations. Bring yours and thereby raise the value of our decision making. We are aiming at involving more people, increasing our collective clout, and having more fun in the process. And it is going to take everyone's best thinking to get us there.

--Bill Shepherd

Share Your Birding Spark to Ignite the Passion within Youth

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birding has left me with a greater appreciation for life in its essence and my identity's own essence.

My hope is that all birders and I share their enthusiasm with young people who have yet to gain such an appreciation for the environment. Even a brief walk through the woods pointing out birds to a child or watching a feeder full of the common bright beauties—the cardinals,

buntings, and goldfinches—is enough to spark a lifelong interest and eventual passion for nature. Just as my short experience holding a hummingbird in second grade eventually developed into my hummingbird banding experience this May, one just never knows how sharing the birds with young people can blossom into impacts that endure beyond the reaches of our lifetimes.

To Old Friends and Familiar Faces

A personal note to all ASCA members who have not been attending the meetings or field trips in recent months, please know that you are missed and we would like to see you back soon.

--Doris Boyles

Conservation News

Barry Haas

Lake Maumelle Watershed Your Drinking Water at Risk

The battle to protect Lake Maumelle, the primary drinking water supply for roughly 400,000 central Arkansans, continues. On May 27 the Pulaski County Planning Board may consider changes to county subdivision regulations that are being updated for the first time since 1972. Included in those subdivision regulation updates is a section dealing with the Lake Maumelle watershed, the land surrounding the lake that drains into it.

Some of you may remember that the Central Arkansas Water (CAW) Commission approved a comprehensive Lake Maumelle Watershed Management Plan in early 2007. The Plan, if implemented, would protect Lake Maumelle by limiting the number of new houses that could be built in the watershed that includes parts of three counties - Pulaski, Perry and Saline. The two overarching goals of the Plan are to protect our high quality drinking water in Lake Maumelle and to be equitable or fair to private property owners in the watershed.

Bottom line- the proposed Pulaski County subdivision regulation changes are very biased in favor of large developers at the expense of small landowners, and would not offer the same protections as the Plan.

The consulting firm that was hired by CAW to help our community develop the Plan says the county ordinance falls well short of the Plan, and that CAW (that means we bill paying customers) would have to buy thousands of acres of land in the watershed to make up for the county ordinance being so weak compared to the Plan. If the weak Pulaski Co. ordinance is the only protection for Lake Maumelle, our water quality will get worse and our treatment costs will go much higher.

If the Pulaski Co. Planning Board on May 27 approves regulatory changes affecting the Lake Maumelle watershed, then those changes will go before the CAW Commission on June 12 for their support or opposition. Keep in mind the CAW Commission has no formal role in adoption of county ordinances. However, the county

ordinance will likely require support from the CAW Commission to be ultimately approved by the Pulaski Co. Quorum Court, the final stage of the ordinance process.

The problem? Since the proposed county ordinance is a marginal improvement over the lack of protection at present, the CAW Board could vote to support it in hopes of strengthening the ordinance over time to more closely mirror the Plan's much stronger protections. The downside? County government officials like Pulaski Co. Judge Buddy Villines may then tell CAW we've done our part on the county level, so please feel free to protect the lake more adequately by condemning and purchasing thousands of acres of private property. The proposed county ordinance is so weak it might require CAW to buy more than 4,000 acres which could cost CAW customers over \$100 million, raising our water rates significantly.

If the Pulaski Co. Planning Board approves any proposed county subdivision ordinance changes, the Pulaski Co. Quorum Court would then have to approve those changes for them to take effect. Pulaski Co. Judge Buddy Villines said that he believes the draft county ordinance will offer 80% of the protection offered by the Plan, while the CAW consulting firm that has worked on the issue for almost three years would not make that claim. Judge Villines and the Pulaski Co. Quorum Court will only do the right thing if enough of their constituents e-mail and call them and demand they do the right thing.

We could well end up with lower quality drinking water at a much higher price to pay for additional costly treatment so that a few large developers can build more houses than the watershed can support. Since our current high quality water at an affordable price is an economic engine that helps drive our state's economy, does it make good economic or environmental sense to take such a risk? Where is the sound leadership on the Central Arkansas Water Commission, Judge Villines or Pulaski Co. Quorum Court?

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Citizen Scientists Rally For A Rare Bird

Audubon Arkansas and the Department of Biological Sciences at Arkansas State University (ASU) are pleased to announce the start of a new citizen science survey for a rare and declining Arkansas bird – the Bewick's Wren.

The Bewick's Wren is a species of high conservation concern in Arkansas and throughout much of its range. Once common, today it is extremely rare east of the Mississippi River. The eastern edge of its range currently runs through Arkansas, making Arkansas the frontline for stemming the decline. The decline is probably due to habitat loss and competition with the House Wren for nest sites. Researchers at Audubon Arkansas and ASU need help searching for wrens across the state. "Arkansans have the opportunity to contribute significantly to a high priority conservation issue," said Dr. James Bednarz, Professor of Wildlife Ecology at ASU. He added, "By learning where Bewick's Wrens live and which habitats they prefer we can make informed decisions about how to best manage for the species."

To learn more and sign up visit the Arkansas Wren Survey web site at ar.audubon.org/wren. The survey is open to anyone of any age and experience

level who can spend at least 4 hours at least twice per year looking and listening for wrens in appropriate habitat.



Bewick's Wren
Drawing by Samantha Holschbach

Survey materials can be found online. Participants also can chat with each other, share stories and findings, and ask questions through the project's e-mail discussion group AR-WREN. There is no fee to participate. Funding is provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Arkansas Game and Fish Commission through the State Wildlife Grant Program.

Lake Maumelle Watershed

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One final note- there is also an effort on the state level to ban direct discharge of wastewater- yes, that means sewage- into public drinking water lakes like Lake Maumelle that are owned by municipalities or water authorities like CAW. Currently there is no direct discharge of sewage into Lake Maumelle, but with new development that could change. Doesn't that seem like a law that would already be in place? Well, it's not.

The Arkansas Pollution Control & Ecology Commission started a public process that will culminate by the end of this year to possibly ban such direct surface discharges of sewage into a public drinking water supply. Without that protection put into place, the battle to control new

development in the Lake Maumelle watershed would be an even more uphill fight.

Your drinking water is not as protected as you think it is. What will you do to help protect it? If you want to contact Pulaski Co. Judge Buddy Villines to express your opinion, you can e-mail him at: cojudge@co.pulaski.ar.us.

You can go to the Pulaski County web site to get contact information for Quorum Court members at: <http://www.co.pulaski.ar.us/quorumcourt2.shtml>. You can also express your opinion to CAW by calling Chief Executive Officer Graham Rich at 501-377-1342.

Upcoming Programs

ASCA meets at 7:00 PM the second Thursday of each month at the John Gould Fletcher Library (except when noted), 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 12, 2008 – There and Back Again

Guest Speaker: **Delos McCauley**

Program: **There and Back Again: Birding from Pine Bluff to Los Angeles**

Our friend and photographer from Three Rivers Audubon, Delos McCauley, will show his quality bird photos from his recent cross-country trip.

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July 10, 2008 – Your Drinking Water

Guest Speaker: **Graham Rich**

Program: **Lake Maumelle Watershed Plan**

Graham Rich, CEO of Central Arkansas Water, will discuss the Lake Maumelle Watershed Plan. ASCA has been closely following this plan's development and its recent controversies. Learn more about the plan that affects our drinking water.

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### August 14, 2008 – Educational Ornithological Seminar

Guest Speaker: **Dan Scheiman, Ph.D.**

Program: **Shorebird Identification**

Dan Scheiman will give the next talk in his Occasional Educational Ornithological Seminar Series with a review of shorebird identification. If you plan on attending the August 23<sup>rd</sup> field trip to Bald Knob you won't want to miss this talk.

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Common Moorhen
photo by Charles Mills

Lake Fort Smith State Park Reopens

by Joan Ellison

Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism

With the reopening of Lake Fort Smith State Park birders will now have a new place to bird in western Arkansas. The park reopened May 21st, at its new site on the western side of 1,400-acre Lake Fort Smith, according to State Parks Director Greg Butts. The park closed on January 2, 2002, to be relocated due to the enlarging of Lake Fort Smith and Lake Shepherd Springs into a single reservoir.

Sporting all new facilities, the 259-acre park features 30 campsites; a group lodge that can accommodate up to 32 persons; picnic sites; a pavilion; marina; double lane boat launch ramp; playground; 8,000-square-foot visitor center with exhibit gallery, meeting/classroom and gift shop; hiking trails (under construction) and other park support facilities. A trail link allows Lake Fort Smith State Park to once again serve as the western terminus of the Ozark Highlands National Recreation Trail.

Lake Fort Smith State Park is one of the 52 state parks administered by the State Parks Division of the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism (ADPT). The City of Fort Smith owns the park and has leased it to the ADPT.

Greg Butts emphasized, "In partnership, the City of Fort Smith and the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism were dedicated to making the new Lake Fort Smith State Park a first-class recreational destination." He continued, "It is a showcase offering improved facilities and scenic views of the lake and surrounding Boston Mountain Range of the Ozark Mountains from its picturesque valley setting."

The park will serve as a gateway to adventure offering a wide range of outdoor activities including camping, fishing, kayaking, swimming, hiking, backpacking, mountain biking and nature study.

A dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony for the park will be held on Thursday, June 19 at 11 a.m. in the campground near the pavilion.

For details and to make reservations visit www.ArkansasStateParks.com/LakeFortSmith or call the park at: 479-369-2469. The park is located eight miles north of Mountainburg on U.S. 71, or take Exit #29 off I-540 at Mountainburg.

Sightings from Around the State

April 4th – Kenny & LaDonna Nichols reported a **Yellow-headed Blackbird** near the entrance of Holla Bend NWR and 2 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** in Delaware Bay at Lake Dardanelle.

April 8th – Josh Engelbert saw a **Marbled Godwit** on Punkin Center Road near Jonesboro.

April 8th – Kenny and LaDonna saw an adult breeding plumaged **Laughing Gull** at Treadway's fish farm in Prairie County.

April 9th – Karen Rowe reported two **Swallow-tailed Kites** were observed by an AGFC/ASU grad student over Prairie Bayou on the WRNWR.

April 10th – Dick Baxter reported seeing around 500 **Dunlin** on Punkin Center Road.

April 10th – Joe Neal and Joe Woolbright found a **Long-billed Curlew** west of Chesney Prairie near Siloam Springs. This is the first time since 1987 one had been reported in the state and only the 7th overall.

April 20th – Kenny and LaDonna found two **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** and a **Swainson's Hawk** at a cattle farm between Dardanelle and Holla Bend NWR.

May 3rd – Dan Scheiman and Bill Shepherd discovered a **Black-billed Cuckoo** in Gillam Park.

May 4th – Charles Mills discovered a **Whimbrel** at the Okay Levee at Millwood Lake.

May 4th – Kenny and LaDonna spotted 250 **Wilson's Phalaropes** and 5 **Swainson's Hawks** along Hwy 155 west of Holla Bend NWR, and a **Cinnamon Teal/ Blue-winged Teal** hybrid at Holla Bend.

May 6th – Leif Anderson discovered a **Common Ground-Dove** north of Hector.

May 10th – Herschel Raney reported 4 **Yellow-headed Blackbirds**, a **Black-bellied Whistling Duck** and 10 **Wilson's Phalaropes** at Lollie. **Cape May Warbler** and **Veery** at Bell Slough WMA. **American Avocet** at Cadron flats and a **White-faced Ibis** off Hwy 65.

May 10th – Dennis Braddy and Skip heard a **Veery** on the Arboretum Trail of Pinnacle Mountain State Park. A lifebird for Skip.

May 10th – Bill Holimon found a **Black-billed Cuckoo** at Allsopp Park in Little Rock during the ACSA field trip.

May 12th – Nick Anich saw 5 **Hudsonian Godwits** at Bald Knob NWR.

May 15th – Joe Neal reported 16 **Red Crossbills** seven miles south of Waldron.

May 24th – Terry Butler had a **White-winged Dove** visiting his feeder in Pangburn.



ASCA Field Trip Schedule

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 about birds from more experienced birders. Perhaps a chance to get a lifebird for those dedicated birders. Check out the web site at www.ascabird.org for more information about upcoming field trips or contact Karen Holliday at karenh@arkleg.state.ar.us.

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*June 14, 2008*

### **Bona Dea Trails and Sanctuary, Russellville**

We will meet at 7:00 a.m. at the Mayflower commuter lot off I-40 West. We will arrive at the Bona Dea Trails parking lot around 8:15 a.m. for anyone who would like to meet us there. Bona Dea Trails is 186 acres of wetlands and woodlands in the Prairie Creek floodplain. The trails are paved and level for easy walking.

From Little Rock, take I-40 west to Russellville. Take Exit 81. Turn left off the exit ramp, then left at the light to go south on Hwy 7. Cross over the interstate, take a right at the second stoplight (Lakefront Drive). The trail parking area will be on your left in less than a mile. Lunch is on your own. There are picnic tables at Bona Dea and several fast food restaurants nearby. There may be a possible side trip to Holla Bend or Lake Dardanelle. For more information contact Karen Holliday at [karenh@arkleg.state.ar.us](mailto:karenh@arkleg.state.ar.us).

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July 19, 2008

Emerald Park and the Arkansas River Trail, North Little Rock

We will meet at 7:00 a.m. at Emerald Park in North Little Rock. Emerald Park is located behind Pulaski Technical College in North Little Rock.

Take the Levy Road exit off I-40 (exit 152), go south on Hwy. 365/Pike Ave. Turn right on West Scenic Drive or continue on to Pershing Ave. and turn right. Go to the top of the hill and follow the signs to Emerald Park. West Scenic Drive dead-ends at the Park. If you take Pershing Ave., turn right into the Pulaski Tech grounds at the Emerald Park sign. Depending on time, we will also walk part of the Arkansas River Trail below Fort Roots. All trails on this trip are paved. This is a morning trip only. Contact Karen Holliday at karenh@arkleg.state.ar.us for more information.

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*August 23, 2008*

### **Bald Knob National Wildlife Refuge**

We will meet at the Other Center parking lot behind McDonald's, in North Little Rock at 7:00 am. We will arrive at the Bald Knob NWR office around 8:30 a.m. for anyone who would like to meet us there.

Our target birds will be shorebirds and anything is possible this time of year. Wood Storks, Roseate Spoonbills and Marbled Godwits have been seen on past field trips. Bring your lunch, plenty of water, scope, hat, and sunscreen. Very little walking will be involved.



# Field Trip Reports

## Warren Prairie Natural Area and Moro Big Pines Natural Area-Wildlife Management Area

March 15, 2008

The weather was great as 17 enthusiastic birders arrived at Warren Prairie Natural Area. Bill Holiman gave an excellent overview of the unique characteristics of the Natural Area and an explanation of how the salt slick barrens and prairie mound woodlands were formed. We were able to flush two **Henslow's Sparrows** and spent 15 minutes admiring them. The sparrows were life birds for several on the trip. We spent the rest of the morning spotting an interesting variety of birds scattered throughout the diverse habitat. Before leaving Warren Prairie, we flushed two more Henslow's.

After lunch, we headed for the Moro Big Pine Natural Area-WMA. Through excellent habitat management of the loblolly-

shortleaf pine flatwoods, Moro Big Pine is now home to at least two-dozen **Red-cockaded Woodpeckers**. Our group inspected three possible RCW roost sites.

We stopped to look at a Pygmy Rattlesnake sunning itself in the middle of the road.

Keith Newton, who has a cabin on nearby Champaganole Creek, joined us. After showing Keith the roost sites, we followed him to his cabin, which sits on the bayou area of the creek. He gave an interesting account of the diversity of wildlife and flora that he sees around his cabin. We ended the day with 39 species of birds. --Karen Holliday

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Camp Robinson Special Use Area and Woolly Hollow State Park

April 12, 2008

The day was cool and very windy as 17 birders headed to the Camp Robinson Special Use Area to look for **Bachman's Sparrows**. We heard several sparrows singing over the noise of the wind. One bird teed up briefly allowing part of the group a good but quick look.

Our next stop was Woolly Hollow State Park. We walked the first part of the Huckleberry Trail, from the trailhead to the campground. Because of the windy conditions birds were scarce, however several critters were out enjoying the sunshine. We spotted skinks, lizards, frogs, two garter snakes, a multitude of butterflies and lovely spring flowers. The dogwoods were numerous and quite showy. After lunch, several birders stayed to walk the trail below the dam where we found a **Northern Parula**, a life, state, and year bird for several. We tallied 34 species for the day. --Karen Holliday

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## International Migratory Bird Day Allsopp and Murray Parks, Terry Lock & Dam, Little Rock

May 10, 2008

Twenty-five birders from around the state were on hand to celebrate IMBD with a walk through Allsopp Park. Included in our group were two birders from New Jersey and one from Montana. We were briefly joined by a reporter from Channel 4's KARK.

The cloudy weather kept birding slow at the beginning, but by mid morning the trees began to come alive with activity. Highlights included: **Mississippi Kite 3, Yellow-billed Cuckoo 1, Great-crested Flycatcher 3, Blue-headed Vireo 1, Swainson's Thrush 1, Wood Thrush 1, Chestnut-sided Warbler 1, Magnolia Warbler 5, Black-throated Green Warbler 2, Blackburnian Warbler 2, and Louisiana Waterthrush 1**. The highlight of the morning was the appearance of a **Black-billed Cuckoo** found at the base of the trail. A lifebird for several in the group.

Only a handful of birders traveled on to Murray Park. There we were able to add to our list: **American White Pelican 38, Green Heron 2, Caspian Tern 3, Warbling Vireo 1, Northern Rough-winged Swallow 85, Summer Tanager 3, Rose-breasted Grosbeak 1, and Baltimore Oriole 2**.

After lunch, our flock scattered with some of the group going to Two Rivers Park and others to Terry Lock and Dam where a most cooperative **Painting Bunting** was the highlight. At Two Rivers Park, **Dickcissel 88, Chipping Sparrow 3, Northern Parula 1, and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher 4** were added to the list.

We ended the day with 79 species and 698 individual birds. --Dottie Boyles

**Audubon Society of Central Arkansas**

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Northern Cardinal and White-throated Sparrow

Photo by Dale Provost

**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.

**Whom 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](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.