

THE SNIPE

The Newsletter of the
Audubon Society of Central Arkansas



Charles Mills

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March – May 2017

The Winter Prairies of Southwest Missouri: A Raptor Day

Mitchell Pruitt

January 29 found Melyssa St. Michael, Jackie Guzy, Meredith Swartwout, and I visiting the prairies of southwestern Missouri specifically to look for Short-eared Owls. We traveled to Prairie State Park, Wah-Sha-She Prairie, and Shawnee Trail Conservation Area.

Stopped among the grasses, the likes of big and little bluestems, switchgrass, Indiangrass, and others, some reaching up to my waist, I'm intent on the horizon and pondering the contrasting life here. Dormant, dead-looking grasses so alive with birds and mammals. Suddenly a shout, "Here comes one!" I turn to see it in the opposite direction of my steady staring, banking up and over a group of short trees; rarely flapping, but keeping a slight dihedral orientation with its wings. Passing me, it sails quickly out over the prairie. Suddenly wings and tail drop and the bird comes to a hovering halt. It hangs in the air for a few seconds, then drops into the grass and comes up with a small mammal in its talons, a Northern Harrier.

A hunting harrier is one of those magical, methodic songs of nature. Though more closely related to hawks and eagles, Northern Harriers have certain physical features and a hunting regime similar to owls. The species relies heavily on sound as well as sight to locate prey as they cruise a grassland.

Harriers aren't the only raptors on the remnant prairies of southwestern Missouri. Red-tailed Hawks are plentiful; soaring above, perching on fencepost and snag, and flying out over the grasses hunting. Like harriers, this species has an affinity for mammals. The Red-tailed variety in this part of the United States (Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri) is incredible in winter. Essentially, the sky is the limit when it comes to the North American subspecies. We tick them off one-by-one. Most sighted are what we in the east like to call the "standard" subspecies, really *Buteo jamaicensis borealis*. Borealis is available in only one morph, but variation within is inevitable: a multitude of browns and whites on back and head, white breast and belly sometimes with a "belly band" and streaking, sometimes without, and a beautiful ruddy-red tail in adults.

We also encounter what folks out west would term the "standard" subspecies, *Buteo jamaicensis calurus*. Calurus comes in several flavors. First, there's a typical "light" morph, similar to Borealis, but with obvious buffy tones instead of a clean, white breast and belly. Second, there's the ruddy version, basically the typical light morph with chocolate tones on head, belly, and underwing and so much ruddy it looks as though it has spent too much time rolling in iron-rich red clay. The last of Calurus, and certainly my favorite, is the "dark" morph; John James Audubon's so-called "Black Warrior." This bird is striking. The entire body is a chocolate brown with the exception of the underwings. The tail has a thick subterminal band and dark barring on a deep, brick-red background.

Hawk diversity for the day ends with a "Krider's" hawk, *Buteo jamaicensis kriderii*. Born to the plains of southwestern Canada or the north-central United States, this Krider's is like the white buffalo of hawkdom. The Krider's has brownish upperparts with varying amounts of white along the back and shoulders. Its head, breast, and belly are snow white. Juveniles also have a white tail; in adults, this is replaced by pinkish red. These miraculously



Mitchell Pruitt

white birds call for a moment of pause and reflection upon the careful color palette of our Creator, this one so subtle. Several brighten our day in the old Missouri prairie country.

I wander to a drain, a low spot in the grassy landscape holding enough water to satisfy a small flock of Mallards. Up a bit, an old oak snag, probably a bur oak, stands in solemn recollection of centuries past. Who knows what it *has* known. What it *does* know today is a Great Horned Owl, silently keeping warm the next generation in a hole much too small for its bulky, feathered body. A single egg

See *A Raptor Day* on page 4

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President's Column

It's easy to lose yourself on back roads out in the Delta on a warm winter's day. The fields are vast, the stubble low, and the winter birds plentiful. Sometimes it seems you can see forever out there in big sky land with no forests or hills to define the horizon. Imagination inevitably circles round to dread weather in the heat of the afternoon but blue skies dismiss those phantom palpitations and the wind urges you on down the road to the next field, the next bayou, the next set of grain bins.

Some people say all you see out there are geese, ducks, and blackbirds on the fields and fish ponds, hawks soaring overhead, and yard birds in town. Why bother when there are interesting birds on the big lakes, birds we don't see but for a few months out of the year. My point exactly. The only time to appreciate the beauty of hundreds of ducks lounging in flooded fields or massed in rafts out on isolated fish ponds happens in that brief interval between the end of duck season and the advent of spring migration. Where better to observe the grace and beauty of thousands of blackbirds in a rippling cloud roll across a rice field?

In such a ramble you may cross paths with the unexpected. How many rare or unusual species go ignored along county roads not traveled or lightly traveled at best? How many counties go unreported or underreported because it's "too far" or "too boring"? Is a day of birding ever boring? Not that I can remember.

During a trip to the delta in February, the group I was with visited three Arkansas State Parks during our travels. Each park had a different focus and the staff on duty were friendly and pleased to have visitors stop by. It was a nice break from driving and the bathrooms were top notch.

A change of pace. At least one person recently asked how to receive alerts regarding conservation issues. If you are interested, the conservation organization of your choice will be more than happy to send you action alerts. National Audubon Society makes it as easy as typing in your email address and clicking send. If you are interested in staying up to date with issues that pertain to birds and conservation, go to the NAS take action page: <http://www.audubon.org/takeaction>

*Cindy Franklin
ASCA President*

Don't let Your Membership Lapse!

If you haven't renewed your membership to ASCA it isn't too late. Renewals were due January 1, 2017, but can still be paid on-line via PayPal through the Membership page of www.ascabird.org.

Checks can be mailed to Jim Dixon, Treasurer, 11805 Birchwood Drive, Little Rock, AR 72211.

Membership Level

Regular Membership – \$15.00

Students/Seniors – \$10.00

Family – \$25.00

Supporting – \$35.00

Patron – \$50.00

Get Well Wishes

We would like to extend get well wishes to ASCA Board Member Darrel Meyerdirk.

Welcome New Members

ASCA would like to welcome the following new members:

Nancy Drury Clark

Katie Kreps

Dennis Moore

Betsy Otwell

Bruce Otwell

Jane Wiewora

Congratulations

To former ASCA President Rob Weiss on his engagement to Rachel Mau. Rob currently lives in Collins, Wisconsin.

Thoughts and Prayers

Our deepest sympathy to Lenore Gifford on the loss of her brother Mark on January 10.

Sun and Blue Sky Adventure

Keith Hawkins

Rayma Jean, DD the birding dog, and I traveled to Patagonia, Arizona, February 1-8, 2017. We had a great time with lots of bright blue sky and warm sun. The daily routine was to hit the ground running as soon as the sun peaked over the Huachuca Mountains, stirring the birds and warming the air.

Many of you have traveled to southern Arizona and are very familiar with the territory and birds. I had high hopes of seeing winter birds in the area not yet on my list such as the Black-capped and Black-tailed Gnatcatchers. Guess what! I have an excuse to return to try again.

I was very excited to pursue my target birds around Lake Patagonia as eBird and other folks had reported both species as present in the area. I decided to attend one of the twice weekly state park bird walks. My hope was more eyes and resident birders would assist me in the quest. Oh wow! I showed up for the Friday walk and I thought I might have accidentally joined an anti-Trump rally or something similar. Close to 45 people attended the bird walk. We broke into four groups and headed down the birding trail that essentially circles the lake. The co-leaders of my group were talented birders, Karen from Canada especially so. We saw a significant number of birds (35 on my list with others spotting more) with great looks. I especially enjoyed watching the beautiful Cinnamon Teals and the antics of a Hammond's Flycatcher. I would not have been able to name the latter were it not for the help of the local experts.



Photo: *Keith Hawkins*

In the afternoons the whole Hawkins pack would load into our rental jeep and hit the back roads of the area. Wonderful vistas abounded but birds were scarce. We enjoyed the outings in spite of the fact the roads were rough and well beaten due to Border Patrol vehicle traffic. The highlight of these back road adventures was a run from Tumacacori to Patagonia through the fringes of the Santa Rita Mountains south of Madera Canyon. We lucked out meeting a resident of the huge Salero Ranch Estates. He was a birder and shared the gate code, allowing us to transit

through the estates—a 10-mile or so run just to pass through the ranch. On the east side of the ranch and south of Madera Canyon we were able to rejoin the U.S. Forest Service road. A visit to the ghost town of Alto was most interesting. Unlike a similar trip a few years ago we only spotted one couple slinking through the brush alongside a north-south road. Oh! We can highly recommend the Wisdom Mexican Restaurant on the old Nogales Road in Tumacacori. Be careful with the Margaritas—they are very strong.

I made the classic mistake of beginning birders on this run. We topped a rise and saw two beautiful white Buteos circling in the mid-day sun. I stopped and took a brief look with my bins. Then big mistake, I started fumbling for my camera. By the time I was ready to shoot they had circled out of range. Stupid me, if I had just watched the birds I might have imprinted enough mental images to know for sure what they were. My first call was Rough-legged Hawk but they could also have been Ferruginous.



Gambel's Quail | Photo: *Keith Hawkins*

Folks familiar with the area will be glad to know the Patton House in Patagonia is growing strong. There are a number of new feeders, new benches, and established trails. They have also moved into the area south of the house along Sonoita Creek toward The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Patagonia Nature Preserve. In just 15 minutes one morning I ticked a dozen species of local birds such as Green-tailed Towhee while I sat on one of the new benches. The TNC property is going strong as well.

Our sun and blue sky seeking adventure was a success that we would love to repeat. However this frugal old man did note that everything from food to gas to Vacation Rental by Owner properties are significantly more expensive in southern Arizona verses south Texas. Additionally for bird diversity I would recommend a trip to this area in August verses February.

Around the World Searching for Cranes

Audubon.org

Jennifer Speers, a member of the board of the International Crane Foundation, an organization that helped bring back the Whooping Crane, decided she wanted to see more than just “whoopers” and Sandhill Cranes, the two species that live in North America. So she and George Archibald, a researcher and co-founder of the organization, arranged to travel the globe and see all 15 species. For six weeks they traveled around the world, stopping in nine countries on four continents.

The duo started in Hokkaido, Japan, where they saw Red-crowned Cranes, slender white birds with red-and-black heads. Then on to China for Siberian, White-naped, Hooded, and Eurasian Cranes.

Their next destination was Bhutan where they saw the elusive Black-necked Crane. In India, they observed Demoiselle and Sarus Cranes, the latter of which is the largest, standing six feet tall.

Onto Africa and Ethiopia for the native Wattled and Black Crowned Cranes. It's taboo to injure or kill the birds there. Then to South Africa to see Blue and Grey Crowned Cranes, the later is the most brilliantly colored with its elegant spray of golden head feathers.

In Australia they found the bluish-gray, saltwater drinking Brolga Crane.

In February, they arrived in Port Aransas, Texas just in time for the annual Whooping Crane Festival. Whooping Cranes remain the rarest of the 15 species, with little more than 300 birds living in the wild.



Whooping Crane in Port Aransas, TX | Photo: Bob Harden

Archibald says the trip was a great opportunity to check in on crane populations around the world and to coordinate with conservationists in those countries, to help prevent the birds from becoming extinct.

To read the entire story visit Audubon.org.

A Raptor Day

Continued from page 1

can be seen from below after the skittish adult flushes, giving away one of the biggest secrets of this old tree. A quick photo for the records and we leave it.

By late afternoon, we're back with the harriers. Close to the horizon, the clouds have parted just enough to allow the golden evening light to bask the landscape in the rich hue. Northern Harriers are busily making last hunting flights. As we watch, a “Kriders” Red-tailed Hawk makes a beeline for its roost, as does an adult Sharp-shinned Hawk, followed by a juvenile Cooper's Hawk. It's raptor galore while the day is used up at last.

Ever lower does the sun sink. When it touches the horizon, harriers begin to disappear. If you blink, they seem just to vanish. All the while, the disappearing sun casts light into a sunset as brilliant as anyone could hope for with a day on the prairies.

For a moment there's a pause in the dusk and the prairie seems as though it sleeps. Then one-by-one, from some of the same places the harriers bedded down, rise the day's main targets and the reason for our pilgrimage north: Short-eared Owls. The owls roost in places similar to that of the harriers, sometimes even the same area.

The Short-eared Owl show began further out in the prairie than anticipated; about a half-mile. So, walk we did, trudging through grass and briar to claim front row seats. To our southwest the colors of sunset linger, providing a

magnificent backdrop for the remainder of the flight show. We stop as a bird speeds toward us. It is large, generally harrier-sized, but bulkier. Its wings are broad and it sports a fairly short tail.

The owl calls as it closes in. The noise vaguely resembles a cat, a raspy one at that. Others answer from somewhere in the dimming light, another from just behind. The first bird pauses for a moment atop a nearby bush. With great respect for owls, I take it all in: a large bird with a rounded head that is a mottled brown, much like its back and wings. A look into its yellow eyes, as it pauses on us while gazing around, and I'm filled with insight into the austerity of this creature and its tough life of hoping that it captures small mammals nightly.

Light disappearing, it becomes hard to see the owls that are just above the surface of the prairie. Owls fluttering all around us and calling, we estimated eight or more.

As night falls, we're enclosed by dim light and the Short-eared Owls disappear behind their curtain of darkness. We begin the dark trek back to the car through the grasses and occasional briars. The cold night air mixed with Short-eared Owls is intoxicating. It isn't every day I get to experience a single one of these creatures of the night, much less in multiples; even less being at the center of their stage. When one actively seeks to be among nature, truly among it, the reward is great. What a privilege.

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.

March 9, 2017–AHTD's Wildflower Programs, Pollinators, and Roadsides: Managing Vegetation for Bees and Butterflies

Speaker: Kayti Ewing, Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD)

Wildflowers are now being used by the AHTD to help beautify the over 200,000 acres of highway roadsides it maintains. Kayti will talk about AHTD's Wildflower Programs, discuss the recent federal policies that have been put in place to promote and develop pollinator habitat on roadsides, and the issues—both positive and negative—related to the actual implementation of pollinator habitat on roadsides.

Kayti Ewing is a botanist with AHTD's Environmental Division. At AHTD, she oversees the Department's several Wildflower Programs, consults with USFWS regarding endangered and threatened plant species, and performs wetland and stream impact assessments in order to obtain the proper 404 permit. She was born and raised in Harrison, AR. She has a B.S. in Botany and an M.A. in Geography, both from the University of Oklahoma. For her thesis, she developed a Floristic Quality Assessment (FQA) for Oklahoma wetlands. An FQA is tool used to evaluate and determine the quality (or degree of pristineness) of wetland habitats based on the vegetation present at a site.

April 14, 2017–Birding Around the Southern Cone of South America

Speaker: Cindy Franklin, ASCA President and Master Gardener

Cindy and her husband Bill Burnham spent 24 days in southern South America on a Wings tour sampling a variety of habitats from Iguazu Falls in northeastern Argentina to Ushuaia in Terra del Fuego to the high Andes east of Santiago, Chile. They traveled approximately 6,000 miles by air, land, and sea from Buenos Aires to Valparaiso, Chile. They added 286 birds to their life list including four species of penguins and seven species of albatross as well as many mammals and several species of whales and dolphins.

Cindy Franklin has had a lifelong interest in gardening and bird watching that began when she was growing up on a dairy farm in Pennsylvania. After she retired from a VA nursing career she became a Pulaski County Master Gardener. She and her husband Bill are members of the Audubon Society of Central Arkansas and the Arkansas Audubon Society. Cindy maintains a pollinator garden both on her front patio and in her front yard, and is endlessly fascinated by the insects that visit her plants throughout the growing season. She also maintains an active hummingbird feeding station during the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds' breeding and migration seasons.

***Please note this meeting will be held at the Little Rock Audubon Center, 4500 Springer Blvd, Little Rock.**

May 2017–No Regular Meeting

Please note: ASCA does not hold a meeting in May. Go out and enjoy migration!

IMBD 2017 - Stopover Sites: Helping Birds Along the Way

Dottie Boyles

Mark your calendars for May 13, 2017. International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD), the signature program of the Environment for the Americas, an international education program that celebrates the migration of nearly 350 species of migratory birds.

This year's theme, *Stopover Sites: Helping Birds Along the Way*, highlights the long journey between non-breeding sites across the Americas and the Caribbean to nesting sites in the United States and Canada. Annually some species travel as much as 12,500 miles roundtrip between grasslands in Argentina to breeding areas in northern United States and Canada. Along the way, birds need to rest and refuel, and the health and safety of these sites is critical to the survival of migratory birds. IMBD celebrates the importance of these habitats and encourages everyone to get involved in protecting these areas. For more information visit: birdday.org.

Winter Visitor

March 4 marked the 130th straight day that a female Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird visited a feeder at the home of Terry and Judy Butler in Pangburn during 2016-2017 fall/winter season. Terry stated the bird seemed to be eating more lately and gaining weight before her journey northwest.

Arkansas Big Year

While he didn't start out planning an Arkansas Big Year, Dr. Charlie Lyon of Shreveport, Louisiana still racked up an impressive 297 species for the state in 2016.

Dr. Lyon, along with fellow Louisiana birders Rosemary Seidler, and Jeff and Jean Trahan, drove numerous miles and spent untold hours exploring Arkansas's lakes, parks, refuges, fields, and back roads in search of birds to add to their lists.

While they occasionally ventured to the central and northern parts of the state, most of their time was spent discovering new areas to bird in the southern half.

The group even managed to record Red, Red-necked, and Wilson's Phalaropes in a single day. A rarity in itself for most Arkansans.

Little Rock and Lonoke Christmas Bird Counts Results

Dan Scheiman, Compiler

Comparing the Little Rock and Lonoke Christmas Bird Counts held on December 17 and 18 respectively, the weather could not have been more different. Unseasonable warmth on Saturday was followed by overnight freezing rain heralding frigid and windy conditions Sunday. Fortunately neither count was hampered by rain or ice, and both produced multiple new records.

For Little Rock, 27 field birders and 4 feederwatchers tallied 24,256 birds of 97 species over a collective 71 hours and 309 miles. We tallied high counts for Turkey Vulture, Eastern Bluebird, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Chipping Sparrow. Unusual birds were Spotted Sandpiper (2nd record, first seen in 2005), Greater Roadrunner (6th), Blue-headed Vireo (3rd), and Lapland Longspur (2nd, first seen in 1975!). Also notable were Northern Bobwhite, Wild Turkey, and Rufous Hummingbird (12th).

For Lonoke, 20 birders tallied 222,988 birds of 103 species over a collective 39 hours and 284 miles. Number of observers and effort were down from last season. We had record low counts for Loggerhead Shrike, Field Sparrow, and Song Sparrow. Yet we tallied more species and more individuals than last season. We tallied a new high count for Bald Eagle. And we had an amazing run of unusual species: Eared Grebe (6th); Red-breasted Merganser (5th), Peregrine Falcon, and Tree Swallow; Osprey (3rd) and Gray Catbird; 2nd for Krider's Red-tailed Hawk; and Lonoke CBC firsts for Black Scoter, Sandhill Crane, and Forster's Tern! Wow!

Merganser Spotted in Conway



This Red-breasted Merganser was spotted in a small pond behind a Petco store in Conway. | Photo: Gail Miller



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.

March 25, 2017

Bald Knob National Wildlife Refuge

Meet at 7:30 a.m. in North Little Rock on the east side of the Other Center parking lot behind McDonald's. The Other Center is located across from McCain Mall, on McCain Blvd. Take Exit 1 West, off Hwy. 67/167. We'll arrive at the Bald Knob NWR around 8:45 a.m. for those who want to meet us there. Look for the line of cars parked on Coal Chute Road. Target birds will be lingering waterfowl and early-arriving shorebirds, herons, egrets, and night-herons. Very little walking will be involved. If you have a scope, bring it. Bring water, snacks or lunch. There is no bathroom on-site. There is a McDonald's just off Hwy. 67/167 at the Bald Knob Exit 55. Go to www.fws.gov/baldknob/ for driving directions and more information about the refuge. GPS Coordinates: 35.260233, -91.571903

April 29, 2017

Bell Slough South AGFC Wildlife Management Area

Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the main entrance to the Bell Slough WMA off Hwy. 365. Our target birds will be spring migrants. Bell Slough is a mix of ecosystems consisting of 2,040 acres of woodlands and wetlands situated between Little Rock and the Mayflower/Conway region. The Bell Slough Kenny Vernon Nature Trail consists of three connecting trails, each ranging in length from about a half-mile to 2 1/4 miles. The WMA also has a nice mix wildflowers that attract numerous butterflies. Wear sturdy walking shoes. This will be a morning trip.

From Little Rock, go west on I-40. Exit I-40 at Mayflower (Exit 135) and turn east (right) at the light onto Hwy. 89. Then turn south (right) just past the commuter parking lot onto the service road. Follow the service road paralleling I-40, then veer right at the fork. Follow this road until you cross the Palarm Creek bridge. Turn left into the WMA parking lot.

May 6, 2017

Gillam Park and the Little Rock Audubon Center

Meet at 7:30 a.m. in Gillam Park at the last parking lot past the swimming pool. Gillam has great habitat for spring warblers and other migrants. There will be moderate walking on fairly level, but possibly muddy trails. When finished at Gillam, we'll drive to the Audubon Center and walk the wildlife observation trail. Last, we'll head to Industrial Harbor Road and Terry Lock and Dam to look for Western Kingbirds and Painted Buntings. Bring water and snacks. Wear sturdy walking shoes or hiking boots.

Directions: 5300 Gillam Park Road, Little Rock. Take I-30 West heading south from Little Rock. Exit onto I-440 going towards the airport. Take Exit 1-Springer Road. At the bottom of the exit ramp, turn left onto Springer Road. Go approximately 1 mile to just past the LRAC. Turn right onto Gillam Park Road. Follow it into the park to the last parking lot past the swimming pool.



Field Trip Reports

Karen Holliday, Field Trip Coordinator

Lake Dardanelle and Holla Bend NWR

January 28, 2017

It was a delightfully sunny day, but with a high of only 48 degrees and windy conditions it was cold enough to keep the large flock of 40 birders on the move.

Our first stop was Delaware Recreation Area on the south side of Lake Dardanelle. With waterfowl numbers down around the state, the lake was no exception. There were small rafts of scaup, American Coot, Bufflehead, Horned Grebe, Common Goldeneye, and one Common Loon. Among the number of Ring-billed Gulls was one Herring Gull. In the pine trees we found two Brown Creepers, and Pine and Yellow-rumped Warblers. A juvenile Bald Eagle did a fast fly-over. Stopping at the Stinnett Creek inlet, we hit the duck jackpot. It was full of Canvasback, Common Goldeneye, Lesser Scaup, Ruddy and Ring-necked Ducks, and two Redheads.

Next stop was to Holla Bend NWR. The headquarters parking lot was birdy with Red-headed, Red-bellied, and Downy Woodpeckers, a Hermit Thrush, Fox Sparrow, and two Rusty Blackbirds. Driving the loop around the refuge, we found Bald Eagles on both nests, a nice variety of sparrows, additional raptors, Winter Wren, and Belted Kingfisher. As we paralleled the river channel we spotted an estimated 500 American White Pelicans. Best birds of the day were a pair of Great Horned Owls. As one owl perched in the trees its bright colors really popped in the sunlight.



Great Horned Owl | Photo: Bob Harden

Last stop was Country Loop Road to look for Harris Sparrows. We were losing daylight fast and White-crowned and Harris's Sparrows kept spooking into the cedar trees. Finally they moved into an adjacent field and perched on brush piles. Success at last and the group was able to get great looks at the Harris's Sparrows. We finished the day with approximately 76 species. --Karen Holliday

Two Rivers Park and Lake Maumelle

February 18, 2017

Thirty-nine birders took advantage of the unusually balmy February weather to bird from morning to dusk. We had a diverse group with birders from all over Arkansas, including two from Mountain Home. We began at the Two Rivers Park walking bridge in west Little Rock. Crossing the bridge, we spotted American White Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants, Ring-billed Gulls, and Common Goldeneyes. Once on the peninsula, we took the dirt trail that skirts the far inlet. We hit the dabbling duck jackpot with two male American Wigeons, Northern Pintails, Gadwalls, Northern Shovelers, and Mallards. Diving ducks included one female Common Merganser, Lesser Scaup, and Bufflehead. Best land birds included Orange-crowned Warbler, Hermit Thrush, Brown Creeper, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and Ruby-crowned Kinglet.



Searching for birds on the Two Rivers Park Bridge | Photos: Dottie Boyles

Next the group headed to the main entrance of Two Rivers Park. With knee boots on, the group headed off to walk the open fields and immediately started flushing Le Conte's Sparrows. Crossing the big field we flushed at least eight! We also saw Eastern Bluebirds, Savannah Sparrows, and Mourning Doves. At the Arkansas River we found Common Goldeneye, and Greater and Lesser Scaup.

A small group decided to keep birding so we drove to the parking lot at the end of the park, then walked along an open field paralleling a small stream. We cleaned up on sparrows with multiple Fox, Vesper, Lincoln, Field, Swamp, Song, Chipping, and White-throated. A Merlin flew low over our group. Best woodpecker was a Hairy. We also had a large flock of Cedar Waxwings. We tallied a total of 51 species with a Killdeer as our final bird.

At this point it was 3:00 p.m., with no lunch break. The group said push on, so we did! Next stop was Vista View on Lake Maumelle. There we found groups of Common Loons, a Red-throated and a Pacific Loon, life birds for several. A juvenile Bald Eagle and a Barred Owl were new birds for the day. We capped our day-long adventure at 5:15 p.m. with a Red-breasted Merganser. An awesome day of birding with great birding buddies and a fantastic list of winter birds. --Karen Holliday

Audubon Society of Central Arkansas

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Henslow's Sparrow | Photo: Bob Harden

Audubon Society of Central Arkansas

Chapter Only Membership Application

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Address _____

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E-mail address _____

ASCA Dues Proration for New Members

	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec*
Membership Level	100%	75%	50%	100%
__Student/Senior	\$10	\$ 7.50	\$ 5.00	\$10
__Regular	\$15	\$11.25	\$ 7.50	\$15
__Family	\$25	\$18.75	\$12.50	\$25
__Supporting	\$35			
__Patron	\$50			

*New Memberships paid in the last quarter (Oct-Dec), will include full membership for the following calendar year.

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Address changes should be sent to the following: If Chapter Only Member, notify both Leon Brockinton, c/o Brockinton Company, LLC at P.O. Box 6213, Sherwood, AR 72124, and Jim Dixon, Treasurer, 11805 Birchwood Dr., Little Rock, AR 72211. If NAS member, notify both Brockinton Company and NAS at P.O. Box 51001, Boulder, CO 80322-1001.

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