Arkansas Audubon Society Fall Convention: A Call to Action

By DAN SCHEIMAN
AAS Trust Chair

If there was a theme to our fall convention, it was a call to take action on behalf of birds. Friday evening’s program was a tag-team effort by Arkansas Audubon Society (AAS) members who attended National Audubon Society’s (NAS) biennial convention in Utah. Pam Stewart highlighted the Plants for Birds sessions; Audubon’s challenge to all of us is to grow 1 million native plants together. Native plants are the core of AAS’s Bird-Friendly Yard (BFY) Certification. I have created a BFY presentation based on Audubon Rockies’ Habitat Heroes talk I saw at the convention. I am offering to share this slideshow with all of you so you can help us encourage more BFY applications through your own talks and workshops. In addition, the BFY Committee hopes all of you will take actions to make your yards even more bird friendly.

Uta Meyer highlighted some of the Bird-Friendly Buildings and Lights Out campaigns across the country presented at the convention. She and I are working out the details for an Audubon Arkansas-led bird-collision monitoring project that will collect the data we need to support a bird-safe building campaign for Little Rock.

see CONVENTION, continued on page 3

Fall convention field trip to Lake Maumelle. | Photo: DAN SCHEIMAN
This is the season for eating way too much and feeding the yard birds plenty, too. If you’re me or over 50 million Americans who feed birds that is. Personally, I’ll wake up and toss out some black oil, nyjer, and suet and head back in for the last of the holiday treats before the rest of family is any the wiser. So many folks do this, yet the reasons seem varied. Many talk of helping out the birds though I’m just hoping to dash a bit of color onto my gray winter observations and gain access to some interesting bird observations. The objective recipient of all this food seems as varied as the people handing out the feed. Are garrulous birds like crows, jays, and blackbirds acceptable visitors? I found the snowbound flock of grackles and rusties mesmerizing, though feeding them on a daily basis wouldn’t have been economically viable. I’ve somehow taught my 5-year-old a virulent dislike for introduced House Sparrows and starlings, though I’ve known many who are happy to feed any bird though rarely Accipiters. Some even extend that welcome to four legged visitors. Maybe welcoming the squirrels and night bandits is for those with deeper pocketbooks. The end result of all this feeding is surely a ripe area for scientific inquiry. Maybe I can encourage you to share your sightings with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s Project FeederWatch. Only 30 Arkansas feeders reported birds last year compared to over 100 for neighboring Missouri and Tennessee!

-ADAM SCHAFFER
President, Arkansas Audubon Society

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**Newsletter and Membership Information**

*The Arkansas Audubon Society Newsletter is a quarterly publication of Arkansas Audubon Society, Inc., a nonprofit 501 (c) (3) organization, 472 Rock Creek Rd., Hot Springs, AR 71913-9261. Issue dates are March, June, September, and December.*

**PLEASE NOTE:** Announcements, articles, information, and/or photographs to be considered for an upcoming edition of *Arkansas Birds* should be submitted to the editor no later than the 15th of the month prior to publication.

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

Send newsletter submissions to samantha.scheiman@gmail.com.

**Membership renewals are due Jan. 1 of each calendar year.**

Please enter my membership in the Arkansas Audubon Society as a:

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*New Memberships paid in the last quarter (Oct. - Dec.) will include full membership for the following calendar year.

**SPECIAL MEMBERSHIPS**

Life Member of Arkansas Audubon Society (may be paid over a two-year period) $250.00
Patron of Arkansas Audubon Society $500.00

Draw check to Arkansas Audubon Society and send to: Wayne Lynch, Treasurer, P.O. Box 2426, Hot Springs, AR 71914.
Volunteers will be needed to walk a route around downtown and record casualties. Stay tuned.

Samantha Scheiman’s attendance at a session about protecting Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) motivated her to initiate a letter writing campaign, urging AAS members to write your members of Congress to oppose any efforts to open ANWR to oil drilling. Birds from all 50 states nest in the refuge. Development will permanently alter the landscape, threatening oil spills in this pristine place. Contact her for talking points.

Resources for Plants for Birds, Bird-Friendly Buildings, ANWR, and more are available for free to all NAS members at Audubon Works (works.audubon.org). Check it out!

Jack Stewart encouraged more members to attend the next NAS convention in 2019. Ruth Thomas Scholarships are available to help cover costs. Samantha took advantage of this. Why not you?

The NAS connection continued Saturday night with our presenter Zach Slavin, Citizen Science Program Manager. Using Christmas Bird Count data, NAS’s science team predicts that nearly half of North America’s birds are threatened by climate change through range loss in the coming decades. To test these predictions citizen scientists are called upon for Audubon’s Climate Watch. The focus is on nuthatches and bluebirds, so you have to be able to identify only four species at most. Leif Anderson has experience with these surveys and is happy to help you set up your own point counts.

Of course at our conventions we are called upon to go birding together. Field trips went to Lake Maumelle, DeGray Lake, Two Rivers Park, Camp Robinson Special Use Area, and Lonoke County. High winds made finding birds a challenge, but collectively we tallied 85 species. Highlights include a Common Merganser on Lake Maumelle, a Red-breasted Merganser on DeGray, and Sandhill Cranes in Alcoa Bottoms. Plus young Julie Klug overcame her fear to handle a Smooth Green Snake.

Mark your calendars: The next Arkansas Audubon Society convention will be held April 27–29, 2018 in Bentonville. More details to come on the AAS website and in the spring newsletter.
Ben Coffey’s *Mid-South Bird Notes* from 1950s
Fully Entered in eBird, Including AR Bird Data

By DAN SCHEIMAN
AAS Trust Chair

From 1952 to 1956 Memphis resident Ben B. Coffey Jr. wrote and published his own journal called “Mid-South Bird Notes” to compile seasonal sightings and announce events. He was the very model of an amateur ornithologist.

At the time little was known about the distribution and seasonality of birds in TN, MS, and AR. He, his wife Lula, and his contemporaries traveled across the region, documenting first spring arrivals, late fall lingerers, and first state records. The Coffeys also participated in Christmas Bird Counts (sometimes as the only party), conducted nightjar surveys, organized nocturnal migrant watches, and banded 106,000 Chimney Swifts at Memphis roosts. The journal also records the spread of species, e.g. Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, as well as the loss of habitat, e.g. “Our levee area is now chiefly pasture…”

In the August 1955 issue he reported on the first meeting of Arkansas Audubon Society at Petit Jean (registration was $1.00). Further, Mid-South Bird Notes served as the publication of Arkansas records, compiled by Doug James, until AAS could produce its own newsletter.

To honor the effort of Ben Coffey et al., including some of our current members named in the journal, I transcribed and uploaded to eBird all the records not already submitted to eBird by AAS (i.e. the CARDinal Club) and the Memphis Chapter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society.

Still, that was over 2,400 records of 107 species spanning 4 decades. Most were from TN (48%), MS (24%), and AR (19%), but also adjacent states and as far away as Trujillo, Peru, where a Chimney Swift banded in Memphis on September 25, 1954, was recaptured by a local researcher on November 7. This bird flew at least 3,500 miles!

We owe a debt of gratitude to their tireless efforts back then that benefit us today.
The AAS Bird Friendly Yard program has gained 26 participants since the summer newsletter, raising the total to 47 yards in 17 Arkansas counties! Only 58 counties to go! The “yards” vary in size from 2,500 square feet to 80 acres. Bridging ecosystems fragmented by development, each yard will provide welcome feeding and rest stops for hungry and tired birds throughout migration seasons.

New Bird Friendly Yards since the summer 2017 newsletter:

**Working to Become Level** - Sara Drew, Ron Kew, Peter & Ann Bleed, Joyce Brown, Dorothy Rhodes

**Green Level** - Alena Cooper


There are participants who indicate they are working on their yards but have not yet sent in the certification/registration form. Plants take a long time to grow, and time is required to become Bird Friendly. Anyone “Working to become Bird Friendly” can send in the certification/registration form, and will be registered as a participant. At present there is no cost to register. If the book of native plants and a garden flag is desired, a check for $20 can be sent to cover costs. A yard can always be upgraded later.

Bird Friendly Yard enthusiasts are spreading the word by informing their neighbors and friends. Some have presented programs, promoting and explaining BFYs. If your community or organization is interested in having a program presented, or if you have a program to present, notify bfaudubon@gmail.com.
Member News: Trips Feature Avifauna of Ecuador, Southwestern U.S., and Washington

By DOTTIE BOYLES
News of Members Editor

At the end of September Dan and Samantha Scheiman flew to Seattle to celebrate her 30th birthday and visit her sister Kristin Holschbach. Their first birding stop was at Seward Park where they checked out Chestnut-backed Chickadees, then checked in with Dan’s colleagues at Audubon Washington, who are based at the Seward Park Audubon Center. Mount Rainier is visible from the center, on a clear day that is. On Samantha’s birthday she enjoyed not only her life Pacific Wren at Discovery Park but also a picnic lunch prepared by Kristin. The whale watching tour out of Edmonds yielded her life Heermann’s Gull, plus other goodies such as all three scoters, Brandt’s Cormorant, and a Rhinoceros Auklet. But the true treats were a humpback whale and four orcas observed without even leaving sight of the harbor, and enjoyed at length and leisure. They highly recommend Chihuly’s Garden and Glass, where an Anna’s Hummingbird was checking out the red glass shapes in the garden.

In September, Jane Wiewora and Nancy Price (from Stuart, FL) traveled to New Mexico for a birding adventure. An early stop was the fantastic Randall Davey Audubon Center in Santa Fe. Hummingbirds (Broad-tailed and Rufous) abounded, as did Wilson’s Warblers. Three towhee species were observed: Green-tailed, Spotted, and Canyon. Stellar’s Jays and Woodhouse’s Scrub-Jays were seen instead of the more familiar to them Blue Jays and Florida Scrub-Jays. The next day, they visited Hyde Memorial SP and saw life birds Red-naped Woodpecker, Cassin’s Vireo, and Townsend’s Warbler. An afternoon trip to the Leonora Curtin Wetland Preserve almost ended sadly, as it was closed. But like any persistent birders, they didn’t give up and birded the road instead—discovering the most interesting-looking birds of the entire trip, a group of three Lewis’s Woodpeckers.

In the Albuquerque area the next day, they took the Sandia Crest Scenic Byway up to Sandia Crest, making stops along the way. Four life birds were seen: Williamson’s Sapsucker, American Three-toed Woodpecker, Northern Goshawk, and Clark’s Nutcracker.

After this, they headed south with visits to Bosque Del Apache NWR, Rio Grande Nature Center SP, Elephant Butte SP, and Leesburg Dam SP. Life birds were Chihuahuan Raven, Dusky Flycatcher, and Gambel’s Quail.

They continued on to Carlsbad Caverns NP via Texas and the beautiful Guadalupe Mountains NP where they added another woodpecker species, the Acorn, to their life lists. At Rattlesnake Springs in Carlsbad, they were amazed by the five brilliant red Vermillion Flycatchers that kept flying about them.

A visit to Bitter Lake NWR near Roswell, and the Black Kettle National Grasslands in Oklahoma on the way home concluded this enjoyable birding trip.

Joe and Amy Hall enjoyed several days of birding while spending a week in southeastern Arizona in early September. A stop at Cochise Lake near Willcox yielded several species, including Western Scrub-Jay, White-faced Ibis, and Wilson’s Phalarope. The subspecies “Mexican” Mallard was also seen. The next stop was Chiricahua National Monument, which offered up an unexpected delight when a band of six coatis scurried across the road ahead of the vehicle.

Near Sierra Vista, a hike along the river at the San Pedro House produced 20 species, including Canyon Towhee, Black Phoebe, Varied Bunting, Lazuli Bunting, Curve-billed Thrasher, Pyrrhuloxia, Inca Dove, Gila Woodpecker, and Ladder-backed Woodpecker.

A trip to Patagonia to view the hummingbirds at the Paton Center did not disappoint, as at least six species, including Violet-Crowned, Broad-billed, and Anna’s, zipped among the feeders, occasionally hovering for a photograph. While not a typical birding destination, the Kitt Peak observatory complex provided a glimpse of the Mexican Jay and Acorn Woodpecker. A Canyon Wren was seen in the Sonoran Desert.

Finding Birds in Southeast Arizona, published by the Tucson Audubon Society, proved to be a useful aid in planning excursions near Sierra Vista and Tucson. By...
the end of the week, Joe and Amy had each tallied 28 life birds. Unseen and unheard was the Elegant Trogon, thereby delivering a welcome incentive for planning a second trip to this area.

In late October, Lance Runion traveled to northwestern Ecuador with Tropical Birding Tours on their Andes Introtour trip and spent eight days birding mainly the Andean foothills region just to the west of Quito with stops at the well-known sites of Yanacocha, Tandayapa Valley, Mindo, Mashpi and Reserva Paz de Aves. Although the weather was usually rainy or foggy, the bird numbers were good. The eight-person group saw just over 290 species during the trip, of which approximately 80 percent were lifers. There were too many stunning tropical birds to settle on a favorite; however, the birds that made the greatest impression included the Sword-billed Hummingbird (just one of 33 hummer species seen), the secretive antpittas including the appropriately named Giant Antpitta, the vibrant Blue-whiskered Tanager, and the occasionally hummingbird-eating Crimson-rumped Toucanet.

Lance Runion observed this Sword-billed Hummingbird at Reserva Yanacocha, Ecuador. | Photo: LANCE RUNION

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New Arkansas Audubon Society Members
Catherine Crews, Russellville

Donation to General Fund
Sally Jo Gibson
Wayne & Marty Lynch
Dan & Samantha Scheiman
A
n incredible 1,000 Black-bellied Whistling Ducks were observed in eastern Miller 25 Apr (Charles Mills). This is, by far, the largest concentration of this species ever seen in the state.

Rare but annual, a drake Cinnamon Teal was spotted near Lonoke, Lonoke 19 Mar (Kylie Wilson).

A Surf Scoter at the Alma Wastewater Treatment Facility 7 Mar (Joe Neal) was a surprising first for Crawford.

Two Red-breasted Mergansers on Greers Ferry Lake, Cleburne 28 May (Kenny Nations) were 3–4 weeks late and one of the latest spring sightings on record.

Inca Dove continues to spread throughout the state. Interesting reports were singles observed in Sherwood, Pulaski 22 Mar (Guy Luneau), Morrilton, Conway 26 Apr (Leif Anderson) and England, Lonoke 29 Apr (Kenny & LaDonna Nichols).

Rare anywhere in the state outside the Fort Smith area, White-winged Doves were noted at separate locations in Little Rock, Pulaski 18 Apr (Jerry & Janie Butler) and 4 May (GL).

Extremely rare in northwest Arkansas, a calling King Rail videotaped at Woolsey Wet Prairie 29–30 May (Alyssa DeRubeis, JN) was a first for Washington.

Rare so late, two Sandhill Cranes were observed at Frog Bayou WMA, Crawford 2 May (JN).

Three Roseate Spoonbills were observed near Empire, Chicot 11 May (David Krementz). This is just the third spring record on file.

Very rare in any season, a White-faced Ibis was seen flying over the observer's home on Mt. Magazine, Logan 30 Mar (Don Simons). This is just the twelfth occurrence for the state and a surprising second for Mt. Magazine.

The season's only Golden Eagle report was that of an immature soaring high over the White River in Marion 18 Mar (Diane Mikrut).

Very uncommon but regular, transient Peregrine Falcons were spotted in eastern Miller 25 Apr (CM), near Hickory Plains, Prairie 10 Apr (K&LN), and Frog Bayou WMA, Crawford 7 Apr (Bill Beall, Jim Nieting, JN).

A Great Crested Flycatcher at Logoly State Park, Columbia 25 Mar (Devin Moon, Bill Ees) was the earliest ever spring sighting.

“Several” Bank Swallows were observed going into nest holes east of Coffeeville, Jackson 14 May (Herschel Raney, Bo Verser). While common in migration, this species is a very rare nesting species in the state.

Rare but steadily increasing, two adult Cave Swallows were reported from eastern Miller 29 Apr (CM).

Though not an invasion year for the species, Red-breasted Nuthatches were noted at Whitney...
Mountain, south of Garfield, Benton 17 Apr (Joan Reynolds, JN) and a very late bird at Dardanelle, Yell 14 May (K&LN).

A Brown Creeper at Sweeden Island Rec Area, Pope 5 May (LA) was a good 2–3 weeks late.

Very rare and local, a Sprague’s Pipit photographed at Bald Knob NWR 20 Mar (Glen & Michelle Wyatt) was just the second for White.

Red Crossbills were observed feeding fledged young near Shores Lake, Franklin 4–5 Mar (BB, JNi, JN, JR). A nest of this species has never been found in the state.

Just the seventh occurrence for the state, a Lesser Goldfinch was photographed visiting a feeder in Hot Springs Village, Garland 18 May (Ted & Linda Hommena).

Rare and less than annual, a Cape May Warbler was identified at Jim Kress WMA, Cleburne 7 May (Tamalyn Block Wortham).

A first-spring male Lark Bunting was discovered just south of Paris, Logan 13 May (K&LN). This is just the fourth state record of this species.

An Ammodramus sp. sparrow was flushed on the very late date of 25 May at Chesney Prairie Natural Area, Benton (ADer).

A Black-headed x Rose-breasted Grosbeak hybrid was photographed at Eureka Springs, Carroll 28 Apr (John Turner).

There are less than 25 Lazuli Bunting sightings on file. Incredibly, there were four photographically documented reports for the season: one in St. Francis 23 Apr (Dawn Gray); one in Fayetteville, Washington 4 May (Kitty Sanders); one in Midland, Sebastian 5 May (Trish Rowley); and one at Bella Vista, Benton 7 May (Gary Frigon).

A Western Meadowlark at Harman Bottoms, Johnson 13 May (LA) was late by at least three weeks.

Two Yellow-headed Blackbirds at Bald Knob NWR, White 25 Apr (Michael Nicodemus) and one at St. James, Stone 9 May (Megan Foil) were rare so far east. Much farther west, an impressive 50 were counted at Kibler Bottoms, Crawford 2 May (JN).

Great-tailed Grackles continued expansion northeast along the I-30 corridor was evidenced by seven birds at the Caddo Valley exit, Clark 15 May (K&LN).

Just the sixth occurrence for the state, a female Bullock’s Oriole was photographed at Bella Vista, Benton 3 May (GF).
Your Trust at Work: AAS Trust Report

By DAN SCHEIMAN
AAS Trust Chair

In 2012 AAS member Dr. Carlos Araoz made a generous donation to the Trust in memory of his wife Eulalia. At the time it was a difficult investment climate to generate significant income from his donated funds, so in 2015 he agreed to let us use those funds for immediate grants. This year we decided to do something special with the remaining $5,000 of Araoz funds. We released an RFP for a one-time $5,000 lump-sum Eulalia Araoz Memorial Grant, hoping to attract an outstanding proposal for a bird research or conservation project in Arkansas. We were pleased with the results. Examination and debate over the merits of the six Araoz proposals plus four other proposals was so challenging and arousing that we did not adjourn until five minutes before dinner! My gratitude to Susan Hardin, Ron Kew, Adam Schaffer, Dr. Than Boves, and Dr. Ragupathy Kannan (not present but submitted comments) for taking the time to fulfill this duty. Additional thanks to Dr. Kannan, who continues to use his overseas birding tours as a fundraiser for the Trust. You can make your own tax-deductible contribution by mailing a check to: Barry Haas, Treasurer, P.O. Box 242088, Little Rock, AR 72223.

At the fall 2017 meeting the Trustees gave 8 awards totaling $10,600.

- Alyssa DeRubeis (M.S., UA-Fayetteville) was granted $500 to see if restored grasslands are successful additions to remnant sites for nesting and non-breeding birds.

- Emily Donahue (M.S., ASU) cached $780 for her study of the winter ecology and physiology of Loggerhead Shrike populations in an agricultural landscape.

- Sara Harrod (Ph.D., ASU) received $500 to examine demographic responses of Eastern Bluebirds to spatio-temporal climate variability.

- Ozark Natural Science Center immediately put their $1,140 to use purchasing binoculars on sale from Eagle Optics for their ornithology and field investigation classes.

- Pooja Panwar (Ph.D., UA-Fayetteville) is again the Doug James Award winner, giving her $700 for validating the reliability of ecoacoustic methods to assess bird diversity.

- Mitchell Pruitt (M.S., UA-Fayetteville) netted $780 to determine the breeding and natal origins of Northern Saw-whet Owls.

- Jacob Wessels (M.S., ASU) is the recipient of the $5,000 Eulalia Araoz Memorial Grant for his outstanding proposal to examine Cerulean Warbler breeding biology, habitat selection, and female movements in the Ozarks. Congratulations!

- Joseph Youtz (M.S., ASU) received $1,200, including the Max Parker Award, to look at occupancy of isolated woodlots by Prothonotary Warblers in northeast Arkansas.

Alyssa DeRubeis, a fall 2017 Arkansas Audubon Society Trust Awardee, holds a Dickcissel. | Photo Courtesy of Alyssa DeRubeis
Donations Appreciated for Ecology Camps, Help Keep Tuition Costs Affordable for Families

By BARRY HAAS
Ecology Camp Treasurer

As this is being written in late November, we are midway through our annual Fall Appeal fundraiser. Each year in late October or early November we send our one annual appeal to Arkansas Audubon Society members, past Fall Appeal donors, and parents/grandparents of recent campers. Income from the Fall Appeal allows us to keep the cost of tuition for our youth ecology camps more affordable for Arkansas families. The tuition is $325 for first-year Junior campers, $350 for second-year Senior campers, and $375 for third-year Advanced campers, but our cost per camper is much higher. The cost for first- and second-year campers is about $425, and for third-year Advanced campers is more than $800.

Why so much? What makes our youth ecology camps so successful in such a short teaching period—5 days for Halberg campers (first- and second-year) and 7 days for Advanced campers—is the ratio of instructors to campers. The Halberg camp has two instructors teaching as a team with a class size for first-year campers of 8–10 and for second-year campers of 12. The Advanced camp has a director and three instructors teaching 12 campers. That’s an extremely high instructor to student ratio, and what makes the camps so successful.

This is typically a slow time of year when we begin planning next summer’s camp sessions. In late February the U.S. Forest Service notifies us of our confirmed dates at Camp Clearfork. That’s when we can safely print applications and flyers, and begin recruiting first-year campers in earnest. Second- and third-year campers are invited back from the previous year’s campers.

Each year we have room for a total of 100 first-year campers, 50 in each of two sessions. That’s our biggest challenge each year, filling those 100 spots with recent 5th and 6th grade students.

Every donation is greatly appreciated. Donors can make their checks payable either “AAS Halberg Ecology Camp” or “Arkansas Audubon Society” and mail them to P.O. Box 242088, Little Rock, AR 72223. All donations are tax deductible and acknowledged by letter or email (email when possible to save on postage expense).

Arkansas Audubon Society Trust Celebrates 45th Birthday and Conservation Successes

By BARRY HAAS
AAS Trust Chair

The Arkansas Audubon Society Trust celebrated its 45th birthday on October 28. As Trust treasurer, I thought you would be interested in some historical information about Trust successes to date. Including Trust grants approved in November, the Trust has given out a total of $163,545.84 in grants. The vast majority of that money came from the Research-Educational Fund, which is comprised of income from Endowment-Memorial Fund investments. Another $1,656.26 came from the Red-cockaded Woodpecker Fund, which is dedicated to projects and awards involving federally endangered Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. The Max Parker Fund created in 2008 has funded $5,254.38 in grants. The more recent Eulalia Araoz Fund has given out $15,000 in grants in recent years. And finally, Doug James has personally funded $1,000 in Doug James Awards.

The Trust’s Endowment-Memorial Fund continues to grow and now totals $163,163.93. The goal is to top the $200,000 mark no later than the 50th anniversary in October 2022. The Max Parker Fund has $16,144.86.

Recent growth in the Endowment-Memorial Fund has come almost entirely from generous donations by trustee Ragupathy Kannan. He leads groups on birding tours, and a portion of the cost has been donated to the Trust to build up the Endowment-Memorial Fund. Kannan is putting his money where his mouth is since he has been the driving force behind the $200,000 goal by 2022. Two thumbs up, Kannan!

We welcome any and all donations to the Trust. They are tax deductible. Checks can be made payable either “Arkansas Audubon Society Trust” or simply “AAS Trust” and mailed to me at P.O. Box 242088, Little Rock, AR 72223.