Bird News

Oddity of the season: No Red-winged Blackbirds were seen on the Conway Christmas Bird Count.

We had pretty good weather for the Little Rock Christmas Count and fine weather for the Lonoke count the next day. Little Rock, with 25 observers and six feeder-watchers, had 79 species; Lonoke, with 15 observers, had 87. Here are some past totals:

- Little Rock: 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84
- Lonoke: 71, 72, 77, 78, 77, 77

Little Rock had high counts for Northern Harrier (19), Sharp-shinned Hawk (2), Red-shanked Hawk (5), Red-tailed Hawk (38), Kestrel (83), Ring-billed Gull (736), and Downy Woodpecker (88), and a low count for Bobwhite (1). Lonoke had high counts for Red-breasted Merganser (7), Kestrel (65), and Least Sandpiper (49).

Shortly after the Mountain Bluebird was seen at Lake Hamilton (as reported in the last Snipe), a Little Gull and a Kittiwake were seen at Lake Millwood. So three species were added to the state bird list in just a short time. Also this winter, Roberta Crabtree found seven Western Grebes at Lake Maumelle. These were true “Westerns,” not the light-phase bird that is now a separate species, called Clark’s Grebe.

It’s been an invasion year for Evening Grosbeaks, those beautiful yellow, black, and white finches from up north. Pinnacle has had twenty or so at their feeding station (you could stay inside in the warm and see them), and Petit Jean State Park has had even more. It’s probably been quite a long time since so many people have seen so many evenbeaks here in Arkansas. Some of the seed these visitors have been eating was bought with money donated to the Nongame Preservation Fund, which made grants to several state parks to buy seed for feeding stations.

The California Condor is in even worse trouble. The last ones—there are fewer than half a dozen left in the wild—are being captured so that maximum effort can be put into the captive breeding program, in the hopes that captive-bred birds can be released in sufficient numbers to avoid their extinction. Tragically, the female half of the only breeding pair left in the wild, the “Santa Barbara pair,” died of lead poisoning in January. The bird apparently ate an animal that had been shot by a hunter and ingested the bullet. It’s horribly frustrating to watch the last of these magnificent birds disappear, and know that human population growth, habitat loss, and illegal disturbance are offsetting the tremendous efforts going into saving them.

On the brighter side, the Bald Eagle seems to be continuing its recovery from the dark days of illegal shooting and pesticide poisoning. Numbers of eagles are hard to estimate, but annual winter surveys in Arkansas show that the national symbol is slowing coming back. Many thanks must go to those, like ASCA member Jane Gulley, who have devoted so much time to educating the public about eagles, and also to those numberless conservationists who worked hard to convince the government, back in the Fifties, Sixties, and Seventies, to ban the cumulative environmental poison DDT. It’s too bad, isn’t it, that our government still allows the export of toxic pesticides that are banned in America? Chemical-company profits are more important than the world environment—which, it’s important to remember, every living thing on earth shares.

Speaking of recovery from DDT, it will be interesting to see whether Ospreys will nest again in Arkansas this year. Last spring was the first time in thirty years or more that the “fish hawk” has bred in our state. Again, we’re seeing results of banning a pesticide that caused infertility in the eggs of avian predators high on the food chain.

The Dusky Seaside Sparrow, as subspecies of the Seaside Sparrow, is down to just two captive birds. Both are males.

The field trip to Holla Bend January 18 was undoubtedly the best-attended we’ve ever sponsored, with two full buses and a dozen or so cars to boot. There were birds, too, with hundreds of Snow and Canada Geese, and six or eight Bald Eagles. A sudden rainstorm (how often do you hear thunder in January?) cut short the lunchtime frenzied dieting and the trip, but the spectacle of all those geese won’t be forgotten soon.

President’s Note

February is the only month that has an animal holiday, and that is Ground Hog Day! This fact may seem irrelevant to Auduboners, but as your new chapter president I would like to extend an invitation to all our members new and old alike. If you have been hibernating it is time to come out of your burrow and into the active warm light of Audubon.

This year our chapter will offer a variety of activities to choose from. Have you attended an Audubon film this year? Come to the film Birds of Seven Continents on February 21 and pick up a list of upcoming field trips. A hardy band of field testers grilled hamburgers in the heat wave of January and planned a wide range of outings. Try one, you’ll like it! (Field trips, not hamburgers.)

Conservation in Arkansas will hopefully reach a milestone in 1986 if the Conservation Sales Tax is passed. I urge you as informed Auduboners to consider the importance of this tax for our future generations. Let us insure that they will have the same opportunities to enjoy wildlife that we have had.

As I write this message I mourn the loss of a broken and precious link in the natural world: a California Condor’s death due to lead poisoning. I also celebrate the beauty of seeing Bald Eagles soar over the Arkansas River while sunbeams tried to break through the rain clouds over Holla Bend.

I hope that you will join us and respond to the Audubon invitation. It is open to all who share a concern for and love of our environment. I look forward to meeting you as we journey together on the Audubon adventure. It is a lot more fun than hibernating and looking for your shadow.

—Neil Curry
continued

especially by those who had never been to the refuge before—a high percentage of those on the buses. There were three Ross’s Geese mixed in with the snows, though only a few saw them. We never heard whether anything about birds had returned to the cedars along the levee. We hope that those who enjoyed the trip will go back to the refuge again to enjoy the wildlife, and we also hope that as the federal budget crunch comes inevitably to the Fish and Wildlife Service, we’ll all support the vital work we do at places like Holla Bend.

It’s time again for ASCA’s “Crash Bird Course” for beginning birdwatchers. If you’ve wanted to learn something about birds but needed some guidance, here’s your chance. The course is informative, entertaining, fun, and cheap. It will be Friday and Saturday, March 7-8, at Pinecone Mountain State Park a few miles west of Little Rock, and it’s only five dollars for an individual or a whole family. Friday night at 6:30, at the Visitor Center, there’ll be a program with short talks on bird classification (who’s related to whom), birdfinding (where and how to look for birds), binoculars (how to buy and use them), and field guides (which ones are best, and how to use them). We’ll also try to answer any questions participants may have, and we’ll have some refreshments. Then, on Saturday morning, after a short talk on bird songs, there’ll be field trips aimed at showing beginners some interesting birds. Participants will go out in the park in small groups, each group led by an experienced birder, and see what’s afield. This is always a very popular course, so call the park for reservations as soon as possible: 865-5806.

The threat of bad weather caused postponement of our scheduled Christmas potluck dinner at the last minute. We apologize to those who showed up at Alderagate that night, and we’re sorry to have missed this annual favorite meeting. The election of officers was held at a special January meeting, where we also heard reports from the National Audubon ecology camp in Wyoming and shared some members’ slides.

Special Bulletin: Chairpeople Wanted!

If you have seen a person who looks like, acts like, and wants to be a Conservation chairperson we need to know! This vital position needs to be filled soon so that our chapter can be represented in conservation issues. Cathy Mitchell has represented us well and is now taking over as our Education chairperson. Have you seen our Membership chairperson? We don’t have one! If you want to help your chapter grow, this position might be just what you’ve been looking for.

Both chairpersons would hold positions on the chapter board in making policy decisions. For descriptions of duties and more information contact Neil Curry.

ASCA likes to put up the wildlife film speakers in homes of our members rather than having them stay in a motel. These are all interesting folks who would reward hospitality. If you have room to host a speaker for the nights of the last films (see Calendar) call Lisa Hlss (661-0431, 371-1191) for information.

Vivian Scarlett, widow of Dr. William P. Scarlett, died November 13, 1985. She was a charter member of the Audubon Society of Central Arkansas and held charter membership in the Arkansas Audubon Society as well. Together with Dr. Scarlett she contributed a major portion of the collection of nests and mounted birds housed in the Museum of Science and History. The reports that she submitted over the years for the Arkansas Audubon Society’s file of bird distribution records constitute another significant contribution on her part.

Mrs. Scarlett took pride in her early association with El Dorado nature photographer Thase Daniel. The two women teamed up in the 1960s. Mrs. Scarlett would locate a nest, and then Mrs. Daniel would set up her equipment to photograph the parent birds when they returned to feed their young. A number of outstanding pictures resulted from this partnership.

“Quotable quotes” are words that come to mind when one thinks of Mrs. Scarlett, yet she was generous with her smiles and always happy to assist with whatever nature-oriented project might be under way. Though her knowledge of birds was extensive, she never hesitated to share her enthusiasm and experience with any beginning birder who showed interest.

When nature-lovers gather in Arkansas this spring, Vivian Scarlett will be missed.

—Bill Shepherd

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**Calendar**

Friday, February 21, 7-45 p.m.: ASCA wildlife film, Roger Tory Peterson’s “Birds of Seven Continents,” shown by Herman Kitchen, at the U of A Med Center Auditorium. Find free parking lot by turning south off Markham onto Hooper Drive; go to stop sign, turn right twice. Call Lisa Hlss at 661-0431 for information about dinner with the speaker before the film.

Saturday, February 22, 8 a.m.: We couldn’t decide whether or not to call this field trip to Pinecone Mountain State Park “Birds in the Bottoms” or “Feathers in the Floodplain.” Join park naturalist Neil Curry as he shows us a backdoor entrance to the Little Maumelle River. Meet at the picnic area to carpool over to the 200 acres that’s just waiting for birdwatchers to come visit. Bring a lunch if you want to stay and picnic.

Sunday, February 23, 1-4 p.m.: If you’re interested in attending one of the excellent Audubon camps in Wyoming, Maine, Wisconsin, or Connecticut, or in sending a child to the Audubon Ecology Camp in Arkansas, you can learn all about them at this program. Even if you’re not interested this year, you can see some entertaining slide shows about the camps; for young and old alike. Call 865-5806 for more information.

Sunday, March 2, 8-10:30 p.m.: Chapter members will work the phones taking pledges during Arkansas public TV’s fund-raising Festival. If you’ve already signed up you’ll be contacted about carpooling; if you want to work, call Neil at 865-5806.

Friday and Saturday, March 7-8: ASCA’s ever-popular “crash course” for beginning birdwatchers at Pinecone Mountain State Park. A classroom session Friday night, with tips on bird classification, identification, field guides, use of binoculars, and anything else people want to discuss. Field trips the next morning, in small groups, each led by an experienced birder. This is a great introduction to bird-watching, geared to beginners, and it costs only five dollars, for an individual or a whole family. You need to make reservations; call 868-5806.

Thursday, March 13, 7 p.m.: Quarterly general meeting for all ASCA members in the Canteen Room (downstairs) of the Game and Fish Commission building (on Natural Resources Drive, north off Markham east of I-430). We’re working on an excellent program, which was not confirmed at time of printing. Come for good fellowship, the latest bird and conservation news, and reports on upcoming field trips and the like.

Friday, March 21, 7:45 p.m.: ASCA wildlife film, *Wildlife Annals*, by Allen J. King, a fine filmmaker who has been to Little Rock many times before. The film will be shown at the U of A Med Center Auditorium. Find free parking lot by turning south on Hooper Drive from Markham; go to stop sign, turn right twice. Call Lisa Hlass at 661-0431 for information about dinner with the speaker before the film.

Saturday, March 22, 6:22 p.m.: "Spring sounds" field trip to Willow Beach public use area, north of the Arkansas River near Scott. Follow signs off Highway 165 southeast of North Little Rock. A picnic shelter will be reserved for all who would like to come earlier and eat together. The field trip will start promptly at sundown (8:22) and will be over not later than 8:30. With luck, we will start by observing the courtship flight of the American Woodcock. Then we will concentrate on the vocalizations of various frog species and search for owls. Some leaders from the Arkansas Herpetological Society will try to capture a few frogs for close inspection. This is something different for us, and it should be fun. Leaders: Bill Shepherd (371-1706), Perk Floyd, Herb Evans, and Darrell Heath.

Saturday, April 5, 8 a.m.: Field trip to Cedar Creek, a scenic area in the Ouachitas west of Lake Sylvia. We'll hike a ways in the woods along the creek to a pretty waterfall, and maybe see some early migrants and wildflowers along the way. Come along and explore with us. Meet at Christ the King Catholic Church on Rodney Parham just south of Highway 10 for carpooling. Leaders: Andrew Pursley, 227-0943.

Friday-Sunday, April 11-13: Spring meeting of the Arkansas Native Plant Society at Mountain View.

Saturday, April 19: Field trip to Warren Prairie in Bradley County to see some of the state's rarest plants. Sponsored by the Natural Heritage Commission and the Native Plant Society. For more information call Bill Shepherd at 371-1706.

Saturday, April 26: Special field trip for beginning birdwatchers. We'll go slow and look at everything from Cardinals to Flickers to Titmice. We won't take anything for granted, and we'll try to answer all questions. This could be a follow-up to the crash bird course, and also for those who've had the course in previous years but still want more basic birding experience. Leader, Mel White, 375-2985 or 664-8786.

Friday-Sunday, May 2-4: The spring meeting of the Arkansas Audubon Society at Fayetteville. Headquarters will be on Mount Sequoyah. Watch for details in the state newsletter. There's always great birding this time of year, and the northwest chapter is sure to put on an excellent meeting. For information call Roberta Crabtree, 755-1723.

Friday-Sunday, May 9-11: Special camping field trip to Village Creek State Park, on Crowley's Ridge near Wynne. Let's see what kind of migrants pass through east Arkansas this time of year, and what flowers are blooming. We'll have an area in the campground reserved for us, or you can stay in one of the new cabins at the park. Crowley's Ridge is a fascinating place, with a different kind of environment from anywhere else in the state. Join us for a weekend of fun; come back Saturday or stay till Sunday. Call Neil Curry, 866-5600 or 868-5297, for more information.

### New Members

**ALEXANDER**
- Cheryl Speer

**BRYANT**
- Jean Beard

**CABOT**
- Pat Doody
- James B. Gannaway

**FORT SMITH**
- Dorothy Henderson

**JACKSONVILLE**
- Katherine Polena
- Cathy and Roy Wadekamper

**LITTLE ROCK**
- Robby Bennett
- Lee A. Beverly
- A. M. Chambers
- Bettye Conard

**GRANDSOUTH**
- Catherine English
- Harry Gaston
- J. Getzine
- R. Chris Griffis
- W. A. Graves
- Dr. and Mrs. Fred Guggenheim
- Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Harris
- Greg Hart
- Ulan Hartwick
- Keith Hickman
- Martha Hula
- W. Law
- Martin Logan
- Hoyt Neill
- Nita Oakley
- Addie Owen
- D. M. Patton
- Elly Peterson
- Robbie Pitts
- Andrew G. Pursley
- John Quinn
- Darrell Riffel

**NORTH LITTLE ROCK**
- Christopher C. Roseu
- Clara Jane Rusarh
- Anthony D. Russell
- Doris Server
- Thomas W. Slotten
- Colin and Mary Ellen Stockdale
- Colette Williamson
- Mary B. Winburn

**ROCKViewController**
- Gliss T. Calvert
- Wesley Crook
- Donna Harris
- Jerry Nixon
- Lillian I. Stout

**SEVENTHDAY**
- Randy J.

**SHANGRI-LA**

Join the Audubon Society of Central Arkansas (ASCA) and you automatically become a member of the National Audubon Society.

You will receive the bimonthly national *Audubon* magazine and the *Snipe*, newsletter of the Audubon Society of ASCA. It is important for new members to join through ASCA, so a portion of your dues supports ASCA.

### APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

**Check the Membership You Desire**

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**Name (Print if possible):**

**Address:**

**City** **State** **Zip**

**Local Chapter:** Audubon Society of Central Arkansas, NAS #B-50

Please make check payable to National Audubon Society.

**SRC-7**

To join, complete the coupon and mail with check to Henry Halberg, ASCA treasurer, 5809 North Country Club, Little Rock, AR 72207. Renewals should be sent to National Audubon Society, Membership Data Center, P.O. Box 2666, Boulder, CO 80301. Send change-of-address to P.O. Box 2666, Boulder, CO 80301. Subscription to Henry Halberg, so you won't miss *Audubon* magazine or the *Snipe*. **INTRODUCTORY MEMBERSHIP $20**
Conservation News

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission is making another effort to pass a conservation sales tax. This new sales tax of one-eighth of one cent would raise funds for game management, wildlife protection, game-law enforcement, habitat preservation, and conservation education. A similar effort failed in the general election of 1984, and this year the GFC is making more overtures to conservation groups and the public to try to gather more support.

Arkansas for Nature is a coalition of conservation organizations and private citizens working to pass the constitutional amendment that would allow this new tax. Many of our ASCA members are very involved in this group, and support this tax as the best way to raise money for conservation in Arkansas. ASCA, as of this writing has not taken a position on the tax yet. (Though by the time this newsletter reaches you, there will have been another board meeting.) There has been some discussion about just how the GFC would spend this money. Since it would come from all Arkansas people, hunters and non-hunters, fisherpeople and non-fisherpeople, those who care about wildlife and those who have very different priorities, this is an important issue. The present GFC is much more enlightened about conservation of all wildlife than it has been in the past, but it would be good to have a real commitment about how these funds would be spent—how much would go to management of game animals and their habitat, and how much for other purposes. (Again, we have been promised such guidelines, and they may have been issued by the time this reaches you.)

We hope this issue gets a full, honest discussion before the next election day. There’s no doubt that people of good will are working hard to resolve the need for more money for Arkansas’s environment, and we’re happy that members of ASCA are involved in this critical effort. If you’d like more information about the conservation sales tax, contact Arkansas for Nature at 666-4546. And watch news reports for developments and comments by interested parties.

Conservation groups spend a lot of time and money urging members to write letters and make phone calls on environmental issues, and we know it’s hard to respond all the time. And sometimes you wonder whether it ever does any good. Well, here are two success stories:

The management of Wapanoocca Wildlife Refuge in east Arkansas was coming under heavy pressure from fishing interests to raise the year-round water level in the refuge in an effort to improve fishing. The problem was, that would have been very bad for the hardwoods in the refuge and would have degraded the quality of the habitat for waterfowl, which is why it was established in the first place, and which should be its primary use. The refuge staff wanted to manage the area for waterfowl, but needed public support. At hearings and through letters, conservationists responded. We’ve got plenty of fishing lakes, they said, but not much remaining hardwood bottomland; leave the refuge alone. And the officials who make the decisions heard; the refuge is safe again, for now.

In 1985, Brazil killed 598 whales. According to news reports, the country banned whaling for five years, beginning January 1 this year. Why? Because thousands of Brazilian children wrote to President José Sarney, asking him to save the whales. Does a letter do any good? It sure does! Please take time to express your interest in conservation to our public officials. That’s why we put their names in every Sniepe.

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