Beginner bird course is April 8-9

ASCA's "crash course" for beginning birdwatchers has been a big success ever since we introduced it—how many years ago now? It's specifically designed to introduce beginners to the joys of birding, informally and inexpensively. This year's course will be held April 8 and 9 at Pinnacle Mountain State Park. The Friday night session (6:30-9:30) covers bird families, identification, binoculars and telescopes, bird books, and good birding areas. Saturday morning we'll talk about bird song, and then experienced birders will lead small groups on field trips in the park. The fee is $5 per person or per family, and covers materials and refreshments. Course size is limited and it's been full every year, so call for reservations now: 866-5806.

It's almost spring! As this is being written, the first Purple Martin has already been seen near Little Rock. By the time you read this, it'll be only a couple of weeks till the rest of the migrants start showing up, and the bloodroots, trout lilies, and spring beauties will be reminding us of why we have conservation programs, write impassioned letters, donate our hard-earned cash, and try to recruit more Audubon members. It's so we can keep on enjoying how great it is to see the woods and swamps, prairies and rivers, lady's-slippers and Pileated Woodpeckers. They give us so much pleasure, most of us want to give something to them: like the chance to survive.

Along with the 30th of this month, start looking for early migrants like Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Yellow-throated Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Solitary Vireo, and Black-throated Green Warbler. One weekend they won't be here, the next they will. It only people were so dependable! And start getting ready to say goodbye to winter friends like Ruby-crowned Kinglet, White-throated Sparrow, and the Common Loons on Lake Maumelle. These five glorious weeks—April 1 through May 15—are the peak birding time in our state, and every day brings new species—some returning to nest, others passing through on their way farther north.

We have some great Audubon activities coming up. Please join us for our March program on bird sounds, the ever-popular "crash course" for beginning birdwatchers, the state Audubon Society meeting, and a variety of field trips. All these events are listed in the Snipe Calendar: mark them on your calendar now!

Thanks to hard work by several ASCA members, chief among them being ex-president Neil Curry, our chapter made quite a bit of money from the bird seed sale we sponsored with the Arkansas Wildlife Federation. We made about $6,600, in fact, on sales of 35 tons of seed. Very hearty thanks go to Linda Blackwell, Gary Cook, Barry Haas, Lisa Haas, Terry Horton, Renee Jorgensen, Robert Lewis, Florence Mallard, Wendy Margolis, Dotty Metcalf, and Kathy Mitchell. Neil strongly urges that most of this money be spent on educational projects. He has several ideas in mind, and they'll be discussed in upcoming meetings.

Anytime's a good time to score a few points for nature. Just ask ASCA's conservation chairperson, Mary Ellen Stackdale. She was shopping at Stein Mart when whom did she happen to see but United States Senator Dale Bumpers. And like a good citizen, she walked up and gave him her opinions on some National Forest issues. Be on the lookout! Politicians have to buy underwear too.

Bird songs, anyone? Our March 10 general membership meeting will feature a program on bird song, with an emphasis on how beginners can start learning who's singing what. We'll also talk about how you can use sound to help with identification even when you don't know many songs yet. We'll have visual aids, and answer as many questions as we're able. The meeting will be in the Game and Fish Commission auditorium at 7 p.m. For more information, call Mel White, 626-8786 or 575-2385.

The spring meeting of the Arkansas Audubon Society will take place April 28-May 1 at DeGray Lodge near Arkadelphia. Members of the state society will receive meeting information in the March AAS newsletter. Nonmembers can contact Wendy Margolis, 664-8477, for information, or—better yet—join the state society. (Remember, the Arkansas Audubon Society is different from ASCA.) It only costs $5: Dotty Metcalf (755-0130) can give you details. It's best to make lodging reservations soon.

The focus of the meeting will be efforts to save the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. The Friday evening program will feature Jeremy Jackson, a biologist from Mississippi State University who is the world's foremost expert on red-cockaded woodpecker. He is also the lead scientist for the National Geographic Society's ivory-billed woodpecker expedition to Cuba. Field trip leaders will take us to nearby pine forests where there have been many sightings of the woodpecker, and to several other good birding locations. We're also planning barge trips on Lake DeGray. The Saturday evening program will include a presentation on the rare hummingbirds seen in the state this winter.

These are not the only occasions of great birding, renewal of old friendships and forming of new ones, and excellent, informative programs. Make plans to attend now.

The best bird ID book is the National Geographic Society Field Guide to the Birds of North America. We've ordered a new supply; call Wendy Margolis (664-8477) to reserve your copy. If you've called before and we were sold out, call again now.

The Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell University has begun an international survey called Project FeederWatch, which is designed to study the distribution and movements of common bird-feeder species. Last year 4,000 people took part, and this year the lab is hoping to attract more than 10,000 participants. You need not be an expert to help out. Counts are made over a one- or two-day period of your choice every other week from November through March, but you are not obliged to watch every time, nor must you watch continuously on count days. Project FeederWatch requires a registration fee of $9. In return for your observations, you will receive a newsletter and report on the season's results, plus two issues of "Birdscope," the lab's research newsletter. If you're interested, write to Erica Dunn, Coordinator, Project FeederWatch, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, Sapsucker Woods, Ithaca, NY 14850.

The hummingbird that was seen at Gillett some weeks ago was definitely Anna's, which makes it the first Arkansas sighting for that western species.

National Wildlife reports that every time a snake or turtle crosses a road, there's a one in twelve chance it won't make it. In one experiment with plastic animals, 87 per cent of motorists went out of their way to avoid them; 6 per cent went out of their way to hit them, and 7 per cent hit them accidentally. Twice as many drivers tried to skosh snakes as tried to squash turtles.

On a serious note, a report from Corkscrew Swamp, the National Audubon Society's sanctuary in south Florida, doesn't bode well for the endangered Wood Stork. In 1961, storks raised 17,000 young in the refuge. Last year, they didn't even nest, and they're unlikely to try this year. The problem? In 1961, there were 91,000 people in southwest Florida; now there are a half-million. Development has so altered the water resources that Wood Storks have nowhere to feed.

National Audubon camps can be a great way to spend your vacation. Many ASCA members have attended one of these excellent camps, and it would be hard to get someone to say a bad word about them. One is on a beautiful island off the coast of Maine, the other is at the Audubon Columns; and the third is in the Wind River Mountains of Wyoming. Sessions run one or two weeks. For a brochure write: Registrar, Audubon Society of Central Arkansas.
Ecology Camps, National Audubon Society, 613 Riverside Road, Greenwich, CT 06831.

The Eskimo Curlew, which has been at the brink of extinction for years, was seen in Nebraska and Texas last year. In May, Canadian Wildlife Service biologists found a pair in the Arctic, and a nest may have been located. These sightings have renewed interest in the shorebird, and plans are being made for recovery.

Don’t forget the AAS Ecology Camp for kids ages 11 and 12. It’s June 19-24 at Camp Clearfork in the Ouachita Mountains, and offers young people an excellent chance to study our natural environment. There’s a professional staff and lots of recreational opportunities. For more information, write AAS Ecology Camp, 624 N. Oak Street, Little Rock, AR 72205.

Write to Senator Dale Bumpers (Washington, D. C. 20510) and ask him to support reauthorization of the Endangered Species Act. This legislation has been of immense value to the conservation movement in the United States, and we must be watchful against those who are always ready to weaken or destroy it. We have lost too much already.

Wanna be on TV? Here’s your chance. ASCA will supply phone-answering during AETN’s pledge week. We’re scheduled for Saturday, March 12, from 8:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Needless to say, we need volunteers. If you can help, please call Dotty Metcalf at 758-0130.

**Calendar**

Thursday, March 10, 7 p.m.: ASCA general meeting at the Game and Fish Commission auditorium off west Markham Street. We’ll have a business meeting and then a program on “Bird Song for Beginners,” with taped songs and slides. See article in this *Snake* Information: Mel White, 375-2985 or 664-8786.

Saturday, March 12, 8 a.m.: Field trip to the Bona Dee area near Russellville. This is an excellent Corps of Engineers park with wetlands, woods, and open areas, with a good variety of birds. The trails are not strenuous, there are restrooms on the site, and we should see great blue herons, wood ducks, lots of woodpeckers, and possibly an eagle. If you haven’t been here before, you owe it to yourself to visit with ASCA. Leader, Cathy Mitchell. Bring a sack lunch, and meet at 8 a.m. at Christ the King Church on Rodney Parham just south of Highway 10. For information, call Cathy, 666-4826, or Barry Haas, 226-5094.

Saturday, March 12, 3:30-6:30 p.m.: Help needed to answer phones at AETN. Call Dotty Metcalf, 758-0130.


Sunday, April 3, 2-3 p.m.: Wildflower program at Pinnacle Mountain State Park. Carl Hunter, author of *Wildflowers of Arkansas*, will present a slide lecture. Information: 686-5806.

Friday and Saturday, April 8-9: ASCA’s “crash course” for beginning birdwatchers at Pinnacle State Park. (See article in this *Snake*.) Information, 664-5986.

Thursday, April 14, 7 p.m.: ASCA board meeting at the Game and Fish Commission building. All members are welcome at board meetings, and we usually have some soft drinks. For information, call Tom Wittenberg, 666-0123 or 666-7218.

Saturday, April 23, 7:30 a.m.: Field trip to Harris Brake Wildlife Management Area near Perryville. This is a very productive area with fields, woods, river, and lake. In the past we’ve seen Barred Owl, Red-shouldered Hawk, Osprey, White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Snowy Owl, and some good stuff; lots of singing spring warblers. Please be on time, as we’d like to get to the area as early as possible. Meet at Christ the King Church on Rodney Parham just south of Highway 10. Bring a sack lunch if you want. Leader, Mel White; information: 664-8786.

Friday, April 29, through Sunday, May 1: Spring meeting of the Arkansas Audubon Society at DeGray Lodge near Arkadelphia. Programs, field trips, fun, food. For information, call Wendy Margolis, 664-8477.

Saturday, April 30, 2:30 p.m.: A program entitled “Rudy Jewels of Arkansas” at Pinnacle State Park, presented by Neil Curry, naturalist and former ASCA president. Answers to your questions about hummingbirds. Call 666-5806 for information.

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