

# THE SNIPE

*The Newsletter of the  
Audubon Society of Central Arkansas*



Charles Mills

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## Kings River Falls Natural Area

*Arkansas Department of Natural Heritage*

If you're looking for new areas in Arkansas to explore, Kings River Falls Natural Area is located at the interface of the Springfield Plateau and Boston Mountains subdivisions of the Ozark Mountains, six miles southeast from the town of Witter, in Madison County. This natural area protects about 3.5 river miles of the Kings River and 945 acres of its surrounding watershed, with the Kings River Falls as its focal point.

The Kings River is a clear mountain stream originating east of Boston in Newton County. The river flows for about 50 miles through Madison and Carroll Counties, eventually merging with Osage Creek before it flows into Table Rock Reservoir.

The native vegetation on land surrounding the river provides protection of the water resource by reducing rain runoff and filtering out sedimentation.

A mixed pine-hardwood forest covers slopes on the east side. On the west side, steeper slopes are covered almost entirely with hardwood species. Rock walls, bluff shelters, and rocky slopes characterize most of the western half of the tract. A diverse and colorful shrub community borders the stream. A variety of trees and shrubs blooming in the spring makes it an ideal time to visit.

In March and April of this year, the Natural Heritage Commission acquired new properties upstream from the current natural area. The additions protect 263 acres of land and more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles of the Kings River, as well as a portion of Mink Creek and other unnamed tributaries. Incorporating these lands into the natural area ensures that the current vegetative cover will remain

intact and degraded areas will be restored to their historic structure and composition.

A new sign marks the existing trail head that begins at the parking area, follows a private fence, crosses a metal foot bridge, then turns to run along Kings River. The trail is marked with blue diamonds. It is approximately one mile from the parking lot to Kings River Falls, a historical swimming hole for the surrounding community. The trail ends at the falls and you must turn around and return the way you came, again following the blue diamond markers.

Another trail, which is unmarked, begins on the south side of the old Dripping Springs schoolhouse. It follows and crosses the river, so wear boots or waterproof footwear if you plan to visit. The trail leads past "steamboat rock", a large rock that separated from the bluff 200 feet above and now sits in the middle of the river. The trail winds along the river and is surrounded by bluffs on either side.

The Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality has designated the Kings River as an Extraordinary Resource Waterway.

Directions to Kings River Natural Area: From the community of Boston on AR 16 (between Fallsville and St. Paul), go north on County Road 3175 (this is a dirt road) for 2.1 miles; bear right as the road forks onto County Road 3415. Stay on this road for 2.3 miles until you come to a "T" intersection with County Road 3500. Turn left, and go across the creek and park along side of County Road 3500. Follow the footpath trail to the natural area.

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# PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

## ROB WEISS

### A Consistent Change

The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was the first new bird species I saw when moving to Arkansas. The day was July 6, 2004 and I had only been in the state for a couple of hours. Growing up in Wisconsin, this species only existed in my field guides and picture books. Seeing such a magnificent bird fly across the roadway was very exciting. The two passengers with me were not quite as impressed as I.

Nearly six years later, those same passengers call me when a new bird appears in the yard or the first American Robin appears in springtime. As the Arkansas weather begins to warm, I no longer anticipate the arrival of Robins or Bluebirds as I did in my youth. Birds such as the Painted Bunting or Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, once wonderful additions to a quickly growing life list, are now harbingers of another new season with more field trips, rare feathered visitors to the state, and more exploration of habitats yet unseen.

I have seen many Scissor-tailed Flycatchers over the years, just as when living up north I had laid eyes upon many a Robin. My relatives in Wisconsin still receive a call every spring when I see the first Indigo Bunting or Baltimore Oriole of

the season. These migrations take place every year, yet the excitement and pleasure of this consistent change still brings joy.

In an ever changing world, we are told that enjoyment in life can only be found when each sight is previously unseen and each experience brand new. In youth we often agree with this attitude. After all, for many young people, there is no greater crime than to be "boring." As each migratory season passes, however, we find more than comfort in familiar birding locations and regular migrants. We find deeper appreciation in the Cardinal which comes every morning to the feeder. We experience fresh beauty of that young Robin in the backyard which is out of the nest for the first time in its life.

The relationship we have with the birds we see is a precious one. There is great excitement in birding. As each birding season comes and goes, make sure the enjoyment of each opportunity does not escape you. One day the species we see each season or every day will arrive and we will no longer be here to enjoy them. While you have the time and the ability, enjoy them and share that joy with others.

*Rob Weiss  
ASCA President*

### Thank You

I wanted to express my appreciation for the many cards, notes, and calls I have received from the members of ASCA since Bill's death. Your presence at his funeral meant so much to me.

Bill really enjoyed life and birding, and ASCA was a big part of that. He enjoyed attending meetings, field trips, and just being involved. I was blessed to see the articles in *The Snipe* and the *Arkansas Audubon Society* newsletters paying tribute to him.

I will always remember the thoughtfulness of the Chapter.

Sincerely,  
Goldie Hailey

# Conservation News

## Warren Prairie Natural Area Home of the Henslow's Sparrow

The Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission and The Nature Conservancy recently completed a landmark purchase of 2,427 acres at Warren Prairie in southeast Arkansas. It is the largest single purchase ever at the site and will more than double the size of the existing Warren Prairie Natural Area. The area's native pine flatwoods ecosystem is among the highest priority conservation targets in the state, and this purchase takes advantage of a rare opportunity to protect a large, intact block of the rapidly disappearing ecosystem. The Nature Conservancy is raising \$450,000 in private funding for the acquisition to leverage \$2,060,000 in federal and \$882,750 in state funding.

By a membership vote at the fall meeting, the Arkansas Native Plant Society (ANPS) donated \$5,000 to the Conservancy to help fund the Warren Prairie purchase. The membership also approved a fundraising initiative to encourage individual contributions. Since then, John Simpson, Eric Sundell, Bill Shepherd, Scott Simon, Theo Witsell, and Joe Woolbright have contributed \$5000 to bring the total ANPS donation up to \$10,000.

Loblolly pine flatwoods are declining rapidly as native stands are converted to intensively managed, chemically treated pine plantations, but not at Warren Prairie N.A. With your help, it will remain a rich mosaic of woodland and savanna, barrens and grassland, marsh and slough. More than 440 plant species will continue to thrive there, including 16 species of conservation concern like the threatened plant *Geocarpon minimum* as well as three plants found nowhere else in Arkansas. Rare animals such as Henslow's Sparrow, Gulf Crayfish Snake, and Northern Crawfish Frog will continue to make their homes there.

If you would like to make a donation to support this natural treasure you can send it to:

The Nature Conservancy  
601 N. University Avenue  
Little Rock, AR 72205

Thank you,  
John Simpson, Eric Sundell, Bill Shepherd, Scott Simon, Theo Witsell, and Joe Woolbright

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## Odd Roadside Attractions -Big Raven Statue

Ravenden is a small town located in Randolph County, Arkansas with about 500 residents, spreads along the Spring River. They are proud of the town's mascot, a 12-foot tall Raven statue.

The town was established in 1883, and was originally called Ravenden Junction. It was inspired by the 19th century profusion of large black birds along the Spring River.

The first statue honoring the raven was conceived by resident Bob Clemens, built by the town's volunteer fire department in 1991, and paid for with local donations. It was originally constructed of fiberglass. Vandals torched

Ravenden's statue in 1996, it was replaced with a reconstituted fiberglass Raven. Two weeks later, Raven #2 was incinerated by vandals.

Ravenden was determined not to give up and built yet another statue from an indestructible mix of cement stucco, coated with flame-retardant paint. The latest version of the Raven was installed in 1996 and still stands today, flanked by American and Arkansas flags.

The base of the statue offers this wisdom:  
"The RAVEN was the first bird sent from the ark in search of land," and "The RAVEN has the reputation for DIVINE or MAGICAL powers."

## Bird Profiles

### Loggerhead Shrike: Grim ‘Ripper’ of the Bird World

*By Samantha Holschbach*

Seemingly cloaked in innocence, the Loggerhead Shrike does not convey any vileness until its hunting habit is revealed. Indeed, this raptorial songbird is quite small and doesn’t seem to have any killing equipment—talons or sharp bill—at first glance.

But just watch it for a while and you’ll observe the “butcherbird” in action. You’ll see it capture an insect, lizard, mouse or bird and proceed to nip the creature’s spinal cord with its hooked bill. Consecutively, the prey may be impaled on barbed wire or thorny shrubs to be held steady while the shrike tears out chunks; its bill may be sharp but its feet are too weak to hold down large prey.

Impaled prey may not be eaten right away but instead stored as a cache—essentially a food pantry—for

times of hardship or courtship. What better way to attract the likes of a lady shrike than with a colorful display of 20+ speared lizards?

The Loggerhead Shrike is present year-round in Arkansas but is more common in the winter and in the east. Although it favors the wide open spaces of agricultural countrysides, intensification of agriculture and urban development have reduced the availability of grasslands with scattered trees and shrubs for nesting. Dr. Dan Scheiman, bird conservation director of Audubon Arkansas, notes that the species has declined in the state by 92 percent over the last 40 years. “This is a loss for birders and farmers,” said Dr. Scheiman, “because shrikes eat pests like rodents and grasshoppers.”

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## All About Birds: Best Lifestyle Website in 2010

### *Webby Award Honors Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s Interactive Site*

*Pat Leonard, Cornell Lab of Ornithology*

*Ithaca, NY*—The 14th Annual Webby Awards judges have chosen the Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s [All About Birds](http://www.AllAboutBirds.org) website as **Best Lifestyle Site** of the year. Hailed as the "Internet's highest honor" by *The New York Times*, the Webby Awards is the leading international award for excellence on the Internet.

The All About Birds website ([www.AllAboutBirds.org](http://www.AllAboutBirds.org)) helps people identify and learn about nearly 600 species of North American birds. The site features photos, sounds, and video of birds, bird-identification tutorials, bird-feeding tips, gear reviews, and an online magazine about birds and bird watching.

"The All About Birds website helps satisfy people’s curiosity about birds—and invites them to explore more about their diversity, beauty, and fascinating behavior," said Cornell Lab communications director Miyoko Chu. "We know that bird watchers are enthusiastic about our site, but we were so thrilled that it appealed to the Webby judges too, who considered sites on every topic from food to fashion."

The site owes much of its visual richness to hundreds of images taken by amateur photographers across the country who contributed to the site’s Birdshare group. The site's sounds and video come from the Cornell Lab’s [Macaulay Library](http://www.macaulaylibrary.org), the world's largest archive of wildlife sounds.

The Webbys are presented by the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences, a 650-person judging academy whose members include Martha Stewart, David Bowie, Arianna Huffington, and Twitter's Biz Stone. This year’s competition received nearly 10,000 entries from more than 60 countries and all 50 states.

"The Webby Awards honors the very best of the Internet," said David-Michel Davies, executive director of the Webby Awards. "The Cornell Lab's achievement is a testament to the skill, ingenuity, and vision of its creators."

## *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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### June 10, 2010 – Night Skies

Guest Speaker: **Jim Fisher**  
Program: **Protecting the Night Environment**

Jim Fisher is the Arkansas Section Leader of the International Dark Skies Association, and Vice President of the Central Arkansas Astronomical Society. He will give an introduction on light pollution issues, light pollution's causes, the harm it does to both the night sky and wildlife, its waste of energy, and ways that it can be simply prevented.

Jim is an attorney for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Little Rock. He has been an amateur astronomer since taking an astronomy merit badge class as a Boy Scout in 1971. He regularly volunteers his time promoting the science and hobby of astronomy and advocating for dark skies preservation.

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### July 8, 2010– Bird Flight

Guest Speaker: **Dr. Wilbur Owen**  
Program: **Adaptations for Bird Flight**

Dr. Owen will describe how a bird's body is supremely adapted for flight. This is the type of interesting ornithological information you can't get by just birding, so you don't want to miss it! Dr. Owen is a retired biology professor from the University of Central Arkansas. He currently resides on Petit Jean Mountain

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### August 12, 2010 – Wedding & Honeymoon Travelogue

Guest Speaker: **Dan and Samantha Scheiman**  
Program: **Wisconsin Wedding and Birding Belize**

The newly minted couple, Dan and Samantha Scheiman, will share the joy and photos of their wedding and honeymoon in May and June. They will talk about the 'green' aspects of their wedding at the Schlitz Audubon Nature Center in Milwaukee, WI, and share the sights from their honeymoon to the rainforest and coast of Belize. They will also showcase some of the native plants that bloom at their Hillcrest home.

Dan is Bird Conservation Director of Audubon Arkansas and Vice President of ASCA. Samantha recently graduated from Harding University with a B.A. in Print Journalism, will intern with the Democrat-Gazette over the summer, and likely will begin a M.A. in Technical Writing at UALR this fall. They hope to one day host a rare bird in their yard and open their home to anyone who wants to see it.



### **Congratulations**

**Daniel Matthew Scheiman**  
&  
**Samantha Mae Holschbach**

Dan Scheiman and Samantha Holschbach were married on Sunday, May 30, 2010 at the Schlitz Audubon Nature Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Dan and Samantha met in August 2007 when Samantha, a student at Harding University in Searcy wanted to attend an ASCA field trip to Bald Knob NWR and needed transportation. Dan volunteered to pick her up not knowing he was going to get more than just birds that day.

Dan is Bird Conservation Director of Audubon Arkansas and Vice President of ASCA. Samantha graduated from Harding University with a B.A. in Print Journalism.

We have all enjoyed watching the friendship and love develop over the years. We wish them all the happiness and many life birds that are in store throughout life for these love birds.



Dan and Samantha running through the wild flowers at Flannigan Prairie  
*Photo by Dottie Boyles*

## Red-headed Woodpecker

A year-round resident in Arkansas, the Red-headed Woodpecker is the only woodpecker with an entirely red head east of the Rocky Mountains. It is a striking bird showing colors of red, black, and white.

These birds often fly to catch insects in the air or drill into wood or bark. It is one of only four woodpeckers known to store food, and it is the only one known to cover its stored food with wood or bark. They are omnivorous, eating insects, seeds, fruits, berries, nuts, and occasionally even the eggs of other birds. Occasionally visits feeders.

They breed in deciduous woodlands, open woods, groves of dead and dying trees, orchards, parks, forest edges, and open wooded swamps with dead trees and stumps. They nest in holes of dead trees or dead branches, preferring snags with little bark remaining. The female usually lays five eggs in early May. Incubation lasts for two weeks. Two broods can be raised in a single nesting season.

Like all woodpeckers, this species' tongue is actually one-half to two-thirds longer than the length which the bird uses for feeding. The extra length is wrapped longitudinally around the brain, between the brain and the skull, to provide added padding for the bird's head's repeated decelerations against wood. The tongue cushions the brain from bouncing against the skull, which would cause brain damage.



Red-headed Woodpecker nestling  
Gail Miller photo



## ASCA Field Trip Schedule

ASCA sponsors numerous field trips throughout the year. The trips are open to all and carpooling is available for trips outside of Little Rock. This is a great opportunity for novice birders to meet and learn more about birds from experienced birders, or perhaps a chance to see a life bird for those who list. For more information visit [www.ascabird.org](http://www.ascabird.org) or contact Karen Holliday, ASCA Field Trip Coordinator at [karenh@arkleg.state.ar.us](mailto:karenh@arkleg.state.ar.us) or 501-920-3246. Always bring plenty of water with you.

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*June 12, 2010*

### **Cook's Lake**

We will meet at 6:30 a.m. at the Prothro Junction commuter lot, I-40, Exit 157, southeast side. We should arrive around 8:15 for those who'd like to meet us there. Cook's Lake is a 72-acre facility surrounded by 1,850 acres of upland and bottomland hardwood forest that includes a two-mile long oxbow lake. We will start the day by walking the trails looking for breeding birds, then return to the education center for an informative program on hummingbirds. The park staff will capture several hummingbirds and demonstrate banding techniques. Bring lunch and water with you.

Directions: Cook's Lake is approximately an hour and a half drive from Little Rock. At Stuttgart, follow AR 146 about 12 miles east and turn south on AR 33. Go half a mile and turn east on AR 33 Spur (Cook's Lake Road). Continue about two miles and turn onto the gravel road between New Salem Baptist Church and the white house. Go one half mile, turn right through the silver gate and continue to the lodge. At the lodge, turn left. The education center/classroom will be the third building past the lodge.

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*July 17, 2010*

### **Arkansas Post National Memorial**

We will meet at the Dixon Road commuter lot, Exit 3, off I-530 South at 6:30 a.m. and arrive around 8:30 at the NPS Visitor Center for those who want to meet us there. Our target birds will be Purple Gallinule, Common Moorhen, Least Bittern, Bald Eagle, and summer songbirds. Alligators are also possible. Bring plenty of water and lunch with you.

Arkansas Post is located on the northern edge of the Gulf Coastal Plain. Its native growth ranges from prairie grasses and lowland hardwood forests, to wetland marshes. For a checklist of the park's birds visit: [www.nps.gov/arpo/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/arpo/index.htm).

Directions: From the Dixon Rd. commuter lot, travel south on I-530 to Pine Bluff. When I-530 ends, exit to US-65. Follow US-65 to Gould and turn left onto AR-212. When 212 ends, turn left onto US-165, and cross over the Arkansas River. Continue on US-165 for five miles, and turn right on AR-169. Follow it two miles into the park.

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*August 21, 2010*

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

Meet us at 7:00 a.m. at The Other Center parking lot (North Little Rock), on the northeast corner of the lot behind McDonald's. The Other Center is located across from McCain Mall on McCain Blvd., US-67/167, Exit 1 going west. We should arrive at Bald Knob around 8:30 if you'd like to meet us there.

We will be looking for shorebirds, with possibilities for Wood Stork and Roseate Spoonbill. It should be very hot so bring plenty of water, sunscreen, and a hat. Bring a scope if you have one. Very little walking will be involved. This will be a morning trip. For more information about the refuge visit: [www.fws.gov/baldknob/](http://www.fws.gov/baldknob/)



# *Field Trip Reports*

## **Cook's Landing**

*March 20, 2010*

Twenty birders gathered at Cook's Landing, we watched as several American White Pelicans flew over the Big Dam Bridge heading west. Overall the birds were scarce and made us hunt for them. We checked the Canada Geese in the lagoon at the boat launch hoping for Cackling Geese, but no luck. Then we headed down the Isabella Jo trail, we spotted a Brown Thrasher and a pair of Wood Ducks did a quick fly-by. Several Belted Kingfishers chattered and swooped past us at several locations. We left the paved trail and proceeded to walk the Pfeiffer Loop trail, which is unpaved. It's an interesting walk with lots of vines in all shapes and sizes hanging from the trees. The trail should be a good location to check during spring migration. Sparrows

were in short supply in the big fields behind the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality building, but we did manage to flush Song and Swamp Sparrows, and glimpsed several Eastern Meadowlarks. An adult Bald Eagle flew low and slow past the group. Along the Arkansas River, Double Crested Cormorants and Ring-billed Gulls perched on the rock jetties. Northern Rough-winged Swallows, Purple Martins, and a Tree Swallow were all briefly seen. Before heading back, a small group walked to the top of the Big Dam Bridge and found 20 American White Pelicans sitting on a sandbar just beyond the I-430 bridge. We had a total of 43 species for the morning. --Karen Holliday

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## **Frog Bayou WMA and Alma Sewage Treatment Facility**

*April 10, 2010*

Eleven birders left Little Rock early and headed to the Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area. At the truck stop at Dyer, we were joined by six additional birders. It was a bright sunny day with little wind with temperatures climbing to the high 70's. A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher greeted us as we entered the refuge. Our target birds were rails and Soras. We diligently checked every marshy area but none were spotted or heard calling. We had great looks at two American Bitterns that flushed, then flew a good distance before disappearing into the reeds. Two Marsh Wrens vocalized repeatedly but refused to show themselves. Three ratty looking Le Conte's Sparrows frolicked within a few yards of our group. A small flock of Pectoral Sandpipers did several fly-bys. Over 30 Blue-winged Teal were scattered around the 812 acres of the refuge. We tallied 36 species at Frog Bayou.

The group then caravanned to the Alma Sewage Treatment Facility on Orrick Road. The wind was blowing toward us carrying the pungent smell of the facility, so our scan of the two ponds was hurried. Two Black-bellied Whistling Ducks were on the far side of the first pond, along with 30 Blue-winged Teal and one Spotted Sandpiper. We checked a pond on private property just east of the treatment plant on the south side of Red Hill Road. We were rewarded with close looks at 32 Black-bellied Whistling Ducks! This was the same pond where Joe Neal's field trip initially spotted the ducks. Our FOS Snowy Egret flew in and settled in among the ducks. Our final tally for day was 46 species. --Karen Holliday

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## **International Migratory Bird Day**

### **Pinnacle Mountain State Park**

*May 8, 2010*

The morning was very cool as eighteen birders met at the Arkansas Arboretum Trail at Pinnacle Mountain State Park to celebrate International Migratory Bird Day. The first birds seen by the group was a pair of Summer Tanagers. Highlights near the Little Maumelle River were Prothonotary Warblers, Louisiana Waterthrush, Pine Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Pileated Woodpecker, and Wood Ducks. Several Red-eyed Vireos foraged in the trees, while a number of Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Acadian Flycatchers, and Black-and-white Warblers

called throughout the morning. Back at the parking lot, the group was treated to the sight of a Bay-breasted Warbler. At the Visitor Center, Black and Turkey Vultures soared on the thermals along with juvenile Red-tailed and Red-Shouldered Hawks.

Along Kingfisher Trail, we observed a Red-bellied Woodpecker feeding young, more Prothonotary Warblers, Indigo Bunting, and Kentucky Warbler. We finished the morning with 41 species. --Karen Holliday

**Audubon Society of Central Arkansas**

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Red-headed Woodpecker  
Photo by Gail Miller

**Audubon Society of Central Arkansas**

Chapter Only Membership Application

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Membership Level:	Student/Senior	\$10 per year
(Check One)	Regular	\$15 per year
	Family	\$25 per year
	Supporting	\$35 per year
	Patron	\$50 per year

Make check payable to "ASCA" and mail to treasurer:  
Ed Laster, 64 Bouresse Drive, Little Rock, AR 72223. Please note that "Chapter Only Members" will not receive *Audubon* magazine. To receive *Audubon* magazine, you need to join the National Audubon Society (NAS).

Address changes should be sent to the following: If a Chapter Only Member, notify Leon Brockinton, c/o Brockinton Company, LLC at P. O. Box 6213, Sherwood, AR 72124. If a NAS member, notify both Brockinton Company and NAS at P. O. Box 51001, Boulder CO, 80322-1001.

*The Snipe* is published quarterly by the Audubon Society of Central Arkansas. Our mission is to encourage programs and activities supporting all things natural, wild, and free, especially birds, bird habitat stability and improvement, as well as to promote fellowship among members, educate and inspire the public, and champion the highest standards of ethical outdoor conduct.

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**Find an Injured Bird?**

For a listing of an AR Game & Fish Commission authorized Migratory Bird Rehabilitator in your area, you can visit their website at:

<http://www.agfc.com/wildlife-conservation/rehabilitators.aspx>  
or  
[http://www.agfc.com/pdfs/rehab/migratorybird\\_rehablist.pdf](http://www.agfc.com/pdfs/rehab/migratorybird_rehablist.pdf)

**\*\*\*Arkansas Rare Bird Alert (RBA)\*\*\***

The RBA lists rare and unusual birds found throughout the state and if possible directions to these birds. **To report or hear the latest sightings**, call (501) 753-5853. The number is listed as J.J. Audubon in the phone book. It is the only white page listing with the last name Audubon.