Spring Convention - Hope, Arkansas

Despite ominous weather alerts and warnings throughout the state, 79 registrants, including two Iola Rea Scholarship recipients, attended field trips, dinners and the trust reception. The weekend of April 30 - May 2, 2010 meant good birding and fine companionship for AAS members and guests in Hope, Arkansas.

148 species were tallied and the weather stayed pleasant enough during daylight hours, enabling birders to enjoy as much time in the field as possible.

Friday evening's dinner was held at the student center at U of A Community College at Hope campus. The evening’s program included three guest speakers, raffles and drawings for multiple door prizes.

Three talented graduate students (pictured at right) from ASU entertained the crowd with interesting presentations on their research. Scott Chiavacci discussed The Breeding Status of Swallow-tailed Kites in Arkansas. Sarah Thompson presented her research titled Are Bewick’s Wrens (Thryomanes bewickii bewickii) Extirpated from AR and Bryan Reiley completed the evening with Effects of a Flood on Foraging Ecology and Population Dynamics of Swainson’s Warblers.

Saturday’s field trips were met with fair skies and humid conditions. Members were invited to attend a special showing of “Fighting Goliath: Texas Coal Wars”, narrated by Robert Redford. Afterwards Nao Ueda from Audubon Arkansas led a discussion with others concerning the threat of coal-fired power plants industry.

Saturday evening’s delightful program was presented by Dr. Ragupath Kannan and Dr. Doug James on the Ecology and Conservation of the Great Hornbill in Southern India.

Board Meeting:

AAS board meeting was called to order on Friday, April, 30 at 1 pm, by President Jack Stewart. After the minutes from the previous fall meeting were approved, the board voted for the proposed budget for 2010/2011. Total income of $7,055.00 with an estimated expenditure of $6,115.00. Membership Chair Maury Baker reported 460 members, 14 new members through the current member-get-member contest.

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From the President
Taking responsibility for the things we cherish

This is about being “political”. The word can connote “the distortion of truth; personal attack”. Being “political” can also mean, “taking responsibility; standing up for what we cherish”. This is about the later definition.

An American Goldfinch, yellow as the sun, flies toward the house. Who among us has not heard the sickening thud of a bird colliding with a window? Advocating for thoughtful building construction and landscaping standards and asking our representatives to fund research into glass manufacturing that will lead to a clear view for us, and reduced reflections of sky and forest for birds, are actions not likely to be controversial among Audubon members. Nor do Audubon members regret past political efforts to stop the trade in egret plumes or the shooting of migratory hawks from migration sites.

Hazards to birds where the effect is further removed from its cause makes for less certain solidarity. It is O.K. to be “political” in the case of windows, but for some it becomes too “political” when we talk about energy policy. As I write this an unknown amount of oil gushes into the Gulf of Mexico. Cause and effect are brought closer together. Visions of oil soaked birds, their feathers tarry black, their throats clogged with gunk should help us unite and advocate for better energy policies.

This summer pay special attention to the climate and energy news. Let your representatives know, no matter what party they belong to, your wishes related to the development and deployment of alternative energy. This issue should be no more controversial for Audubon members than is protecting birds from crashing into windows.

There is power in numbers so this last item is related to the first. At the annual business meeting in Hope last month the membership present passed the proposed AAS budget for 2010/2011. At the board meeting on Friday the Treasurers Report received attention. A quick glance at the figures shows income slightly greater than expenditures.

“That’s good. Can we go birding now?”

Wait a second, please. A closer look at the balance sheet reveals that membership receipts do not cover expenses. The books balance because of gifts and donations, not an ideal situation (I’m referring here to the AAS general fund not the camp or trust finances). The solution is new members.

So, now let’s go birding, but while we are out there we need to recruit new members. If each one of us gets one new member by the end of this September we will be twice as rich and twice as strong! 

Jack Stewart
AAS President

ABA’s “Gulf Coast Fund”

In a recent post to ARBIRD-L, Steven Cardiff, NAB Regional Editor (AR, LA), encourages concerned citizens to donate to the American Birding Association’s “Gulf Coast Fund”. Ninety-five percent of the funds will go directly to helping with bird-oriented efforts related to the oil disaster. Note that at least some funding will be earmarked for various Louisiana-based institutions and organizations, to be used for supporting field work such as coastal bird surveys for damage assessments and post-disaster monitoring.

Now that oil is coming ashore, ABA is most concerned with the tidal marshes and the birds that are most dependent on these fertile feeding grounds. At this point, there is no known way of extracting the oil from the marshes without tearing apart the fragile ecosystems. Effort will be concentrated on these habitats and monitoring the birds that use them.

ABA will start issuing checks from the ABA Gulf Coast fund. Initial checks for $1000 will be sent to the Barataria Terrebonne Estuary Program, the LSU Bird Resource Center, and Baton Rouge Audubon Society to aid in monitoring projects. More details are available at http://www.aba.org/gulf/.

Or contact Melissa Rasuch, ABA at 719-578-9703 x 237 or mrasuch@aba.org.

Arkansas Audubon Society Newsletter

The Arkansas Audubon Society Newsletter is a quarterly publication of Arkansas Audubon Society Inc., a nonprofit organization, P.O. Box 313, Pangburn, AR 72121.

Issue dates are: March, June, September and December.

The newsletter is provided to those who pay membership dues to AAS.

Send submissions for the newsletter to:
Kelly Chitwood, 1023 Austin, Camden, AR 71701. Digital submissions can be sent to: kchitwood@cabelynx.com.

Visit the Arkansas Audubon Society website: arbirds.org

ANNUAL DUES on calendar year basis
Regular Member .................. 15.00
Regular Family ................. 20.00
Sustaining Member ............. 20.00
Sustaining Family .............. 25.00
Contributing Member .......... 30.00
Contributing Family .......... 35.00
Student Member ............... 5.00

SPECIAL MEMBERSHIPS
Life ................................ 250.00
Patron ............................ 500.00

Draw check to Arkansas Audubon Society and send to:
Terry Butler, Treasurer
P.O. Box 313
Pangburn, AR 72121

AAS is a 501 (c) (3) organization.
The Arkansas Audubon Society was organized in 1955.

Graphics on mast drawn by Pat Moore.
Distribution and Abundance of Arkansas Birds
Seasonal Summary for Winter 2009-10

ROSS’S GOOSE—An individual of the rare blue morph was found by Kenny and LaDonna Nichols north of Pine Bluff, Jefferson 12-28 and again on 12-30 by Rob Doster and Delos McCauley.

TUNDRA SWAN—There were three records of this rare species: one immature near Lehi, Crittenden 1-27 (Chris Heppel), and 1-28, 2-12, and 2-15 (John Jay Walko); an adult and an immature, first discovered in late fall or early winter by Mike Bivin, and photographed by Donald Ouellette and Joanie Patterson on 2-19 on a pond in extreme south Fayetteville, Washington; and two juvéniles seen on Lake Sequoyah (Fayetteville) 12-11 by Joe Neal.

AMERICAN BLACK DUCK—Two were found at Holla Bend, Pope, well west of the normal range, 1-4 (Leif Anderson).

MOTTLED DUCK—Twenty, a large number at any season, were counted by Dick Baxter at Camp Nine Farm, Desha on 12-20. All winter records are from this county. Away from Desha, this species has been reported from April to August.

SURF SCOTER—One was seen 12-2 & 2-6 (KN, LN, DBa) at Lake Dardenelle, Yell, giving Arkansas its first February record. It is very rare any time in winter.

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER—An adult male was seen 12-26 to 2-28 at Lake Dardenelle, Yell (KN, LN). The species occurs most often in winter, although it is still rare then.

LONG-TAILED DUCK—A female was found at Lake Maumelle, Pulaski 1-23 (DBa). As with the preceding species, this one has been reported most often in winter, when it is still rare.

RED-THROATED LOON—one was found by Dennis and Pat Braddy 1-24 on Lake Maumelle, Pulaski, and later seen by many observers until 2-19. There are 22 previous records ranging from Oct. 23 to Apr. 5, though mainly from November through March. The first record was during the winter of 1888-89, the second in 1933.

PACIFIC LOON—One, presumably the same bird that was found by Jim Dixon in late November, and was seen 12-5, 2-10, and 2-13 at Lake Maumelle, Pulaski (Karen Holliday, Dan Scheiman, Samantha Holschbach, David Ray, DM, KN, LN). There are only eleven or twelve previous records, from Nov. 8 to June 1. Most records are from early November to early March. This species was first reported in 1991.

YELLOW-BILLED LOON—The second record for Arkansas was found and photographed by Jim Dixon 2-7 at Lake Maumelle, Pulaski; seen there again and documented by Kenny and LaDonna Nichols on 2-10. The other record was in November from nw. Arkansas in 1991.

WESTERN GREBE—One was photographed on Lake Georgia Pacific, Ashley 1-1 by Kelly Chitwood, Rick Burson, and Joe Cambre. There were also two records of Western/Clark’s Grebe: one on Lake Columbia, Columbia, 12-19 (Darrell & Debbie Chatelain), and one on Lake Dardenelle in Russellville, Pope 2-18 (Chris Killner). Any sort of Aechmophorus is rarely reported, and occurs mainly from November to March.

ANHINGA—Very unusual in winter, one was at Felsenthal, Union 1-1 (LA, Teresa Matthews). This is the first winter record in eleven years, and may be the first ever in January.

GREEN HERON—one was found 1-11 in Pulaski (JD). These are very rare in winter in the state.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON—The seven juvéniles seen at Camp Nine Farm, Desha 12-16 (DBa) were the second highest number reported in winter. There are twelve previous winter records.

WHITE IBIS—the 55 seen in Woodruff 12-17 (DSc, John Andre) is by far the largest number reported in the winter, and is only the second winter record for the northern half of the state.

WHITE-FACED/GLOSSY IBIS—one was discovered at Camp Nine Farm, Desha 12-20 (DBa). All Plegadis are very rare in winter.

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK—a rare bird seen almost only in winter in recent years, one was reported at Holla Bend, Pope 1-4 (LA) and 1-16 (JD), KH, SH, DSc, Bruce Tedford). Another, a dark morph adult, was seen in Jefferson, 12-28 (RD, Lyndal York).

GOLDEN EAGLE—one was seen in Marion, at the Buffalo National River 12-16 (LA), and near Victor, Pope 12-14 (LA). During the last ten years, about 3/4 of records are in winter for this rarity.

PEREGRINE FALCON—Although increasingly regular in spring and fall, Peregrines are rare in winter. Leif Anderson saw one at Holla Bend, Pope 1-4.

SORA—The second winter record for northern Arkansas was near the Razorback Park Golf Course (Fayetteville) 12-20 (Jason Lusciar, Jeff Kimmons, Maureen McClung). Even in southern Arkansas, the species is rare in winter.

SANDHILL CRANE—one was present 12-16 to 1-19 near Kelso, Desha (DBa, Rosmary Baxter, Jeff Baxter); another at Lake Conway, Arkansas 2-13 (Daniel Harvey); three were followed from seven miles west of Dardenelle, Yell, west into Logan 2-28 (KN, LN); four were found south of Arkadelphia, Clark 2-28 (DSc, SH, Don Harrington) in the same place that two were reported on that town’s CBC; and a total of 125 were in two flocks headed north in apparent migration at Camp Nine Farm, Desha (DBa, JB) 2-28. This is a rare species that is seen predominantly in winter.

AMERICAN AVOCET—one was seen 12-5 at Camp Nine Farm, Desha (DBa). These are very rare in winter, there being only two other winter records since 1986.

WESTERN SANDPIPER—rarely reported in winter, two were seen near Dagmar, Woodruff 12-17 (DSc, JA).

LAUGHING GULL—for the twelfth consecutive year, one was seen at the Dardenelle Lock & Dam, Yell (KN, LN). This season it was observed 1-4 & 1-5. Away from the above site it is a rare species in winter.

continued on page 4
LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL—there are now about ten records for this species, almost all from Lake Dardenelle, ranging from Nov. 10 to Apr. 4. This year, at least three individuals were seen there: an adult 1-15, 1-31, and 2-6 (KN, LN, DBa.); a first winter bird 1-16, and 1-31 (KN, LN); and a second winter bird 2-6 (KN, LN, DBa).

GLAUCOUS GULL—a first winter bird was found 2-5 at Lake Dardenelle and seen again 2-11 (KN, LN, DBa). This is the ninth record for the state, and the fourth from Lake Dardenelle. All records are from winter except for two in November.

BARN OWL—rarely reported from anywhere in the state in any season, one was found dead in Rogers, Benton 1-28 by R.D. Madison.

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD—one, that was present since October stayed at a North Little Rock, Pulaski feeder until 2-10 (Don McSwain, Tana Beasley, Jack & Bobbi Guenrich, DSc). These are very rare during the winter months.

CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD—The sixth state record was first seen in October near Ferndale, Pulaski, and stayed until 1-31 (Mr. & Mrs. James Major, DSc, SH). There are two previous records of this species from this location, in the fall and winter of 2004-05, and in the fall, winter and spring of 2003-04.

RUFOSUM HUMMINGBIRD—Four records, three from Little Rock: an adult male was found by Cindy Franklin 11-29 to 12-5, another 12-13 (DSc, SH), and a third by Kelly Jobe, Judy Russell, and Toby Chu 12-27. The fourth record was an adult female, found by Carolyn Bettinger 12-9, and later banded by Larry Witherspoon in North Little Rock. It stayed until at least 2-7. These are rare, but of annual occurrence each fall and winter.

EMPIDONAX SPECIES—One was seen at Felsenthal, Union 1-1 (LA). There is only one other winter record for this group.

SAY’S PHOEBE—one was seen foraging 1-6 near Maysville, Benton (JN), around the perimeter of a chicken house, where the ground, which was frozen elsewhere, may have provided some invertebrate food. There are only about 14 records, about half from winter.

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER—the state’s first record was first seen and heard by LaDonna and Kenny Nichols along Bob Long Rd., near Lonoke, Lonoke 12-20. Later in the day, it was induced to vocalize repeatedly by the use of recordings of the bird’s call by Dan Scheiman, which helped to cinch the identification. Several others, also, saw and heard the bird that day. Apparently, it was not detected on subsequent days.

TREE SWALLOW—one was seen briefly, foraging over Lake Elmdale in Elm Springs, Washington 12-4 (Mike Modinow). This was the only second record for December.

TOWNSEND’S SOLITAIRE—One was discovered 1-10 at Holla Bend, Pope (LA). There are about ten previous records, almost all from winter.

VARIED THRUSH—the first record for Arkansas was photographed 1-29 to 2-1 by Joe Stalling at his home in Jonesboro, Craighead.

Palm Warbler—one was found at the Buffalo National River, Marion 12-16 (LA), and another at Felsenthal, Union 1-1 (LA, TM). There are about 28 previous reports for the winter, only four before 1990.

Louisiana Waterthrush—the first winter record for Arkansas was obtained when this species was found at Lake Fayetteville, Washington 12-6 & 1-9 (H. D. Chapman).

Wilson’s Warbler—The second winter record was photographed along Crooked Creek near Harrison, Boone 12-14 (Leesia Marshall).

Spotted Towhee—a male and a female were seen in Little Rock (Mel White, DSc, SH, m.o.b.) The female was noted 11-21 & 12-23, then the male on 1-17 & 1-23. Reported mainly in fall and winter, this rare species has also been found more often in the western half of the state than in the eastern half.

American Tree Sparrow—there were twelve reports this winter, the most since 2000-01, predominantly from nw. Arkansas. The largest number was 110 at Woolsey Wet Prairie, Fayetteville, Washington 1-19 (PB, DBr, JN), the largest number reported in at least 24 years, while the southernmost report was from Felsenthal, Union near the Louisiana border 1-1 (LA), where this species is almost never seen. This bird is most often reported from nw. Arkansas, where it is rare most winters.

Lark Sparrow—one was at Holla Bend, Pope 1-4 (LA). Since 1986, this species has been found in about one third of the winters.

Grasshopper Sparrow—one was seen at Felsenthal, Union 1-1 (LA, TM). It is the third or fourth winter record.

Dark-Eyed Junco—there were two records of “Oregon” Junco both males: one north of Harrison, Boone 2-15 (Sheree & Hank Rogers), and one that was photographed in Fayetteville, Washington 12-26 (Sara & Bob Calk). These are rare, but for at least the last ten years have been reported nearly annually, mostly from nw. Arkansas.

Western Tanager—a basic plumaged male was discovered 1-31 by Ed Laster in West Little Rock, Pulaski. This is the tenth record for Arkansas. Two of the other records were also realized in winter.

Indigo Bunting—one was photographed in Lakeview, Baxter 1-5 by Jim Gaston. It is only the ninth winter record.

Baltimore Oriole—An adult male was a striking surprise at Lake Elmdale, Washington 11-21 & 12-4 (JP, MM). This species is very rare in winter, especially in northern Arkansas.

Report rare, unusual or extra-seasonal bird sightings to: Joe Neal email address: joeneal@uark.edu.

Responses to Mike Modinow’s report: mamlod@hotmail.com
by Loice K. Lacy

We got really lucky weatherwise at the AAS spring meeting in Hope as the forecasts had not been good. Even though it rained some during Friday night, it ceased for the most part to permit great birding Saturday. Then just as our evening meeting was coming to a close, the city tornado alarm began sounding. President Jack Stewart stepped to the podium to suggest we not leave the building just yet but rather go downstairs for greater safety in case the tornado did strike. After a short wait downstairs the danger was past, permitting us to brave the rain to go to our cars with nothing more than our feathers dampened; not our spirits.

Nikki Owen of Fairfield Bay and Colby Croswhite of Jasper, products of last year’s Ecology Camp, attended the meeting as Iola Rea Scholarship winners. Nikki was brought to the meeting by Don Riggien who had been a close friend of her late dad. On Saturday they chose a trip to Rick Evans Grandview Prairie. Don reported that Nikki enjoyed the birding so much that it took prodding to get her back in the car after each stop.

Colby was accompanied by his mother, Delana Covey. For Saturday’s birding these two were on the trip led by Sterling Lacy. It was a pleasure watching all the seasoned birders making great effort to see that Colby and Delana had a good birding experience, which we were assured they did.

After first stopping for some good birding at Bois d’Arc WMA, Sterling took us to what he described as his “Secret Place” — secret because it is private property for which he had special permission from the owner to take a group there on Saturday. He had become acquainted with this excellent birding spot near Boyd Hill back in 1986 while working on the breeding bird atlas.

As we drove onto the land, there were swampy areas to our left and a lake to our right which hosted not only many good birds but alligators as well. Of special interest were the numerous Black-bellied Whistling Ducks and the Tree Swallows nesting in cavities in the many dead trees in the lake. Amazing to see the ungainly Tree Ducks and the dainty little Tree Swallows sometimes nesting in the same tree, as many of the trees had multiple holes.

We enjoyed having John and Joyce Jones of Little Rock to ride with us for the Saturday birding. They told us they would be celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary on May 7. Congratulations to you two and best wishes for many more years together! The couple are the parents of AAS member Karen Holliday as well as two other children.

The day after the AAS meeting ended, Sterling and I went to Warren Prairie Natural Area for its dedication as well as a tribute to the late Jodie Mahony, a state legislator who was a champion of Arkansas’ natural resources. Others from the Audubon Society we saw there were Carolyn Minson, Bill Shepherd, and Barbara and Maury Baker. I hope I didn’t omit any of our members who were in attendance but I may have, thinking it was at Hope where I had seen them.

In February, Bill Shepherd attended the American Ornithologists’ Union in San Diego, California. He saw three new birds there, one of which was a Nutmeg Mannikin, an introduced species not yet countable but Bill believes that it will be at some future date. He saw three of the Mannikins one day and then a single one the following day.

The other two new species, added on an all-day pelagic trip, were Rhinoceros Auklet and Red-billed Tropicbird; the latter flew low over the boat several times. Also seen on the trip were porpoises and Humpback and Gray Whales. Among the marine birds seen, Bill found the Cassin’s Auklets most entertaining as they were so full of krill they couldn’t keep airborne. He said they’d fly from the crest of one wave only to hit the next and the next until finally the boat would get so near to them, they’d dive under and he’d never see them again. He enjoyed having Gary Graves and Rob Doster to bird with him on the boat.

By the time you read this, Dan Scheiman and Samantha Holschbach will be a wedded couple. Dan told me in Hope that they would honeymoon in Belize following their May wedding. Our sincere wishes are extended to you two that 60 years from now in May you will be celebrating as John and Joyce Jones did this year.

Sterling and I enjoyed our trip to Africa even more than we had anticipated. Not only did we see every four-footed animal one could expect, we added over 120 birds to our life lists. (We’ve estimated the number of new ones as we haven’t yet found time to sort out several that we may have seen previously.)

Before we left for Africa we were informed that, because of extremely rough roads, women would be wise to pack bras even though they didn’t ordinarily wear such. Had I needed this instruction before packing, I think it would have proven even more beneficial than any advice my mother ever gave me. Rough roads, YES!

One thing that has demanded so much of our time since returning home is the Arkansas State Master Gardener Convention which will be in Magnolia this year May 20-22. Hosting such an event for 420 master gardeners from all over the state is a big undertaking, plus I’m one of the scheduled speakers.

Editor Kelly Chitwood and her family will be moving back to her childhood homeplace east of El Dorado as soon as they sell their house in Camden. Excited about living in the country again, Kelly says, “When we’re settled in, we plan to install nesting boxes and feeding stations for our new feathered friends.” Lucky friends.

No, not packing just yet; gotta do the convention thing first. Then in June we’re returning to Hummer House – that great little birding spot near San Angelo, Texas that we’ve visited several times previously. This stay is a gift from my youngest son presented at my recent birthday blast my children hosted. You don’t expect me to tell my age, do you? But I will say that I’ve exceeded by 15 years the expected lifespan given in Psalms 90:10. I’ve even managed five years over the 10 that one might gain “by reason of strength.” ☻
Dancing in the Sky: An Account of Research on American Woodcock in Arkansas

By Andrea Long - Graduate Assistant - University of Arkansas at Monticello

In my home state of Maine, we associate two sounds with the onset of spring. The first is the male ruffed grouse ‘drumming’ and the second is the male American Woodcock singing as he performs his spectacular aerial courtship ‘dance’. For my graduate research through the School of Forest Resources at the University of Arkansas-Monticello, I am interested in the American Woodcock. Ever since I first saw this bird display in my undergraduate, I was awed at the intricate movements of this stout, odd-looking bird. If any of you have not seen this bird in ‘dance’ action, I urge you to find and watch this display!

Woodcock populations are distributed in the eastern half of the United States. They breed in the north and winter in the south, although in some southern states they hold permanent residency. Woodcock are typically associated with young vegetation types, such as fields and clearcuts. Most importantly, an area must have earthworms as this is their principal food source. Woodcock have a long, pointy bill specifically made for probing into the ground in order to procure this tasty meal.

The reason we have interest in studying woodcock, other than the fact that they are really cool, is that their populations have been declining since 1968. Arkansas is unique because it is used as a wintering ground, for breeding, and as a migratory stopover site. Unfortunately, there is a lack of information on woodcock migration and habitat use on wintering grounds and migration stopover sites, and little information exists on woodcock in Arkansas. Thus, my project is the first step in filling this gap. We are interested in documenting woodcock migration chronology and comparing their use of different ages of pine clearcuts. Also, in the 2011 season the use of Arkansas for nesting will be explored.

The study is occurring on industrial forest lands in southeastern Arkansas. We separated clearcuts into three types; newly cut (NCC; 1 – 2 years old), newly planted (NPP; 1 – 2 years old), and young pine plantation (YPP; 3 – 4 years old). Crepuscular surveys were conducted in 3 replicates of each clearcut type and woodcock were counted when seen or heard conducting their displays. The same clearcuts were sampled weekly to document woodcock migration chronology.

To begin with, I found many more woodcock than I would have expected. Based on accounts from several people I felt as car be attributed to a higher percent of bare ground, which facilitates probing for food, and less cover which allows the male woodcock to expend less energy when performing courtship displays.

The peak in migration varied based on clearcut stage (Figure 1). The NPPs peaked in Late-January, the YPPs in Early-February, and the NCCs in Mid-February. It is interesting to note that when NCCs reached peak woodcock numbers, the NPPs and YPPs were steadily declining. It has been shown that with many bird species, different ages and sexes will use different vegetation types. In particular, as male woodcock are territorial for singing grounds, an age difference could explain these trends seen in the data because the immatures could be pushed into suboptimal habitat by mature males. Thus, in 2011 birds will be captured, aged, sexed, and banded to further explore these trends. When all numbers are averaged across all clearcut stages for each sample period, the overall peak in migration is early-February and activity ceased in mid-March. This timing seems typical based on observations in other states showing completion of migration by mid-March.

I’d like to thank the Arkansas Audubon Society for supporting this research. My hope is that this study will help further woodcock conservation within the state. I feel that this is an important step in understanding woodcock ecology and in the future will lead to more in-depth research within the state. If any of you have questions, comments, or suggestions please feel free to contact me (long@uamont.edu). Anyone is more than welcome to join me starting next January in the field to see the woodcock dance!!

![Figure 1. The average number of woodcock found during crepuscular surveys during each survey period on the new clearcuts, newly-planting pine plantations, and young pine plantations and an average across all three clearcut types.](image-url)
From the Camp

As this is written in mid-May, applications to attend this June’s two Halberg Ecology Camp sessions are pouring in. The latest report from executive director Liz Fulton indicates both sessions should be full once again with 50 first time campers and 12 returning campers per session.

The Camp’s most recent Fiscal Year ending March 31, 2010 was a big improvement over the previous year. National financial markets that were very negative the previous year turned around. The Camp also benefited from a very generous donation of stock in late 2009 that added a welcome cushion to Camp funds. In addition we had the best response ever to our annual Fall Appeal with donations totaling $9,341 from a total of 81 donors. That’s $2,977 more than the year before from 30 more donors. Thanks to everyone who made donations.

We continue to receive scholarship funding from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, although the amount was reduced by $2,000 this year due to state budget shortfalls. The many Audubon and other nature groups that have funded scholarships steadily over the years continue to be solid supporters of both scholarships and tuition assistance. These donations make it possible for a number of youth to attend whose families cannot afford the regular tuition of $275.

It takes all of us to keep the Camp the success it continues to be. If you would like to make a donation, please mail a check made payable ‘AAS Halberg Ecology Camp’ to 804 Konrad Ct., Little Rock, AR 72223-9201. All donations are tax deductible. The camp is part of the Arkansas Audubon Society and a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization as determined by the Internal Revenue Service. We honor requests that donations be listed as anonymous.

Barry Haas
Ecology Camp Treasurer

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<td>Lillian Franklin</td>
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**Scholarship & Tuition Assistance**

- Arkansas Native Plant Society
- Arkansas River Valley Audubon Society
- Audubon Society of North Central Arkansas
- Foothills Plant Society • Sally Jo Gibson
- Hot Springs Village Audubon Society
- Mena Nature Club
- Cheryl & Norm Lavers (in celebration of Norm’s birthday)
- John & Donna Simpson
- Three Rivers Audubon Society

**Memorials & Honoraria**

- In memory of Hervey Howington
  - Barry Haas & Susan Hardin
- Lonave & Jim Hornburg • Sandra Key
- Cheryl, Norm & Gawnain Lavers
- Danette & Dan Lawrie
- Northeast Arkansas Audubon Society
- Frank & Roberta Sloan • Suzanne Wilmuth

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In memory of Phyllis Bartlow
- Robert Blumeshine • George & Susan Chambers
- B.J. Cutrell • Marie Elser
- Josie & James Farrell • Roger Finkman
- Liz & Bill Fulton • Catherine Hepinstall
- Art & Martha Johnson • Ed Laster & Mary Roark
- Bill Shepherd • National Information Solutions
  • Suzanne Wilmuth

In memory of Freeman Thomas
- Liz & Bill Fulton

In honor of Mary Ann Hicks
- Lucy & Gary Moreland

In honor of B.J. Cutrell
- Halberg Ecology Camp Committee
- Art & Martha Johnson

In honor of Art Johnson
- Julia Connelly

In honor of Art & Martha Johnson
- B.J. Cutrell

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The Fall AAS Meeting will be at Lake Point Conference Center in Russellville on November 12-14. Reservations may be made by calling 479-356-6240. Room rate is $65.00 per night plus tax for a total of $70.85 per room for either single or double occupancy. There is no elevator. If those who are able to walk up the one flight of stairs would take an upstairs room, that would leave the downstairs rooms for those who have difficulty with stairs.
An ode to magic hour in the big woods

Leif Anderson

It’s late winter – early spring. 6pm and getting dark. You’ve been in the woods since 5 am. You’re out of water and food. You’re cold. You’re wet from sweat and a pinhole leak in your chest waders. You’ve canoed, walked and waded across the miles of bottomland forest. You’re tired. You’ve heard lots of woodpeckers, but not THE woodpecker. You know you’ll be spending an hour by flashlight to return to your vehicle. But do you care? NO. Why? Because you’re approaching the time of day when the world stills, breathing stops and hope springs eternal. IT’S MAGIC HOUR.

When birding I rarely sit. I’m always looking for the next bird. I know I shouldn’t because I’ve seen the birders that I admire the most be able to identify birds from far away, just by their flight. The difference from them to me? They sit and observe closely.

Searching for Ivory-bills gives me a chance to explore nature in a whole new way. In detail, in stillness. I’m pretty sure this bird has superman hearing & sight. Their feathers are made of reflective materials, rendering them invisible. They can swim under water. They can teleport to alternate realities. They can change their appearance to appear as a wren. I guess I exaggerate just a tad, but their nature makes watching by sitting more productive than walking.

Every year during the search there has been forms to document where, when and how you search. There is a line to record watches, where you sat for > a half-hour. Because the hour and a half at dawn and dusk are so different than a normal watch they get designated with a special name. Magic hour watches.

Many haven’t had the chance to see the wonders of the big woods, nor sitting at this special time of day. I hope with these words to take you on a trip into Magic Hour. For me this time of day is the most amazing time. You have to sit and not move, blending in with the woods hoping a big showy black-white bird, comes in to fill the void.

The day insects trade duty with their night neighbors.

A mosquito finds its way through your defenses and feasts. Your hand wants to squash it, but the brain says no, be still. She flies away, full. A snail settles into the spend the night. No movement, no sign that someone lives underneath. The human sounds just aren’t there and you feel like you’re the only human within hundreds of miles. Only one. The cameras are on, ever ready. Waiting. The mammals are moving slowly through the leaves and a single squirrel sounds like a herd of deer. A pair of otters swim by, playful in the swamp waters. A family of raccoons waddles by, without realizing that the woods aren’t quite right. Not right. The waters still and the fading light reflects off the bald cypress trees. You see some deep gouging on a hackberry. Surely Ivory-billed scaling. Oh wait it’s a beaver’s gnawing from when the water was higher. Much higher. You see three different oak acorns within a hand’s span. You see the most amazing pattern of interlocking stones – wait, you’re looking at the bark of a 24” dia. persimmon. You see a freshly green, majestically tall tree. Wait, it’s a bald cypress seedling, with high hopes and aspirations. You see a small tree trunk reaching one hundred feet to the tree canopy. Wait, it’s an 8” inch dia. wild grape, hitching a ride to the heavens. And sunlight. You see the first greenery of spring. Greenbrier, flooded to its top.

Time passes without knowing. Two hours go by in the span of minutes. Shadows elongate and darken into strange unworlly shapes.

A single White-throat salutes the coming of evening with a haunting song. Haunting song.

The day birds are going to roost, maybe calling but always the sounds appear muted, trying to maintain the peace. Peace.

The birds may catch a mosquito for an evening snack, but the pace isn’t frantic.

A winter wren hops along a log, getting ever closer. You don’t breathe. He hops onto your boot, and then you feel the curious touch of his toenails as he moves to your knee. Then he flies away, having found no tasty morsels. Never knowing or caring about the “log” he was on. You breathe.

The Barred Owls tune up across the forest. First one, then many from all around. Their time.

The woodpeckers arrive: You hear the Downy approach. The first woodpecker to the sycamore woodpecker hotel. One call from far off, then she is there, not in any hurry, exploring some limbs before disappearing into the highest hole, tucked under an overhanging branch. Then a flicker pair arrive, calling several times as they approach. They land in the top of the tree and work down to their hole. The Red-bellies arrive. Not calling until they are on the perimeter. They move from tree to tree. One lands just above you. You stop breathing as bark falls on you. Then they head to their hole, calling the way, though muted. A Flicker flies in, pokes his head in a hole to be greeted by an indignant Flicker squawk. The Flicker flies away. The world is very still when a big shadow passes over you. You stop breathing and remain totally still, while inside your brain is doing somersaults and your heart beats so loud that surely the bird hears it. Is this the moment? Then the Pileated flies direct and powerful to the roost hole, with nary a normal call. Just some strange half notes that surely couldn’t come from a bird that you thought you knew. It disappears, somehow without appearing to touch toes to the lip. The world stills and time passes. The forest is quiet and darkening. Nothing moves. You don’t want to break the peace, so you remain still, ever hoping. You accidentally brush cloth on cloth and the head of the sentinel Pileated appears in the hole, sharply scanning for trouble. You stop breathing and finally he disappears, silently. You wait. Seven woodpeckers of five species are here, but other bigger, better holes remain for the sixth species. You wait. Finally it’s full dark and yet another magic hour has past. But there is always tomorrow. Always tomorrow. ☔️

For some of us hope still springs eternal, and we search on.

Cheers, Leif Anderson
Arkansas Audubon Society Trust Report

Thanks to YOUR generosity, we awarded $3,830 in grants to six students from three universities during the spring convention at Hope.

Rebecca Cooper, a MS student at Arkansas State University, received a grant of $580 for her project - “Development of a non-lethal method for measuring persistent organic pollutants in adipose tissue of migratory passerines.”

Aditi Lele, a Ph.D. student at the University of Arkansas, received a grant of $725 for her project - “Independence of rare hornbills and rare trees: Implications for the conservation of this plant-animal system for maintenance of the landscape mosaic of Western Ghats (India)”. 

Andrea Long, a MS student at the University of Arkansas at Monticello, received a grant of $1,000 (including $575 from the Max Parker fund) for her project—American Woodcock Migration Chronology and Clearcut use within Central Arkansas.”

Maureen McClung, a Ph.D. student at the University of Arkansas, received a grant of $800 for her project—“The response of avian communities to ice damage in the Arkansas Ozarks.”

Brandon Noel, a Ph.D. student at ASU, received a grant of $800 for his project—“The breeding and foraging ecology of the Pileated Woodpecker in eastern Arkansas, with reference to the conservation of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker.”

Amber Overfield, a BS student at ASU, received a grant of $500 for her study “The Status of Breeding Belted Kingfishers in Northeast Arkansas and the Potential Impact of Contaminants.”

The Doug James award for excellence in avian research goes to Aditi Lele. Doug has generously donated $200 to the trust for Aditi and an anonymous donor awarded another $675 to the trust for Aditi.

The Max Parker fund is designated for AR bird research. Max was a forester and had always loved finding a Woodcock on the Arcadelphia Christmas Bird Count so we thought it appropriate to give the $575 award to Andrea Long.

Financial times are tough and obviously, contributions have slowed to a near standstill for the last 2 years. But the need continues. We awarded $3,830 from grant requests of $7,895. As you can see there is always a need to grow the trust endowment fund for future grants. Dr. Kannan of UA-Fort Smith has launched a special fund raiser to celebrate Dr. Doug James’ 85th birthday. Doug is a long time supporter of AAS and a special friend of the trust and it would be great to grow the trust for his birthday! Your contributions of any amount that you feel comfortable with are greatly appreciated! Please send any contributions to Barry Haas, AAS Trust Treasurer.

Leif Anderson
AAS Trust

Martha Milburn presented with Parker Service Award

During the 2010 Spring Convention, the Parker Service Award was presented to Martha Milburn for years of dedicated service to the Arkansas Audubon Society. Members, including President Jack Stewart recently presented the award, a handmade bowl crafted by AAS member, Ed Laster to Martha in Harrison, Arkansas.

Sadly Martha passed away May 19, 2010 at the age of 85 at Hills Hospice House in Harrison.

She was a conservation partner of the Nature Conservancy in Arkansas. She was named an honorary life member of the Nature Conservancy because of her efforts for the preservation of Baker Prairie. She was an advocate for recycling before it became a mainstream issue, maintaining a drop off for materials in her carport and personally delivering the materials to recycling centers.

Her love and knowledge of birds was well known. She traveled extensively to make sightings of birds found only in certain locations. She participated in many bird counts and other birding adventures along with friends who were members of the Disorganized Bird Club (DOBC). Martha initiated the Buffalo River Christmas Bird Count.

Known as “Aunt Martha” not only to her family but to countless others, young and old, near and far. She will be remembered for her concern of the environment, her strong will and sharp wit.

FREEMAN DAYTON THOMAS, age 86 of Jacksonville passed away Thursday, March 4, 2010 in Cabot. Mr. Thomas grew up in Pangburn, AR before moving to Little Rock. He taught biology at Jacksonville Middle and Jacksonville High Schools where he was head of the science department. He was voted outstanding biology teach one year of his career. He held MS in Botany and Zoology with Minors in Art and Music.

He led field excursions for the Arkansas Audubon Society’s Halberg Ecology Camp, Pinnacle Mountain State Park and taught summer science sessions for MacArthur Park’s Museum of Science & History for many summers.

He wrote about edible and medicinal wild plants for “Ozark Highways Magazine”. He belonged to several organizations, including: Partners for Pinnacle, The Mena Nature Club, AAS (in which he served as president), Arkansas Native Plant Society and the Arkansas Herb Society.

He was especially proud of his former students, who became biologists, doctors, veterinarians and other professionals. Memorials may be made to the AAS Trust, the Arkansas Nature Conservancy or to Partners for Pinnacle.
A Tornado of Birds: Bird Island IBA

Dan Scheiman, Ph.D.
Bird Conservation Director, Audubon Arkansas

At less than a tenth of an acre, Bird Island’s size is disproportional to its huge importance for Arkansas birds. Bird Island, Arkansas’s 29th and most recently recognized Important Bird Area (IBA) harbors one of the state’s largest Purple Martin roosts. Tens of thousands of martins roost nightly on the island’s trees for a few weeks each July-August before migrating to South America. Around dusk they come from all directions and swirl like a loose tornado before settling down, wing-to-wing, for the night. When all those birds leave the roost each morning en masse, they can be seen on NEXRAD radar.

When Bo Verser saw that radar image, he brought it to the attention of Audubon Arkansas. Audubon partnered with the Mountain Pine High School Environmental and Spatial Technology (EAST) lab to investigate. With support from Audubon Arkansas, Hot Springs Village Audubon, Garland County Audubon, the Purple Martin Conservation Association, the US Army Corps of Engineers and others, the EAST students and facilitator documented the roost and experimented with ways to count birds. Efforts paid off with an IBA designation and an award-winning documentary film made by the students.

Site Description:

Bird Island is an island of Bald Cypress in the middle of Lake Ouachita. It is 1,260 feet long, and about 100 feet at its widest point. Much of the land beneath the trees may be submerged when the water level is up. The island is about a mile from the nearest mainland shoreline. The nearest boat launch sites are Brady Mountain Use Area and Buckville Use Area.

Ornithological Summary:
An estimated 20,000 to 40,000 Purple Martins roost on Bird Island IBA. Counting the birds, however, was not easy. Getting even a ballpark figure was complicated by the sheer numbers, constant influx and movement of birds, tree cover, and fading light. Students experimented with several techniques, including photographing the sky through a fisheye lens and later counting all the dots (birds) in the photo, and counting all the birds on a branch and then multiplying by the number of branches and trees.

Conservation Issues:

Birds roosting on the island have been disturbed by boaters using fog horns and floodlights. Visitors have left trash behind. The Corps and Arkansas Game and Fish Commission have been alerted to the fact that some boaters intentionally or unintentionally disturb roosting birds. Signs posted at access points and around the island could reduce disturbance. Preventing foot traffic during roosting will protect the birds and reduce litter. Students hope their effort will help protect the site while still attracting more nature tourists to an area that depends on tourist dollars.

A Win for the Environment

On May 13, 2010, the Arkansas Supreme Court unanimously upheld the Court of Appeals decision rejecting the construction permit for Southwestern Electric Power Company’s John W Turk coal-powered plant in Hempstead County.
Spring Convention

2500 new AAS brochures were delivered by Kelly Chitwood. They are currently being distributed throughout the state.

Publicity co-chair Sally Jo Gibson reported various newspapers throughout the state of Arkansas had published news of the convention.

The Parker Service Award’s guidelines for the selection process were submitted to the board. The award committee will be comprised of the two most recent recipients of the award, plus two AAS members appointed by the president who will select the recipient. The award will be granted to members, who have, over an extended period, provided exceptional service to the society. While the award may be given less than annually, it may not be given more than once per year. Any member of the society may submit a nomination to the president who will transmit this submission to the committee.

Vice-president, Carolyn Minson reported the fall meeting will be at Lake Point Conference Center in Russellville on November 12-14. Details and numbers for reservations are listed on page 7 of this newsletter.

An entertaining brain-storming session with the theme “If we won the lottery...” followed. Suggestions included land acquisition with a conference center in a central location for meetings, gear and apparel for web sale purposes and investing in environmental issues.

Convention photos at right, Dr. Doug James, Dr. Ragupath Kannan, Terry Butler poses with Pat Moore and her new Arkansas Audubon Society stitched logo shirt and Ed Laster’s one of a kind creation that was presented to Martha Milburn as the Parker Service Award.

New Members
Carolyn Birdsong - Little Rock
Greg & Edie Calaway - Little Rock
Kay Craig - Wilmar
Stephanie Cribsb - Lowell
Alan, Terri & Carressa Gregory - Harrison
John & Sarah Haman - Little Rock
Kulmar Maruthur - Hot Springs
Ed & Greta Pinkston - Harrison
Donna Simpson - Hot Springs Nat’l Park
Jack & Mary White - Hartford

Donations by Individuals to General Fund
Bill Burnham
Cindy Franklin
David & Karen Holliday
Catherine Hepinstall Hamilton
Richard & Margaret Lincourt

New Life Member
Brenda Fulkerson #159 - Little Rock

PHYLLIS BUSHNELL MUGGE BARTLOW was born in Harrisburg, IL on August 4, 1923. She graduated from Ben Blewett High School, St. Louis, in 1941, and earned her undergraduate degree in occupational therapy from the University of Illinois in 1946 as a member of the first OT class to graduate from the Uof I Medical School.

Phyllis married A. Kent Bartlow in 1951 and they resided in Ankara, Turkey until Kent completed his military career. They had three children, John Rand, Steven Boland and Marilyn Simmons.

She taught occupational therapy at the University of Central Arkansas for 10 years, and at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia for two years.

She enjoyed painting and drawing; collecting antiques; and participated in nearly 50 Elderhostel trips. She was very active in church leadership functions, was a board member of the Arkansas Center for International Visitors; was a life member of AAS and member of the Halberg Ecology Camp Committee.

Thank You - I wanted to express my appreciation for the many cards, notes, and calls I have received from the members of ASCA and AAS since Bill’s death. Bill really enjoyed life and birding, and ASCA and AAS was a big part of that. He enjoyed attending meetings, field trips, and just being involved. It was a blessing to see the articles in the last issue of “The Snipe” and “Arkansas Birds” paying tribute to him. I will always remember the thoughtfulness of the Chapters. - Sincerely - Goldie Hailey
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