

THE SNIPE

*The Newsletter of the
Audubon Society of Central Arkansas*



Photo by Charles Mills

What's Inside?

President's Column	Page 2	Upcoming Programs	Page 5
Conservation News	Page 3	New Bird Platform	Page 6
Strength in Numbers	Page 4	Upcoming Field Trips	Page 6
Lake Fort Smith State Park	Page 4	Field Trip Reports	Page 7

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Raptors: From Injury to Release

*by Rodney Paul
Raptor Rehabilitator*

With raptor rehabilitation, the injuries are widespread from the most common, vehicle collision, gunshot wounds, and the so-called "orphaned" baby to diseases such as West Nile virus.

The rehabber performs the first evaluation. Is it a broken bone, is there blood present, does the bird seem to have any apparent difficulties? Much the same as a paramedic would evaluate a human casualty.

After an evaluation by the rehabber, it is determined if the bird requires veterinary attention. Not all cases require medical care, for instance, with "babies". Also, unfortunately, a broken joint such as an elbow, or a spinal injury is a death sentence as there is no hope of recovery for such a traumatic injury.

Most, if not all, raptor rehabbers have had the basic training required to properly evaluate a bird's immediate medical needs/care.

An injured raptor can require as little as a few weeks or up to six months of rehabilitation in order to be released back into the wild. During this time, the bird is limited to a particular size flight pen depending on his/her injury. As the "patient" gradually recovers, it is moved to a larger flight pen.

During the recovery period, the rehab bird has little or no contact with humans unless medications are prescribed.

Rehab patients are fed the diets consistent with what they would find in the wild. Babies are "trained" to hunt, in a controlled environment, often with the help of a surrogate

parent. When the birds are successful at catching their own live prey, they have proven their ability to be released back into their natural habitat.

Birds of prey usually establish a territory and ideally need to be released where they came from.

Unfortunately, this isn't always possible, as we do not want to release them back into the "predicament" that brought them to us in the first place.



Rodney Paul with a Mississippi Kite
Photo by Ed Laster

For birds that are determined to be non-releasable, there is a second chance. They can be used as educational tools to help educate the public regarding the laws, ecological and life cycle benefits we gain from raptors if you are properly permitted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

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Don't Believe Everything You Read

In the August 7 issue of the *Arkansas Times*, both Ernie Dumas and John Brummett took the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission to task for its natural gas leases in Petit Jean River Wildlife Management Area (Yell County) and Gulf Mountain Wildlife Management Area (Van Buren County). Dumas spoke of "despoiling thousands of acres of wildlife habitat and Brummett spoke of "prostituting, rather than conserving, our most naturally pure land."

Whoa, Nelly! The land that the Game and Fish Commission purchases for wildlife management areas is not "our most naturally pure land." Typically it has been land that just had all the merchantable timber removed from it (thus lowering its cost). Some of the land even has a history of crop production. Almost all of it has been grazed by cattle at some point. True, the land may have good-sized trees on it now—provided Game and Fish has owned it long enough; but the reason why the commission owns it is to maximize its production of specified game species, not because it is representative of presettlement conditions. (The latter is the mission of the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission.)

Give Dumas and Brummett credit for good intentions, but their information was faulty.

It should be emphasized that the disturbance to the wildlife management areas occasioned

by gas drilling will be mostly temporary and that such disturbance will affect only a small percentage of the total land in these wildlife management areas. Forests are renewable resources, though admittedly the forests in the floodplain of the Petit Jean River will recover much faster than those on Gulf Mountain. Sure, you can expect more cowbird parasitism on nesting songbirds until the trees grow back, but look what the commission can do with the money it is gaining! The disturbance will be mostly temporary, whereas the land that the commission will be able to buy with its gas money will remain wild forever.

Now, why did Dumas and Brummett have the monetary value of the gas leases (\$29.5 million) without the corresponding information about how the money would be used? Perhaps it is because the Game and Fish Commission negotiated this big deal in the dark without significant public involvement. And why did the commission not even talk about how the money will be and must be used when it announced its deal to the world? You'll have to ask them. I can't think of a single good reason. So is there a *bad* reason? It does appear that they thought they had something to hide, doesn't it?

What a pity when a good deal for Arkansas's wildlife ends up hurting the Game and Fish Commission's reputation.

Audubon Arkansas Society Fall 2008 Meeting

The AAS Fall 2008 Meeting will be held at DeGray State Park, October 24-27, 2008. To reserve a room in the lodge call 1-800-737-8355. The rate is \$85 for a single/double plus 10% tax. Be sure to tell the operator you are with the Arkansas Audubon Society.

For more information or to download a registration form you can check out the AAS web page at <http://www.arbirds.org/index.php>.

Conservation News

Barry Haas

Lake Maumelle Watershed at Risk

Protection of central Arkansas' primary drinking water supply, Lake Maumelle, remains precarious as members of the community work with both Central Arkansas Water (CAW) and Pulaski County government, including County Judge Floyd 'Buddy' Villines and the 15 Justices of the Peace who make up the Quorum Court.

It has been a year and a half since community groups working with CAW developed a comprehensive Lake Maumelle Watershed Management Plan (the "Plan"). That is when an effort started to implement the assorted provisions in the Plan. The Plan will protect the Lake Maumelle watershed from overdevelopment that would both threaten our drinking water quality and drive up its cost. The Plan allows development in the Lake Maumelle watershed, the area surrounding the lake that drains downhill into the lake, but would limit development to protect the lake and our drinking water quality while also protecting the property rights of small and large landowners alike.

By early March 2008 CAW and Pulaski Co. staff had drafted a good ordinance that would have offered most of the protections in the Plan. But by late March developers had managed to rewrite that draft and it became more of a development plan than a plan to protect our drinking water. Since then members of the community have been working to increase pressure on our elected officials to implement protections in accordance with the Plan so our children and their children will have the same high quality drinking water at an affordable price we enjoy today.

So what can and should you do? If you have internet access, go to <http://www.co.pulaski.ar.us/> which is the Pulaski Co. web site. Contact Judge Villines and members of the Quorum Court, and urge them to approve an ordinance which will protect Lake Maumelle in accordance with the Watershed Management Plan and its assorted provisions.

The big problem? Judge Villines says he will not "do zoning", even though some form of zoning is needed to adequately protect your drinking water. By zoning we are talking about things like minimum lot sizes (5 acres on low slope and 10 acres on high slope land as defined in the Plan) to limit housing density. We also need to restrict the size of wastewater systems so that if there is a

problem in the future it would limit the amount of raw sewage that would end up in our drinking water supply. And the Plan includes restrictions on the percentage of each real estate parcel that must be left undisturbed to reduce runoff into the lake. Undisturbed, forested areas offer the best protection, and the reason we have such high quality drinking water coming out of Lake Maumelle today is that 90% of its watershed is currently forested.

All of the protections in the Plan were approved by consensus by more than 20 community groups ranging from the Chamber of Commerce, local governments, watershed property owners, environmental groups, CAW water customers, real estate interests, etc. That compromise is being threatened by Judge Villines unwillingness to support this broad-based community effort, but to instead favor several large developers who have Villines' ear on the subject.

CAW has already told Pulaski County they will pay the cost of implementing all the protections needed on the county level. And it is far safer and less costly to keep pollutants from getting into Lake Maumelle than it is to treat them once they are in your drinking water. An emerging threat is the presence of pharmaceuticals and other toxic substances like pesticides and herbicides which can now be detected at trace levels. Nobody knows the implications of such substances in drinking water. Limiting the number of houses that can be built in the Lake Maumelle watershed will effectively limit the amount of potential pollution that could get into our drinking water supply.

The choice is clear- you can either protect your high quality drinking water supply now before large scale development takes place, or you will pay a much higher water bill in the future for lower quality drinking water. The choice is up to the 400,000 central Arkansans who rely on CAW for their drinking water. What will you choose? If you remain silent, others will choose for you.

For more information on this issue contact Barry Haas (bhaas@sbcglobal.net) or 821-4097 (Little Rock).

Please forward any e-mails you receive from Pulaski County regarding Lake Maumelle to Barry Haas (bhaas@sbcglobal.net).

Strength in Numbers

by Dan Scheiman

There is strength in numbers. As members of Audubon, whether National or Chapter-only, we speak with one voice on issues that concern us all. Our organization carries weight with lawmakers when we say “The Audubon Society of Central Arkansas and its 800 members urge you to...” But an even stronger statement is made when a politician receives 800 letters written by individuals united on a subject.

One of the duties of Audubon, both National and ASCA, is to bring to your attention important, breaking news on environmental issues and to suggest ways that you can get involved. Please take

suggestions for involvement to heart. We’ll be even more successful in our conservation efforts with your help.

At the local and state levels, Conservation Chair Barry Haas does an admirable and tireless job tracking issues and notifying us of opportunities to attend meetings, make phone calls, or write letters. Please attentively read the Conservation News column in every Snipe and follow Barry’s lead.

At the state and national levels, National Audubon offers its action alert network. I urge you to subscribe to AudubonAction at

audubonaction.org. When critical environmental legislation arises in Washington you’ll receive an Action Alert e-mail summarizing the issue and providing you with a quick and easy way to make your individual voice heard. Often this is through a customizable form letter directed to your representative. Two mouse-clicks and you’re done. Activism doesn’t get any easier than that!

Believe it or not, lawmakers do take note when they receive personalized messages from their constituents. So express your opinion at every opportunity. Our collective voice is made stronger when every individual speaks up.

Lake Fort Smith State Park

by Jay Schneider

Lake Fort Smith Park Interpreter

Lake Fort Smith State Park is your gateway to adventure in the natural diversity of the Boston Mountains.

Lake Fort Smith State Park re-opened on May 21, 2008, allowing visitors for the first time since 2002. The park is once again the western terminus for the 165-mile long Ozark Highlands Trail. This trail follows just above the shoreline of Lake Fort Smith for around the first five miles along the western shore, then crosses Frog Bayou and follows the northern shore until it meets up with Jack Creek. Then the trail turns east towards White Rock Mountain. This trail and another 12 miles of trail will give birders countless ways to access bird habitats from lakes, waterfalls, creeks, and Ozark hillsides to highpoints within the mixed Oak-Hickory forest.

Recent sightings include: Osprey, American Avocet, Blue Grosbeak, Eastern Kingbird, Chuck-will’s-widow, numerous shorebirds, gulls, and waterfowl, along with the usual sightings.

Springtime and early summer are great times to locate numerous warblers including the Hooded Warbler. Greater Roadrunners use the cedar glades for roosting

and are seen and heard often throughout the park. Bald Eagles have been seen around the park weekly for the past 18-20 months and during the winter dozens call the lake home.



Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism Photo

Weekly lake tours on a 25-passenger tour boat are a great way to experience the lake and experience wildlife from the water. Fall migration tours and winter eagle tours are planned for the remainder of the year. For more information on the park and upcoming programs: <http://www.arkansasstateparks.com/lakefortsmith/> or call the park at 479-369-2469.

Upcoming Programs

ASCA meets at 7:00 PM the second Thursday of each month. The programs are free and open to the public. **Please note meeting locations and time changes.**

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### September 11, 2008 – Milkweed Biology

Guest Speaker: **Dr. Eric Sundell**  
Program: **Milkweed Biology**  
Place: **Roosevelt Thompson Library**  
Meeting Time: **6:30 p.m.\***

Dr. Eric Sundell, Emeritus Professor University of Arkansas at Monticello and current instructor of Arkansas Audubon's tree identification workshop, will describe the biology and marvelous pollination system of that unique family of flowering plants that brighten up fields and gardens and provide food for butterflies.

Roosevelt Thompson Library, 38 Rahling Circle, LR, phone 501-821-3060. Rahling Circle is located at the northeast corner of Chenal Parkway and Rahling Road (entry from Rahling Road). Rahling Circle is U- shaped rather than a circle, with the open end of the 'U' on Rahling Road. The library will be open during our meeting in the 'program room'. **\*This meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m.**

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October 9, 2008 – Conservation Concerns in Alaska

Guest Speaker: **Stan Senner**
Program: **Current Conservation Concerns in Alaska**
Place: **McMath Library**
Meeting Time: **7:00 p.m.**

Stan Senner, Director of Audubon Alaska, will discuss migratory birds that link the Arctic and Arkansas, and share with us those burning issues that are heating up the arctic. Learn what's going on and how you can help. See the North from the comfort of the South.

McMath Library, 2100 John Barrow Drive, LR, phone 501-225-0066. McMath Library is located 1/2-mile south of the Kanis and Barrow Road intersection on the right (west) side of John Barrow Drive. **Note: the automatic gate will close at 7:00 p.m.**, if you arrive after that time you will have to park outside the gate and walk to the library building. The meeting room is just inside the front door to the right.

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### November 13, 2008 – Red Slough Wildlife

Guest Speaker: **Robert Bastarache**  
Program: **Red Slough Wildlife**  
Place: **Terry Library**  
Time: **7:00 p.m.**

Robert Bastarache, District Biologist for the Oklahoma Ranger District of Ouachita National Forest, will take us on a virtual tour of an amazing magnet for birds and wildlife in southeastern Oklahoma. If David Arbour's bird lists aren't enough to whet your appetite, Robert's talk will surely spur you to visit this important bird area.

Terry Library, 2015 Napa Valley Dr., LR, phone 501-228-0129. Construction on Napa Valley Road has forced the relocation of the library's parking lot entrance. Enter the library parking lot from Hinson Road into the parking lot of the building next door (to the east on Hinson Road). Those two parking lots connect. The library meeting room is on the east end of the library with entry doors adjacent to the meeting room.

## **Arkansas' Birdiest Month**

Which month of the year do you think you have the greatest possibility to spot the most birds in the state of Arkansas?

Take a guess before you read on. (You may or may not be surprised).

After breaking down the AAS 50th Anniversary Arkansas Bird List by month this is what I discovered:

April-299  
October-288  
May-262  
September-257  
November-238  
March-230  
August-215  
December-211  
January-195  
February-190  
July-185  
June-183

Good Birding  
David Ray

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## **Save the Date**

December 11<sup>th</sup> will be the date for ASCA's annual Holiday Potluck and Silent Auction. Our Guest Speaker this year will be from the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism

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*.



# ASCA Field Trip Schedule

## New Bird Observation Platform

On August 18th a ceremony was held at Millwood Lake dedicating a new bird observation platform at Beard's Bluff Overlook. It is the beginning of efforts by the Corps of Engineers to make the lake a better place for birders and to educate the public about birds. The platform has kiosks that feature local birds of interest. Charles Mills and Dan Scheiman helped by providing their expertise. The Corps is also working on a trail (and perhaps other features) that will give better access to more of the Okay Levee.

## Least Grebe at Centerton



Photo by Joe Neal.

This Least Grebe was discovered by Mike Mlodinow and Jacque Brown on August 3rd at Centerton Fish Hatchery. This was a First record for Arkansas.

## Welcome New Members!

Fred Greenwood, Little Rock  
Gail Cardwell, Mabelvale

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 life bird for those dedicated birders. Check out the web site at [www.ascabird.org](http://www.ascabird.org) for more information about upcoming field trips or contact Karen Holliday at [karenh@arkleg.state.ar.us](mailto:karenh@arkleg.state.ar.us).

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September 13, 2008
Village Creek State Park

We will meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Prothro Junction commuter lot off I-40 East. Village Creek State Park is located on Crowley's Ridge, a unique geologic anomaly covered with a lush hardwood forest, and includes two lakes. The focus will be migrating songbirds. Bring lunch and plenty of water. The park trails are a mix of easy to moderate difficulty. The Military Road Trail is a beautiful trail that preserves the most dramatic remaining portion of the Trail of Tears. It became a major route of the Indian Removal for Creek, Chickasaw and 600 Cherokee. Directions: take I-40 east to Forrest City. Take Exit 242 at Forrest City and go 13 miles north on Hwy. 284 to the park. Approximate driving time from Little Rock is two hours.

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*October 18, 2008*  
**Bell Slough Spillway Trail**

We will meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Mayflower commuter lot off I-40 West at Exit 135. The Bell Slough spillway trail takes you through a varied habitat ranging from hardwoods to swampy areas. The diverse environment should give us a good mix of birds. Because of the possibility of tall grass and muddy areas, rubber boots are recommended. We will spend the morning birding the spillway. For those who wish to bird the main entrance area of Bell Slough in the afternoon, bring lunch.

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November 8, 2008
Andrew Hulsey Fish Hatchery and Arkadelphia Sewer Ponds

We will meet at 7:30 a.m. at the south end of the commuter parking lot at I-630 and Shackelford Road in Little Rock and carpool first to the Andrew Hulsey Fish Hatchery, then on to the Arkadelphia sewer ponds. Both locations are good not only for waterfowl but an assortment of other species because of the surrounding woodlands area. There will be quite a bit of driving and walking. The walking is on level ground. Bring a lunch and plenty of water. Barry Haas will assist with this trip.



Field Trip Reports

Bona Dea Trails and Sanctuary, Russellville

June 14, 2008

Five intrepid birders braved early morning storms to arrive at Bona Dea just as the clouds began to break up. On the Old Shorty Trail we searched for the **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** nest seen on previous visits. No sign of the nest or birds. We walked the Serendipity Trail that loops around Black Water Swamp. **Prothonotary Warblers** abounded.

A diminutive Prothonotary earned our respect and sympathy as it worked vigorously to feed a substantially larger and very demanding immature **Brown-headed Cowbird**. **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** called throughout the morning. We spotted two sets of female **Wood Ducks** being followed by their ducklings, all little balls of fluff. Further along, we saw ten, much more developed, immature **Wood Ducks**.

After Bona Dea we headed north on Highway 7 to look for **Yellow-throated** and **Cerulean Warblers**. At Long Pool Recreation Area, Dan "Golden Ears" Scheiman heard a **Yellow-throated Warbler** singing on the far side the Big Piney River. He coaxed it across the river where it sat above our heads giving everyone great looks. A lifebird for Craig and Dale Provost.

Using directions from Mel White's book *A Birder's Guide to Arkansas*, we continued up Hwy. 7 to Hwy. 16. Approximately 1.6 miles down the Piney Creeks WMA gravel road, Dan heard a singing **Cerulean Warbler**. A very cooperative adult male gave us all breathtaking looks. A **Worm-eating Warbler** also put in an up-close appearance. We tallied 44 species for the day. --Karen Holliday

Emerald Park and the Arkansas River Trail, North Little Rock

July 19, 2008

Six birders strolled around Emerald Park and the adjacent quarry in North Little Rock. The morning started out cool, calm, and quiet. We started off with views of a pair of **Scissor-tailed Flycatchers** with a nest in a pine tree on Pulaski Tech's campus. Along the Arkansas River we watched a family of three **Eastern Kingbirds** and a family of five **Baltimore Orioles**. A **Northern Bobwhite** called repeatedly from the quarry. We saw 31 species over three hours: **Canada Goose, Northern Bobwhite, Great Egret, Green Heron, Mississippi Kite, Broad-winged Hawk, Mourning Dove, Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, White-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, Fish Crow, Purple Martin, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Summer Tanager, Northern Cardinal, Baltimore Oriole, and House Finch**. --Dan Scheiman

Bald Knob National Wildlife Refuge

August 23, 2008

Thirty birders spent a hot and humid morning studying migrating shorebirds at Bald Knob NWR and Important Bird Area. The shorebirds weren't the only long-distance migrants; members of the Disorganized Bird Club drove from Newton Co. and a couple from Fort Smith left at 4 AM to join us. We had about as many bird species as birders, including 12 shorebird species and a flock of

five Roseate Spoonbills. As we worked on distinguishing the dowitchers and yellowlegs we spotted 10 Black-necked Stilts and a single Sanderling. Long-legged waders outnumbered short-legged shorebirds as recent rains flooded fields leaving little mudflat habitat. Still, during shorebird season, Bald Knob is the place to be! --Dan Scheiman

Audubon Society of Central Arkansas

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Forwarding and return postage guaranteed.
Return service requested.



A rare visitor to Arkansas this Whimbrel was spotted and photographed by Charles Mills at Millwood Lake

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

*****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.