

THE SNIPE

The Newsletter of the
Audubon Society of Central Arkansas



Charles Mills

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June – August 2012

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch visits Mount Magazine State Park

Dottie Boyles

Don Simons, Park Interpreter at Mount Magazine State Park, spotted a Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch feeding in a small patch of grass across from the front doors of the visitor center on the morning of May 6. Don posted his finding and a photograph of the bird on ARBIRD-L around 11:15 a.m. Shortly afterwards birders from across the state began arriving for a glimpse of this rare visitor to Arkansas.

According to a recent article published in *Mother Nature Network*, when Audubon Arkansas's Bird Conservation Director Dr. Dan Scheiman was asked what could have caused this bird to fly towards Arkansas, he replied, "Some populations of the Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch are migratory. This bird's internal compass is off, and it traveled in the opposite direction than it was supposed to." A phenomenon called reverse migration.

A songbird of extreme environments, the Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch is normally found on open ground at the top of mountains from Alaska to California, and on the Aleutian and Pribilof islands. As Arkansas's highest point, Mount Magazine was the perfect place for a bird whose internal compass lead it astray, and for many Arkansans, a chance to add a hard-to-find species to their life list.

For several days, birders flocked to Mount Magazine State Park, often driving for hours, in hopes of seeing this rarity. Most were rewarded with great views and photographs, while a handful of others unfortunately missed it.



Abby Darrah

In the birding world, timing is everything. The rosy-finch's arrival at the state park's visitor center could not have been better as Don left the same afternoon for a birding trip to Kansas. Without Don's keen eye, the bird's presence could have gone completely unnoticed. The last reported sighting was by Rob Weiss on May 11, at 9:00 a.m.

Pending acceptance by the Arkansas Bird Records Committee, this will be the first official sighting for this species in the state.

President's Column

Jane Gulley

Learn to be a Citizen Scientist

Although the weather has been a bit strange lately it has not hampered ASCA activities! We are a hardy group and would love to have you join in the fun and camaraderie.

I often stress what an active and exciting group ASCA is. When you spend time going birding and learning about the birds, you can also enjoy becoming a citizen scientist.

International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD), which was held on May 12, 2012, is one opportunity in which birdwatchers can contribute information about birds and their needs. In fact, with the internet your bird watching records can be entered into a data base that helps researchers keep up with information ranging from general locations, to rare sightings, to breeding populations. It is exciting to be needed and know your birding time is "free time" well spent!

While the ASCA group was on a wet, but successful field trip for IMBD, I was teaching birding skills to Boy Scouts for the Boy Scout University. The birding class was held at the Witt Stephens, Jr. Central Arkansas Nature Center. A wonderful learning center, located in the Little Rock River Market District, which children and adults can both enjoy. The Director of the center is Neil Curry, a former past President of ASCA. Admission to the center is free.

I taught morning and afternoon sessions with as many as twelve boys in attendance for each session. It is a unique learning experience, to say the least, and a wonderful opportunity to introduce youngsters to the fun and challenges of bird watching. I presented a

section on the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) and passed out information from previous counts held in Arkansas. The boys enjoyed interpreting data and discussing factors that could influence yearly bird counts, and counts over numerous years. I have CBC records dating from 1955 through 2009 and they are interesting to study. I felt comfortable talking about the role ordinary people play in helping with citizen science.

The Scouts study feathers through magnifying glasses, learn to use information in field guides, and complete a craft project. They also learn to use and focus binoculars, and even go on a bird search inside the nature center. I always plan ahead in case of rain and the resources available through the center are a true boon. The center has a great handout enabling people to search for mounted birds that are displayed within the building.

There is also an excellent opportunity to practice using binoculars and identify birds through the large glass windows that overlook well stocked bird feeders. There is nothing more discouraging for beginning birders, young or old, than not being able to see birds and use those newly learned skills by which to identify them. The birds at the feeders stay long enough to be identified with books and binoculars supplied free of charge by the Witt Stephens, Jr. Central Arkansas Nature Center.

Please remember while your birding time is fun and exciting, it can also be useful and informative. Keep up the birding and come to an ASCA meeting and learn how you can become a citizen scientist.

Jane Gulley
ASCA President

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Arkansas Audubon Society Spring Meeting

Another fabulous spring convention was held atop Petit Jean Mountain at Winrock Institute. Birders of all ages and skills attended field trips to some of the best birding the Arkansas River Valley has to offer.

Arkansas Audubon Society (AAS) Vice-President, Karen Holliday, can be thanked for arranging fine accommodations, extraordinary dining, fun-filled raffles, and door prizes. The weekend tallied 115 species, including Anhinga, Painted Bunting, and Merlin.

Several youth were in attendance, and who better than Annie Meeks, 16, former Halberg camper to write about those who attended the spring convention!

The Halberg Connection

“So much to see, so little time...”—often seems to be the mantra of students and birders alike. With all of the opportunities floating around out there for teenagers and high school students, it is hard to know where to begin when you venture out of your little safety bubble and into the world, chocked-full of things worth your time or interest. But over the last thirty-three years hundreds of bright-eyed middle schoolers have happened upon the

perfect milestone—“Junior Arkansas Audubon Society Halberg Ecology Camp, held each June at Camp Clearfork, a U.S. Forest Service camp between Hot Springs and Mt. Ida, with each session having sixty-two 11- and 12-year old youth” (arbirds.org).

It is safe to say that just about every student embarking on this new sleep-away adventure already has a knack for something outdoorsy, but for a few students, their passion for the outdoors is so overwhelming that the staff can't help but invite them back, again, and again, and again... until they *gasp* run out of camps! All of a sudden it is up to those students to use their years of training to begin solo science projects and move up to the matured learning chances that have been awaiting them.

For a few campers—one, two, or three camps just weren't enough, and they had to keep coming back. At the 2012 AAS Spring Convention, seven previous Halberg campers attended! Scattered among those in attendance were Adam Schaffer, Mitchell Pruitt, Jessica Haley, Natasha Haley, Spencer Anderson, Caleb Knighten, and me.

Continued on page 4

Lesser Goldfinch visits Benton County

Dottie Boyles

On May 9, just west of Highfill, in Benton County, a male Lesser Goldfinch was spotted visiting a feeder at the home of Joyce and Harland Shedell. The next day, Joel Neal photographed this rare visitor and soon other birders from around the state followed.

Pending acceptance by the Arkansas Bird Records Committee, this will be the third time this species has been recorded in the state.

Cool Facts:

Male Lesser Goldfinches in the most eastern part of their range in the United States tend to have black backs and napes. Those found to the west have green backs and only a black cap. South of central Mexico, all of the males are black-backed.

It is particularly adaptable when it comes to habitats and frequents thickets, weedy fields, woodlands, forest clearings, scrublands, farmlands, as well as parks and gardens in both suburban and urban settings.

They primarily feed in small groups, moving through low weeds and other plants in order to reach seeds, buds,

flowers or fruits. In its pursuit it sometimes hangs upside down to harvest the food.



Jacque Brown

Lesser Goldfinches are social, often gregarious birds that form flocks and forage together during any season. Water sites can attract large congregations. They only defend territories near their nests, but when defending these territories they fiercely beat each other with their wings and peck each other's heads. Pairs are monogamous, and the male feeds the female when she is incubating eggs.

Reference: The Cornell Lab of Ornithology; *All About Birds*

Penguin–Pedia

A Special Event with the Little Rock Zoo

Dan Scheiman

On Saturday, June 16, the Audubon Society of Central Arkansas (ASCA) will be co-hosting with the Little Rock Zoo a special guest speaker, David Salomon. The event will be held at the Zoo’s amphitheater at 10:00 AM. The cost of admission is the regular Zoo entrance fee of \$10.00 for adults and \$8.00 for kids ages 1-12. One-year-olds get in for free. Active military and seniors over 60 receive a \$2.00 discount.

ASCA will have a table available to hand out information and membership brochures. A few volunteers to run the table will get in for free. Come and enjoy the event as well as promote our Chapter and birds to a new audience. Contact Vice President Dan Scheiman to get involved.

David Salomon will present information and photos about the world’s penguins featured in his new book *Penguin-Pedia*. It is an informative and inspiring tribute to the 17 species of penguins on the planet. He is a lifelong photographer, part-time writer, and full-time real estate developer from Dallas, Texas. David has

always loved animals and has a knack for taking pictures, specializing in outdoor photography.



David Salomon

After being struck by “penguin-mania,” following a trip to Chilean Patagonia, he spent the next two summers sailing the southern oceans, photographing all 17 penguin species. Every picture in *Penguin-Pedia* was taken by the author. He also launched a massive search to personally verify old and new information about these graceful birds. The book will be for sale at the event.

AAS Spring Meeting

Continued from page 3

Now, if you have never seen any of these names before, there is rising University of Arkansas college freshman, Mitchell Pruitt, (does Arkansas Big Year mean anything to you!?) who is by far one of the best Ecology camp success stories, attending “just one camp” and consequently falling into ornithology and nature photography, not only as a hobby, but as a lifestyle. And if you have attended an Ecology Camp lately, you have definitely enjoyed the company of Adam Schaffer—outdoorsman, teacher, and naturalist who’s been blessing the Audubon Society with his company for years. Then there’s the artsy biology student, Jessica Haley, who strengthened her love for snakes and fellow herps; Natasha Haley, taking two camps by storm with her adventurous spirit; and finally, Spencer Anderson and Caleb Knighten, Iola Ray Scholarship recipients who set out to broaden their birding experiences and create lasting networks for the future.

For Spencer, none of his experiences have been in vain. After being prompted by a fifth grade teacher, he applied for his first “eye opening” camp. While experiencing for the first time all the new fields science had to offer, one counselor in particular made a

difference for him that summer. Just a week after camp, Matthew Wilson invited Spencer to go birding with him. Spencer recalls: “We hiked 13 miles that day, and had a blast seeing all the birds. After that experience, I started spending a lot of time birding at my home; I would just go sit outside with my field guide and see how many birds I could find.” He enjoyed getting to meet all of the people who work behind the scenes to make the Halberg Camp an unforgettable experience. Inspired by his time with AAS, he hopes to pursue a future built around ecology so that one day, he can help to preserve nature with a project similar to the Red-cockaded Woodpecker monitoring, that he observed during his senior year of camp.

Each of the campers has a similar appreciation for their time with AAS—it is no coincidence that these students have already made an impact in their scientific communities.

Thank you AAS members and Halberg Ecology Camp contributors—your work really does make a difference in the lives of others (just know you won’t be getting rid of any of us anytime soon).

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.

June 14, 2012 – Green Living

Guest Speaker: April Ambrose

Program: Green living, Greenwashing, and LEED Certification

April Ambrose, one of central Arkansas's green gurus, will describe what it means to live green, as well as how to tell when something isn't as green as it seems. She'll also talk about how buildings become certified as green through her employer, Viridian.

April received her BS in a self-designed Environmental Education major, which included an Arkansas high school teaching certificate, from Hendrix College. April is a LEED Accredited Professional in Building Design and Construction. She is the first Chair of the educational non-profit Elevate, and in the past was the first Chair of the Little Rock Sustainability Commission, and the founder of Arkansas Earth Day Foundation.

July 12, 2012 – Wisdom, the Midway Albatross

Guest Speakers: Darcy Pattison and Kitty Harvill

Program: A Story and Images of Hope: Wisdom, the Midway Albatross

The author and illustrator of the children's book, *WISDOM, THE MIDWAY ALBATROSS: Surviving the Japanese Tsunami and Other Manmade and Natural Disasters for Over 60 Years*, will discuss the research for the book, creating the book, and the current status of Laysan Albatrosses. Book sales and book signing at the conclusion.

Published in eight languages, Darcy Pattison's recent children's nature books include *Prairie Storms* (Sylvan Dell) and the forthcoming *Desert Baths* (Sylvan Dell). Her books have been recognized for excellence by starred reviews and various state reading award lists. She was the 2007 recipient of the Arkansas Governor's Arts Awards, Individual Artist Award for her work in children's literature. When not writing, Darcy can be found quilting, hiking--or searching for more bird stories.

Illustrator Kitty Harvill was born in Clarksville, Tennessee, received her BFA cum laude in painting from SMU including a semester of study in Paris. She received an MA in art therapy from the University of Illinois at Chicago, and an AA in illustration from Ray College, Chicago. She held positions of art director and creative director in the advertising industry, designing and supervising the production of such projects as the Dillard Department Stores annual report. In 1990, she formed Harvill Ross Studios Ltd., a commercial art firm.

August 9, 2012 – TBA

Stay tuned to ASCA's website and to ARBIRD-L, the Arkansas birding listserv, for an update on August's program.

Hummingbird Program Mount Magazine State Park June 22 and 23, 2012

Come join us, Bob and Martha Sargent, along with Arkansas hummingbird banded Tana Beasley, in a down-to-earth, informal session as we capture and band Ruby-throated hummingbirds during the annual Mount Magazine Butterfly Festival to be held at Mount Magazine State Park, June 22 and 23.

Bring your list of questions related to the private lives of these pugnacious little feathered beasts. Having captured and banded many tens of thousands of hummingbirds over the past 25 years, we will share what we have learned, and what we THINK we know about these smallest of all neotropical migrant birds.

A special presentation on hummingbirds will be held Friday night, June 22. Part of the presentation will cover some species of hummingbirds that go undetected and unidentified in Arkansas.

For more information contact:
Don Simons, Park Interpreter
Mount Magazine State Park
don.simons@arkansas.gov
479-963-8502

Bob and Martha Sargent
Clay, Alabama



Ruby-throated Hummingbird
photo by Gail Miller

Feathered Flyers Weekend
Pinnacle Mountain State Park
July 28-29, 2012

It's all for the birds! Pinnacle Mountain State Park will hold its Feathered Flyers Weekend, July 28 and 29. Programs all weekend will feature: birds of prey, hummingbird viewing, bird hikes, owl pellet dissection, bird identification program, Fill the Bill game, and other bird related games and activities. Admission to all activities is free.

Saturday, July 28
8:30-11:00 a.m.
Hummingbird Viewing

Come explore the world of hummingbirds and watch as they feed at the visitor center feeders. After viewing, join park interpreters to learn more about amazing hummingbird adaptations, how to attract them to your yard, and what to feed them. Don't miss this amazing treat!

Saturday, July 28
11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.
Birds of Prey

A special program by Rodney Paul, licensed bird of prey rehabilitator, will be presented in the Pinnacle Mountain State Park visitor's center conference room. Several live birds will be shown such as hawks and owls. Mr. Paul will discuss how injured birds are rehabilitated and released back into the wild. Admission is free, but limited to the first 50 guests.

Pinnacle Mountain State Park is located at 11901 Pinnacle Valley Road, Little Rock, AR 72223.

Contact the park for a detailed program schedule as the event draws near.

Richard Spilman, Park Interpreter, CIG
Pinnacle Mountain State Park
Email:
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ArkansasStateParks.com



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 see a life bird for those who list. For more information visit www.ascabird.org or contact Karen Holliday, ASCA Field Trip Coordinator, at ladyhawke1@att.net or 501-920-3246. Always bring plenty of water with you.

June 2, 2012

Warren Prairie Natural Area

We will meet at 7:00 a.m. at the Dixon Road commuter lot, Exit 3 off I-530 south. We should get to the Warren Prairie Natural Area parking lot on Hwy 172 around 9:00 a.m. for those in south Arkansas who would like to meet us there. Our target bird will be the Red-cockaded Woodpecker (RCW). The young fledge around the last part of May, so RCW family groups should still be in the general cluster area.

Warren Prairie is an Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission site located in the Coastal Plain and consists of a mosaic of salt slick barrens, saline prairie, Delta post oak flatwoods, prairie mound woodlands, pine woodlands, and bottomland hardwood forest communities. It is also a global National Audubon Important Bird Area (IBA). Joining us will be Bill Holimon, Natural Heritage ornithologist and Chief of Research, who manages the RCW population and its habitat.

Bring scopes, boots, bug spray, water, and snacks/lunch. There is a McDonald's in Warren. From Warren, take U.S. Highway 278 East approximately 4.5 miles, across the Saline River, to the junction of State Highway 172 (Old Hwy. 8). Turn right (south) and proceed 2.0 miles to parking lot and sign on the left (east). GPS coordinates: 33.57956, -91.98643.

July 14, 2012

Bois D'Arc Wildlife Management Area

Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the south end of the commuter parking lot at I-630/I-430 at Shackleford Road in Little Rock. We will stop at the McDonalds in Hope (Exit 30 off I-30) around 9:15 a.m. for those in south Arkansas who would like to join us. Or, meet us at Bois D'Arc Lake. Our target birds will be Purple and Common Gallinules and their young, herons, egrets, Anhingas, and possibly an alligator! Very little walking will be involved. Bring scopes, plenty of water, snacks, and lunch. Or, you can eat lunch in Hope after we leave Bois D'Arc.

Bois D'Arc WMA is reached from Hope by taking Exit 30 off I-30 to Hwy 29 south, then Hwy 174 south from Hope to Spring Hill. Then follow Hwy 355 west from Spring Hill. Turn right into the WMA just before the highway ends at the lake.

August 18, 2012

Bald Knob National Wildlife Refuge

We will meet at 7:00 a.m. in North Little Rock at the Other Center parking lot on the east side of the lot behind McDonald's. The Other Center is located across from McCain Mall, on McCain Blvd. Take Exit 1 West off US-67/167. We'll arrive at Bald Knob NWR at around 8:30 a.m. for those who want to meet us there.

The federal refuge is a National Audubon Important Bird Area (IBA). We expect shorebirds, night-herons, and possibly Wood Storks and Roseate Spoonbills. It will be very hot so bring plenty of water, snacks, sunscreen, and a hat. If you own a scope, bring it also. Very little walking will be involved. This is a morning trip. Go to www.fws.gov/baldknob/ for more information about the refuge.



Field Trip Reports

Camp Robinson Maneuver Training Site

March 10, 2012

Brian Mitchell, Natural Resource Officer, met with 23 birders for a tour of the Camp Robinson Maneuver Training Site. The purpose of the trip was to introduce birders to a new area. The Post totals 33,000 acres and is open to the public. The acreage has a great mix of habitats, comprised of oak hardwood forest, with some areas burned on a regular basis to encourage Bachman's Sparrows. Several streams provide riparian areas; plus there are open fields, small lakes and ponds.

The first stop was the Engineer's Lake, where we found Belted Kingfishers, Tree Swallows, Wood Ducks, Cooper's Hawk, Pileated Woodpecker, and a mix of sparrows. The next stop netted more sparrows including Chipping, Fox, Lincoln's, and Field Sparrows, and Eastern Meadowlark. The sunshine and warm weather provided the next location with a bonanza of butterflies and birds, with Pine Warblers as life birds for the

first-time birders. Several Falcate Orangetips, Eastern Tiger Swallowtails, duskywings, and either Pipevine or Spicebush Swallowtails, drifted by.

Next was a sweep of the military drop zone, which has an extensive grassy field. Surprisingly an American Bittern flushed; a life bird for many in the group! Numerous Savannah Sparrows flushed, and six Le Conte's Sparrows teed up for us.

The last stop netted three male Eastern Towhees, more Pine Warblers, and Brown Thrashers. On the drive out of the area we spotted a female American Kestrel and the only juncos of the day. Chorus Frogs and Spring Peepers were heard at several stops during the morning. The species count was 49 for the day. --Karen Holliday

Lake Sylvania

April 21, 2012

Lake Sylvania is a lovely, secluded 18-acre lake in the wooded hills of the Ouachita National Forest near Perryville. It features a day-use section with picnic tables, bathhouse, swimming area, and a campground.

The morning started out chilly, but sunny as 27 birders, including two from Oregon, explored the picnic area. There we saw Eastern Kingbirds, Eastern Phoebe, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and lots of Pine Warblers.

Next, we skirted the lake edge, crossed the creek to the campground, and walked the trail that runs along the far side of the lake to the dam. A male Orchard Oriole was spotted across the lake. Summer Tanagers were seen and heard, along with Black-and-white Warblers, Red-eyed Vireos, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and FOS Great Crested Flycatchers.

The park's interpretive trail has the added bonus of signs scattered along the route identifying many of the native tree species and giving interesting details about each tree. The best birds on this trail were Scarlet Tanagers, Wood Ducks, Swainson's Thrushes, a heard only Northern Parula, and Black-throated Green Warbler.

When we reached the parking lot, an extra treat was watching many of the 250 participants in the Slobberknocker Mountain Bike Marathon stream past the trail head. This is a yearly 75-mile endurance race, which starts in Perryville and takes place mostly on the unpaved fire roads around Lake Sylvania.

While eating lunch at the picnic area, one of the nesting Red-shouldered Hawks made an appearance, as well as a Broad-winged Hawk. --Karen Holliday

Gillam Park and Terry Lock & Dam

May 12, 2012

In the pouring rain, ten intrepid birders met at Gillam Park, part of the Little Rock Audubon Center campus, determined to find birds. We explored the trails, but very little was moving. We saw an Acadian Flycatcher and heard a Wood Thrush, plus a few common birds. Numerous box turtles along the trail almost out-numbered the birds; one was a tiny baby turtle.

We stopped by the Audubon Center for a tour of the innovative "green" features that were incorporated when the facility was renovated. Audubon's Educational Director Mary Smith provided information about the native plants they are propagating in the gardens around the center.

At the industrial area on Fourche Dam Pike we located two soggy Western Kingbirds at Custom Metals. They seemed to be checking the floodlights as a possible nesting site.

The last stop was Terry Lock and Dam. We saw one Painted Bunting and heard a second one, a life bird for three of the group. We also saw Indigo Buntings, Double-crested Cormorants, and one damp Lincoln's Sparrow. On the drive out, we stopped to admire three Loggerhead Shrikes, life birds for the last of the valiant birders who endured through the entire water logged morning. --Karen Holliday

Audubon Society of Central Arkansas

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Tricolored Heron
photo by Dottie Boyles

Audubon Society of Central Arkansas

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*New Memberships paid in the last quarter (Oct-Dec), will include full membership for the following calendar year.
All Membership renewals are due January 1 of each calendar year.

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Ed Laster, Treasurer, 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).

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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.

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

Find an Injured Bird?

For a listing of an AR Game and Fish Commission authorized Migratory Bird Rehabilitator in your area, you can visit their website at:
http://www.agfc.com/species/Documents/migratory_bird_rehablist.pdf