BIRDING: A PURSUIT FOR TREASURED FRIENDS

Samantha Holschbach
Harding University

Igniting a spark within participants for the natural world, birding is a hobby that seems to foster the thrills of discovering treasure, analogous to unearthing gold nuggets hidden in a western streambed or, more appropriately, finding Arkansas diamonds in a field at Crater of Diamonds State Park. Whether in our backyards or prime bird habitat, all we birders must do is scan through the foliage for a glimpse of our feathered treasures flitting about and singing.

My first true appreciation for birds blossomed while accompanying my dad and my county’s Audubon Society in Wisconsin in 2005. As it was the peak of the spring migration, the shrubs and trees teemed with myriad warblers and their contemporaries. Crossing a bridge over a river, the guide pointed out Chestnut-sided, Yellow, and Magnolia Warblers in the willows hugging the bank. I focused my binoculars on a male Magnolia Warbler, completely unprepared for the beauty I beheld—a glistening golden body traversed with ebony streaks and white accents. I was equally enthralled with the Chestnut-sided Warbler, whose coloration resembled the Magnolia’s save for the flanks washed in mahogany. Nevertheless, the most memorable moment was spying a male American Redstart bathed in sunlight, its orange highlights glowing like embers in a nighttime campfire.

That memory will forever be engraved upon my mind, spurring my zeal for birding in a way that has progressed into the present.

Aside from the quest for brilliantly-hued birds in the spring, which I can’t help but compare to an adult form of an Easter egg hunt, the birders themselves enhance this search. Unlike certain sports and hobbies that may limit participants, birding encompasses a broad spectrum of individuals differing, sometimes drastically, by age, skill, and physical abilities. From the tiny tyke who must be hoisted up to peer through a spotting scope, to the seasoned birder whose lengthy life list shocks beginners, all harbor the one element that matters: passion. This enthusiasm for the birds stands as the simple ingredient to bridge birders of all walks, causing all to embrace each other’s company in almost a kindred manner. Some birders invite fellow bird fanatics into their homes to see a backyard rarity over extended periods or load a car with people they have never before met—it is merely enough that the passengers are birders.

All in all, birding’s qualities that echo a treasure hunt, coupled with its whimsical way of linking diverse participants, showcase this hobby’s allure, an appeal that possesses benefits besides. Birders not only kindle a youthful spirit as they anticipate rarities or lifers, especially seen within the twinkling eyes of aged birders, but they gain physical vitality as they swiftly amble to their target birds’ locale. Thus, it is not so fanciful for birders to believe that the fountain of youth does indeed exist, disguised in the awe of peering through a kaleidoscope in which the colored pieces are composed of our treasured friends flitting just outside our windows.

ASCA’s Holiday Potluck & Silent Auction

Come join us on Thursday, December 13th from 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. at Magnolia Lodge for our annual Holiday Potluck and Silent Auction. This fun event is a great opportunity not only to enjoy some wonderful food, but also spread some holiday cheer and exchange stories with fellow birders. Our speaker that evening will be Craig Fraiser, a photographer who specializes in Arkansas wildflowers.

Auction items can be purchased or hand made. Please let me know no later than, Monday, December 10th what item(s) you are donating. You can email me at elbowles@aristotle.net. If you are bringing an item, please be there before 6 p.m. so we can get your item labeled and in place. We will begin accepting bids for the auction by 6:15 and will sit down for dinner around 6:30. ASCA will provide the drinks, plates, cups and eating utensils.

Magnolia Lodge is located at 5304 West Markham Street in Little Rock. Directions to the lodge are located on page 7 under Programs.

Dottie Boyles - Silent Auction Chairman
Cool weather energizes me! In winter I can stay outside and tramp about as long as I want without getting overheated. The chigger problem is forgotten, while ticks and mosquitoes become at least scarce. I can wade through tall grass and weeds without worrying about snakes. And there's an anything-is-possible excitement in the air that can't be matched in the breeding season.

To be sure, insectivorous birds are in short supply; and those birds that do feed on insects concentrate mostly on digging bugs out of the ground or from tree bark. But the absence of insectivores is more than made up for. For one thing, it's so much easier to see birds in the woods when branches are bare.

Fish-eating birds that spend the winter with us--like gulls, loons, and grebes--give us many more reasons to be drawn to rivers and lakes. We can easily identify more than a dozen species of ducks in a single day afield, not to mention geese and swans. And birds that prey on other birds or on mammals are more numerous and various in winter, often good for an adrenaline rush.

Finally, we experience an influx of seed-eating birds in fall. Many of these are species that can be attracted to a feeder outside your window. So, when harsh weather drives us indoors, we can still enjoy observing the birds attracted to the table we have set.

Plan to participate in one or more Christmas counts and other winter field activities. You'll be glad you did.

--Bill Shepherd

**Nomination of New Board Members**

The Nominating Committee, consisting of Sherry Phillips, Doris Boyles and myself, confirmed that Bill Hailey, DeLynn Hearn, Bill Saunders and myself have agreed to continue serving on the ASCA Board of Directors for 2008.

Drew and Sherry Phillips have stepped down. Doris Boyles and Craig Provost have been nominated to replace them. Their names will be put before the Board and members at our end of the year elections during the December meeting.

Sherry Phillips has also resigned as the Hospitality Chairperson. Doris Boyles has been nominated to replace her.

We owe a tremendous thank you to Drew and Sherry Phillips for their many years of service to ASCA and know they will return to other roles in the organization after a brief rest.

*Ed Laster*
Nominating Committee Chairman

**Best Wishes to Bill Hailey**

The ASCA Officers and Board members extend get-well wishes to Bill Hailey who is recovering from surgery on his right shoulder. Bill, everyone at ASCA wishes you a very speedy recovery!

**Dark Hollow & Bass Pro Shop**

Clearing of land in North Little Rock’s Dark Hollow (at the southeast corner where I-30 meets I-40 in North Little Rock) could begin at any time. That is unfortunate as Dark Hollow is the core of North Little Rock’s storm drainage for that entire part of the city. This oasis has filtered storm water runoff for many decades, but will now be covered by impervious surfaces like asphalt parking lots and stores.

Conservationists filed a lawsuit to stop this project, but it was rejected in federal court over a year ago. Many issues, from traffic problems to storm water runoff, have yet to be addressed, and it appears the developers and North Little Rock city officials will just deal with such problems on the fly.

We can only hope that the citizens of North Little Rock don't have to pay a big price for that refusal to deal with very real problems.

*Barry Haas*
**Conservation News**

**Threats to Lake Maumelle**

A program to inform Central Arkansas Water (CAW) customers about the threats to Lake Maumelle, which provides 65% of the drinking water to about 400,000 central Arkansans, was held the evening of November 13. Members of the public who attended learned of the recently drafted and approved comprehensive Watershed Management Plan ("the Plan") that is hoped will protect Lake Maumelle for many decades.

They also learned that the Plan must still be implemented on the county, city and possibly state level to keep sewage from getting into the lake and also keep future development within the Lake Maumelle watershed limited as directed by the Plan. That would require 5-acre and larger lots, depending on the lot slope, limits on impervious areas (homes, driveways, roads and other surfaces that do not allow water to penetrate and force it to run off instead) and the purchase of some acreage by CAW to mitigate for small landowner exemptions that offer equity to long-time small landowners in the watershed.

Lake Maumelle is one of the highest quality water sources in the southeastern U.S. and provides that water at a much lower price than others pay in this part of the country.

A group called Citizens Protecting Maumelle Watershed filed suit in late July to overturn a settlement between CAW and Waterview Estates, a group of developers who owned land in the most sensitive part of the watershed, just north of the water intake pipes. Two hearing dates were scheduled and then canceled, and as of mid-November a decision had not been made by Judge Willard Proctor. Despite the lawsuit which relies on a similar case decided by the Arkansas Court of Appeals in 1997, the developers are proceeding and have already cleared a strip of land 60' or more wide and more than one mile long in preparation for a concrete diversion ditch that would be built there. That ditch, if ultimately constructed, could be almost five miles long at completion. If the court decides that the 300 acres in question belongs to the public, the developers will be asked to remove any such structures and put the land back the way it was before they cleared it.

Those who missed this public presentation should visit the Citizens Protecting Maumelle Watershed web site at: http://www.protectarkansaswater.org (think Protect Arkansas Water) to keep abreast of further developments in this critical issue.

If you know of a community group that would like to hear such a presentation on Lake Maumelle, please contact Barry Haas (bhaas@sbcglobal.net or 501-821-4097 in Little Rock).

**Proposed BFI Landfill Expansion**

A proposed expansion of the BFI landfill on Mabelvale Pike in Little Rock is on hold while the City of Little Rock and BFI explore other options. One such option would be for BFI to withdraw its application for expansion or possibly even close the landfill, and in return the City of Little Rock might contract with BFI to operate the city-owned landfill. The BFI landfill is built in an area where Rock, Fourche and Coleman Creeks converge. It is a unique wetlands area that has seen serious flooding in the past.

Audubon Arkansas has been working for years, including millions of dollars in federal grants, to help reclaim the Fourche Creek wetlands along with Little Rock Parks & Recreation. This area could become a premier wetlands park almost unequaled anywhere else in the country. But the existing BFI landfill in that location is an obstacle to bringing this area back from the dump site it has become.

Some months ago Little Rock Mayor Mark Stodola publicly pledged to oppose the BFI expansion. Let's hope Stodola will help get this landfill closed, not expanded, and we can turn that part of Little Rock into an asset rather than a liability. Mayor Stodola, we are counting on you to help the public get rid of this landfill, or at the very least reject any expansion.

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**Little River Bottoms IBA Update – Birds vs. Coal**

Dan Scheiman, Ph.D.
Bird Conservation Director, Audubon Arkansas

In the last issue of The Snipe you read about Arkansas’s latest Important Bird Area, the Little River Bottoms. It is more than 18,000 acres of contiguous, relatively undisturbed bottomland hardwood forest and a unique, biologically diverse, and ecologically sensitive area in Hempstead County. These bottoms contain several dozen plant and animal species of conservation concern, thousands of breeding wading birds, and the state’s largest breeding populations of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, Anhingas, White Ibis, Common Moorhens, and Purple Gallinules. Southwestern Electric Power Company (SWEPCO) wants to build a 600-megawatt coal-fired power plant literally across the street. The plant would produce 6 million tons of carbon dioxide, plus sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and mercury that threaten birds and human health. In October the Arkansas Public Service Commission (PSC) closed 17 days of hearings and expert testimony concerning this plant. Regrettably, on Nov. 21 they voted 2-1 to grant a certificate of need. The issue isn’t over as the AR Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) has yet to grant an air permit, but this is a blow to Arkansas’s birds, bird habitat, and reputation. PSCs in Florida, Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas have recently rejected coal-fired power plants. The trend is obvious, Arkansas must become progressive and move towards renewable energy sources. Write to Governor Beebe and ask him to exert his influence on ADEQ and live up to his promise to err (when necessary) on the side of protecting the environment.
Birds I Didn't See in Greece

by Bill Shepherd

One goal I had for my more than three weeks of birding in Greece this past May was to "complete my suits" of all the woodpecker species that breed in Europe and all the shrike species nesting there. Among the shrikes I needed Lesser Gray Shrike and Masked Shrike, both of which breed in Greece. Among the woodpeckers, I needed only the White-backed Woodpecker to complete my suit; this species inhabits some of Greece's mountain forests.

Though Arkansas birders may find it hard to believe, in almost a month of birding I never had a single woodpecker in my binoculars. Once during my first week in Greece, while walking, I got two quick glimpses of a woodpecker in flight. It appeared to be either a Syrian Woodpecker or a Great Spotted Woodpecker, both species that I had seen well last year in Austria.

Other than that, all my woodpecker sightings were of birds in flight that I saw while driving. In most cases, all I saw was a silhouette; I couldn't even tell a Green Woodpecker from a Great Spotted under those conditions.

Especially disappointing was an entire afternoon that I spent on a trail ascending lower slopes of Mt. Olympus, in known White-backed Woodpecker habitat. While I did manage to add a couple of other species to my trip list during the climb, I never heard or saw a single woodpecker that day.

With shrikes I was more successful. The lovely Red-backed Shrike proved quite common and I saw Woodchat Shrikes several times. Almost to my surprise, I did get excellent looks at a Masked Shrike on two successive days. Or maybe I saw both members of a pair, though never more than one at a time. One of my books gave exact directions to a dry, rocky hillside where Masked Shrikes could usually be found, and I drove to that spot early one morning. I parked my rental car and got out to start searching. Up on a high utility wire, a small lump caught my attention. I thought the lump, if it was a bird at all, might be some little job like a Stonechat perched with its back to me. But I kept my binoculars on it.

Eventually the bird looked over its shoulder at me and I saw the distinctive facial pattern. It was an elegant Masked Shrike. I could hardly believe that this "grail bird" of mine was one of the first birds I saw that day. And I managed to observe it several times, all the while enjoying the music of Nightingales and Golden Orioles that sang from concealment in trees along a nearby stream.

As for Lesser Gray Shrike, though the species is much more widely distributed in Europe, no dice. I just never encountered one.

I visited the Forest of Dadia in extreme northeastern Greece to see the many raptor species for which it is famous. Especially appealing to me was the opportunity to watch a place where the carcasses of dead farm animals are laid out in the open for the benefit of vultures, eagles, and other carrion eaters. According to my books, Griffon and Egyptian Vultures always show up for the feast but are generally outnumbered by the rarer Black or Cinereous Vulture, a species of which I had seen only one or two individuals in Spain. I arrived at Dadia on a Sunday afternoon and, disdaining a ride in the minibus offered free of charge, took to the trail on foot and hiked up to the large blind that overlooks the feeding platform. An interpreter was in the blind with a telescope; but no carrion and no vultures or other raptors could be seen on the feeding platform—located some half-a-kilometer away. I asked the interpreter when was the best time to see raptors feeding; and she recommended the first minibus of the morning, at nine o'clock. So the delicacies would be presented early in the day, see Birds I Didn't See on page 5.

Lonoke and Little Rock Christmas Bird Counts

The days are getting shorter and the weather is getting colder, but that doesn't mean the birding has to slow down! It is Christmas Bird Count season again. The CBC is an Audubon citizen science program and the nation's longest running bird survey – this is the 108th year. On count day participants count all birds they encounter within their assigned section of a 15-mile diameter circle. Birders of any skill level are welcome. It's a great opportunity to learn from experienced birders! You can bird for as long as you like. ASCA sponsors two counts, Lonoke on Sunday, December 16th, and Little Rock on Saturday, December 29th. Contact the compiler, Dan Scheiman at birddan@comcast.net or 501-244-2229 if you would like to join one or both. There are 15 other counts across the state. Contact Leif Anderson at leanderson@fs.fed.us or 479-284-3150 ext. 3151 for more information. Hope to see you out there!

Be good and good birding,
Dan Scheiman
Yellow Rails and Snow Bunting have Eight Arkansas Birders Dancing with Delight

by Dottie Boyles

With an invitation from David Arbour of De Queen, AR, to participate in a Yellow Rail drag on November 4th at Red Slough WMA, McCurtain County, OK, eight eager Central Arkansas birders gathered in the darkness, at the base of my driveway to head southwest. At Red Slough, we met up with ten others from Texas, Oklahoma City and Fayetteville, AR.

For those who have never attended a rail drag, two people hold either end of a long rope to which are tied several plastic bottles of various sizes. Inside each bottle are a few pebbles for added weight. Everyone else either walks behind the rope or stands off to the side. It took only a few sweeps through the field before the first Yellow Rail was flushed. A life bird for several on the trip! At a second location, we flushed two more Yellow Rails.

It was there that the children of Matt and Kristin White of Texas performed their own version of a rail drag. After finding a narrow stick about 9 feet long and attaching a small flag to it, the two oldest girls got on either end with the two youngest positioned behind. They proceeded to march through the field with high hopes of flushing their own Yellow Rail.

We went next to Unit 36 and found 3 or 4 Henslow’s Sparrows, but were unable to get any to sit up for us. At Otter Lake we found 1 Ruddy Duck, 1 Redhead, and 3 Common Moorhens among the 1000 American Coots. Several Virginia Rails and Soras were calling behind us.

What happened next is what birders dream of. Around 4 p.m., as we drove down the levee toward Lotus Lake, a small bird flushed just as we were coming to a stop by the observation deck. Matt White leaped out of his car and yelled “Snow Bunting!” Unfortunately, the bird flew over our heads and away. As we all gave chase, it landed in a small willow at the west end of another levee. Suddenly, it flew back to the east and landed in front of Matt’s car. Everyone raced down the levee in hot pursuit, climbed the observation deck and there, just 40 feet below, was the beautiful bunting. Another life bird for six of us and a first for Red Slough.

When Craig and Dale Provost see a life bird, they have a special dance they perform. As we all stood on the platform that day, we all joined in with the dance. It was also Craig’s birthday and he and Dale added 6 life birds to their list. Not a bad birthday present.

Birds I Didn’t See continued

I noted carefully, and an early start for me the next morning would be advisable.

That evening, as I was finishing my supper in a local taverna, a troupe of some 15 or so Germans, all wearing binoculars, straggled in and sat down to eat. Eager to pick their brains for birding information, I walked over to their long table and introduced myself to one of them in German, telling him that they were the first birders I had encountered in two whole weeks of birding Greece alone. The man responded courteously but didn't volunteer any useful information.

Eventually their guide, who had been busy earlier collecting his party's orders for food and drink, came over to my table and chatted with me for a few minutes. Though German also, he was quite fluent in English as well as Greek and explained that he was engaged in conservation-oriented research on the water birds of one of Greece’s river deltas.

When I asked him about the raptor feeding platform, he urged me, "Get there even before nine if you can."

So I woke up plenty early Monday morning and hit the trail again, arriving at the blind by 8 o'clock. No one else was in the blind, no visitors and no interpreter either. Thus no telescope was available. Nor was any carrion lying on the feeding platform. Just a few animal skins and clean bones.

But I could see nine or ten Griffon Vultures and a few Egyptian Vultures perched in trees nearby and waiting for the arrival of the meat wagon. (No Cinereous/Black Vultures yet.) So I decided to bide my time. I had reached the blind before the carrion was deposited and thus was assured of the opportunity to witness the entire performance.

While I waited, a Common Cuckoo flew low right over the blind and uttered a harsh note. A Golden Oriole sang in the distance. I whistled back in the hope that the oriole would come to investigate. But my imitation must have been unconvincing; the oriole never appeared.

And my wrist watch continued to mark the passage of time.

Even vultures have limits to their patience, however. By 9:30 vultures were beginning to fly around a bit, then to leave the area. No minibus had arrived and disgorged passengers. No visitors and no interpreter had appeared at the blind. It finally became clear that there wasn't going to be a feeding this Monday morning. Whether the staff just takes Mondays off or whether they feed the birds only on alternate days, I never learned. But no one who knew had thought to inform me that fresh carcasses would not be delivered that Monday. So I left the blind at 9:45 and hiked back down to the hostel for a very late breakfast.
108th Christmas Bird Count

It finally feels like fall and the birds are moving in for the winter. It's time to start thinking about the Christmas Bird Counts. The CBC has been around for 108 years and is the longest running bird database in North America. Dates start December 14 and run through January 5.

Any experience level is welcome and any length of time is appreciated. If you can only watch at your feeder - great, you are likely to get birds that might not be seen in the woods. The important thing is joining other birders and having FUN.

Below you'll see the dates and contact information. Many of these counts really could use your help!!!! Please consider doing more than one count. Hope to see you out, enjoying the birds, continuing the tradition.

Cheers,
Leif Anderson

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<th>Count</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jonesboro</td>
<td>Fri 14</td>
<td>Jim Bednarz</td>
<td>Jonesboro</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jbednarz@astate.edu">jbednarz@astate.edu</a> (870) 972-3082</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arkadelphia</td>
<td>Sat 15</td>
<td>Max Parker and</td>
<td>Arkadelphia</td>
<td><a href="mailto:max_parker@earthlink.net">max_parker@earthlink.net</a> (501) 225-6589 or Dolores Harrington (870) 246-2729</td>
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<td>-Dolores Harrington</td>
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<td>Buffalo Nat. River</td>
<td>Sat 15</td>
<td>Mark Robinson</td>
<td>Evening Star</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mark_robinson@nps.gov">mark_robinson@nps.gov</a> (870) 449-4311</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conway</td>
<td>Sat 15</td>
<td>Martha Johnson</td>
<td>Conway</td>
<td><a href="mailto:amjohnson@conwaycorp.net">amjohnson@conwaycorp.net</a> (501) 329-5214</td>
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<tr>
<td>Magnolia-Lake Columbia</td>
<td>Sat 15</td>
<td>Sterling Lacy</td>
<td>Magnolia</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lklacy@magnolia-net.com">lklacy@magnolia-net.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fayetteville</td>
<td>Sun 16</td>
<td>Joe Neal and</td>
<td>Fayetteville</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jpeal@fs.fed.us">jpeal@fs.fed.us</a> (479) 521-1858 or <a href="mailto:mamlod@hotmail.com">mamlod@hotmail.com</a> (479) 443-2663</td>
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<td>-Mike Mlodinow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lonoke</td>
<td>Sun 16</td>
<td>Dan Scheiman</td>
<td>Little Rock</td>
<td><a href="mailto:birddan@comcast.net">birddan@comcast.net</a> (501) 244-2229</td>
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<tr>
<td>N. Fork Illinois Bayou</td>
<td>Sun 16</td>
<td>John Andre</td>
<td>Hector</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jandre@fs.fed.us">jandre@fs.fed.us</a> (479) 284-3150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot Springs Village</td>
<td>Mon 17</td>
<td>Lynn Sackett</td>
<td>Hot Spgs Vlg</td>
<td><a href="mailto:tlsackett@sbcglobal.net">tlsackett@sbcglobal.net</a> (501) 922-9060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain Home</td>
<td>Mon 17</td>
<td>Sharon Boatright</td>
<td>Mtn Home</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sharonb@mtnhome.com">sharonb@mtnhome.com</a> (870) 430-5335</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bayou DeView</td>
<td>Wed 19</td>
<td>Steve Osborne</td>
<td>Brinkley</td>
<td><a href="mailto:steve_Osborne@fws.gov">steve_Osborne@fws.gov</a> (501) 513-4479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crooked Creek</td>
<td>Wed 19</td>
<td>Sally Jo Gibson</td>
<td>Harrison</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sjgibson@alltel.net">sjgibson@alltel.net</a> (870) 741-5805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village Creek SP</td>
<td>Wed 19</td>
<td>Vicki Trimble</td>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Vicki.trimble@arkansas.gov">Vicki.trimble@arkansas.gov</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Holla Bend NWR</td>
<td>Thur 20</td>
<td>Leif Anderson</td>
<td>Dardanelle</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Leanderson@fs.fed.us">Leanderson@fs.fed.us</a> (479) 284-3402</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pine Bluff</td>
<td>Fri 28</td>
<td>Rob Doster</td>
<td>Pine Bluff</td>
<td><a href="mailto:calcarius@comcast.net">calcarius@comcast.net</a> (505) 323-3660</td>
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<tr>
<td>Little Rock</td>
<td>Sat 29</td>
<td>Dan Scheiman</td>
<td>Little Rock</td>
<td><a href="mailto:birddan@comcast.net">birddan@comcast.net</a> (501) 244-2229</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wapanocca NWR</td>
<td>Sat 29</td>
<td>Dick Preston or</td>
<td>Turrell</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dickpreston@bigriver.net">dickpreston@bigriver.net</a> (901) 837-3360</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>-Van Harris</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:shelbyforester1223@earthlink.net">shelbyforester1223@earthlink.net</a> (901) 876-3337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White River NWR</td>
<td>Sat Jan 5</td>
<td>Keith Sutton</td>
<td>St. Charles</td>
<td><a href="mailto:catfishdude@sbcglobal.net">catfishdude@sbcglobal.net</a> (501) 847-9643</td>
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Great Backyard Bird Count

Mark your calendars for the 11th annual Great Backyard Bird Count, February 15-18, 2008. The GBBC is a joint effort of National Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. It is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent. Anyone can participate, from beginning birders to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes. It’s free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds.

Participants count birds anywhere for as little or as long as they wish during the four-day period. They tally the highest number of birds of each species seen together at any one time. To report their counts, they fill out an online checklist at the Great Backyard Bird Count web site. Participants may also send in photographs of the birds they see. A selection of images is posted in the online photo gallery.

In 2007, participants reported a record-breaking 11 million birds of 616 species. They submitted more than 80,000 checklists, an all-time record for the ten years of the count.

For more information visit http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/
Upcoming Programs

The ASCA meets at 7:00 PM the second Thursday of each month at the John Gould Fletcher Library (except where 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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December 13, 2007 – Potluck and Arkansas Wildflowers

Guest Speaker: Craig Fraiser
Program: Photographing Arkansas’s Rare and Endemic Wildflowers

Join us on Thursday, December 13th from 6:00 – 9:00 pm at Magnolia Lodge for our annual Holiday Potluck and Silent Auction. Our special speaker for the evening will be Craig Fraiser, an amateur photographer who specializes in Arkansas wildflowers. He has made it his goal to photograph all of the state’s rare and endemic wildflower species. He’ll talk about his search for his subjects and show beautiful slides throughout the evening.

We will have our annual Potluck and Silent Auction that evening as well. Our Silent Auction is always fun and a critical source of funds for ASCA. Auction items can be purchased or hand made. See page 1 for details.

Bring your favorite dish and come join us for lots of fun on Dec. 13th at 6 p.m.

Magnolia Lodge is located at 5304 West Markham Street in Little Rock. To get there from Little Rock or North Little Rock:

Take I-630, then take the Fair Park Blvd exit – Exit 4. Head north on Fair Park Blvd to Markham Street (0.6 mi). Turn Left on Markham Street, go about a block and a half (0.1 mi).

Magnolia Lodge will be on the Right between Harrison and N. Tyler Streets. The parking lot is located behind the building. There is a driveway off Markham Street between Magnolia Lodge and Steven-Dell Insurance or turn right on Harrison Street, then left just behind the Miller Plaza Bldg.

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January 10, 2008 – Annual Business Meeting

The Audubon Society of Central Arkansas will hold its annual Business Meeting on Jan. 10th at 7:00 pm. All ASCA members are encouraged to attend. This meeting will be held at the home of Dottie and Doris Boyles. Please contact Dottie at ctboyles@aristotle.net or (501) 224-0302 if you need directions.

ASCA can only exist with active members and this is your opportunity to provide input into our activities for 2008.

There will not be a program or guest speaker at this meeting.

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February 7, 2008 – Managing Your Waste

Guest Speaker: Robert Hunter
Program: Waste Management Practices for a Greener Living

Robert Hunter, Technical Assistance Manager in the Solid Waste Division of ADEQ, will discuss waste management practices with an emphasis on purchasing power and recycling in everyday life. Come learn about some easy, practical things we can do to reduce our output and be more "green."

**Please note the new date and location:** This meeting has been moved to the first Thursday in February and will be held at Magnolia Lodge, 5304 W. Markham Street.

Tree Planting Opportunity

Here is an opportunity for ASCA to do some hands-on work around town. This winter Audubon Arkansas and Tree Streets, a local non-profit organization, will be teaming up to plant trees along streets in the Swaggerty Creek Watershed in an area south of downtown Little Rock. They will be planting willow oaks, Nuttall’s oaks, tulip poplars, sycamores, and red maples. This project creates wildlife habitat, improves air and water quality, and will create scenic tree lined streets for everyone to enjoy. They will be planting every Saturday from 9:00 – 11:00 am (except around holidays or when it is raining by 8 am).

They meet at the Community Bakery, downtown at 9:00 am. Lots of volunteers will be helping with this project, contact Johnnie Chamberlin or Brent Kelley at 501-244-2229 if you would like to participate or if you need more information.

ASCA and its members have volunteered to work on Saturday, January 5th or in case of rain we will reschedule for January 12th.

Bewick’s Wren

This Bewick’s Wren was discovered near Lonoke on October 14th
Photo by Dale Provost
Congratulations Doris and Dottie Boyles

The "Wings Over Arkansas" awards program is part of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission’s "Watchable Wildlife" program. The program offers six levels of achievement with full color certificates and lapel pins awarded to bird watchers who report their list of Arkansas Birds to the AR Game & Fish Commission. This year the program was expanded and the Swallow-tailed Kite Level was added for persons reporting 300 or more birds on the Arkansas Bird Checklist.

Congratulations to Doris and Dottie Boyles of Little Rock for reaching the Swallow-tailed Kite level on Sunday, September 16th, with the sighting of a Sabine’s Gull at Millwood Lake. The Sabine’s was state bird #300 for both of them.

Only one other person, Dan Scheiman, also of Little Rock, has completed this program.

Sightings from Around the State

September 15th – at approximately 4:30 p.m., Charles Mills spotted a juvenile Sabine’s Gull wheeling around Millwood Lake.

October 9th – Ron Howard found a female Black-throated Blue Warbler at Craighead Forest Park, in Jonesboro.

October 14th – Dennis Braddy discovered a Bewick’s Wren near Lonoke. Craig and Dale Provost, and Doris and Dottie Boyles also observed the bird that day.

November 1st – Don Simons found a Prairie Falcon soaring around Cameron Bluff at Mount Magazine State Park.

November 4th – Mike Mlodinow and Joe Neal discovered a Surf Scoter on Beaver Lake in Northwest Arkansas.

November 10th – Kenny Nichols found a first year Lesser Black-backed Gull on Lake Dardanelle.

November 12th – Leif Anderson reported finding a Rock Wren at the Corps of Engineers Old Post Park, Russellville.

November 18th – Charles Mills found two Snow Buntings at Okay Levee.

The ASCA sponsors numerous field trips throughout the year. The trips are open to all and carpooling is available for trips outside of Little Rock. This is a great opportunity for novice birders to meet and learn their birds from more experienced birders. Perhaps a chance to get a life-bird for those dedicated birders. Check out the web site at www.ascabird.org for more information about upcoming field trips.

December 2007

Lonoke and Little Rock Christmas Bird Counts

All are welcome to participate in the annual Lonoke and Little Rock Christmas Bird Counts. The Lonoke Christmas Count will be held on Sunday, December 16th and the Little Rock Christmas Count will be held on Saturday, December 29th. For more information see page 4.

To participate in a count, contact Dan Scheiman at birddan@comcast.net or (501) 244-2229.

For more information on Christmas Bird Counts you can visit: www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/

January 19, 2008

Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge

We will meet in the northwest corner of the Wal-Mart Super Center located on the corner of Chenal Parkway and Highway 10 at 8:00 am and carpool to Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge. Our target birds will be Bald Eagles, waterfowl and sparrows. Bring lunch, water, and rubber boots if you have them. We’ll walk along the roadside and in grasslands. We should arrive at the Holla Bend visitor center around 9:45 for anyone who wants to meet us there.

Contact Dottie Boyles at ctboyles@aristotle.net for more information.

February 19, 2008

Stuttgart Airport

We will meet at the south end of the commuter parking lot at I-630 and Shackleford Road at 8:00 am. We’ll arrive at the airport office around 9:20. Our target birds will be Lapland and Smith’s Longspurs, Sedge Wrens, Le Conte’s Sparrows, Sprague’s Pipits, and Short-eared Owls. Bring rubber or hiking boots because we will walk through short and tall grass with wet spots and prickly vegetation. We will have lunch at a local restaurant.

For more information contact Dan Scheiman at birddan@comcast.net

THE BIG YEAR

A Cackling Goose, spotted in Jonesboro on November 17th, became Dennis Braddy’s 300th year bird for Arkansas! While finding 300 birds was his original goal for 2007, he is still going and has already added four more species to his list. Congratulations Dennis! We are proud of you!!!
Field Trip Reports

Wapanocca National Wildlife Refuge
September 29, 2007

When 21 early birders (including 5 from TN) gathered at Wapanocca National Wildlife Refuge we didn't know just how varied and exciting the birding would turn out to be. The earliest birders were treated to the birdiest time at the refuge. They saw a number of migrants in the ragweed and trees flanking the bridge, including a Philadelphia Vireo, and Black-throated Green and Nashville Warblers. When we scanned the lake we found a Ruddy Duck, American Avocets, and a Snowy Egret, but it was the Rose-breasted Grosbeaks along the boardwalk that captured everyone's attention.

Then Jeff Wilson arrived bringing news of a juvenile female RED-NECKED PHALAROPE he found in a partially flooded field outside the refuge. We dashed for the cars and followed him to the spot. Everyone got fantastic looks! It was a lifebird for 15 of us!

Later, Jeff directed us to a rice field being harvested. As we watched the combines, at least 8 Soras and 1 Virginia Rail flushed. We ended the day with 75 species and countless memories. --Dan Scheiman

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Arkansas Audubon Society Fall Meeting and Field Trips
October 26 – 28, 2007

Thanks to all who attended the AAS Fall Conference in Little Rock. We had great presentations from Rob Doster regarding the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher and Paul Hamel regarding Cerulean Warblers. Excellent goodie bags and door prizes were generously donated by members and local businesses.

Saturday we collectively took field trips to Two Rivers Park, Bell Slough, Lonoke, Murray Lock & Dam/Cook’s Landing, David D. Terry Lock & Dam/Willow Beach, and Wattensaw Wildlife Management Area. We recorded 118 species. Highlights included Surf Scoter, Redhead, Eared Grebe, Virginia Rail, Sora, Dunlin, Black-throated Green Warbler, and Brewer's Blackbird.

Sunday’s field trips included Two Rivers Park, Kingfisher Trail at Pinnacle Mountain, and David D. Terry Lock & Dam/Willow Beach. Many thanks to everyone who led field trips for this meeting.

Mark your calendars: The Spring meeting will be held at the Janet Huckabee Nature Center outside Fort Smith, April 25-27, 2008. --Jason D. Luscier, AAS Vice President

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Lake Dardanelle
November 17, 2007

The weather was fantastic with little wind or heat shimmers on the lake. We started the day at Kiddie Pool Point with our excellent guides Kenny and LaDonna Nichols and their dog Missy. Word was out about the LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL, which drew a total of 31 people to the Nichols’ viewing dock. The gull cooperated beautifully and was a lifebird for many.

The large flock of people then caravanned to Piney Point where we found 4 Red-tailed Hawks and their dog Missy. Word was out about the LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL, which drew a total of 31 people to the Nichols’ viewing dock. The gull cooperated beautifully and was a lifebird for many.

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After lunch, Kenny and LaDonna led a smaller caravan to Holla Bend NWR. A large kettle of Red-tailed Hawks was a fascinating sight as they rode the thermals above the pine trees. At the next stop, we flushed several Le Conte's Sparrows.

With a possible Red-throated Loon at Lake Maumelle, the original eight ASCA members peeled off and headed towards Little Rock, racing the fading light. At Lake Maumelle, we checked both of the far west rest stops, where we found Common Loons and Horned Grebes but no Red-throated Loon. We made one final tally with our little band of birders and Rob Weiss had the most lifebirds with a total of 10 for the day!

It was a wonderful day with great people, great birds, and great guides. --Karen Holliday
**Audubon Society of Central Arkansas**
300 S. Rodney Parham Road, Suite 10
Little Rock, AR 72205

Forwarding and return postage guaranteed.
Return service requested.

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This Snow Bunting was observed on Nov. 4th by several birders visiting Red Slough WMA, McCurtain County, Oklahoma. Photo by Matt White.

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**Audubon Society of Central Arkansas**
Chapter Only Membership Application

Name ___________________________________________
Address _______________________
__________________
City _____________________  State  ______ Zip  _______

Membership Level:
- Student/Senior $10 per year
- Regular $15 per year
- Family $25 per year
- Supporting $35 per year
- Patron $50 per year

(Check One)

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

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**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.

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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

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**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.