

THE Snipe



AUDUBON SOCIETY OF CENTRAL ARKANSAS

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A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

July 6, 1988

Field trip coming up July 30 to Emerald Park in North Little Rock. See Calendar in this *Snipe*.

Report from ASCA's field trip to Magazine Mountain, June 11: Approximately thirty birders ascended to the cool Logan County peak, led by Wendy Margolis with assistance from Cathy Mitchell and other members. (Ed. note: We're always grateful for the help of our trip leaders.) As usual, we saw more birders than birds, although we *heard* lots of Wood Thrushes, White-breasted Nuthatches, Ovenbirds, and even a few other warblers that we imagined to be uncommon nesters. Nobody seemed to mind the limited birding opportunities, as we had the mountain pretty much to ourselves and it was a welcome retreat from urbanism. The activities of several Scarlet Tanagers and families of Black-and-white Warblers (and of Gary Cook's well-behaved dog) kept us entertained.

Other species seen included Great Crested Flycatcher, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Eastern Bluebird, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Acadian Flycatcher, Red-tailed Hawk, Hairy Woodpecker, and Yellow-throated Warbler. A number of wildflowers were in full bloom; most noteworthy were death camas, or fly poison, and smooth petunia.

A search for Rufous-crowned Sparrow turned up a hang-glider instead; perhaps there's a connection there. Those who couldn't make it for this trip can call Wendy (664-8477) for directions. Magazine is a special place, even in the heat of the summer, and we highly recommend a visit now. It's likely that before long the mountain will be the site of a state park, and will never be so peaceful and uncrowded again.

At the May ASCA board meeting, directors voted to give an additional \$257 to help pay for the legal battle against the proposed damming of Lee Creek near Fort Smith. The fight to save this scenic stream is in the final stages, and the conservation side needs all the help it can get.

The winner of an ASCA scholarship to a National Audubon Society ecology camp is Marcie Heuer, who teaches fifth grade at Cathedral School in Little Rock. Congratulations to her; we know she'll have one of the greatest experiences of her life.

Get ready! Little Rock will host the fall meeting of the Arkansas Audubon Society October 21-23. Our own Wendy Margolis, vice-president of AAS, will probably have lots to do, so be prepared to volunteer to help. The meetings and meals will be at Baptist Medical Center, and people will be making their own arrangements for accommodations. More on this meeting later. For those who look ahead, the 1989 spring meeting will be at Petit Jean, May 5-7.

News from National Audubon: A recent letter from Peter Berle, president of NAS, projects that National's budget for next year will be in the black, with no more staff reductions, an addition regional office (in the northeast), and *higher membership fees* (although the \$20 introductory rate will still be in effect). Despite higher membership fees (up from \$30 to \$35), local chapters' shares *will not increase*. NAS finished the 87-88 fiscal year with a balanced budget for the first time in several years, Berle said, and next year's budget of \$32.2 million is 5% higher.

A new booklet on the Red-cockaded Woodpecker is available from the Game and Fish Commission. It was written by Doug James of UA-Fayetteville and former ASCA member Fred Burnside, and includes 11 color photos of the birds, their nests, and habitat, as well as national and state distribution maps. To get a copy, write to the Endangered Species Section, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, 2 Natural Resources Drive, Little Rock, AR 72205.

Starting this fall, Doug James will be on assignment in Belize conducting workshops on ornithology, ecology, and conservation for the national park personnel there. This small Central American country is very poor, and lacks even enough money to

buy binoculars for its park employees. If you have binoculars that you no longer use, Dr. James would love to be able to give them to Belizeans, to aid in their work in establishing and protecting the country's national parks. Belize is poor economically, but it is rich in natural resources; please help in their conservation efforts if you can.

Send binoculars to Douglas James, Department of Zoology, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR 72701. Please send them before August.

Bird news? We don't know any. Summer is the slowest time for birds in Arkansas, and we've had no reports of anything noteworthy locally. Elsewhere, Rufous-crowned Sparrows were found in a different location on Mount Magazine, off Highway 309 before the turnoff, and Double-crested Cormorants were found nesting at Lake Millwood, the first such record in a long time.

Big-time bird scientists from around the world will gather in Fayetteville August 15-18 for the annual meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union. The public is invited to attend talks on a variety of subjects by ornithology professionals. For information on attending the meetings, which will be at the Center for Continuing Education, contact Douglas James, Department of Zoology, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR 72701; phone 575-6364.

Tourist attraction or commercial mine? If you care about the future of the Crater of Diamonds State Park near Murfreesboro, now is the time to express your feelings. Talks are going full speed ahead on allowing commercial exploitation of the mine, the only one of its kind in North America. The idea is, of course, that the state would strike it rich on royalties, and Arkansas would suddenly be just like one of those Persian Gulf nations where every citizen is given a Rolls-Royce, a Lear Jet, two hundred camels, and a billion dollars at birth. On the other hand, it could be that this venture will go bust just like the other diamond-mining operations have in the past. Write to: Crater of Diamonds Mining Task Force, c/o Ms. Jo Luck Wilson, Department of Parks and Tourism, One Capitol Mall, Little Rock, AR 72201.

Looking at roadside flowers is better than spending money on mowing and chemicals to maintain a lawn-like look along highway borders. The problem is, when the highway workers let the flowers grow, they get letters and phone calls from people complaining about the unsightly "weeds" along the roadsides. The solution? You guessed it: Conservationists need to write *more* letters asking that mowing be done less frequently. Fall mowing, after flowers have gone to seed, allows a new generation of wildflowers to get started. Please send your thoughts on this matter to: Mr. Maurice Smith, Director, Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department, P.O. Box 2261, Little Rock, AR 72203.

Letters, letters, letters . . . We wouldn't ask you to write if it weren't important. The United States has what may be its last opportunity to save a significant amount of tallgrass prairie—more than 50,000 acres in northeastern Oklahoma. Long negotiations have produced a proposal supported by congressmen and other officials, but ranching interests have organized highly vocal opposition. If you have a moment, write to Oklahoma senators David Boren and Don Nickles (U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510) and tell them that, as a good Arkansas neighbor, you support the prairie preserve bill. Maybe you could tell them that you'll visit often and spend lots of money in their state, too.

ASCA and Little Rock suffered a great loss when Mr. and Mrs. John T. Williams were killed in an auto accident June 6 in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Our sympathy goes out to the families.

Didn't this go out at the turn of the century? Three men in St. James Parish, Louisiana, were arrested this spring for killing 468 young Yellow-crowned Night-Herons—to eat. The birds weren't

old enough to fly; the men went through a heronry and shot them with .22 rifles. They were charged with violating the federal Migratory Game Bird Act.

Zoo Days are coming, and we need people to work the ASCA booth at the festivities. You'll meet lots of zoo visitors and answer a few questions about birds, and also hand out Audubon literature. Zoo Days are August 27-28; if you can help, please call Debbie Jackson at 663-4960 or 666-2406.

"Funny, you don't look like a Painted Bunting." Bill Shepherd and Robert Lashley went to Willow Beach park to try to photograph a Painted Bunting this spring. They set up a blind and Bill played a tape of a bunting song, placing the tape recorder just outside the tent. Not only did the male respond, he landed on the speaker, looking for the rival in his territory.

Watch for Audubon television specials Sunday nights on PBS in July and August. Topics covered will include whales (July 17), "Messages from the Birds" (July 24), and others of interest.

Volunteers wanted. Dotty Metcalf has begun working as a volunteer coordinator (got that?) at Pinnacle Mountain State Park, and she's actively looking for people who can help out with all sorts of exciting volunteer work. Anyone who is interested can reach her on Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Visitor Center. Call 868-5806. Or call the ASCA hotline and leave a message: 753-8496.

Speaking of the hotline, call up now and then to see what's going on, and especially if you see any interesting birds. That number again, 753-8496.

Calendar

Thursday, July 14, 7 p.m.: ASCA board meeting at the Game and Fish Commission building off west Markham Street. All members are welcome at board meetings. Information: Tom Wittenberg, 666-0123, 666-7218.

Saturday, July 23, 8-10 p.m.: Star Party at Pinnacle Mountain State Park. See stars, planets, etc., through telescopes if it's a clear night. Information: 868-5806.

Saturday, July 30, 8 a.m.: Field trip to Emerald Park in North Little Rock. Meet at the park. Take W. Pershing Blvd. west off Pike Avenue; follow signs to vo-tech school. Turn off Pershing at W. Scenic Drive. Go past school; the park entrance is just past the school and around the bend to the right. A recent scouting trip turned up some good species and spectacular views right here in our own back yard. No lunch needed; we'll be through before lunchtime. Bring binoculars, field guides, and something to drink. Information: Barry Haas, 225-5096.

Saturday, July 30, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.: Natural history book sale at Pinnacle, proceeds to benefit the park's education program. If you have books in good condition that you'd like to donate to the sale, take them to the park before July 30. Information: 868-5806.

Saturdays in August, 9-11 a.m.: Volunteer trail guide workshops at Pinnacle. Learn to teach others about the wonders of nature, and how to lead groups on park trails. Those who complete the training sessions may be asked to help guide groups of young people on Kingfisher Trail. Information: 868-5806.

Thursday, August 11, 7 p.m.: ASCA board meeting at the Game and Fish Commission building off west Markham. All members are welcome at board meetings. Information: Tom Wittenberg, 666-0123, 666-7218.

Thursday, September 8, 7 p.m.: ASCA general meeting (for all members) at the Game and Fish Commission building auditorium. Dr. Charles Preston of UALR will present a program on birds of prey. Hawks, eagles, and other raptors are always a popular subject, and Dr. Preston, who has studied birds of prey in the U.S. and Central America, is sure to have a fascinating presentation for us. Information: Tom Wittenberg, 666-0123, 666-7218.

Saturday, September 10, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.: Volunteer park clean-up day at Pinnacle. Trash bags and free drinks provided. Meet at west summit picnic area. Information: 868-5806.

Saturday, September 24, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.: Hawk watch at Pinnacle lookout near the Visitor Center. Depending on the weather, there can be hundreds of migrating Broad-winged Hawks on view; even on a slow day, we always see Ospreys, cormorants, and other birds along the river. Come and go as you wish. Information: 868-5806.

OFFICERS, COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS, AND DIRECTORS

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