

THE SNIPE

*The Newsletter of the
Audubon Society of Central Arkansas*



Charles Mills

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New Visitor Facilities at Three Arkansas National Wildlife Refuges

Through a news release dated July 22, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has awarded a \$2.8 million contract for three new visitor contact stations and a new maintenance building at central Arkansas national wildlife refuges under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA).

K-Con Inc., a small business in Charleston, S.C., will design and build the four new buildings under a contract for \$2,815,365.

"These new buildings will provide wonderful new facilities to enhance the public's enjoyment at three of our refuges, including new opportunities for environmental education for school groups," Salazar said. "The construction project will also be an economic boost and provide much needed jobs for the local community."

Construction will take place at Bald Knob National Wildlife Refuge, Wapanocca National Wildlife Refuge, and Big Lake National Wildlife Refuge. All are part of the Central Arkansas Refuge Complex.

The three visitor contact stations will be very similar to one another, said Jonathan Windley, deputy project leader for the Refuge Complex. "Each one will be a great gateway to welcome the public visiting our refuges," he said. "They offer a special room for school groups where we provide education on the environmental work being done at the refuge, as well as

an information desk for volunteers to greet the public and help explain the refuge's assets and activities. They will also have interpretive wildlife displays and office space for staff."



Big Lake National Wildlife Refuge – Dottie Boyles

The existing facilities at the three refuges are cramped and outdated. Bald Knob's headquarters has been a single trailer since the refuge opened in 1993. All existing buildings will be demolished as part of the contract.

In addition to the visitor facilities, K-Con will design and build a new maintenance building at Big Lake National Wildlife Refuge that will be used to store and repair the refuge's equipment.

ASCA Officers

President

Rob Weiss
kofkpastor@yahoo.com

Vice-president

Dan Scheiman
501-280-9024
birddan@comcast.net

Recording Secretary

Vacant

Treasurer

Ed Laster
501-868-6004
elaster523@sbcglobal.net

Newsletter Editor

Dottie Boyles
501-224-0302
ctboyles@aristotle.net

Board Members

Doris Boyles
501-224-0302
ctboyles@aristotle.net

D. DeLynn Hearn
501-771-4686
warblingvireo@yahoo.com

Jane Gulley
janegulley@comcast.net

Jim Dixon
501-258-1914
jamesdixonlr@att.net

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

Christmas Bird Count Compiler

Dan Scheiman
501-280-9024
birddan@comcast.net

Conservation

Barry Haas
501-821-4097
bhaas@sbcglobal.net

Hospitality

Doris Boyles
501-224-0302
ctboyles@aristotle.net

Rare Bird Alert

D. DeLynn Hearn
501-771-4686
delynn@iwon.com

ASCA Webmaster

J. Lyndal York
501-663-2192
lrbluejay@sbcglobal.net

Field Trip Coordinator

Karen Holliday
karenh@arkleg.state.ar.us

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

ROB WEISS

Old Treasures As Well As New

In the summer of 2010 I traveled out of the United States for the first time since becoming a bit more serious about birding. Although this was not a birding trip per se, the birds I was able to observe between visits with relatives and viewing cultural sites proved to be a highlight of my travels. This was not my first time in Germany. However, it was my first time in Germany since becoming more involved with our local Audubon chapter here in central Arkansas.

It is this latter point on which I would like to focus in this article. The effect of education regarding nature and conservation is one which is not to be overlooked. Moreover, the opportunities for education are not enjoyed only by those who have made fields of study such as ornithology and biology their profession. The fact that you are reading this publication most likely means you can play an active role in furthering the goals of this chapter in terms of conservation and education in your own backyard and with people you see every day.

Nearly all of the birds I saw in Germany were new to me. With only a few exceptions, the most common of yard birds seen by my relatives every day were to me, beautiful new species which I came to learn more about each morning I awoke to their increasingly familiar songs, or observed their behavior while dining with my family.

It was at one such dinner that a relative asked why I was continually looking so

intently at House Sparrows whenever they would land on the window sill. I explained there was a sparrow similar to the House Sparrow, but smaller in size and with a brown head, which I was hoping to see. After a few days some of my relatives also began to keep an eye on the sparrows which would suddenly appear at the window, hoping they might also find one of these Eurasian Tree Sparrows at their window.

Sometimes that is all it takes to increase public awareness and education on birds or any animal part of the ecosystem through which we walk every day. There are many birders and naturalists in the state of Arkansas with a great deal of experience or education or both. I made prodigious use of bird identification tips gained from many of you reading this article. The knowledge you passed on to me enhanced the enjoyment of an already fulfilling vacation.

In the end, a Eurasian Tree Sparrow never landed on the window sill for me to add to my life list, but the chance I had to share my love of birding with my relatives was a good use of my time. My thanks to you who have shared your knowledge with the chapter, be it at meetings, field trips, or reported significant sightings. Your efforts and patience with those who learn from you are much appreciated. No matter what your level of knowledge or participation in chapter activities, take some time to teach what you know to others and you might be surprised at the results.

Rob Weiss
ASCA President

Notice of Vote for Upcoming Bylaws Change

The proposed Bylaws change is in Article 6 Officers, Section 2. The amendment would delete the second sentence which reads: "The president and vice-president may not succeed themselves."

Barry Haas moved at the August 12 meeting to define an Audubon Society of Central Arkansas (ASCA) member as someone who receives *The Snipe* newsletter either in print or electronically, or receives information about ASCA from the website, www.ascabird.org, or by any other electronic means. Dottie Boyles seconded and the motion carried.

Leanah Larkin Floyd

May 18, 1922 – July 5, 2010

Leanah Larkin Floyd, 88, of Little Rock, died July 5, 2010. She was born May 18, 1922, in Shamrock, Oklahoma, to the late Joseph and Ruth Larkin.

Leanah is survived by her husband of 65 years, E.P. "Perk" Floyd and her two sons, Martin Floyd and wife Margaret of Cheneyville, Louisiana, and Larkin Floyd and wife Pam of Berryville, Arkansas. Also left to honor her memory is grandchildren; Morgan Floyd, Jesse and Kristie Floyd, Neil and Megan Osam, David and Juliet Moore, and Amy Peck. Cherished great-grandchildren include Dyllan and Brooklyn Floyd, Evan Osam, and Ryan and Carleigh Moore.

Leanah will be remembered for her kind and generous heart. Over the years she hosted many bird-watching groups to their lakeside home in Hensley, Arkansas, where she also enjoyed gardening and making jams and jellies which she gave as gifts to her many friends. Leanah, a talented seamstress and weaver, was a founding member of the Arkansas Weavers Guild. She was also a longtime member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Little Rock.

A memorial service honoring her life was held at 2:00 p.m. on July 19, 2010.

Friends Remember Leanah Floyd

Leanah was 88 years young and had suffered from leukemia in recent years. She and Perk were a great team and have done so much for our feathered friends including banding thousands of birds over many years, coordinating Christmas Bird Counts and Breeding Bird Surveys, etc. I think Perk told me he has been a member of the National Audubon Society since the 1940s. He will turn 92 shortly.

For years the Audubon Society of Central Arkansas would make an annual trek to Sheridan to visit their wonderful home on the lakeside, learn about their banding activities and enjoy Perk and Leanah 'in their natural setting'. Just as important as seeing their birds, was the fellowship and good food enjoyed by all at these potlucks.

Leanah lived a good life, had two children, and have countless good friends who always enjoyed visiting with her and Perk and 'talking birds' or anything else. In recent years they had moved to the Woodland Heights retirement community in west Little Rock.

Leanah will be greatly missed.

Barry Haas

My very dear friend, Leanah Floyd has passed away. She was almost like a mom to me. She and Perk took me under their wings so to speak, and allowed me to be a small part of their family. We spent many days together banding hummers and visiting, telling me stories and sometimes just watching the birds and the lake.

Just now, this minute, I feel like I just met her yesterday, and yet, we go back many, many years. I loved that lady! I love Perk! I will miss her.

*Thanks,
Larry Witherspoon*

I had the pleasure of visiting with Leanah and Floyd at their home at Lakeside many years ago when I worked for The Nature Conservancy and the Floyds graciously hosted a group of us. They were gentle and personable and Perk's dedication to banding hummingbirds was impressive and legendary. We shall miss Leanah.

*Ellen M. Fennell
Audubon Arkansas*

The Elegant American Avocet

With its elegant profile and striking coloration, the American Avocet is unique among North American birds. This long-legged shorebird is characterized by a long, thin bill that curves upward. It has a distinctive black and white striped pattern on its back and sides. During the breeding season, the head and neck are a pinkish-tan and during winter, a grayish-white color. They average 18 inches in length with a wingspan of 31 inches. The avocet has bluish-gray legs and feet, thus earning the nickname "blue shanks."

American Avocets are commonly found in shallow muddy ponds, fresh and saltwater marshes, and saline lakes. It feeds by thrusting its bill underwater and swinging it side to side along the bottom to stir up aquatic insects and crustaceans.

Avocets have elaborate courtship displays that include various actions and posturing. They nest in colonies of 10 to 12 from April to June, constructing nests that are merely depressions on the sand or platforms of grass on mudflats. The female lays three to four olive-colored eggs that are incubated for 22 to 24 days. Should the water rise, the breeding pair will raise the nest up to a foot or more with sticks, weeds, and feathers to keep the eggs above water.

A female avocet may lay one to four eggs in the nest of another female, who will incubate them. They may also parasitize other species' nests such as Mew Gulls. Other species will parasitize avocet nests. Avocets have been

known to incubate mixed clutches of their own eggs with those of Common Terns or Black-necked Stilts.



American Avocet – Ron Howard

During the nesting period they are aggressive toward intruders, sometimes physically striking Northern Harriers or Common Ravens. They will also engage in distraction ploys, one right after another, until they drive the intruder away. These displays can include loud call notes, a "crippled bird" act, a "begging for pity" act, and even a spectacular "dive bomb" display where the bird will swoop down on the predator and narrowly miss it.

The downy chicks leave the nest within 24 hours after hatching. They can not only feed themselves but walk, swim, and dive to escape predators.

References: Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Texas Parks and Wildlife

An Un-Belize-able Honeymoon

Dan & Samantha Scheiman

Following our wonderful wedding in Wisconsin on May 30, we went to Belize for our honeymoon. It is a good destination because English is the official language, they accept US dollars, and they sure know how to cater to tourists. The people, food, weather, and of course the birds were all outstanding.

Our first stop was Chan Chich Lodge, a full-service resort nestled in a 130,000 acre private jungle reserve. Chan Chich is famous for its regular sightings of various cat species that are protected by the vast reserve. We didn't see cats, but we saw lots of tropical birds like Montezuma Oropendola, Ocellated Turkey, and Red-ored Parrot – and that was just around the cabanas! We birded every day (and some nights), both with the friendly, knowledgeable guides and on our own along the resort's nine miles of trails. We were treated to close

looks at spider monkeys and howler monkeys; the latter sound like huge monsters when you hear them roar at close range!

After four days in the rainforest we spent three days on the coast, at Matachica Resort on Ambergris Caye (pronounced 'key'). Belize's primary coastal attraction is the world's second longest barrier reef just off shore. Snorkeling with green sea turtles and nurse sharks was one of the highlights of our trip. Magnificent Frigatebirds frequently flew over, and we observed Tropical Mockingbirds and Black Catbirds around the resort. In the mangroves behind the resort we saw other life birds like Mangrove Vireo and Mangrove Yellow Warbler. We tallied 140 birds, 110 lifers for Sam and 55 lifers for Dan. We'll return someday ... after we bird Costa Rica.

Upcoming Programs

ASCA meets at 7:00 p.m., 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 Avenue. The programs are free and open to the public.

September 9, 2010 – Zoonotics

Speaker: **Susan Weinstein, DVM, Arkansas Department of Health**
Program: **Zoonotics**

Dr. Susan Weinstein will teach us about zoonotics, diseases that normally infect animals but can be transmitted to people. Several diseases are carried by birds. What's the latest on West Nile Virus? Is there a risk of catching Swine Flu in Arkansas? Are there risks to feeding or handling wild birds? Ask Susan.

Dr. Weinstein is the Public Health Veterinarian for the AR Dept. of Health. She is Chief of the Zoonotic Disease Section, where she works with diseases animals are able to transmit to humans.

October 14, 2010 – Leave No Trace

Speaker: **Dr. Greg Hamilton**
Program: **Leave No Trace**

Dr. Greg Hamilton will share with us the principles of Leave No Trace, a program designed to assist outdoor enthusiasts with their decisions about how to reduce their impacts while enjoying the outdoors. It is best understood as an educational and ethical program, not as a set of rules and regulations. Leave No Trace information helps public land visitors understand and practice minimum impact skills and ethics.

Dr. Hamilton is a senior research economist, demographer, and director of research at the Institute for Economic Advancement. Greg is active with the Boys Scouts (BSA). He served as Scout Master of Troop 30 at St Paul's Church in 2005. Since then he has become a Leave No Trace Master Trainer and is engaged in developing and delivering the BSA's Leave No Trace Training Programs.

November 11, 2010 – The Ozarks Project (tentative)

Speakers: **Kelly Mulhollan and Donna Stjerna**
Program: **The Ozarks Project, Toucan Jam, and more**

Kelly and Donna will entertain us with folk stories collected from the people of the Ozarks. They may even share a song or two inspired by these tales. In addition to being skilled musicians, they are excellent educators and will describe the ways they teach children about exotic cultures and nature through their *Toucan Jam* program.

Both Kelly and Donna are accomplished songwriters and play a plethora of acoustic instruments under the moniker *Still on the Hill*. The group's repertoire is primarily their own original, roots-based compositions, a genre hybrid they term "folkgrass." The twosome has created several very popular children's shows and educational workshops which they perform under the name *Toucan Jam*. They also teach students about birds at the Halberg Ecology Camp.

Arkansas Audubon Society Fall 2010 Call to Meeting

The 2010 Fall Meeting of the Arkansas Audubon Society (AAS) will be held November 12-14 in Russellville, AR.

Friday registration (4:00-6:00 p.m.) will be held in the Atrium area of the Hickory Lodge at Lake Point Conference Center on Lake Dardanelle. All the rooms in the Hickory and Oak Lodges are set aside for the conference, call 470-356-6240 for reservations. AAS has a Special Rate of \$65 per night plus tax for a total of \$70.85 per room for either single or double occupancy.

The cost of registration is \$20.00 per person. To qualify for the Early Bird Discount (subtract \$5.00), mail your registration to Carolyn Minson by October 15. Children under 16 with adult are free. Friday and Saturday evening meals are \$22.00 a person.

Friday's field trips will begin at 1:00 pm. Evening events will begin at 7:30 pm and include guest speakers, Shawn Porter, Sarah Thompson, and a member slide show*.

Saturday's field trips TBA. The evening begins with a Camp/Trust Reception at 5:15 pm, dinner at 6:15 pm, and the evening program at 8:00 pm. Guest speaker will be Dr. Doug James.

To download a registration form, agenda, and field trip schedule, contact Carolyn or visit the Arkansas Audubon Society website at: www.arbirds.org.

Carolyn Minson
AAS Vice President
csminson@mac.com

*Request for bird slides: For this meeting, the emphasis will be on photos taken of birds in exotic places, however photos of local birds will be accepted as well. Members' bird pictures will be shown during the informal Friday evening get-together. Please submit up to 20 digital photos by November 8th to Lyndal York at lrlbluejay@gmail.com.

Survey an Important Bird Area

Dr. Dan Scheiman, Audubon Arkansas

Important Bird Area (IBA) designation is based on bird population data that show a site meets one or more IBA criteria. Though some IBAs are regularly monitored, others are not. Current data on key species and species groups are needed to support continued designation.

Potential IBAs also require data to support nomination. In addition, bird population data is important for addressing threats to IBAs, developing conservation and management plans, and assessing bird conservation and habitat acquisition priorities statewide.

You can help support Arkansas's IBA program by volunteering to monitor a site, whether designated or proposed. The time, skill and technique needed vary depending on what birds need to be counted.

Bell Slough Wildlife Management Area and Camp Robinson Special Use Area are two sites close to Little Rock that need updated bird data. Species of concern that need monitoring at one or both sites include Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Northern Bobwhite, Bell's Vireo, and Bachman's Sparrow.

To find the best method, survey sites, and season(s) to work, contact Dr. Dan Scheiman, Bird Conservation Director at dscheiman@audubon.org.



Yellow-crowned Night-Heron – Kelly Chitwood



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 or contact Karen Holliday, ASCA Field Trip Coordinator at karenh@arkleg.state.ar.us or 501-920-3246. Always bring plenty of water with you.

September 18, 2010

Bell Slough Wildlife Management Area

We will meet at 7:30 a.m. at the main entrance to Bell Slough WMA, south of Mayflower. We'll slowly walk the trail looking for migrating fall warblers. This is a good opportunity to learn to identify warblers in their non-breeding (basic) plumage. The trail is gravel and fairly level for easy walking. This will be a morning trip.

Directions: From Little Rock take I-40 West to Exit 135 at Mayflower. Cross over the interstate, then turn left (south) onto Hwy. 365. Go approximately 2.5 miles, look for the brown sign. Turn left off Hwy. 365 onto Grassy Lake Road. Follow Grassy Lake Rd. under I-40 then turn left into the parking lot just after crossing Palarm Creek.

October 23, 2010

Mount Nebo State Park

We will meet at 7:00 a.m. at the Mayflower commuter lot off I-40 West at Exit 135. We'll arrive around 9:00 a.m. at the Visitor Center on top of the mountain for those who want to meet us there. The trails offer sweeping views of the Arkansas River Valley, are gravel and fairly level for easy walking. With a bit of luck, the mountain will still be in fall color. Our target birds will be winter residents. Bring scope, water, snacks, and a lunch. If time permits, we may make a quick stop at Holla Bend NWR. This will be an all-day trip.

The address for the park is: 16728 W State Highway 155, Dardanelle, AR 72834. Go to www.arkansasstateparks.com/mountnebo for more information about the park.

November 20, 2009

DeGray Lake Resort State Park

We will meet at 8:00 a.m. at the commuter lot at I-630 and Shackelford Road (I-430) in Little Rock. We'll arrive around 9:30 a.m. at the park's Lodge for anyone in the area who would like to join us. Our target birds will be eagles, ducks, mergansers, gulls, and other water birds. Bring scope, water, snacks, and lunch. Dress warm, the lake can be windy. We will return to Little Rock after lunch.

Address for the park is: 2027 State Park Entrance Road - Bismarck, Arkansas 71929. Go to www.degray.com for more information about the park.



Field Trip Reports

Cook's Lake

June 12, 2010

Braving temperatures in the mid 90's, fifteen birders headed to Cook's Lake, located approximately 15 miles east of Stuttgart. We stopped at the Potlatch Conservation Education Center and were greeted by facility manager Don McSwain and education specialist Tana Beasley. We walked the trail that runs along the top of the bluff of the oxbow lake. There Great-crested Flycatcher, Prothonotary Warbler, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Summer Tanager, Indigo Bunting, and Eastern Wood-Pewee were numerous. At various intervals we would see Red-eared Sliders or find semi-aquatic turtles, which had made the long climb up the bluff to lay eggs in mud holes they had shaped into the forest floor. We spotted a total of 30 bird species along the trail.

We gathered in the much appreciated, air-conditioned Education Center to hear Don and Tana's presentation on hummingbirds. They covered the life cycle of the

tiny birds, including their arduous migration flight, nesting sequence, and tips on attracting hummingbirds to your backyard with various plants and feeders. Tana captured several Ruby-throated Hummingbirds from among the 30-40 visiting the feeders, and Don demonstrated banding techniques and the documentation process. The entire presentation was fascinating and informative.

On the way back to Little Rock, a small group made a quick trip to the Stuttgart Airport in hopes of finding a Painted Bunting, unfortunately we came up empty. We did see and hear several Dickcissels, Red-winged Blackbirds, Mourning Doves, and Killdeers. Even though it was mid-afternoon, a Common Nighthawk made several swoops over the group. We saw a total of 16 species. --Karen Holliday

Arkansas Post National Memorial

July 17, 2010

Braving the heat, fourteen enthusiastic birders met at the Dixon Road commuter lot at 6:30 a.m. for the two hour drive to Arkansas Post National Memorial park. There we were rewarded with a cooling breeze, lots of fun birds, and three American alligators!

Our first stop was a bonanza of Purple Gallinules, Anhingas, and Common Moorhens with their chicks. They were little black balls of fluff with bright orange bills. A couple of Least Bitterns flushed and flew across the slough in front of us. We counted ten American White Pelicans circling overhead and spotted two American alligators; one leisurely swimming among the blooming lotus plants and the other sunning on top of a small grassy knoll.

At the visitor center the park's biologist Sarah Allely, joined us on our trail walk. She provided informative

pointers about the park's varied habitat and vegetation, and interesting tidbits about the history of the area. Orchard Orioles, Great-crested Flycatchers, Summer Tanagers, Carolina Wrens, and Eastern Wood-Pewees abounded. We were treated to a Yellow-throated Warbler foraging in a tree next to the trail at eye-level. We also watched a 14-foot alligator swim across the small lake located behind the visitor center.

We stopped for lunch at the picnic area overlooking the back waters of the Arkansas River where we observed a Bald Eagle nest. It's been active for the past eleven years. The two juvenile eagles seen near the nest two weeks ago were not present. Soaring on the updrafts were three Mississippi Kites and a Broad-winged Hawk, while numerous Great Egrets and Anhingas flew overhead. We headed back to Little Rock with a total of 46 species for our trip list. --Karen Holliday

Audubon Society of Central Arkansas

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Eastern Kingbird
Photo by Gail Miller

Audubon Society of Central Arkansas

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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

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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.

Find an Injured Bird?

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

<http://www.agfc.com/wildlife-conservation/rehabilitators.aspx>
or
http://www.agfc.com/pdfs/rehab/migratorybird_rehablist.pdf

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

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