Dan Scheiman  
**Bird Conservation Director, Audubon Arkansas**

Registration is now open for Audubon Arkansas's BirdLR Birdathon. Birdathons all over the country engage thousands of birders in raising hundreds of thousands of dollars for bird conservation. BirdLR's Birdathon is a competitive search for birds plus a fun way to raise money for Audubon Arkansas's bird conservation and environmental education work. Teams of 2-5 will set species and fundraising goals, then collect donations or pledges per species seen. Teams will compete for prizes for the most species seen and money raised.

This year the Birdathon is bigger and better than ever! The boundary has been expanded to all the counties that surround Pulaski: Faulkner, Lonoke, Jefferson, Grant, Saline, and Perry. Further, teams now have a full 24 hours on Saturday May 9, ample time to search for nocturnal birds. All participants are encouraged to convene for a Bird Bash tally rally on Sunday May 17 from 5-7pm at the Little Rock Audubon Center. There will be free food, fellowship, and awards. You even get a BirdLR t-shirt!

Last year's Birdathon was a success, despite rain and flooding, thanks to 35 birders who formed 7 teams. All together teams tallied 140 species and raised $8,080 for Audubon Arkansas's bird conservation and environmental education programs.

Registration forms are at [http://ar.audubon.org/bird-lr](http://ar.audubon.org/bird-lr). The deadline is March 15. The sooner you register your team the sooner Audubon Arkansas will create your team's profile page to make fundraising easier, e.g. friends and family anywhere in the world can donate online.

If you aren't up for a fast-paced race to find birds but still want your birding to count for the cause, ASCA will be sponsoring its own monthly bird walk that day with a pledge per species seen by participants under Karen Holliday's leadership.

Don't feel like going into the field? Consider having a few friends over for some casual backyard birdwatching. Tell them why you love birds and support Audubon Arkansas and ask them to do the same. Sounds like your speed? Let's chat.

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Lance Runion  

**Thanksgiving in Ecuador**

During Thanksgiving week 2019, I traveled to Ecuador with Field Guides Birding Tours for a nine-day trip based out of San Isidro Lodge in Napo Province. Yes, it was rainy at times, but the birding was good with 246 species including 118 life birds seen.

Although difficult to choose a "favorite" bird, some of the standouts included Giant Hummingbird, Coppery-chested Jacamar, Amazonian Umbrellabird, Wire-crested Thorntail, Paradise Tanager, Many-banded Aracari, Lined Antshrike and of course the famous "San Isidro" Owl. Also, impressive and one of the hoped-for target birds was the Andean Condor of which seven were counted. It wasn't all birds all the time though. We also got nice looks at mammals such as Andean Fox, Mountain Tapir and even a Spectacled Bear! In addition to the great birding, our hosts even provided us with a tasty Ecuadorian Thanksgiving dinner, and no there was no cuy on the menu.

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Chestnut-breasted Coronet | Photo: Lance Runion
President’s Column

Mother Nature seems to be losing patience with humankind. Massive storms with shredding winds and deluges of historic proportions do not focus our attention for long. Firestorms, each new one worse than the last, rage across landscapes as fire seasons begin earlier and last long past what we are accustomed to. Glacier melt accelerates and coastal flooding increase year after year. We saw pictures of people wading through Venetian piazzas; and now coronavirus is raging across east Asia.

Still enough of us don’t listen. Too many governments dawdle as the evidence of climate change accumulates. Governments including our own are in the process of rolling back environmental regulations instead of strengthening them, favoring corporations over the health and well-being of its citizens. Too many people have forgotten or never knew how bad the pollution was before the Clean Water Act and Clean Air Act were passed. When citizens don’t remember something, it’s easy to say the government has overreached, regulations are inconvenient, and we don’t need them anymore because whatever the problem was in the past has been fixed and won’t occur again.

Despite all the bad news, there are people and organizations out there who are willing to challenge governments and hold them accountable. Environmental groups, individuals, and even state governments act on a daily basis to address issues of public concern. People speak out about wrongs, and groups file lawsuits to challenge regulatory changes they disagree with. More progressive states sue to protect their rights to regulate conditions within their borders. Individuals also take action on a personal level, changing how they live to lessen their footprint, volunteering to be climate and nature advocates, and changing their property’s landscape to make it more welcoming to the local flora and fauna.

The next Presidential election is now months away. Not only federal elections, but state and local issues will be on the ballot as well. It occurs to me the most significant environmental action any of us can take this year is to make time to educate ourselves about the candidates and the issues on our local ballots and then go vote. We need to encourage our friends and relatives to do the same and be willing to provide information on the issues and how a yes or no vote will affect the environment today and the climate long-term.

Mother Nature will let us know eventually if we made the right choices.

_Cindy Franklin, ASCA President_

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Welcome New Members

Lynne Clifton
Barbara Justus
Kelly Morrissey
Ann Wagner
John Walker

Don't forget to Renew your Membership

Just a reminder, ASCA membership renewals were due January 1, 2020 and can be paid on-line via PayPal through the membership page at [www.ascabird.org](http://www.ascabird.org).

Checks can be made out to ASCA and mailed to Jim Dixon, Treasurer, 11805 Birchwood Drive, Little Rock, AR 72211.
A Journey Across Eastern Australia

Patty McLean, Karen Holliday, and Michael Linz

Australia is on many folks’ bucket list, and Michael Linz, Patty McLean, and Karen Holliday signed up for this nearly 5-week adventure to The Land Down Under that included many top birding destinations in Queensland, New South Wales, and Tasmania. Here’s their story about this amazing trip, led by Kim Risen of NatureScape Tours.

We arrived in late September at the start of Australia’s spring/summer but found little rain due to long-standing droughts across the country. Our adventure started in Sydney with trips to the Royal Botanic Garden and Centennial Park for our first Australian birds, with a quick tour of the famous Sydney Opera House and the busy Sydney Harbor where we enjoyed fresh seafood.

From Sydney, we flew to Cairns in Tropical North Queensland and visited prime birding destinations including the Esplanade, botanic gardens and nearby lakes, plus a stop at an enormous roost of Spectacled Flying Foxes squalling in trees in front of the city library. Over the next several days, we toured Etty Bay, Daintree National Park and The Tablelands, adding Southern Cassowary, Australian Brush-Turkey and scrubfowl, kites and sea-eagles, plus shorebirds, thick-knees, fruit-doves, imperial-pigeons, kookaburras, frogmouths, kingfishers, bee-eaters, cockatoos, parrots, and lorikeets, as well as the ubiquitous honeyeaters and friarbirds. In Queensland, we soon began seeing marsupials including kangaroo, wallaby, and platypus.

Further north, we took guided boat tours on the Daintree River, observing numerous endemic birds and a large crocodile on the riverbank. In The Tablelands, we found some of our favorite trip birds: Fairywrens, bowerbirds and the striking Australian Bustard. This bioregion is known as “The Wet Tropics” and is home to 13 of Australia’s 269 endemic birds including Victoria’s Riflebird, which we saw display his brilliant colors in hopes of attracting a mate. We also found our first bowerbird, a male Great Bowerbird enhancing his court with newly found treasures of pink artifacts and flirting with the girls. At Kingfisher Lodge, owner Carol led us on a hike on Mt. Lewis, known for local endemics and especially the secretive Tooth-billed Bowerbird. At the lodge, the feeders and water features brought in several more endemics including an elusive Red-necked Crake.

Our next flight took us to the Brisbane area along Queensland’s Fraser Coast where we explored the vast bays, valleys and mountains. From here, we spent a day on the isolated marine and avian sanctuary of Lady Elliot Island, a coral cay in the Great Barrier Reef. When we arrived, we found hundreds of Bridled Terns and Black and Brown Noddies nesting in the stunted trees; Red-tailed Tropicbirds with chicks tucked under bushes; and Buff-banded Rails scampering across the path. Great and Lesser Frigatebirds hovered overhead while Sooty Oystercatchers and Eastern Reef Herons worked the exposed coral. The day’s highlight was the glass-bottom boat trip, where we snorkeled in the clear water, spotting turtles, manta rays and colorful fish darting amid the vibrant coral.

Back on the mainland, we headed to O’Reilly’s Rainforest Retreat, which sits atop a mountain range inside Lamington National Park, an area known for its rainforests, ancient trees and waterfalls. Many of the lorikeets, catbirds, parrots and bowerbirds are accustomed to people and will land on your head, at your feet, or on your railing for a free handout. The dense primeval forest around the Reserve is where we found the elusive Albert’s Lyrebird. While there, a much-needed solid day of rain fell across the entire area, so we took a day of rest, getting organized for the next half of our trip.

Continued on page 4.
Eastern Australia cont.

Continued from page 3

Flying back to Sydney we explored New South Wales using a local guide. Along a trail in the Royal National Park we found a Superb Lyrebird, and at Providence Point along the coast, we watched Humpback Whales and dolphins feed and frolic close to shore. We hiked the barren coastal heathlands, where we got fleeting glimpses of the Southern Emu-Wren and a close encounter with an Eastern Brown Snake, a highly venomous snake in Australia.

Our next local guide took us to the Capertee Valley and into the stunning Blue Mountains, where we found more endemics in the ancient forests and mountains including shriketits, robins, whistlers, the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater and a few oddities like the Musk Duck. Back in Sydney, we took a pelagic trip into the Tasman Sea where, twenty miles out, we were surrounded by shearwaters, petrels, storm-petrels and four albatross species, including the great Wandering Albatross.

Our final week in Tasmania was spent in the Cradle Mountains and on scenic Bruny Island. In the Cradle Mountains we saw snow-capped mountains, high elevation endemics and marsupials including wombats, and at our remote mountain lodge we had an endangered Tasmanian Devil pay a visit. On scenic Bruny Island, we stayed at the Inala Conservation Reserve where we got excellent looks at all three pardalote species including the critically endangered Forty-spotted. Near Adventure Bay we spent one evening along the sand dunes where at dusk, after a day of foraging at sea, hundreds of Short-tailed Shearwaters returned to their burrows to feed their hungry juveniles loudly calling from below. Just before total darkness, we saw two Fairy (Little) Penguins emerge from the surf and waddle to their burrows in the dunes.

While in Tasmania, we saw the beginnings of the catastrophic forest fires and efforts to contain them. We hope the country will soon get healing rains and begin their recovery from these wildfires that have caused such a tragic situation for all who call this amazing and unique part of the world their home.

A King Parrot poses for a selfie with Michael. Photo: Karen Holliday

A few of the nearly 400 species we saw during our trip that seemed to be wherever we went were the Welcome Swallow (a fitting name), the Willie-Wagtail (a quite charismatic bird) and the very noisy Sulphur-crested Cockatoo. We found them to be a constant and charming reminder of where we were in this wonderful part of the world, and their merriment will be long remembered.

NOTE: Michael and Patty will present photographs and a more detailed overview of this trip at the July 9, ASCA meeting in Little Rock.


**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. The programs are free and open to the public.

March 12, 2020 — Survival by Degrees
Dan Scheiman, Bird Conservation Director, Audubon Arkansas

A new study from National Audubon Society scientists reveals climate change is the number one threat to birds. Using the latest climate science modeling with an expanded pool of bird data, Audubon shows that two-thirds of North American birds are more vulnerable than ever from rising temperatures and climate-related events like sea level rise, droughts, fires, and extreme weather. The good news is that our science also shows that if we take action now we can improve the chances for the majority of species at risk from climate change. Our birds are telling us that it’s time to act now.

Dr. Dan "The Bird Man" Scheiman has a B.S. from Cornell University, M.S. from Eastern Illinois University, and Ph.D. from Purdue University. He and his coworkers at Audubon Arkansas monitor birds, restore wildlife habitat, and help Arkansans improve their local environments. He has been birding for over 25 years. Since moving to Arkansas in 2005 to work for Audubon he has seen 363 of the 422 bird species documented in the state.

**NOTE:** This meeting will be held at Audubon Arkansas, 4500 Springer Blvd.

April 9, 2020 — Understanding Wild Turkey and Northern Bobwhite Populations in Arkansas — Jeremy Wood, Turkey Program Coordinator, and Marcus Asher, Quail Program Coordinator, AGFC

Northern Bobwhite populations in Arkansas have been on a steady decline for several decades due to loss of suitable habitat across much of the state. Similarly, despite restoring Eastern Wild Turkey populations to their peak across Arkansas by the early 2000s, there appears to have been a steady population decline since 2003. Despite turkeys being a generalist, they require similar habitats for nesting and brood rearing as quail. Learn why populations have declined, what AGFC is doing to reverse these trends, and how birders can help AGFC monitor populations to inform future management.

Jeremy Wood started with AGFC in August 2018 as the Turkey Program Coordinator. Prior to moving to Arkansas, he was the Assistant Wild Turkey Program Coordinator for the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission. He received his MS in Forest Resources at the University of Georgia’s Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources, and BS in Wildlife Ecology from the University of Maine.

Marcus Asher has been with AGFC over four years, three of which he has served as the state’s Quail Program Coordinator. Before that he was area manager for St. Francis Sunkenlands WMA. He previously worked for Missouri Department of Conservation as a private lands conservationist, and for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service as a Soil Conservation Technician. During and after graduation from Arkansas State University, Marcus worked on songbird banding, and on Northern Bobwhite and Greater Sage Grouse projects.

May 14, 2020 — No Meeting

Please note: ASCA does not hold a meeting in May. Go birding and enjoy migration! Participate in the BirdLR Birdathon (see page 1).

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**Christmas Bird Count Results**

Dan Scheiman, Compiler

The Little Rock and Lonoke Christmas Bird Counts were held on December 14 and 15 respectively.

For the Little Rock CBC, 26 birders and 7 feederwatchers tallied 13,683 birds of 96 species. While having TWO Rufous Hummingbirds on this count was not a first (it happened in 1990), it is a sweet occurrence and probably won’t be the last thanks to more and more people leaving their feeders out. Other notable birds were Peregrine Falcon (5th record), White-eyed Vireo (3rd), and Blue-headed Vireo (6th).

For the Lonoke CBC, 22 birders tallied 59,638 birds of 105 species. My team had 5 Trumpeter Swans fly overhead at Anderson’s minnow farm, which was not only a first for the Lonoke count but a first Lonoke County record! With this species it probably won’t be the last. Other notable species were Cattle Egret (8th record), Sora (7th), 9 Tree Swallows (6th), and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (4th).

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**Tropical Kingbird**

Photo: Michael Linz

After news a Tropical Kingbird was spotted at Lake Saracen, birders from around the state began heading toward Pine Bluff to see this first state wonder. The bird was first reported on December 13, 2019 and was still present as of February 20, 2020.
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 28, 2020
Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park & Willow Beach Recreational Area

Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Dickey-Stephens Baseball Park, located at 400 W. Broadway, North Little Rock if you want to ride/caravan to Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park (TMASP). Or, meet us there at 8:15 a.m. We will tour the visitor center and walk the Plum Bayou Indians trail, plus the Knapp Trail and boardwalk. Toltec is the archaeological site of Native Americans who inhabited the area over a thousand years ago and protects an 18-mound complex with the tallest surviving prehistoric mounds in Arkansas. The site is on the banks of Mound Lake, an oxbow lake of the Arkansas River. The site is a National Historic Landmark. There is a $3.00 per person entrance fee for the guided tour.

Next stop is Plantation Agriculture Museum for a quick tour and check of the oxbow bayou behind the facility.

Our third stop is Willow Beach Recreation Area & Campground on the Arkansas River near David D. Terry Lock and Dam. At our various stops, we should find herons, egrets, ducks, early arriving warblers, and lingering winter birds in the Bald Cypress backwaters and along the Arkansas River.

It will be easy walking on paved trails and boardwalks. TMASP is located at 490 Toltec Mounds Road, Scott, AR 72142.

For more information about the park, visit: www.arkansasstateparks.com/toltecmounds/.

April 25, 2020
Lake Sylvia Recreation Area

Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the west Little Rock Walmart on Hwy. 10/Cantrell Rd. in the northwest corner of the parking lot. We'll caravan from there. Lake Sylvia is a picturesque 18-acre lake nestled in the Ouachita National Forest surrounded by pines and hardwoods. The Lake Loop Trail and the Wildlife Trail are unpaved, with fairly level, easy walking. The Trees of the Forest Trail includes informational signs identifying common trees in the area. The trail is paved and has fairly level walking. Bring water and snacks. There is a picnic area if you want to bring your lunch. The park will be open and bathrooms available. There is a $3 per vehicle day use charge.

Directions—Lake Sylvia is one-mile north of the intersection of Hwy. 10 and Hwy. 9 (Williams Junction), and nine miles south of Perryville. From Hwy. 10, turn west at the brown-colored Lake Sylvia sign onto Hwy. 324. Go 4 miles to the park entrance. It is approximately a 45-minute drive from Little Rock. GPS coordinates are: N34.8822836, W92.8102027. Website is www.fs.fed.us/r8/ouachita/recreation/campgrouds/lakesylvia.shtml

May 9, 2020
Gillam Park and Little Rock Audubon Center

Join us as we celebrate World Migratory Bird Day and experience the excitement of spring migration. This walk doubles as one of the BirdLR Birdathon teams, a fun, friendly competition that raises money for bird conservation in Arkansas, sponsored by Audubon Arkansas. The ASCA team’s fundraising goal is to collect donations or pledges based on per species seen. Donate to our team by going to araudubon.org/birdathon/asca.

Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Gillam Park at the far parking lot. Gillam has great habitat for spring warblers. There will be moderate walking on fairly level, but possibly muddy trails. Once finished at Gillam, we’ll drive to the LRAC and walk the wildlife observation trail. Last, we’ll head to Industrial Harbor Road and David D. Terry Lock & Dam to look for Western Kingbirds and Painted Buntings. Bring water and snacks, the trip can last into early afternoon. Wear sturdy walking shoes or hiking boots.

Directions—Address is 5300 Gillam Park Road, Little Rock. Take I-30 West heading south from Little Rock. Then 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 one-mile to just past the LRAC. Turn right onto Gillam Park Road. Follow it into the park to the last parking lot.
Lake Dardanelle and Holla Bend NWR  
January 25, 2020

Twenty-four birders adventured to Lake Dardanelle and Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge for an all-day birding event. The day was pleasant with sun, mild temperatures, and little wind. First stop was the Delaware Recreation Area. Birds were a bit sparse, but we had nice views of male and female Common Goldeneyes, Bald Eagles, two Herring Gulls mixed in with Ring-billed Gulls, Buffleheads, Lesser Scaup, and several American White Pelicans. A massive raft of Double-crested Cormorants was seen in the far distance. Closer in was a Lesser Black-backed Gull sitting on a channel buoy.

Next stop was the Russellville side of Dardanelle Lock and Dam where we hoped to find the Rock Wren reported the previous week. To everyone’s disappointment, the wren was a no-show.

The group continued on to Holla Bend NWR. Seen along the highway were Loggerhead Shrikes, American Kestrels, Red-headed Woodpecker, and Eurasian Collared-Doves. The first raptor at the refuge was a Bald Eagle sitting on a nest, two additional eagles were seen later, along with Northern Harriers and Red-tailed Hawks. We had five species of woodpeckers including Hairy, Downy, Red-bellied, Pileated, and Northern Flicker. We flushed a lot of sparrows as we drove the refuge, the most common being Savannah and White-throated, plus a nice group of Vesper Sparrows. At the observation tower, the group spread out in a long line and walked the large field across from the tower. We flushed several LeConte’s Sparrows; three perched up for good views. A flock of 60 American White Pelicans circled overhead. As it got late in the day, our last stop netted Hermit Thrush, Winter Wren, and a flock of American Robins, completing our tally of 65 species.

Two Rivers Park  
February 15, 2020

This was ASCA’s participation in the 2020 Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). We started at the Two Rivers Park bridge area and peninsula at the east end of Two Rivers Park. The weather was cold, but quickly warmed up. We slowly walked the picnic area and the dirt trail that parallels an inlet of the Arkansas River. Pine Warblers, Dark-eyed Juncos, and Fox Sparrows were foraging on the ground in the short grass. Further down, we found a Brown Creeper, two Hermit Thrushes, a Swamp Sparrow, more Fox Sparrows and numerous White-throated Sparrows. Yellow-rumped Warblers, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, and Red-bellied Woodpeckers worked the trees.

Waterbirds dotted the river inlet, with groups of Gadwall, scaup, a pair of Common Goldeneyes, and lots of Double-crested Cormorants flying past. A huge group of Ring-billed Gulls and 23 American White Pelicans shared a big sandbar. In the pine trees we called up a Blue-headed Vireo. A nice surprise ending to this part of the trip was a very cooperative House Wren.

The group then drove to the west end of Two Rivers Park. We headed for the big, open field and spread out to walk in a long line, hoping to flush sparrows. A Northern Harrier glided past. It took a third pass through the tall grass to finally flush our target bird, LeConte’s Sparrow. We flushed at least six. One teed up in a small bush, giving everyone great looks.

At this point it was 1:30, with no stop for lunch, so the group broke up. Some headed to the Galloway exit off I-40 to find the recently spotted flock of Great-tailed Grackles. Another group headed to Lake Maumelle to find the last of the lingering loons. Final tally for the trip was 54 species.

This Rock Wren, photographed by Michael Linz a week earlier, managed to elude birders during the ASCA field trip. It was spotted again a few days later.

LeConte’s Sparrow | Photo: Michael Linz
Audubon Society of Central Arkansas
P. O. Box 6213
Sherwood, AR 72124

Forwarding and return postage guaranteed. Return service requested.

A rare winter visitor, this Least Flycatcher was spotted at Knopp Park in Little Rock.
Photo: Michael Linz

Audubon Society of Central Arkansas
Chapter Only Membership Application

Name _____________________________________________
Address ___________________________________________
City _______________________ State ______ Zip _______
E-mail address _______________________________________

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*New Memberships paid in the last quarter (Oct-Dec), will include full membership for the following calendar year. All Membership renewals are due January 1 of each calendar year and can be paid online via credit card at www.ascabird.org or mail a check to the address below.

Make check payable to ASCA and mail to: Jim Dixon, Treasurer, 11805 Birchwood Drive, Little Rock, AR 72211. Please note that “Chapter Only Members” will not receive Audubon magazine. To receive Audubon magazine, you will need to join the National Audubon Society (NAS).

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.

THE SNIPE is published quarterly by the Audubon Society of Central Arkansas. Our mission is to encourage programs and activities supporting all things natural, wild, and free, especially birds, bird habitat stability and improvement, as well as to promote fellowship among members, educate and inspire the public, and champion the highest standards of ethical outdoor conduct.

Report a Banded Bird

To report a bird with a Federal Band or Color Marker you can visit the U.S. Geological Survey website at: www.reportband.gov.

Find an Injured Bird?


Wild Birds Unlimited, 1818 N. Taylor Street, Little Rock, AR 72207. Phone: 501-666-4210
*Mention you are an ASCA member and receive 10% off your next purchase.