Arkansas Audubon Society

2023 - Jonesboro Convention Field Trips

Friday, May 5

F1 - Craighead Forest Depart: 1:00 PM (15) - Moderate Craighead Forest is a city owned park located in the scenic beauty of Crowley's Ridge, a unique piece of North American topography. This 692-acre park is a combination of wooded areas, a lake, and open fields which provide a variety of habitats attracting an exciting mix of birds, such as migrating warblers, tanagers, grosbeaks, vireos, and flycatchers. If time permits, the group can explore the Forest L. Wood Crowley's Ridge Nature Center The Center adjoins the southern boundary of Craighead Forest Park and includes a 5.5-acre prairie, a 2.5-acre pond and approximately 100 acres of woodlands. We'll walk the Nature Center's trail and check their colorful blooming gardens which attract numerous butterflies, birds, and other insects. The trip includes moderate walking on dirt and paved trails. Bathrooms are available in the Park at Centennial Rotary Park at the end of Access Rd. #5, and also at the Nature Center. Directions— Craighead Forest Park is located at 4910 South Culberhouse Road in Jonesboro. GPS coordinates for Craighead Forest Park are 35.774865, -90.702296 Leader: Karen Holliday	F2 - Fields Surrounding Jonesboro--American Kestrels Depart: 1:00 PM (1 hour) - Easy We will go out into the agricultural areas surrounding Jonesboro to experience our American Kestrel research, while discussing the conservation of the species and the concept of One Health eco-agricultural integration. We will check some nest boxes that may be occupied by kestrels. If there are nestlings, we may band them and collect poop samples (to study diet using DNA metabarcoding). We may also try to use bal-chatri traps to catch some adults (and collect fecal samples from them). We will also bird in the agricultural areas along the way. All of the nest boxes are within 10-30 minute drives from town and we can drive directly up to the nest boxes. So as long as people are ok driving their vehicles on well-maintained dirt roads, it should be accessible for all. Total trip time can vary depending on how long people want to stay out (could be as short as 1 hr or as long as 3 hrs)! NOTE: Limited to 10 participants. Leader: Ty Sharrow	F3 - Scatter Creek WMA--Chuck-Wills-Widow Depart: 6:30 PM (45 minutes) - Moderate We will visit Scatter Creek WMA, which is located about 45 minutes north of Jonesboro. During the visit, we'll have the opportunity to observe two out of the three nightjar species that can be found in Arkansas: Chuck-will's-widow and Eastern Whip-poor-will. We may also see Eastern Screech-Owls, Great Horned Owls, and bats. We'll discuss the unique behaviors and natural history of nightjars and use playback to attract them for observation. To maximize our chances of seeing these birds, we'll aim to arrive at Scatter Creek 15 minutes before sunset and park our cars in the large gravel area at (36.156468, -90.580388). If the birds are not in close proximity, we may have to walk up to 1.5 miles. It's important to bring flashlights (headlamps and/or handheld flashlights) and bug spray, as well as a light jacket since nighttime temperatures in early May can dip down to the low 60s. NOTE: Limited to 10 participants. Leader: Brandon Dunnahoo

Saturday, May 6

S1 - Lake Frierson and Crowley's Ridge State Parks Depart: 7:00 AM (30) - Easy The field trip will leave from the Hilton Garden Inn and caravan to Crowley's Ridge State Park, a 30-minute drive. First stop is the Park's Visitor Center where we will meet one of the Park's Interpretive Rangers, who will give us an overview of the Park's history and grounds. We'll then explore the Park, check Ponder and Walcott lakes, then walk one, or possibly two trails, depending on the time. The trails are a mile or less and fairly level. Comfortable walking shoes are recommended. Heading back to Jonesboro, we'll stop at Lake Frierson State Park. It's smaller than Crowley's Ridge SP. After a stop at the Visitor Center, we'll walk the ½ mile Dogwood Lane Trail, then check the lake for Osprey, Eagles, kingfishers, and herons, plus the park grounds before driving back to Jonesboro. Lake Frierson SP is 10 miles from Jonesboro. Spring migrants are our goals at both parks. There are picnic tables and bathrooms at each park. For more information about the parks, trails, and maps, go to www.ArkansasStateParks.com. A Bird Checklist for each Park is available online at each Park's website. Leader: Karen Holliday	S2 - Craighead Forest Depart: 7:00 AM (15) - Moderate Craighead Forest is a city owned park located in the scenic beauty of Crowley's Ridge, a unique piece of North American topography. This 692-acre park is a combination of wooded areas, a lake, and open fields which provide a variety of habitats attracting an exciting mix of birds, such as migrating warblers, tanagers, grosbeaks, vireos, and flycatchers. If time permits, the group can explore the Forest L. Wood Crowley's Ridge Nature Center The Center adjoins the southern boundary of Craighead Forest Park and includes a 5.5-acre prairie, a 2.5-acre pond and approximately 100 acres of woodlands. We'll walk the Nature Center's trail and check their colorful blooming gardens which attract numerous butterflies, birds, and other insects. The trip includes moderate walking on dirt and paved trails. Bathrooms are available in the Park at Centennial Rotary Park at the end of Access Rd. #5, and also at the Nature Center. Directions— Craighead Forest Park is located at 4910 South Culberhouse Road in Jonesboro. GPS coordinates for Craighead Forest Park are 35.774865, -90.702296 Leader: Dan Scheiman	S3 - Craighead Forest--Kingbirds Depart: 7:00 AM (15 minutes) - Moderate We will visit Craighead Forest Park Saturday morning to attempt to capture Eastern Kingbirds for a project studying the evolution of hosts and their parasites. Craighead Forest Park is located south of Jonesboro and is a hotspot for birding during spring migration. Besides the netting demonstration for an Eastern Kingbird (and other songbirds), we will very likely see migrating warblers and other songbirds. We will meet individually at the entrance of Craighead Forest Park (35.779499, -90.709375) in the parking area before moving everyone to a net set-up for the Eastern Kingbird (it is a 10-15 min drive from the Hilton Garden Inn). Folks will get to see how we attempt to capture songbirds, and if we are lucky, process a few birds. Regardless, we will walk through the banding and processing steps as well as describe ongoing genomic work and the questions associated with the project. If time allows, we will walk and bird nearby to try to find some migrants. The site is very accessible to most people and we can spend anywhere from 1-3 hrs here. NOTE: This trip is limited to 10 participants. Leader: Alex Worm

S4 - St. Francis Sunken Lands WMA--Prothonotary Warbler Depart: 8:30 AM (45 minutes) - Moderate If experiencing Prothonotary Warblers up close and personal sounds “sweet, sweet, sweet” to you, then you won’t want to miss this field trip! We will travel to St. Francis Sunken Lands Wildlife Management Area (35.722242, -90.392080) where we are in the midst of conducting a field experiment to better understand how feather mites (tiny spider-relatives that live on feathers) impact their avian hosts. To address this and several other mitey-mysteries, we have captured, banded, and measured Prothonotaries at this site over the last two years and have removed mites from half of them. This year, we (you included!) are looking for any returnees and attempting to recapture/remeasure them. By doing so, we will be able to determine if mites are good for birds (mutualists), bad for birds (parasites), or do not impact birds at all (commensals). We will depart in the morning (with some flexibility) and drive ~45 minutes to the field site. This trip will require some light walking (and it could be muddy). We can spend up to 3 hrs at the site, which is also full of migrating songbirds, and you are free to leave earlier if you drive your own vehicle (on well-maintained dirt roads). Bring your binoculars, bug spray, and wear clothes that you don’t mind getting a little dirty. NOTE: This trip is restricted to10 participants. Leader: Alix Matthews	S5 - Fields Surrounding Jonesboro--Loggerhead Shrikes Depart: 10:00 AM (45 minutes) - Easy This trip will involve driving the agricultural areas surrounding Jonesboro to visit breeding territories of nesting Loggerhead Shrikes! Bring your binoculars to observe these fierce predatory songbirds and the colored bands we have placed on many in the area. We will attempt to trap, band, and process shrikes we see along our drive. We will also visit active nests and potentially band nestlings as well. Since starting to band and monitor shrikes in 2016, the Boves Lab has studied various aspects of their biology, including survival, site fidelity, habitat use, and reproductive success. We are also collecting various samples from these birds to investigate their exposure to agricultural toxins like pesticides and the potential biological effects resulting from this exposure. This trip will require very little walking and will be accessible to all those with a vehicle able to drive on well-maintained dirt roads. This research trip will run for 2-4 hours. Attendees can feel free to return to the convention venue at any time. (Drive time: target areas are all <45 min from Jonesboro) Leader: Emily Donahue	