

THE SNIPE

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The Newsletter of the Audubon Society of Central Arkansas

www.ascabird.org



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Hummers, Hummers Everywhere!

During the month of December, several hummingbirds decided to spend their winter here in Arkansas, instead of in their normal, more tropical, locations farther south.

The **Rufous Hummingbird** returned to Fayetteville, not only for the Christmas Bird Count in December but also for the Great Backyard Bird Count in February. A **Broad-billed Hummingbird** found a wonderful feeding place with warm hospitality in White Hall. While a **Broad-tailed Hummingbird** found a good food source and a friendly family in Beebe. A special thank you goes to the three families, who not only hosted these rare visitors to Arkansas but also were kind enough to share them with other birders from around the state.

So keep those hummingbird feeders ready, you never know what might show up!



Broad-billed Hummingbird

photos by Robert Herron



Broad-tailed Hummingbird

ARKANSAS AUDUBON SOCIETY CALL TO MEETING Lake Village, Arkansas

The 2006 spring meeting of the Arkansas Audubon Society will be held **May 5-7**, in Lake Village. Friday registration will be at the Ramada Limited from 4:00- 5:45 pm.

Accommodations can be arranged at the Ramada Limited (870) 265-4545. Additional rooms are available at the Lake Shore Motel (870) 265-2238 and the Budget Inn (870) 265-5341. Camping is available at Lake Chicot State Park and private parks.

Directions: Lake Village is on Lake Chicot in southeastern Arkansas. The Ramada Limited is on the west side of Highway 65. Meals and programs will be at the Lake Village Country Club. Directions will be included in your registration packet.

**Field Trips for this event are listed at the bottom of page 7.

**AAS Call to Meeting Registration form may be found on the back page.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

DREW PHILLIPS

Greetings Birders and Friends,

Spring is just around the corner. Any day now I expect to hear of the first Purple Martins arriving in our Natural State. ASCA will be providing access to some great birding through our monthly field trips. Our field trips are one of the best ways to get your feet wet if you are a beginning birder, and great fellowship and fun for more experienced birders.

I would like to encourage anyone who has thought about attending one of our field trips to act on that impulse this spring. Every field trip has experienced birders and quite often some of the very best birders in Arkansas. Do not worry about being inexperienced! Seasoned birders like nothing better than helping a new birder learn about our great sport.

We will be going to Dagmar WMA and Brinkley in search of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. That is a long shot, but who knows? There will be plenty of other birds to see. It will be well worth the trip just to see the habitat! In April we are having a field trip especially for beginners. It will be in Little Rock at Boyle Park and Hindman Park, two of the best spring migration hotspots for songbirds.

Our May field trip will be held in conjunction with our annual potluck picnic at Gilliam Park.

We held it there last year and had really good birding and great fellowship at the picnic. Check the Field Trip section for dates, times and details.

I would like to announce that Dan Scheiman was elected to the ASCA Board of Directors at our January Planning Meeting. Dan is an Ornithologist with Audubon Arkansas. He has been a great asset on our field trips, and at our business meetings. Thank you Dan!

If you have any questions about field trips, monthly programs or what kind of bird is in your backyard, give me a call. I will do my best to help you.

Good Birding!

Drew M. Phillips
ASCA President

BFI to Expand Landfill

Barry Haas

BFI has issued a proposal to expand their landfill on Mabelvale Pike, just south of Asher Avenue. The landfill, which was sadly issued a permit many years ago, is at the confluence of Fourche, Coleman and Rock Creeks. This is the most critical area of Little Rock's watershed and probably the most unsuitable location for a landfill in all of Little Rock. There are currently two other landfills in Pulaski County with ample capacity, so this is strictly an issue of BFI not wanting to give up the profits it makes for piling up mountains of garbage, much of it from outside Pulaski County, in our most sensitive watershed area.

BFI is seeking to expand the landfill both by raising the height of the landfill and also expanding horizontally onto additional acres. The expansion would add about 20 years of life to the 3-4 years of capacity left under their existing permit. BFI is attempting to package and sell the expansion as a new park for the city, offering to build a neighborhood park atop the pile of garbage once they are done in 20 years or so.

Back in the 1990s BFI received a permit to expand after promising they would never again ask to expand the landfill. So much for the value of BFI's word!

BFI has shown it will do anything, and I mean anything, to get another expansion approved, including their recent effort to take over the Geyer Springs Neighborhood Association by having BFI landfill employees join the neighborhood group and then vote to replace the association president with someone who supports BFI's proposed expansion. This show of incredible stupidity on BFI's part garnered them several days worth of very negative stories in the media. Watch for news of BFI's proposed expansion.

Conservation News

Barry Haas

There are a number of conservation issues that you need to know about.

Arkansas's Extraordinary Resource Waters

To start with, do you care about Arkansas's Extraordinary Resource Waters (ERWs)? ERWs are our very best streams, rivers and lakes and were given special protections by the legislature in the late 1980s. But there is an effort to reduce or eliminate those protections, which could, for example allow dams on ERWs. This attempt to change regulatory protections of ERWs is being led by River Valley Regional Water District (Crawford Co. in west Ark.), but would affect every specially designated and protected water body in the state.

The conservation community argued against this 'third party rulemaking' process, but the Pollution Control and Ecology Commission (PC&E Comm.), at the urging of Commissioner Randy Young, approved the measure. River Valley RWD wants to change Regulation 2, which governs surface waters in Arkansas. River Valley RWD currently buys water from Ft. Smith and has a long-term contract covering the next 15 years or so, but wants to dam Lee Creek near the town of Mountain Pine to provide their own drinking water supply. Conservationists urged River Valley RWD to work with Ft. Smith water officials toward a regional water supply concept. Our special streams should not be dammed when there are other less expensive, less environmentally damaging options

available to provide safe, affordable water to Arkansans.

The Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), which carries out policies adopted by the PC&E Comm., and ADEQ Director Marcus Devine are strongly opposed to this attempt to lower protections for ERWs. And the Environmental Protection Agency, sent the PC&E Comm. a strongly worded letter opposed to allowing the third party rulemaking process to go forward. So we have to hope that if the PC&E Comm. caves in and votes to reduce or eliminate protections for our ERWs, EPA will ride in on their white horses to save the day. But let's work hard to persuade PC&E Comm. to do right by our ERWs and not depend on EPA to save us.

There will now be four public hearings including one in Little Rock on Monday, **April 17th at 1:00 p.m.** in the Commission's meeting room at the Arkansas State Police headquarters building in SW Little Rock.

There will also be a public comment period to allow written or e-mail comments to be submitted, but they must be received by ADEQ no later than **4:30 p.m. on May 3rd**. E-mail comments should be sent to: reg-comment@adeq.state.ar.us

Please mark your calendars so you can submit your comments

before the May 3rd deadline. With public hearings **March 27th in Van Buren, April 3rd in Mountain Home and April 10th in Springdale** as well as the **April 17th hearing in Little Rock.**

You may want to wait until sometime in April to submit your comments as additional information, that might become available between now and then, may affect any comments you would choose to make.

The Commission is currently scheduled to vote at a special meeting on October 26th whether or not to amend Regulation 2 to weaken ERW protections that could allow dams and other such degradations of ERWs.

We encourage you to submit public comment in writing by the **May 3rd deadline** and ask the PC&E Commission to continue current strong protections for our ERWs and reject River Valley RWD's attempt to build an unnecessary dam on Lee Creek. ERWs belong to all of us, and they are part of our state's economic engine that provides lots of tourism dollars and tourism related jobs. Let's not kill the goose that lays the golden eggs.

Stay tuned for news on this and other conservation issues. It is up to all of us to be aware of what is going on in our community and to make our voices heard when we disagree with what is being proposed.

Dark Hollow/Bass Pro

The proposed Bass Pro shop in the Dark Hollow area of North Little Rock is on hold because of a lawsuit in which ASCA is one of the plaintiffs. Bass Pro refuses to move its proposed store to an area just east of Dark Hollow that would not have the same environmental problems as the Dark Hollow site.

Rebsamen Park Road

Another attempt is being considered to open Rebsamen Park Road to commuter traffic. Alltel Corporation is the driving force on this. In the early 1990's ASCA and others fought the first attempt both in court and then winning a vote of support from Little Rock voters in November 1992. That area along the Arkansas River has developed as an unparalleled recreational area along both sides of the river. Walkers, joggers, bicyclists and others use this unique area called Little Rock's 'Chain of Parks' (Rebsamen, LaHarpe and Murray parks are side-by-side along this stretch of the Arkansas River).

Steve's Excellent Woodpecker Adventure

Steve Shunk, from Sisters, Oregon, spent nine days in Arkansas, during the month of December, searching for woodpeckers. I asked Steve to share some of his birding adventures with us. While it was difficult to condense 8 pages of notes to one, I've tried to pick out the highlights from his trips around the state. Thanks Steve for sharing.

DAY 1 – WEDNESDAY, DEC. 7

Hello all, another report from a local birder inspired me to report my first afternoon of birds in Arkansas. I spent a little over an hour walking around Hindman Park and it was very birdy. The highlight was my 'life' AMERICAN WOODCOCK that flushed from the thicket on one of the side trails to Fourche Creek. This was a glorious surprise! I was also in search of woodpeckers. As soon as I got out of the car, there were three PILEATEDS next to the parking lot. There were many RED-BELLIES, plus one or two each of DOWNY, HAIRY, FLICKER, and YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER.

DAY 2 – THURSDAY, DEC. 8

David Luneau was kind enough to let me tag along for a morning walk in the White River NWR, out of Ethel. The habitat at White River is awesome, even in the cold rain. We found many woodpeckers, including a number of RED-HEADS, RED-BELLIES, YB SAPSUCKERS, and DOWNIES, a few PILEATEDS, and one HAIRY. On the drive back, I spent some time watching two great spectacles: BLACKBIRDS and SNOW GEESE. The most unusual thing (for me) was to see that at least 1/3 of the birds were BLUE GEESE. We usually see about 1 in 500 in Oregon (blue to white)

P.S. I enjoyed the company of the Audubon Society of Central Arkansas tonight at their annual potluck and fundraiser. Thanks to the group and its leaders for the invitation and hospitality.

DAY 3 – FRIDAY, DEC. 9

For my third day in the state, I headed for Hot Springs. I made it to the Red-cockaded roost by 3:15, at about 4:15, I heard two or three RED-COCKADED WOODPECKERS calling. One of the birds finally flew into the roost-tree area. What a character!

DAY 4 – SATURDAY, DEC. 10

I spent the day with Joe Neal birding the Upper Buffalo River Valley. We spent the most time at Cave Mtn, Steel Ck, and Lost Valley. The birding and scenery were fantastic. Highlights included RED FOX SPARROWS, numerous WT SPARROWS, and 2-3 SWAMP SPARROWS. We saw at least three adult BALD EAGLES in the valley and heard BARRED and EASTERN SCREECH-OWLS. We also found my first E. TOWHEES and E. BLUEBIRDS of the trip.

DAY 5 – SUNDAY, DEC. 11

I spent most of the morning photographing woodpeckers in Old Post Rd Park. The next few hours were occupied at Holla Bend NWR. There were lots of HARRIERS and RED-TAILS, and my first SHARP-SHINNED HAWK of the trip. I didn't get to spend much time with woodpeckers here, because I was distracted by all the sparrows! I found FIELD, SWAMP, SONG and WHITE-THROATS. I also had a couple PINE WARBLERS. Further down the road, I found SAVANNAH, WHITE-CROWNED, as well as one LINCOLN'S SPARROW. I spent some intimate photo time with an oblivious armadillo, and ran across two hen TURKEYS on my way out of the refuge.

DAY 6 – MONDAY, DEC. 12

I spent a couple hours in the Stuttgart area. My main stop was the airport. The walk out was loaded with SAVANNAH SPARROWS and E. MEADOWLARKS. It wasn't until I reached the field past the outer runways that I found HORNED LARKS, before long I saw LAPLAND LONGSPURS. On the walk back,

I waded through the interior grassy patches, it only took a moment before I flushed my first SMITH'S LONGSPUR.

DAY 7 – TUESDAY, DEC. 13

I drove to Pine City to look for that OTHER endangered woodpecker. I no sooner got out of the car when I heard the chitter-chatter of the RED-COCKADED WOODPECKERS. That is really one charismatic little bird. But that wasn't all that I found. I saw (not just heard) seven of the eight woodpeckers on my "target" list for the trip. I enjoyed extended looks at RED-HEADED, and watched a little tiff between a RC and a RH. The evening wrapped up with a GREAT-HORNED OWL calling. A couple MARSH WRENS in the bog, east of the woods, and another GH OWL on a wire. It was a good day.

DAY 8 – WEDNESDAY, DEC. 14

I sit in my hotel room tonight after my connecting flight to Houston was delayed beyond recovery. I also learned that it was -10⁰ at my house this morning, with over a foot of snow remaining on the ground. Today's report, covers my planned morning and my impromptu evening of birding in L. R. area.

I left just enough time this morning to do the Faulkner Lake/Terry Lock run described in Mel White's *A Birders Guide to Arkansas*. Highlights on this route were mostly waterbirds. GREAT EGRETS, CANVASBACKS, RING-NECKED DUCKS, BUFFLEHEAD, LESSER SCAUP & a pod of HORNED GREBES.

DAY 9 – THURSDAY, DEC. 15

First stop was a heart-thumping hike up Pinnacle Mountain. Next, I stopped at the picnic area by the closed gate. The birding was very good here of common passerines. Best bird at this site was PINE WARBLER, but I got nice shots of CARDINAL, JUNCO, MYRTLE WARBLER, and WT SPARROW.

Much better birding was had at Two Rivers Park. I found beaucoup sparrows here, with SAVANNAHS and FIELDS mixed with a few SONGS at the garden area. I headed out the trail toward the AR River. There is a small cattail marsh on one side and bog on the other that were both very productive. I found another clump of SWAMP SPARROWS, mixed with SONGS in the marshy area, but my best find was a VIRGINIA RAIL in the cattails.

I want to thank all of you who contributed to a successful and enjoyable adventure. I especially appreciate all the positive feedback on the daily reports. I figure that the least I can do when a community is so welcoming is to share my daily bird sightings. I can safely say that I will be back, sooner or later, and I invite you all to come visit us in Oregon the first chance you get. When the Arkansas summer becomes meltingly oppressive, pop out to the east side of the Oregon Cascades. The weather is great and the birding is even better. I would be happy to help you find our 11 species of breeding woodpeckers, along with anything else that strikes your fancy. Keep up the good work conserving habitat for that magical 9th woodpecker. If nothing else, you will make life better for the other eight!

Steve Shunk – Paradise Birding: Tours for Bird Lovers

P.S. – I ended the trip with 102 species, including 8 woodpeckers, 7 or 8 "year-birds", three or four birds I had not seen in a few years, and 1 lifer. I will return again the first weekend in March for a very short visit. We'll see what I can do to pad my Arkansas state list!

Upcoming Programs of the 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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## March 9, 2006 – Waterbird Adventures

Guest Speaker: **Allan Mueller**  
Program: **Waterbird Adventures**

Allan Mueller, Avian Programs Director with the Arkansas Field Office of The Nature Conservancy, will present a program entitled "Waterbird Adventures." This program will include numerous slides of waterbirds and ramblings on their natural history and conservation issues.

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April 13, 2006 – Benefits of Prescribed Burning

Guest Speaker: **Roger Fryar**
Program: **Ecological Benefits of Prescribed Burning**

Roger Fryar, U.S. Forest Service, Ozark-St. Francis National Forest. Mr. Fryar will give a presentation entitled "Ecological benefits of prescribed burning."

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## May 20, 2005 – Annual Spring Potluck and Field Trip, Gilliam Park

We are combining our annual Spring Potluck with our May field trip. For specifics, please see May 20<sup>th</sup> Field Trip and Picnic on the Grounds at Gilliam Park on page 6. Last year, the birding was excellent and the food was great! This is a fun event you won't want to miss. So grab your binoculars, your favorite dish and we'll see you there!

### **Audubon Society of Central Arkansas Chapter On Membership Application**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**City** \_\_\_\_\_ **State** \_\_\_\_\_

**Zip** \_\_\_\_\_

|                                  |                |               |
|----------------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Membership Level:<br>(Check One) | Student/Senior | \$10 per year |
|                                  | 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 South Rodney Parham, Suite #10, Little Rock, AR 72205. If a NAS member, notify both Jetletter and the NAS at PO Box 51001, Boulder CO, 80322-1001.

**President:**  
Drew Phillips  
501-228-5245  
drewmilp@yahoo.com

**Vice-president:**  
Bill Holimon  
bholimon@sbcglobal.net

**Recording Secretary:**  
Open

**Treasurer:**  
Barry Haas  
501-821-4097  
bhaas@sbcglobal.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

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

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

**Christmas Bird Count Compiler:**  
Dan Scheiman  
501-280-9024  
birddan@comcast.com

**Conservation:**  
Barry Haas  
501-821-4097  
bhaas@sbcglobal.net

**Field Trip Coordinator:**  
Open

**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  
lrbluejay@sbcglobal.net

**Newsletter Editor:**  
Dottie Boyles  
ctboyles@aristotle.net

**Vacant:**  
Education, Outreach,  
Publicity, Migratory Counts



# 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](http://www.ascabird.org) or contact Drew Phillips at (501) 568-3182 or (501) 228-5245 for more information about upcoming field trips.

March 11, 2006

## Brinkley and Dagmar WMA

We will meet at the **Commuter Parking Lot at I-630 and Shackleford Road at 7:30 AM** and carpool to Brinkley and Dagmar WMA. We'll be walking along the Mud Slough and Apple Lake birding trails in the heart of Ivory-bill country where possible sightings have occurred. The trails are level and grassy and go through bottomland hardwood forest with some open water. This is a transitional time of year. Winter birds will still be with us, a few early migrants may arrive, and some permanent residents will start breeding. Butterflies also are possible if the day is sunny. A variety of restaurants are available in nearby Brinkley for lunch. Bring plenty of water.

April 22, 2006

## Boyle and Hindman Parks -Little Rock

We will meet at the **Commuter Parking Lot at I-630 and Shackleford Road at 7:30 AM** and carpool, first to Boyle Park, then on to Hindman Park. This field trip will be especially for beginners. So if you have never been birding before and would like to find out what the excitement is all about, this would be an excellent trip for you. Boyle Park and Hindman Park are two of the best spring migration hotspots for songbirds in Little Rock.

May 20, 2006

## Field Trip at Gilliam Park & Picnic on the Grounds

We will meet at the commuter parking lot on **I-630 & Shackleford Road at 7 am**. We will proceed to Gilliam Park for a morning field trip and have our annual spring picnic at the park. We plan to be finished with the bird walk by noon and have our potluck at the pavilion in Gilliam Park.

Gilliam Park is a large city park in the Granite Mountain area, off Springer Blvd. Access to this park, which is leased to Audubon Arkansas, is currently limited but will be open to the public again as Arkansas' first Audubon Nature Center in a few years. They have graciously granted us access on Saturday, May 20<sup>th</sup>. This park features a varied habitat from White Oak glades to bottom land hardwoods. We expect it to be full of songbirds and other migrant species. This should be great fun with good birding and a potluck picnic. Please contact Drew Phillips at 228-5245 for more information.

**\*\*\*\*THE BIG YEAR\*\*\*\***  
**Congratulations to**  
***Kenny and LaDonna Nichols***  
***of Pangburn, Arkansas***  
**on finishing 2005 with a total of**  
***311***  
**Species for Arkansas!!!**



# Field Trip Reports

## Little Rock & Lonoke Christmas Bird Count Results

December 2005

The Little Rock and Lonoke Christmas Bird Counts were held on December 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, respectively. The Christmas Bird Count is an annual event sponsored by National Audubon Society. It is the longest running bird survey in the nation and since its inception, in 1900, has spread to Canada, Mexico, and Latin America. This long-term dataset has revealed important trends in winter bird populations, such as the alarming 98% range-wide decline of Rusty Blackbirds. Audubon Society of Central Arkansas sponsors the Little Rock and Lonoke counts.

During the Little Rock CBC, 24 participants in 9 parties traveled a combined total of 381 miles to tally 18,269 individual birds of 89 species. Highlights include **1 Spotted Sandpiper**, **1 Sedge Wren**, **2 Le Conte's Sparrows**, **5 Orange-crowned Warblers**, and a record **122 Rusty**

Dan Scheiman - CBC Co-Complier

**Blackbirds.** One-hundred nineteen of those blackbirds were observed on the Hindman Park golf course.

During the Lonoke CBC 19 participants in 8 parties traveled a combined total of 450 miles to tally 99,726 individual birds of 109 species. **Snow Geese (41,454)** and **Red-winged Blackbirds (28,998)** comprised the majority of the individual birds observed. Highlights include **2 Spotted Sandpipers**, **31 Dunlin** (two species that don't regularly winter in Arkansas), **1 Rough-legged Hawk**, **1 Bewick's Wren** (two species that are difficult to find in the area), and **7 Cackling Geese** (a new species for the count).

Please join us next year. All skill levels are welcome. It's a great way to watch and learn about birds while contributing to our knowledge of their distribution and abundance.

## Holla Bend NWR

January 21, 2006

On January 21<sup>st</sup>, 12 birders attended Audubon Society of Central Arkansas' field trip to Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge. We saw 45 species. Holla Bend is known for its Bald Eagles in winter, and as a reliable spot to find wintering Short-eared Owls. We saw a whopping **7 Bald Eagles**, 2 of them adults. Although we did not flush a **Short-eared Owl**, we did find a flattened spot in the grass containing the feathers and

Dan Scheiman

foot of a Red-winged Blackbird as well as **THREE** owl pellets! A rodent jawbone was visible in one pellet. We did flush at least **12 Le Conte's Sparrows** from the tall grass across from the observation tower.

A personal highlight for me was a singing **Fox Sparrow**. This is the first time I can remember hearing their rich, melodious warble.

\*\* **AAS Call to Meeting** - Field Trips listed are for **SATURDAY, May 6**. Depending on demand some may be repeated on Sunday, May 7.

### A- Baxter Farm near Arkansas City - Depart 7:00 am from Ramada Limited parking lot.

This trip explores 20,000 acres of private property near Arkansas City. Includes Breeding Mottled Ducks, King Rails, Least Bittern, Common Moorhen, and shorebirds. The best birding area in southeast Arkansas and not normally open to the public. Most birding from or near vehicles with little walking. Limit 20 participants.

### B- Mississippi Levee Tour - Depart 6:45 am from Ramada Limited parking lot.

This trip will go along the Mississippi River Levee stopping at borrow pits for waterbirds and wooded areas for songbirds. Most birding from or near vehicles with short walks on side roads into the forest. Limit 20 participants.

### C- Grand Lake Loop - Depart 7:15 am from Ramada Limited parking lot.

This loop goes south almost to the Louisiana border. From the top of the levee we will scan treetops and borrow pits, drive down to the Mississippi River and stop to look for migrants in the trees around water areas. This is route 50 as described in *A Birder's Guide to Arkansas*. Short walks, most near vehicles. Limit 20 participants.

### D- Lake Chicot State Park - Meet 7:30 at Park visitor center parking lot.

We will begin by walking the one-mile nature trail, which should be excellent for woodland birding at this time of year. At 10:30 we take the park boat for a trip on Lake Chicot to some otherwise inaccessible areas. Note: this trip will stop at the Lakeside Cafe for lunch before returning to the park. \$6 charge for the boat trip. Lunch at the Cafe will be on your own. Considerable easy walking on level ground. Limit 14 participants.

### E- Overflow National Wildlife Refuge - Depart 6:45 from Ramada Limited parking lot.

This refuge is a wetland complex that includes bottomland hardwood forest and should be teeming with migrants at this time of year. Prothonotary, Yellow-throated and Swainson's Warbler. Limit 20 participants.