

THE SNIPE

The Newsletter of the
Audubon Society of Central Arkansas



Charles Mills

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June – August 2015

The Breeding Bird Survey's 50th Anniversary

Dan Scheiman

The 2015 season will mark the 50th year that the North American Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) has been in operation. Through the efforts of experienced volunteers, the BBS generates valuable population trend information for a large number of upland bird species; this information is regularly used by scientists and conservationists to monitor the status of bird populations and identify species most in need of conservation attention. For example, the National Audubon Society analyzed BBS data and Christmas Bird Count data in relation to climate variables to predict how climate change will affect hundreds of our bird species.

The BBS is a long-term, large-scale, international avian monitoring program initiated in 1966 to track the status and trends of North American bird populations. The BBS continues to monitor bird populations across the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, and informs researchers

and wildlife managers of significant changes in bird population levels.

Each year during the height of the breeding season, participants skilled in bird identification collect bird population data along roadside survey routes. Each survey route is 24.5 miles long with stops at 0.5-mile intervals. At each stop, a 3-minute point count is conducted. During the count, every bird seen or heard within a 0.25-mile radius is recorded. Surveys start one-half hour before local sunrise and take about 4 hours to complete.

There are 52 routes in Arkansas, of which 5 are open and in need of volunteers. If you think you have the skills to run a route, contact our state's BBS Coordinator, Dick Baxter, at dickbaxter100@gmail.com. To learn more visit <https://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs>.

Crested Caracara Found in Jackson County

Early Monday morning, May 11, Dan Scheiman reported on the ARbird-L listserv, news of a Crested Caracara spotted in Oil Trough (Independence County). Craig Shirley had first noticed the bird on Friday as it was spending time in his yard and surrounding pastures.

Dan received a photo via Karen Rowe, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC), taken by Mr. Shirley. By noon Dan and Jeremy Chamberlain were viewing the wayward straggler. The bird appeared sick or injured and was not able to fly. An AGFC wildlife officer captured it. Tim Lindblom volunteered to transport it to Raptor Rehab of Central Arkansas for examination.



The bird was malnourished and had an infection around the eye area. It was taken to a Sherwood veterinarian and treated with antibiotics.

On May 24, Rodney Paul reported the Crested Caracara had fully recovered from the infection and been moved to a flight pen to strengthen its wings.



Crested Caracara in flight pen

After much debate and research it was determined the bird should be released where it was found, in Oil Trough.

The bird will be banded and fitted with a transmitter before its release.

Pending review by the Bird Records Committee, this will be a first state record!

Photos courtesy of Rodney Paul and Raptor Rehab of Central Arkansas.

ASCA Officers

President

Cindy Franklin
meshoppen@hotmail.com

Vice-president

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

Recording Secretary

Vacant

Treasurer

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

Newsletter Editor

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

Board Members

Robert Bays
robert.bays@acxiom.com

Samantha Dixon
supersampow@gmail.com

Jane Gulley
501-225-2072
janegulley@comcast.net

D. DeLynn Hearn
501-472-8769
warblingvireo@yahoo.com

Darrel Meyerdirk
dmeyerdirk@comcast.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

Field Trip Coordinator

Karen Holliday
501-920-3246
ladyhawke1@att.net

Hospitality

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

Karen Holliday
501-920-3246
ladyhawke1@att.net

Rare Bird Alert

D. DeLynn Hearn
501-472-8769
warblingvireo@yahoo.com

Webmaster

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

President's Column

On Behalf of Roads Less Traveled

They slip past our windows, roads that disappear around bends or fade into distant horizons as we drive to our predetermined destination. Hotspot birding, that's what happens these days. Drive to places we know welcome or at least tolerate birders, get out, do our thing, then on to the next location. Perhaps this behavior was inevitable as the natural world erodes around us, not unlike Niagara Falls, worn away day by day until the retreat is measured in kilometers instead of a hectare or two converted here and there, until a local ecosystem exists in memory only.

Those roads linger in the mind. They invite us back to a time of unscripted birding when the adventure was the time spent exploring local byways that will never make it to hotspot status. How else to discover pocket ecosystems tucked away out of sight, a pond here, a bayou there, a graveyard carved from hardwood and pine habitat, and fields that always seem to have a bird or two of interest. Yes, sometimes the local residents become concerned about our presence. Most of the time the neighbors will chat about the birds they see once they are assured we are not much of a threat other than a road hazard.

As this spring proceeds to summer, it is a good time to explore less traveled roads throughout Arkansas, especially so when the dread humidity pods that Otus faithfully reports on each year roll over Arkansas and our desire to spend a day outside fades as the temperature and humidity rise. As we travel and perhaps explore off road sites before the sun gets too hot, we can't help but notice and assess the state of the local environment. Habitat and environmental issues go hand in hand with our love of nature and birds. Since we often visit locales that few Arkansans seek out, we develop a feel for what is happening to the land and communities around Arkansas, and through local, state, and national organizations such as Audubon, we use this knowledge to be effective educators about and advocates for the natural world.

So go forth, observe, and remember to document your sightings on eBird.

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood... We took the one less traveled by... With apologies to Robert Frost

*Cindy Franklin
ASCA President*

Anne Allbright Phillips

May 17, 1930 - March 8, 2015

Anne Allbright Phillips of Little Rock, passed away on March 8, 2015, she was 84. Anne lived a full life marked by a curiosity in all things, a deep kindness for others, and a love of nature. She was born May 17, 1930, in McGehee, Arkansas. The daughter of the late Fount and Nita Albright of Little Rock and was the youngest of three children.

She attended Hendrix College and the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville where she won the campus award for the best actress in 1952. "She was the only one not acting," read one review.

She is survived by her children Russ Phillips, Pat Phillips, Sally Phillips Scott-Rector, and John Phillips; brother Charles Albright; and grand-children Michael, Katherine, Olivia, Theo, Emma, and Matt.

A former member of the Audubon Society of Central Arkansas, Anne requested, that in lieu of flowers, memorials be sent to ASCA.

To date ASCA has received \$887.63 in memory of Anne.

Welcome New Members

ASCA would like to welcome the following new members:

Mary Creemer
Theba Lolley

Joyce Gundy
Christopher Stevens

Injured Bald Eagle Released

Dan Scheiman

On March 7, Dan and Samantha Scheiman went to the Wrape Plantation Waterfowl Rest Area in Bayou Meto Wildlife Management Area to watch Rodney Paul release a rehabilitated immature Bald Eagle.

A careless hunter shot the eagle, which was rescued by a caring hunter.



photo by Dan Scheiman

Bald Eagle being released at Bayou Meto WMA.

Global BIG Day

Birders Tally Half the World's Bird Species in 24 Hours

eBird and Cornell Lab of Ornithology

The first ever Global Big Day was held May 9, 2015. The event sponsored by eBird and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology was created as a way to engage a worldwide network of birders to go out and count birds in support of global bird conservation. The goals were to record more than half of the world's species of birds through eBird in a single calendar day, and to raise \$500,000 for bird conservation. Thanks to the generosity of donors, nearly \$300,000 has been raised so far.

In preparation for the Global Big Day, Cornell Lab of Ornithology reached out to countries around the world, bringing as many people together as possible to support global bird conservation. Birders, researchers, and conservationists from 80 countries and all seven continents confirmed they would be participating in advance of the event.

The first Global Big Day was truly spectacular, and provided a one-day snapshot of the world's birds like never before. When first envisioned, eBird and Cornell Lab had hoped it might record 4,000 or 4500 species worldwide, but the amount of participation surged well beyond that. Tens of thousands of people, and hundreds of organizers, are to thank for this effort.

The network of eBirders on the Global Big Day spanned each of the seven continents, covering over 130 countries to submit a grand total of over 800,000 bird observations. eBirders tallied 6,069 species seen or heard in just 24 hours—more than half the world's bird species, submitted 43,677 checklists, with 13,930 people participating, of that number 1,298 submitted their first eBird checklist ever.

The previous best day for eBird submissions was February 15, 2015, on which 3,090 species were recorded. Global Big Day nearly **doubled** that count!

The first checklist submitted was from Queensland, Australia and featured a single species, a Bush Thick-Knee, that was calling around 1:30 in the morning.

As of May 18, Peru was on top of the leaderboard, with 1,183 species on a single day. Brazil recorded 1,126 species, and Columbia 855.

eBird and Cornell Lab of Ornithology would like to thank everyone who helped make Global Big Day a resounding success.

For more information or to see current standings visit their website at eBird.org, then click on the "Learn More" tab.

So how did Arkansas do on the first Global Big Day?

Birders from around the state reported 181 species, submitted 132 checklists, with 57 people participating. Out of Arkansas's 75 counties, only 23 reported activity.

eBirders with the most species:

1. Ryan Risher (89)
2. Michael Linz (83)
3. Adam Schaffer (82)
4. Alan Gregory (79)
5. Karen Garrett (79)

eBirders with the most checklists:

1. Dottie Boyles (7)
2. Jim Dixon (6)
3. Alan Gregory, Karen Garrett, Daniel Mason, Mike Stage, and Evelyn Oxner tied for third place with (5) checklist each.



photo by Dottie Boyles

Birders from around central Arkansas gathered at Gilliam Park in Little Rock, on May 9, to celebrate International Migratory Bird Day. Many also participated in the first ever Global Big Day by submitting their checklist to eBird.org.

Top ten counties:

1. Benton (126 species, 22 checklists)
2. Pulaski (109 species, 37 checklists)
3. White (92 species, 3 checklists)
4. Boone (85 species, 10 checklists)
5. Garland (79 species, 10 checklists)
6. Scott (78 species, 4 checklists)
7. Faulkner (66 species, 10 checklists)
8. Baxter (61 species, 7 checklists)
9. Saline (53 species, 6 checklists)
10. Pope (51 species, 2 checklists)

Chasing Life Birds in Texas

Rhonda Townsend

On March 21st, Danny and I, along with Michael Linz, set off on an early spring birding adventure to Rockport and Port Aransas, Texas. Anyone familiar with this area may know that the two main recreational activities are either fishing or birding. We did many hours of the latter on our four day trip, and were rewarded with a great list of birds. Our target bird was, of course, the Whooping Cranes that over-winter in this part of Texas. We were not disappointed.

Being somewhat familiar with the area, we knew that a good place to start Day 1 of our trip would be the Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center. The boardwalk over this fresh water habitat is great for up close viewing of ducks, ibis, egrets, herons, and Roseate Spoonbills. This was a great place for Michael to put his camera to work, and he did, getting some great shots. We got to see several Cinnamon Teal, a life bird for all of us, and also a couple of rather large alligators. Yes, everything is bigger in Texas!

Day 2 of our trip began with a stop at another fresh water habitat in the area called Paradise Pond. Here we saw pairs of Mottled and Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, and a pair of Great Kiskadees that put on a wonderful show for all of us birders. A stop at Coffee Waves for large lattes and a long wait at the ferry resulted in an unexpected bathroom break at Aransas Pass Park. It yielded us a cooperative Clapper Rail

calling from the reeds. It was heard, seen, and photographed, another great life bird for us all! After finally making it to Goose Island State Park, awaiting our viewing and cameras were five Whooping Cranes. Meanwhile, Michael was able to spot the red-eye of a Bronzed Cowbird among a mix of blackbirds. And to end a great day of birding in the park, we heard and Michael recorded Common Pauraque calling at dusk.

The last two days of our Texas trip were spent looking at and photographing numerous shorebirds, terns, and gulls. At Port Aransas Nature Preserve (aka Charlie's Pasture to the locals) we saw several varieties of plovers including Wilson's and Snowy. One Snowy Plover had five bands on her legs, and was sitting on a nest of three eggs. We later learned she was banded in the area two years ago and her nest is being monitored. All in all, we saw over 120 different species on our short trip, 16 new life birds for Michael and 8 new life birds for us. Several species we expected to see did not make a showing, at least not for us anyway. Oh well, guess we will just have to try again!

The helpfulness of the local birders, the miles of boardwalks, observation towers, and the variety of species in this area make it a great place to go birding any season of the year.

Birding Beyond Arkansas

Whooping it Up in Louisiana

Don Simons

March first found me evading ice on my way to Natchitoches (Nack-a-tish), Louisiana for a regional workshop of the National Association for Interpretation. I participated in a field trip to Rapides Parish southeast of Alexandria where we met Marty Floyd, son of Perk Floyd, who some of you fondly remember. Marty led us to an area where a large number of Sandhill Cranes winter every year. We found several groups totaling 21 as well as a variety other birds. Much to our surprise we happened upon three Whooping Cranes walking in a flooded rice field. I have a hunch that Marty knew they were in that area.

In 2011, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) began a project to reintroduce Whooping Cranes to their ancestral grounds in southwestern Louisiana where a resident population of nonmigratory whoopers disappeared in 1950. So far the LDWF has released 64 Whooping Cranes from eggs incubated at the USGS Research Center in Patuxent, Maryland. At this time they are tracking 40 cranes. Their goal is to have a subpopulation of 130 cranes.

Through a spotting scope we could see each of these three had a different combination of colored leg bands. The following day a LDWF biologist was our keynote speaker at the workshop. She related details about the Whooping Crane project including the history of those three birds. A different pair attempted to nest last year, but was unsuccessful. Maybe this year we will hear about the first Whooping Crane hatching in Louisiana in 60 years.

Sightings in Cyprus

Bill Shepherd

On April 8-15, 2015, Bill traveled to Cyprus, and recorded 98 bird species, eleven of which were life birds. His life list included: Long-legged Buzzard, Marsh Sandpiper, Eleonora's Falcon, Little Crake, Baillon's Crake, Cream-colored Courser, Caspian Plover, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Cyprus Wheatear, Cyprus Warbler, and Spectacled Warbler.

His European list currently stands at 355 species.

High Island Birding – Texas Style

Karen Holliday

Michael Linz and I headed to the High Island and Galveston Island areas of Texas for a week of non-stop birding April 17-24. It was the first trip to the area for both of us during spring migration. Out the door at first light each morning, and staggering back well after dark each evening, we racked up close to 180 species.

Michael totaled seven life birds and Karen picked up four lifers. Best birds were great looks at a Black Rail, two Seaside Sparrows, seven Red Knots, an adult Black-billed Cuckoo, six pairs of White-tailed Kites, plus a group of 500 American Avocets in full breeding plumage at San Luis Pass.

An extra treat was running into Jack and Pam Stewart, Tim and Stephanie Barr, Larry and Jean Jernigan, and Karen's friend JoAnn Drew, who started Karen rocketing down the path of birding beyond her own backyard.

Upcoming Programs

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 11, 2015 – Water Smart Landscape Design Tips

Speaker: Mark Brown, UA Cooperative Extension

As the spring rains become a distant memory and the summer drought sets in, June is a great time to learn how to use less water and save money by incorporating some easy tips on plants, soils, and maintenance of your landscape.

Mark Brown has been with UA Research and Extension in Little Rock for four years. His duties include promoting turfgrass management and outdoor water efficiency programs with Central Arkansas Water. Previously, he worked on golf course and sports field management and also lawn care management. Mark graduated from the University of Arkansas with a B.S. in Horticulture and Turfgrass Science. He currently is pursuing a M.S. in Plant Science.

July 9, 2015 – Greening Schools Across Arkansas

Speaker: Linda Smith, U.S. Green Building Council

The U.S. Green Building Council – Arkansas Chapter is a nonprofit organization whose 300 members work to promote green buildings for everyone in the state. Come learn about new and renovated school buildings in every corner of Arkansas that save energy and water, and have demonstrated healthier indoor air quality. Find out what 90 student-led teams are doing with the Arkansas Green Schools Challenge to green their own campuses.

Linda K. Smith became Executive Director of the U.S. Green Building Council – Arkansas Chapter in 2009. She is an active community volunteer for large nonprofit construction projects and served as the owner's representative for the renovation of the historic Junior League Building and as the Building Committee chair for the renovation of Second Presbyterian Church. In 2010, she was named the Jane Mendel Volunteer of the Year for the Little Rock School District. She currently serves on the Little Rock Sustainability Commission, as the Sustainer Advisor to the Junior League of Little Rock Nonprofit Center, and on the Ferncliff Camp Construction Advisory Committee.

****There will be an optional tour of Little Rock Urban Farming 5:30 - 6:45 p.m. See insert to the right of this article for more details.**

August 13, 2015 – Why Transit, Why Here, Why Now?

Speaker: Jarod Varner, Central Arkansas Transit Authority

Central Arkansas citizens, employers, and prominent institutions are beginning to recognize the benefits of investing in a robust transit system. Whether it's due to a need to attract and retain young talent, to allow an aging population to age in place, to reduce congestion and the exorbitant cost of commuting, or to improve the health and environment of our communities, Central Arkansans are seeking more efficient modes of transportation. The Central Arkansas Transit Authority, CATA, is in the final stages of developing a strategic plan, MOVE Central Arkansas, with the goals of articulating a vision of a new transit system with services that make riding transit more desirable for more people in the community. Learn more about CATA's plans and provide critical input.

Jarod Varner is Executive Director and CEO for CATA. Jarod began his public transportation career with the Denton County Transportation Authority in Lewisville, Texas. He holds a B.S. in Public Administration from Harding University and a Master of Public Administration degree from the University of North Texas. Jarod was named one of the Top 40 Under 40 transit professionals by Mass Transit Magazine. He currently serves on the Board of Directors for Metroplan, and the North Little Rock and Sherwood Chamber of Commerces.

You're Invited to a Garden Party on July 9

Dan Scheiman

Our guest presenter in April was Chris Hiryak of Little Rock Urban Farming (LRUF). In addition to sharing scenes and stories about his business and non-profit, he invited us to take a tour. We will do just that. On July 9, meet at 5:30 PM or arrive when you can, at LRUF for libations and a celebration of urban gardening. The farm is one block south and west of the Fletcher Library; park at the library, walk south on Buchanan St., then west on G Street. At 6:45 we'll walk back to the library to commence our regular meeting.

LRUF is a community based food enterprise located in the heart of Little Rock. It specializes in the production of organic fruits, vegetables, herbs and cut flowers for local markets. LRUF is dedicated to urban organic food production and the urban agrarian lifestyle. For more information visit: <http://littlerockurbanfarming.com>

Prothonotary Warbler



photo by Michael Linz

Cool Facts:

The Prothonotary Warbler is one of only two warbler species that nest in cavities. Lucy's Warbler is the other.

They breed in wooded swamps and other bottomland forests. Characteristic tree species include willows, sweet gum, willow oak, black gum, tupelo, bald cypress, elms, and river birch. On their wintering grounds Prothonotary Warblers are abundant in mangrove forests.

Their diet is mostly made up of moths, butterflies, flies, beetles, mayflies, and spiders. They may supplement their diet with seeds, fruit, or nectar.

Florida Birding at its Finest

Sandy Berger

Twice in less than two months, I've had the opportunity to visit Florida. Except for flying to Guyana from the Miami airport, I had never been to Florida. Needless to say, I was enthralled.

My first visit in January was for only two days at Panama City Beach. I picked up one life bird. A dozen or so Royal Terns were perched on rocks, with an assortment of gulls and shorebirds, at St. Andrews State Park.

My second visit was to see my uncle, who had rented a duplex at New Smyrna Beach. The south end of the beach cannot be driven on, so it seems more wild. Northern Gannets and Brown Pelicans fished offshore. Huge flocks of Black Skimmers flew past every day, with many stopping to rest on the beach with Royal and Forster's Terns, and Laughing, Ring-billed, and Herring Gulls. On my last day, three Sandwich Terns flew in and sat just a few feet from me.

We visited Merritt Island NWR. Black Point Wildlife Drive was an amazing drive. I picked up two more life birds—Reddish Egret and Glossy Ibis. Roseate Spoonbills and Osprey were everywhere. Next we hiked Scrub Ridge Drive Trail in search of Florida Scrub Jays. The wind was howling, nothing was singing or moving. My uncle's brother-in-law had an app on his cell phone with the scrub jay's call. He played it, and instantly two jays popped up.

I witnessed an incredible scene at Daytona Beach Shores. Every evening, between four and six o'clock, thousands of gulls gathered on the beach. Then they flew out to spend the night on the ocean, beyond the breakers. Many birders patrolled the beach. One man drove past me twice, stopping to tell me about an Iceland Gull up that way, and a Thayer's Gull down that way. I spotted an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull in the midst of thousands of Laughing Gulls.

Birds were everywhere in Florida: Wood Storks, Roseate Spoonbills, and Tri-colored Herons in wet areas next to the interstate; flyovers of Sandhill Cranes; Common Ground Doves huddled under a boardwalk trying to escape a fierce wind; and Mottled Ducks in city ponds alongside White Ibis and more herons.

Despite two days of fog and a nasty nor'easter, this was an east coast Florida trip at its finest.



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 ladyhawke1@att.net or 501-920-3246. Always bring plenty of water with you.

June 13, 2015

DeGray Lake Sunset Trail - Arkadelphia

Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the south end of the commuter parking lot at the I-630/I-430 intersection at Shackleford Road in Little Rock. We should arrive at the trailhead around 8:00 a.m. for those who would like to meet us there. This new trail opened in early April. It is an ADA accessible 1-mile trail, with a level paved surface. It winds through the forested edge of Lower DeGray Lake. The lower lake is much smaller and quieter than the main lake and offers some superb wildlife viewing opportunities. Cerulean Warblers have been documented in the area. Time permitting, we may check the upper lake area trails.

The trailhead is on Hwy. 390, approximately 2 miles west of Exit 78/Caddo Valley off I-30. The turn onto Hwy. 390 is immediately off I-30. Follow the signs to Lower Lake. At the turn to the boat ramp, continue straight until you reach the trailhead parking lot. The bathrooms are open year-round. GPS coordinates: 34.180313, -93.097702.

July 11, 2015

Dr. Lester Sitzes III Bois D'Arc WMA - Hope

Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the south end of the commuter parking lot at the I-630/I-430 intersection at Shackleford Road in Little Rock. We will stop at the McDonalds in Hope (Exit 30 off I-30) around 9:00 a.m. for those in south Arkansas who would like to join us. Or, meet us at Bois D'Arc WMA at 9:30 a.m. Our target birds will be Purple and Common Gallinules, Least Bittern, Anhingas, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, herons, egrets, and possibly an alligator or two! Very little walking will be involved. Bring scopes, plenty of water, snacks, and lunch. There are also several restaurants in Hope.

Bois D'Arc WMA is located 10 miles south of Hope. Take Exit 30 off I-30 and turn east. Go past McDonald's, then under the railroad overpass. At the light at the big intersection, turn right onto Hwy. 67. Go 1/3 of a mile. At the brown sign, turn left onto Hwy. 174. Take Hwy. 174 south 6 miles to the stop sign at Spring Hill. Turn right onto Hwy. 355. Go west for 4 miles. Turn right at the white wooden WMA sign just before the highway ends in the lake. Follow the paved road and take the first gravel road to the left down to the lake. GPS coordinates: 33.558062, -93.694239

August 29, 2015

Bald Knob National Wildlife Refuge - Bald Knob

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 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 also a National Audubon Important Bird Area. We expect to see shorebirds, herons, night-herons, egrets, and possibly Wood Storks and Roseate Spoonbills. It will be very hot so bring plenty of water, snacks, sunscreen, and a hat. If you have a scope, bring it. Very little walking will be involved. There is no bathroom on-site. There is a McDonald's just off Hwy. 67/167 at Bald Knob Exit 55.

Go to www.fws.gov/baldknob/ for driving directions and more information about the refuge. GPS: 35.260233, -91.571903



Field Trip Reports

Karen Holliday, Field Trip Coordinator

Dale Bumpers White River NWR and Visitor Center

March 21, 2015

Twenty-one birders met at the Dale Bumpers White River National Wildlife Refuge Visitors Center located in Arkansas County. The refuge manager provided background on the history of the refuge, its conservation programs, and its varied habitats and wildlife. Our goal was participation in Arkansas's Rusty Blackbird Spring Migration Blitz, with the refuge's hardwood bottomlands an ideal destination. The Rusty Blackbird population is in steep decline and we only located five for the blitz.

As we walked the boardwalks, we saw large flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, Brown-headed Cowbirds, and American Robins. A few wintering waterfowl were still present, along with various woodpecker species, and two Purple Martins.



photo by Dottie Boyles

We stopped briefly by the Stuttgart Airport to look for the Barn Owl pair and located both birds. At the airport and Roth Prairie Natural Area, the Short-eared Owls were a no-show.

In several muddy fields a few miles north of the airport, we found huge flocks of American Golden-Plovers. A rough estimate tallied more than 2,000 plovers. A hunting Red-tailed Hawk kept flushing more and more plovers as it worked the fields. Wilson's Snipe, Killdeer, and Red-winged and Brewers Blackbirds were also in the fields. The plovers were a great finale to the last hours of a great trip.

Delta Rivers Nature Center, Lake Saracen, and Bayou Bartholomew

April 25, 2015

Twenty-seven birders from all over central Arkansas met at the Governor Mike Huckabee Delta Rivers Nature Center in Pine Bluff. John Redman and Delos McCauley provided the VIP tour of the area. The parking lot and feeders were loaded with Baltimore Orioles and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. As we walked the Discovery Loop and Whitetail Trails we spotted Swainson's and Wood Thrushes, Cedar Waxwings, Louisiana Waterthrushes, and Gray Catbirds. Two different mixed-feeding flocks netted us the following warblers - Blue-winged, Bay-breasted, Chestnut-sided, Golden-winged, Black-throated Green, Black-and-white, Nashville, Tennessee, American Redstart, Northern Parula, Yellow-rumped, Prothonotary, and Common Yellowthroat, plus a Blue-headed Vireo.



photo by Dottie Boyles

Our next stop was to the Lake Saracen reed beds. Three very cooperative Soras fed and fussed out in plain sight, making both birders and photographers very happy. We also had singing Marsh Wrens and two Forster's Terns.

Next we visited Wilbur West Road, which normally is a great spot for shorebirds, egrets, and bitterns, but heavy rains and high water the night before caused a lot of species to move on. Even so, we managed to find Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Orchard Oriole, two Yellow Warblers, Cliff and Barn Swallows, and an Anhinga soaring with some Turkey Vultures. A small flock of shorebirds circled the area. Photos of the flock later confirmed it contained four Wilson's Phalaropes and three Greater Yellowlegs.

Our last stop was the Bayou Bartholomew Trail off Hazel Street. The water level here was also high, which severely limited access to most of the trail. Highlights included Prothonotary and Kentucky Warblers, and two Anhingas.

We finished around 3:00 p.m., a tired, hungry, but happy group of birders and photographers.

Gillam Park and Little Rock Audubon Center

May 9, 2015

Even with a severe threat of rain looming, twenty-five adventurous birders met at Gillam Park, just south of Little Rock. With light drizzle and poor lighting, we headed off in search of birds. We stumbled upon two mixed feeding flocks which included several species of warblers: Bay-breasted, Chestnut-sided, Canada, Magnolia, Black-throated Green, Yellow, Yellow-throated, American Redstart, Northern Parula, and Ovenbird. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Yellow-billed Cuckoos, and Red-eyed and White-eyed Vireos serenaded us as we walked the trail. Wood Ducks and a Belted Kingfisher were our bayou birds.

After a stop at the Little Rock Audubon Center to see their new native plantings and exhibits, we headed to the industrial park area, south of the airport. There we found several Western Kingbirds. It seems the number of nesting pairs has been increasing over the years.

At the David D. Terry Lock and Dam, the male Painting Buntings were a no-show, but a female Painting Bunting was heard and seen. Other good birds were Baltimore and Orchard Orioles and several Eastern Kingbirds. While we didn't get the fallout of migrants we expected from the weather, we still had a great time.

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Horned Grebe in breeding plumage at
Treadway's Minnow Farm (Prairie County)
photo by Michael Linz

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