

THE SNIPE

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The Newsletter of the Audubon Society of Central Arkansas

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Mount Magazine and Stuttgart Airport Recognized As Important Bird Areas

Dan Scheiman

Bird Conservation Director, Audubon Arkansas

On March 22nd the Important Bird Areas Technical Committee recognized Mount Magazine and Stuttgart Municipal Airport as the state's 23rd and 24th 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.

Magazine Mountain (2,753 ft in elevation) is the highest point in Arkansas. Since Bill Shepherd discovered Rufous-crowned Sparrows there in 1972, the mountain has consistently supported 50-100% of the state's population. This may be the eastern-most population in the world. Prescribed fire and thinning are used to maintain the sparse juniper-hardwood forest with a grassy understory on south-facing bluffs that birds prefer. Neotropical migrants such as Acadian Flycatcher, Wood Thrush, Black-throated Green Warbler, and Hooded Warbler are common breeders. More than 3,000 raptors migrate by the mountain each year including a few sightings of Peregrine Falcons. Thanks goes to Don Simons (Mount Magazine State Park Interpreter) and Bill Shepherd for helping to fill out the nomination form.

Located in the Grand Prairie region, Stuttgart Municipal Airport maintains remnant tallgrass prairie and shrubland patches for birds such as Short-eared Owl, Loggerhead Shrike, Sedge Wren, Bell's Vireo, Painted Bunting, and rarely Henslow's Sparrow. Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, Arkansas Game & Fish Commission, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the City of Stuttgart have an agreement to conduct prairie restoration. The airport is especially known to birders as one of the most reliable and certainly the most accessible location to find Smith's Longspurs in the state; as much as 15% of the state's population regularly winters in the short *Aristida* (three-awn grass) patches that border the runways.

Aristida grows on poor, disturbed soil left behind by runway construction on many of Arkansas' airfields. However, bermuda grass is often planted after construction, leaving little room for *Aristida*. Restoration plans at Stuttgart include seeding 131 acres to *Aristida*. If you visit be sure to first stop at the airport terminal so employees know you are birding and can point you in the right direction. Thanks to Carl Humphrey (Airport Manager) and Bill Shepherd for help with the nomination form.

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

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

DREW PHILLIPS

Greetings Birders and Friends,

Spring is here and summer is just around the corner. On the environmental front the news is disappointing. Judge Howard has ruled against our lawsuit against The Corps of Engineers and Dark Hollow. I feel certain we will appeal the ruling.

Another issue of great importance is the threat to Arkansas Extraordinary Resource Waters. There is a proposal to weaken the current regulations protecting our most valuable rivers and streams. The comment period ends at

4:30 PM, June 2, 2006. The comment period may have past by the time you receive this, but you should be alert to this issue. The Arkansas Dept. of Environmental Quality is the regulatory agency.

The past several weeks we have seen gas prices soar. I will keep my trips as close to home as possible. There are many opportunities for birding in the Central Arkansas area. Two Rivers Park, Pinnacle Mountain State Park, Bell Slough at Mayflower, Burns Park, Allsopp Park, Boyle Park

and many others are less than 30 minutes from home. This will be an excellent summer to rediscover the birds and other wildlife in our own back yard and burn a little less fuel. I will also avoid hopping from spot to spot in my car and utilize the walking trails with the side benefit of getting some much-needed exercise.

I hope to see you soon!

Good Birding
Drew M. Phillips
ASCA President

Dark Hollow

Barry Haas

In early May federal Judge George Howard granted a motion to dismiss a lawsuit filed by the Arkansas Nature Alliance, Audubon Society of Central Arkansas and several individuals that sought to stop construction of a shopping center including a Bass Pro store in the Dark Hollow area of North Little Rock, a wetlands area immediately east of I-30 where it runs north through North Little Rock and then south of I-40 as it heads east from its junction with I-30. The lawsuit was filed based on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers not following existing federal law that required them to fully consider the environmental impact such a shopping center would have on this critical drainage basin. A large part of North Little Rock's drainage, something like 5,000 acres, goes through and is filtered by the wetlands in Dark Hollow.

Unfortunately, Judge Howard ruled that the plaintiffs lacked standing to file the lawsuit. An appeal of Judge Howard's ruling to the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals in St. Louis is likely to follow, so stay tuned for further developments on this issue.

Rebsamen Park Road

Barry Haas

Little has happened in public since UALR presented its study on Rebsamen Park Road to the Little Rock Board of Directors in early March. The UALR study reiterated that the same problems evident in the early 1990s if Rebsamen Park Road were to be extended for a commuter route are still present today. And many more people use that area along the Arkansas River, including Rebsamen, Murray and Laharpe Parks, for recreational pursuits today than did so 15 years ago. If anything, there would be more problems extending Rebsamen Park Road today than there would have been back in the early 1990s when the public very clearly said 'no' to the idea.

We can only hope the 'message' sent to the Board by Little Rock voters in November 1992 plus the earlier legal judgments against extending the road will prevail. A majority of Board seats plus the Mayor's seat will be on the ballot this November. Rebsamen Park Road could be 'the issue' this fall when we decide who we want representing us at city hall.

Conservation News

Barry Haas

Arkansas' Extraordinary Resource Waters

You still have time - but only until 4:30 p.m. on June 2nd - to submit your comments on a proposal to weaken or eliminate special protections currently given to Arkansas' Extraordinary Resource Waters, or ERWs. Arkansas conservation groups are united in opposition to weakening protections for our most pristine rivers and water bodies.

Why would Crawford County and the city of Van Buren propose to get water by building a \$167 million dam (cost estimate in 2000) when clean, affordable water is already available from existing, nearby sources? Answer: when the purpose is really to create a recreational lake, even if it destroys Lee Creek, one of our very few ERWs. These are special places that we all have a responsibility to help protect for our children and their children.

Arkansas has more than enough water in existing lakes, reservoirs and the Arkansas River to meet our water needs for many decades to come. A better solution than yet one more dam on another of our extraordinary streams is communities working together to make the best use of existing water supplies. That's what Little Rock, North Little Rock and surrounding communities did by coming together to form Central Arkansas Water. The creation of Central Arkansas Water allows us the opportunity to provide high quality water for almost 400,000 Arkansans at a far lower cost by pooling our resources. Why can't Van Buren and Crawford counties work together just like we have here in central Arkansas to protect extraordinary places like Lee Creek while also insuring an abundant supply of high quality, affordable water for that region of the state?

Extraordinary Resource Waters (ERWs) are the purest, raw water bodies in Arkansas. Of 20,000 stream miles in Arkansas, only 16% of those miles are designated "extraordinary" and given extra protection.

People from all 50 states and many countries come to Arkansas to enjoy our streams and rivers, providing tens of millions of dollars in income to the state. In 2005, the Department of Arkansas Parks and Tourism

estimates that tourism and recreation added \$6.4 billion in economic value to the Arkansas economy. ERW streams and lakes are also the most important waters for fishing and outdoor recreation, and Arkansas' most rare and endangered wildlife inhabit these waters.

Special interests are seeking to revise and weaken Regulation 2, which governs Arkansas Surface Water Quality Standards. There is no need to change Regulation 2, as it would weaken protections given to our very best streams. If the Arkansas Pollution Control and Ecology Commission adopts the weakened standards, an ordinary ditch will have more protection than the Buffalo, Caddo, Cadron, Cossatot, Devils Fork of the Little Red, Illinois Bayou, Saline, Spring and Strawberry Rivers as well as Lake Ouachita, to name but a few.

Please take a few minutes now to submit your comments and make sure your voice is heard. Written comments opposing changes to Regulation 2 that protect ERWs **must be received by the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) no later than June 2nd at 4:30 p.m.** You can send your comments by e-mail to the attention of Doug Szenher at: reg-comment@adeq.state.ar.us

Please make sure your comments clearly state that you are opposed to changing Regulation 2 as proposed by the River Valley Regional Water District (Crawford County) that would weaken protections for all our state's Extraordinary Resource Waters (ERWs). Or, if you prefer, you can send regular mail comments to Doug Szenher, Public/Media Affairs Manager, Ark. Department of Environmental Quality, Public Outreach & Assistance Division, P.O. Box 8913, Little Rock, AR 72219-8913, but they must arrive at ADEQ no later than 4:30 p.m. on June 2nd.

For more information or if you have questions about ERWs, please contact:

Barry Haas
bhaas@sbcglobal.net or (501) 821-4097

TO A PAINTED BUNTING

*Joseph C. Neal
Fayetteville, AR*

While I have lived most of my life in western Arkansas, central Arkansas was my home for a few years in the early 1970s. My father, Grover Ray Neal, was Superintendent of the Little Rock National Cemetery. He died in 1972 in a boating accident on the Arkansas River. I moved from Fayetteville to help my mother, Hazel Kennedy Neal. I was 26 that year.

The Arkansas River valley is in my blood. As a kid I played around the creeks, ponds, and fields of Fort Smith. I kept crawfish in jars and old pots. Our relatives lived on small farms in Booneville, Alma, Casa and Magazine. Water snakes I found at Natural Dam north of Van Buren scared me and stoked a fascination for places conducive to crawfish and birds. As an adult, I would learn to call these places “ecosystems.”

Considering how my life has evolved, those couple of years in Little Rock were formative. In 1972 I did not own a car or a TV. It was my view that competition

for oil was at the root of many world problems. In the eyes of that 26-year-old “child of the 60s,” TV didn’t help people to think independently. I now own cars, TVs, computers and a DVD player. Like I said, things evolve.

In my twenties my head was filled with Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson. I discovered Walter Inglis Anderson of Ocean Springs, Mississippi. His watercolor depictions of the Gulf coast fauna and flora –and especially birds—rekindled youthful fascinations. Growing up, I did not own binoculars or bird books and there were no birders in my family. But at 26 I had my heart full of art, poetry and I bought pawnshop binoculars. I didn’t have the Gulf of Mexico, but I did have the Arkansas valley, health, youth, and a bicycle.

I found that I couldn’t go out of my Hillcrest apartment without bins in my bicycle basket. The 10-mile ride to my mother’s house turned into a birding and

wildflower expedition. Near my apartment, Allsopp Park proved a fine place for natural history explorations. One spring ride to the Arkansas River resulted in the discovery of a dead male Painted Bunting and a Cedar Waxwing, both squashed flat on the highway. Even the evils of that smashing couldn’t hide life’s radiant beauty and mystery.

I was in Little Rock this spring for the meeting of the Eastern Old Growth Society. I took a walk through memory, past my old place on Oak Street, and down Kavanaugh past Allsopp Park. It was spring, and the robins were caroling away. I thought a lot about my folks, my 20s, and those bicycle-birding rides, marriage-child rearing-divorce, graduate school, a Forest Service career.

I have lots better binoculars now, and a spotting scope and digital camera to go with. For me it’s about when the jack-in-the-pulpits will bloom and when the buntings will arrive. You know--the old mystery remains.

Congratulations to Barry Haas Conservationist of the year

The Sierra Club of Arkansas, hosted an awards banquet, on April 15, 2006, recognizing Arkansas citizens and organizations that have helped promote conservation in our state.

Receiving awards were Citizens Protecting Maumelle Watershed as activists of the year; and **Barry Haas** was named conservationist of the year.

Barry is treasurer and past president of ASCA and works tirelessly on conservation issues that affect Arkansas. Congratulations Barry, we are proud of you.

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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## June 8, 2006 – Arkansas’s Extraordinary Waters

Guest Speaker: **Martin Maner**  
Program: **Arkansas’s Extraordinary Waters**

Martin Maner, Chief of the Water Division of the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality, will present a brief history and overview of our ERWs and the need to protect them.

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July 13, 2006

Guest Speaker: **Kelly Irwin**

Kelly Irwin, herpetologist with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, will be our speaker on July 13.

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## August 10, 2006– Warren Prairie Natural Area

Guest Speaker: **Bill Holimon**  
Program: **Habitat use of Henslow’s Sparrows**

Bill Holimon with the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission will give a presentation on "Abundance and habitat use of wintering Henslow's Sparrows at Warren Prairie Natural Area."



Question Mark Butterfly  
Photo by Dan Scheiman

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# ASCA Field Trip Schedule

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

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June 17, 2006

Lorance Creek Natural Area

Our June Field Trip will be to Lorance Creek Natural Area. There is a boardwalk that extends into the bottomland hardwood swamp that makes up most of the natural area. We will be on the lookout for songbirds and waterfowl. If time permits, we may take a side trip if there is the possibility of seeing good birds in the area. We will **meet in the southwest corner (closest to Regions Bank) of the commuter parking lot at I-630 and Shackelford Road at 7:30 am**. This is a half-day trip so you will not need to bring a lunch, but **DO BRING BUG SPRAY!** Call Drew Phillips for more information.

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*July 15, 2006*

## Mt. Magazine State Park

Mount Magazine is the tallest point in Arkansas and has just opened the new lodge and restaurant. This park offers the best chance of seeing the Rufous-crowned Sparrow and the Diana Fritillary. Plus it will be much cooler on top of the Mountain than here in Central Arkansas. We will **meet in the northwest corner of the Wal-Mart Super Center located on the corner of Chenal Parkway and Highway 10 at 7:30 AM**. You may bring your lunch or try out the new restaurant in the lodge.

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August 26, 2006

Bald Knob National Wildlife Refuge

Our main goal on this trip is shorebirds. The shorebirds will be on their southerly migration to their winter homes in Central and South America. Anything is possible at this time of year at Bald Knob. Bring your lunch or eat in town and **don't forget your bug spray**. We will **meet at the Other Center parking behind McDonald's at 7:30 AM**.



Field Trip Reports

Lake Dardanelle and Mt. Magazine

February 25, 2006

Birders from around the state flocked to Kenny & LaDonna's home on Lake Dardanelle, with the hope of seeing the **Tufted Duck**. We were not disappointed. With the help of Kenny & LaDonna, the duck was found sleeping among a large raft of **Lesser Scaup**. Even though "Tuffy" slept through the majority of our visit, it was still great to see such a rare bird in Arkansas. Other birds seen were, **Black Scoter, Bufflehead, Canvasback, Horned Grebe, Pine Siskin, Cedar Waxwing and Yellow-rumped Warblers**.

Seven members of the ASCA group traveled on to Mt. Magazine to look for the Townsend's Solitaire and Rufous-crowned Sparrow. This time we came up empty. However, Mt. Magazine is always a beautiful place to be and we saw several more species of birds, as well as butterflies. We ended the day with a total of 44 species.



Field Trip Reports cont.

Dagmar Wildlife Management Area

March 11, 2006

Sixteen birders attended the trip to Mud Slough Birding Trail in Dagmar WMA. Dagmar is surrounded by Cache River National Wildlife Refuge in the heart of Ivory-billed Woodpecker country. We didn't see an Ivorybill but we did see six other woodpecker species. Although spring was just around the corner, a number of winter species were still present.

We saw 28 species: **Wood Duck, Mallard, Great Blue Heron, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Belted Kingfisher, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Winter Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, Brown Thrasher, Eastern Towhee, Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Northern Cardinal.**

After lunch at Gene's BBQ in Brinkley, four of us headed for a previously located **LARK BUNTING**, Arkansas' second state record. It was located at the intersection of Rt. 1 and Rt. 153 near St. Charles in Arkansas County. It was the very first bird we saw when we arrived! This handsome winter-plumaged male gave us long looks.

Dan Scheiman

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## Boyle and Hindman Parks – Little Rock

April 22, 2006

The weather was perfect as 9 birders met at Boyle Park for the Boyle and Hindman Parks field trip on April 22<sup>nd</sup>. Many thanks to Bill Shepherd for leading this trip and sharing his knowledge with us. The day started with 2 **Killdeer** as we left the commuter parking lot. We ended the day with a total of 51 species, with 43 tallied at Boyle Park. Several birds, including a **Great Crested Flycatcher, Baltimore Oriole, Ruby-throated Hummingbird** and a singing **Kentucky Warbler** were very cooperative and allowed for long looks. Other species seen included: **Great Blue Heron, Green Heron, Red-headed, Red-bellied and Hairy Woodpeckers, Northern Flicker, Nashville, Magnolia and Pine Warblers, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-breasted Chat, Wood Duck, Eastern Phoebe, Tufted Titmouse, Brown Thrasher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, White-eyed Vireo, Summer Tanager, Wood Thrush, Barn Swallow,**

**Brown-headed Nuthatch, N. Mockingbird** (with a broken wing), **Belted Kingfisher, White-throated Sparrow** and a **Mississippi Kite**. We watched as a female **Northern Cardinal** was building her nest and a pair of **Red-shouldered Hawks** were keeping watch over theirs.

Other species included **Eastern Chipmunk, Green Tree Frog** and **Pearl Crescent Butterfly**.

Five people traveled on to Hindman Park, where we tallied 17 species of birds along with a **Red-spotted Admiral, American Lady** and **Common Checkered-Skipper**. New birds for the day included **Hooded Warbler, Northern Parula, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Cedar Waxwing, Eastern Bluebird, Cooper's Hawk** and **Turkey Vulture**.

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Gillam Park and Picnic

May 20, 2006

Barry Haas did a great job leading the Gillam Park field trip on Saturday, May 20th. It was also good to see so many new faces joining us on this outing. The first field we visited just outside the park yielded the most birds with a total of 19 species seen during the short time we were there. Highlights included **Orchard Oriole, Dickcissel, Indigo Bunting, Chimney Swift, Eastern Blue Bird, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Rock Pigeon, Blackburnian Warbler, Blue Grosbeak, Mississippi Kite** and a flyby of seven **Great Blue Herons**.

Inside the park the woods were fairly still with few species seen. Unfortunately you could not say the same for the overly friendly ticks and mosquitoes. **Carolina Wrens** and **Red-eyed Vireos** were heard calling in several places along the trail. Also seen were **Summer Tanager, Great Crested Flycatcher, Blue Jay** and **American Robin**.

According to Dan Scheiman of Audubon Arkansas the potluck-bird walk added Mississippi Kite, Rock Pigeon, Blue Grosbeak, and Orchard Oriole to the Audubon Nature Center list.