



Charles Mills

THE SNIPE

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Arkansas Birders' Observations During Total Eclipse

Dottie Boyles

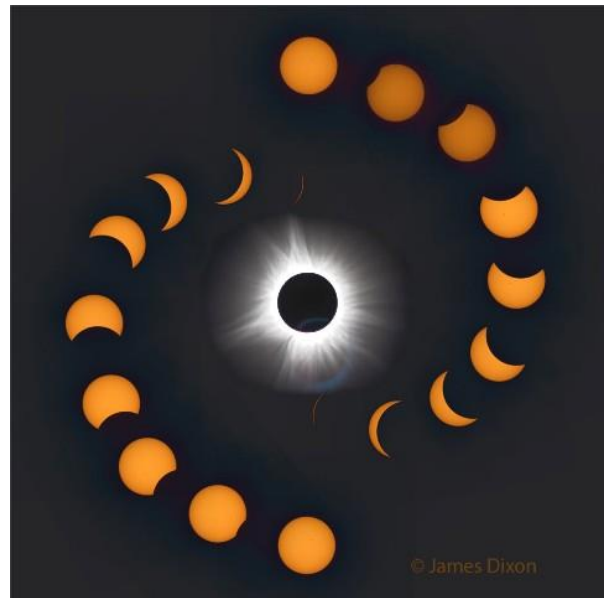
On April 8, 2024, parts Arkansas were fortunate to be in the path of darkness as the moon traveled between the sun and earth. The path of totality passed through Arkansas from the southwest to northeast corners of the state. Totality lasted anywhere from two to four minutes, depending on which part of the state you were in. Visitors from all around the United States and the globe traveled to The Natural State to experience the eclipse. This included a group of scientists from Paris, France, who also visited Paris, Arkansas while they were here.

Watching and experiencing this rare act of nature was something to behold. Also interesting to note was bird behavior during totality. At the Boyles household here in Little Rock, it was a rather warm afternoon. Only four species, White-throated Sparrow, Carolina Wren, Tufted Titmouse, and Northern Cardinal, were singing at the beginning of the eclipse. However, as the moon covered more of the sun and the temperature began to drop, more birds began to sing. They sang the loudest just before, during, and right after totality. Then went quiet as the sun came back out and the temperature climbed.

Karen Holliday hosted a big group of family and friends who came from all over the U.S. to experience the length of totality that Arkansas would offer. The group targeted Mountain View because of its projected four minutes and 14 seconds, almost the longest of viewing totality in Arkansas. So, Karen rented a couple of houses for several days just outside Mountain View along the White River.

Karen said, "Having experienced totality in Missouri in 2017, I knew what to expect. But this time totality was a little longer. It was definitely cooler longer, and dusk was longer. The temperature drop was more noticeable. The birds did go from normal daytime chatter to quiet during both eclipses. However, this time we had a small group of Turkey Vultures come flying low over us, obviously heading to their roost, just before totality. As soon as the sun came back out, the birds got noisy again, especially a big flock of American Goldfinches in a

nearby field. They went from loud chatter to completely quiet, then back to loud chatter as soon as it got back to regular sunlight. It was interesting how quickly they started back up again."



A totality montage collage by Jim Dixon

Leif Anderson shared on ARBIRD-L, "The last three days I've had the pleasure of being a volunteer for some neat bioacoustic eclipse research, led by Dr. Douglas Barron and his undergrad student Colton Morris from Arkansas Tech University. I had three interesting bird observations. During the partial portion of the eclipse two White-throated Sparrows stopped feeding/calling/singing and flew up into a cedar bush. They stayed on the "roost" until after totality, then resumed their normal feeding behavior. The end of totality "dawn chorus" at 1:54 p.m. was just as good as our normal dawn chorus. About four minutes into totality, a Barred Owl started calling."

Leif stated Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge hosted about 800 eclipse visitors, many of whom were birders and/or nature lovers from all over the country, Canada, and even a birding family from the Czech Republic.

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Cindy Franklin
ASCA President

A few weeks ago, a person posted an observation of an uncommon Arkansas bird outside its current range. Questions followed. The original poster eventually disengaged citing frustrations with the ongoing questioning. It seems like a good time to talk about how sightings of rare, uncommon, or unusual birds are vetted here in Arkansas.

Prior to the 1950's no formal vetting process was in place. When the Arkansas Audubon Society (AAS) was formed, one of the tasks the organization assumed was reviewing notable sightings. From the Arkansas Bird Records Committee page on the AAS website: "The intent of...the review process...from the beginning was to establish a standard for which rare bird reports can be used as scientific-quality data. Accepted records are now posted online in the Bird Records Database and published in the AAS newsletter, *Arkansas Birds*; especially notable sightings and photos may be published in *North American Birds* magazine. These records are also used to periodically update the official checklist of Arkansas birds."

Initially, this peer review task was assigned to the curator. The first curator was Dr. Doug James of Fayetteville. The Arkansas Bird Records Committee (BRC), comprised of five members chaired by the curator, was established in 1984 to assist the curator in examining the reports and deciding if enough evidence exists to add the sighting to the bird database. The BRC continues to review sightings up to the present. Committee members, all volunteers, have a deep knowledge of birds and particular expertise in the birds that grace our state.

If you happen upon a rare, out of range, out of season, or difficult to identify bird, what do you do? First, note the time and place of the sighting. Before the advent of electronic records all notable sightings were submitted in writing to the curator and the committee. The form is now online here: <https://arbirds.org/Records/Report.aspx>.

The gold standard these days is a photo. Most photos submitted are not magazine quality. A photo that shows enough field marks to make an identification is acceptable proof. An audio recording may also be submitted as proof. Also, a detailed description is acceptable. Many people now use eBird to report their sightings. Should you post on eBird, make a note of the checklist number and include it on the electronic record submission to the BRC.

If you post an unusual sighting on social media, expect questions. Some of the people asking the questions will be members of the BRC or people from state agencies tasked with following bird populations. What they are interested in are the facts of the sighting to determine if the sighting should be added to the Bird Records Database. None of the questions are meant to question the skill of the observer.

In this era of unsettled weather, birds are turning up in unusual places. While it is unlikely you will see an unusual bird on any given outing, it does happen. Please submit your sightings with documentation. If your report is accepted by the BRC, you will contribute to the accumulated birding knowledge of state.

Welcome New Members

Alexander Lamas
Sarah Labuda

Upcoming Programs

All upcoming programs are held online via Zoom. To find and register for each meeting visit delta.audubon.org/events. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

June 13, 2024 – Changing Climate, Changing Birds Dr. Jeremy Cohen

Dr. Jeremy Cohen is an Associate Research Scientist in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Yale University. His research connects global change biology and avian ecology, using big environmental and ecological datasets (including eBird data) and statistical modeling techniques to understand how birds are responding to extreme and unusual weather events, which have increased greatly in frequency and intensity over the past several decades.

In his presentation, he will discuss how eastern North American birds have reacted to heat waves, droughts, and a polar vortex and how these responses are predictable based on species' life history traits.

July 11, 2024 – Bird Banding in Little Rock Kevin Krajcir

Kevin Krajcir is a conservation biologist with the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission.

He recently set up a banding station at the Little Rock Audubon Center to bring central Arkansas into several national projects including a Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) study and a Monitoring of Neotropical Migrants study, as well as a long-term exploration of the effects of bird-friendly land management practices. The banding station began capturing birds this past spring.

In this presentation Kevin will discuss banding, how work at the Little Rock station has gone so far, and the hopes for these and other studies going forward.

August 8, 2024 – Photographing Birds in Arkansas Sarah Morris

Sarah Morris has quickly joined the ranks of Arkansas birders with more than 300 species on her state life list. What's amazing about Sarah's list is she has photographed most of those birds.

She will talk about her quest to photograph as many Arkansas birds as possible. She'll also share tips for photographing birds that she's learned along the way. Join us to see some of Sarah's fantastic photographs and hear her journey as a birder.

Sarah is the Internal Communications and Health Literacy Coordinator for the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH). Prior to joining the ADH in February 2018, she was a newspaper journalist and freelance writer for more than 10 years. She is a member of the Junior League of Little Rock and Arkansas Audubon Society.

Arkansas Hot Spots

Patty McLean

Thanks to the generous volunteers who have submitted information and photos, we've made a lot of progress on the Arkansas Hotspots page.

Currently we have over 1,750 hotspots in the state with 700 plus still needing information and 1,200 needing photos. You can help by picking a few incomplete hotspots and submitting information and/or photos. This includes general info about a specific location and tips for birding the area. Photos of the habitat can be taken with your smart phone! All submissions are reviewed by an editor before going live.

Helping with this project is a big benefit to novice birders, first time visitors to a site, and anyone who wants more information before visiting a location.

Thank you in advance! This action goes a long way in helping build our birding community.

Arkansas Hot Spots can be found at: <https://birdinghotspots.org/region/US-AR>.

Tri-colored Heron



Photo: Dottie Boyles

Global Big Day in Arkansas

Taylor Long
Arkansas eBird Reviewer

On May 11, 2024, 1.3 million birders from around the globe participated in Global Big Day, a 24-hour celebration of birds organized by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Globally, more than 63,000 birders submitted 156,000 checklists, contributing to the observation of more than 7,725 bird species.

Here in Arkansas, we had the highest participation ever, with over 700 eBirders submitting checklists that documented 212 different species across The Natural State in just one day. This year's participation was an 80% increase over last year's event and proves that birding and participation in citizen science is on the rise in Arkansas. Check out all the results by visiting ebird.org/globalbigday and searching for Arkansas.

Global Big Day 2024 by the numbers in Arkansas:
212 species
526 checklists
701 eBirders

For comparison, Global Big Day 2023 collected more data about birds on a single day than ever before. In Arkansas, 390 eBirders created 415 eBird checklists, documenting 201 species in our state. Check this link for a summary of Global Big Day 2023 in Arkansas: ebird.org/region/US-AR?yr=BIGDAY_2023a.

Top counties by number of complete checklists submitted:

1. Pulaski: 124
2. Crawford: 65
3. Washington: 56
4. Benton: 36
5. Pope: 28
6. Baxter: 15
7. Saline: 14
8. Craighead: 14
9. Franklin: 11
10. Carroll: 11

Top counties by number of species observed:

1. Washington: 129
2. Pulaski: 122
3. Benton: 115
4. Crawford: 113
5. Pope: 111
6. Saline: 91
7. Craighead: 86
8. Columbia: 83
9. Prairie: 81
10. Clark: 78

Out of Arkansas's 75 counties, 54 had complete checklists submitted, and 56 had at least one species submitted. Leaving 19 counties under birded.



Several Western Kingbirds were spotted in the Little Rock Port Authority area during the Global Big Day event. | Photo: Dottie Boyles



Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks gather under a feeder in the Willow Beach area of Scott. These are just a few of the 38 counted in the same yard on May 11. | Photo: Dottie Boyles



Field Trip Schedule

ASCA sponsors several field trips throughout the year. Field 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 see a life bird. 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 snacks and water with you.

June 8, 2024

Willow Beach Park and Campground Scott, Pulaski County

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Willow Beach Park and Campground near Scott. The picnic and campground area has easy walking on level, paved and grassy areas bordering the Arkansas River. It offers a mix of habitats including large cottonwood trees full of Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, Warbling Vireos, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, Yellow-billed Cuckoos, and Prothonotary Warblers. Multiple swallow species can be seen skimming the grassy areas. Egrets and herons lurk in the marshy areas. A nearby neighborhood is a gathering spot for Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks and Great-tailed Grackles. A recent birding trip to the park netted 48 species. This will be a morning trip.

From Little Rock, take I-440 east past the airport, then take U.S. Highway 165 east for 2.5 miles. Turn right onto Colonel Maynard Road and continue for three miles. Turn right again onto Blue Heron Parkway and follow the signs to Willow Beach.

GPS: 34.695944, -92.136181.

July 20, 2024

Dr. Lester Sitzes III Bois D'Arc WMA Hope, Hempstead County

Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the south end of the commuter parking lot at the I-630/I-430 intersection at Shackelford Road in Little Rock. We'll stop at the McDonald's in Hope (Exit 30 off I-30) around 8:45 a.m. for those in south Arkansas who would like to join us. Look for Great-tailed Grackles around the McDonald's parking area. We should arrive at Bois D'Arc WMA at 9:15 a.m. Our target birds will be Purple and Common Gallinules and their chicks, Anhingas, Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, Least Bitterns, herons, egrets, and possibly an alligator or two! Very little walking will be involved. Bring scopes, plenty of water, snacks, and lunch. There are

several restaurants in Hope if you prefer to eat lunch in town.

Bois D'Arc WMA is located 10 miles south of Hope. Take Exit 30 off I-30 and go east. Continue past McDonald's, then under the railroad overpass. At the traffic light at the big intersection, turn right onto Hwy. 67. Go 1/3 of a mile. At the brown sign, turn left onto Hwy. 174. Take Hwy. 174 south six miles to the three-way stop sign at Spring Hill. Turn right onto Hwy. 355. Go west for four miles. Turn right at the white wooden wildlife management area sign just before the highway ends in the lake. Follow the paved road, then turn left onto the first gravel road and go down to the lake.

GPS: 33.558062, -93.694239

August 10, 2024

Bald Knob National Wildlife Refuge Bald Knob, White County

Meet at 7:00 a.m. in North Little Rock on the east side of The Other Center, in the parking lot next to McDonald's. The Other Center is located on McCain Blvd. across from McCain Mall. Take Exit 1 west off US-67/167. We'll arrive at Bald Knob NWR headquarters building around 8:30 a.m. for those who want to meet us there. If running late, look for the line of cars parked on Coal Chute Road. This federal refuge is also a National Audubon Important Bird Area. We expect to see shorebirds, herons, night-herons, egrets, and possibly Wood Storks and Roseate Spoonbills. It will be very hot so bring plenty of water, snacks, sunscreen, and a hat. If you have a scope, bring it. Very little walking will be involved.

There is no bathroom on-site. There is a McDonald's just off Hwy. 67/167 at Bald Knob Exit 55. Go to www.fws.gov/baldknob/ for driving directions and more information about the refuge.

GPS: 35.260233, -91.571903



Field Trip Reports

Karen Holliday, Field Trip Coordinator

Delta Rivers Nature Center and surrounding areas - March 16, 2024

Saturday morning central Arkansas woke up to fog. Despite this, our small group of determined birders drove to Pine Bluff. When we arrived at the Governor Mike Huckabee Delta Rivers Nature Center, the fog was especially dense, so we toured the facility and enjoyed the excellent exhibits while waiting for the fog to lift. At the viewing window, the feeders were close enough to see the birds coming in to eat. The sun finally popped out, so we headed outside and started birding the trails and boardwalks. At the marshy pond we flushed Wood Ducks, a nice start to the morning. As we walked, we spotted a good mix of birds, including the elusive Brown Creeper, a Winter Wren, Eastern Phoebe, and Hermit Thrush. Woodpeckers included Pileated, Red-headed, Red-bellied, Downy, and Hairy. Also Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Northern Flicker. It was too early for most wood warblers, but Yellow-rumped Warblers were still present.

With 31 species already on our list, we ran through the nearby Pine Bluff Regional Park. There wasn't much at the river except for a large raft of American Coots, an American Kestrel, two Great Blue Herons, a Great Egret, and a Field Sparrow. The Bald Eagle nest had one adult perched next to it. We enjoyed finding another nice mix of woodpeckers, plus Gadwalls, Ring-necked Ducks, and lots of Canada Geese on the golf course.

By now it was noon and the group voted to head to McDonald's for a quick lunch and meet Pine Bluff's newest avian residents--10 Great-tailed Grackles. We also saw a Brown Thrasher and Northern Mockingbird, along with several European Starlings, and House Sparrows.

The last stop was to Bayou Bartholomew Trail, just off Hazel Street. Species here included more Wood Ducks, Yellow-rumped Warblers, an assortment of woodpeckers, several White-throated Sparrows and three Swamp Sparrows. Final eBird trip total was 51 species. Thank you Sarah Morris for keeping the lists.

The unexpected surprise at Bayou Bartholomew was an extremely cooperative Blue-headed Vireo. A life bird for two people in our group! A wonderful ending to a day that started in thick fog and ended with a life bird!

Bell Slough Wildlife Management Area April 20, 2024

Despite threatening rain predictions, a small group of birders gathered at the main entrance to Bell Slough Wildlife Management Area (WMA), in Mayflower. The trip was a wonderful opportunity to acquaint our newer birders with one of our favorite birding areas near Little Rock.

The goal was to find warblers and other species migrating from their winter habitat in South America. We ended up seeing eight species of warblers. The best of which were five Prothonotary Warblers (PRWO) seen on our walk. Showstoppers! PRWO are always a highlight for everyone. I call them eye candy. I explained the history behind their name. Papal Clerks of the Roman Catholic Church were known as prothonotaries, who wore yellow robes. That's where the name originated. Prothonotary is Latin for First Notary in the Catholic Church. Add that to your Bird Nerd factoids.

Although one surprise--no Black-and-white Warblers. Normally, there is a plethora of those squeaky little guys by now at the WMA.



Front row-L to R: Sarah Morris, Kim Hillis, Lynn Christie, and Lenore Gifford. Back row: Dawn Stirrup, Aster Droste, Nancy Young, and Karen Holliday. | Photo: Lynn Christie

Two Northern Waterthrush were life birds for several. We had four species of vireos, White-eyed, Red-eyed, Yellow-throated, and Warbling, plus five Ruby-throated Hummingbirds.

See Field Trip Reports page 7.

Field Trip Reports

continued from page 6

In the flooded area we found Blue-winged Teal, American Coot, Little Blue and Green Herons, Great Egrets, and pairs of Wood Ducks flying over. We saw Blue-gray Gnatcatchers on their lichen-covered nest. Very challenging to find in the trees as they are very well camouflaged.

Our final bird, as we walked out to the parking lot, was a flyby of a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher.

Despite cool temperatures, cloudy skies, and threatening rain, we had 49 species. Not a bad day to be out birding at the start of spring migration.

Gillam Park, Little Rock Audubon Center, and Terry Lock and Dam Park May 11, 2024

The Audubon Society of Central Arkansas celebrated World Migratory Bird Day/Global Big Day by birding around the southern part of Little Rock.

Twenty birders started the morning at Gillam Park hoping to find warblers and we were not disappointed. After three hours at the park, we totaled 12 species of warblers, four vireo species, and a nice mix of other birds. Highlights of warblers included Black-and-white, Bay-breasted, Blackburnian, Black-throated Green, Chestnut-sided, Kentucky, Magnolia, Tennessee, Wilson's, and American Redstart.

Especially fun were flyovers of pairs of Wood Ducks, with two pairs perched high up in the trees. We finished Gillam with a total of 45 species.

We left Gillam and made a quick stop at the Little Rock Audubon Center. Our 19 species there included Chimney Swifts, Purple Martins, five Mississippi Kites, a Ruby-throated Hummingbird, and a nice flock of 19 Cedar Waxwings.

The next stop was the Valero gas station at Fourche Dam Pike Road for a "pit stop" and Great-tailed Grackles. Our five species there included several of the grackles with their massive tails.

We circled the Frazier Pike/Fourche Dam Pike area looking for Bobolinks. We only managed a brief look at a couple. Several in the group wanted to see Western Kingbirds and we found several, along with Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, Loggerhead Shrikes, and lots of singing Dickcissels. We tallied 33 species there.

The last stop was to David D. Terry Lock and Dam Park. After an hour and a half birding that area, we'd found 41 species. Yellow-billed Cuckoos, American White Pelicans, one Double-crested Cormorant, more Mississippi Kites, two new vireos for the day-Philadelphia and Warbling, plus several Prothonotary Warblers, a Bald Eagle, Eastern Kingbirds, and a very chatty, Yellow-Breasted Chat. Unfortunately, we couldn't call in a Painted Bunting normally found there. It was getting late in the afternoon and becoming quite warm, so the birds weren't as active.

The final count for the day was an amazing 80 species! It was a fun day exploring Little Rock and sharing birds with great birding buddies.



Gillam Park field trip | Photo: Dottie Boyles

Congratulations Dr. Mitchell Pruitt

Dottie Boyles

After years of Northern Saw-whet Owl research, Mitchell Pruitt presented his PhD defense on April 25, 2024. The University of Arkansas at Fayetteville held its commencement ceremony May 11.

In a recent post to ARBIRD-L Mitchell stated, "It has been a great journey and I cherish the support provided by the Arkansas birding community over the years! I'm not going anywhere—and neither is the Arkansas Saw-whet Owl Project—but I am excited to close this chapter of getting a PhD."



Thanks to the Northern Saw-whet Owl Project, many in the birding community were able to add this pint-sized owl to their life/state lists.

Prior to his research there were only 13 known records of saw-whet owls in Arkansas. In this photo, taken in the fall of 2021, Mitchell is holding the 100th Northern Saw-whet Owl captured since the program began in 2014.

Congratulations to Dr. Mitchell Pruitt, Doctor of Philosophy, Biology.

Audubon Society of Central Arkansas

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Audubon Society of Central Arkansas

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	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec*
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__ Regular	\$15	\$11.25	\$ 7.50	\$15
__ Family	\$25	\$18.75	\$12.50	\$25
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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.

Reporting a Banded Bird

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

www.reportband.gov/

Find an Injured Bird?

For a listing of an Arkansas Game and Fish Commission authorized Migratory Bird Rehabilitator in your area, visit their website:

<http://tinyurl.com/26pr977f>