



Arkansas Birds

Newsletter of the Arkansas Audubon Society

Summer 2023 | Volume 68 | No. 2

Full-color newsletter available at <https://arbirds.org/AAS/Newsletter.aspx>

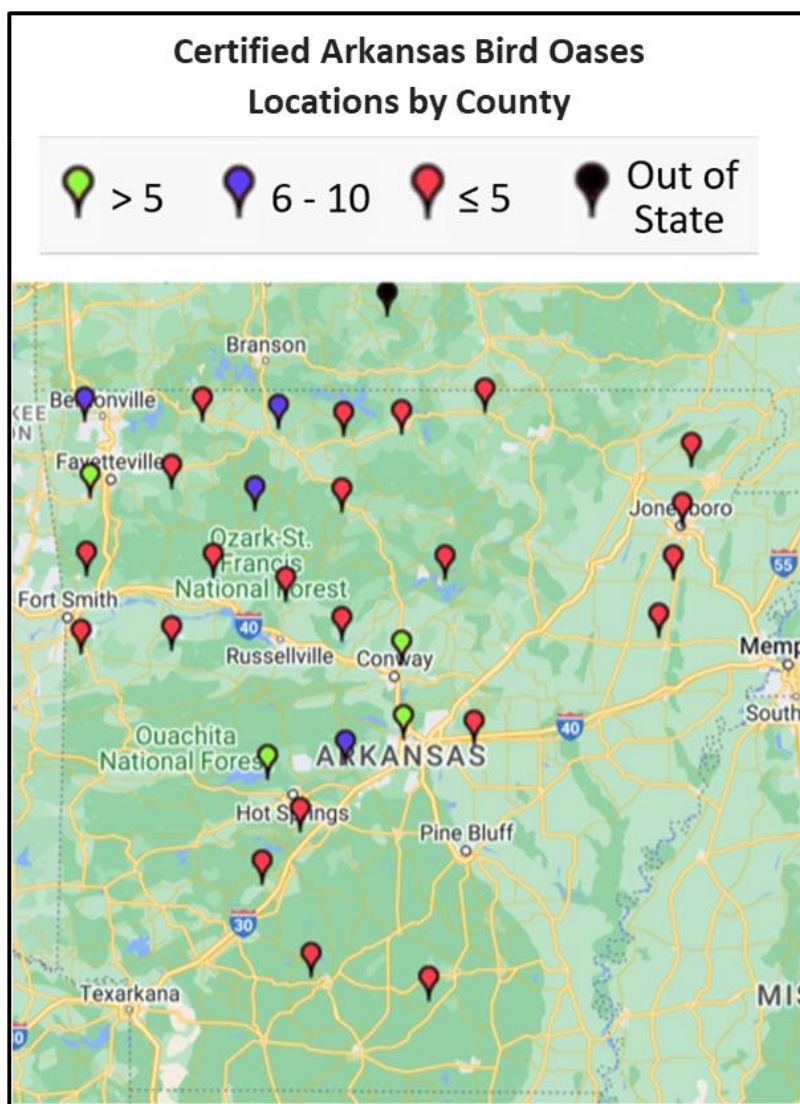
Bird-Friendly Yard Report

By PAM and JACK STEWART
AAS Bird-Friendly Arkansas Committee

The AAS Bird Friendly program now has 181 registered yards; some are 50 square feet, and some are over 100 acres. In total, 1,560 Arkansas acres are being cared for by homeowners who understand what it means to be “bird-friendly.” While only 20 to 40 percent of these acres must be planted with native species, the yards, which are scattered throughout 30 Arkansas counties, are places where birds can find food, shelter, and safe places to nest. More than this, these yards can connect to other yards and neighboring natural areas, forming bird and butterfly corridors throughout our natural state of Arkansas!



Metallic Green Sweat Bee (Agapostemon texanus)
on Aster | Photo by Pam Stewart



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

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. Please send newsletter submissions to emilyrdonahue@gmail.com.

Membership renewals are due January 1st of each calendar year.

REGULAR ANNUAL MEMBERSHIPS	Jan – Sept*	Oct – Dec**
Regular member	\$15.00	\$15.00
Regular Family	\$20.00	\$20.00
Contributing Member	\$30.00	--
Contributing Family	\$35.00	--
Sustaining Member	\$20.00	--
Sustaining Family	\$25.00	--
Student member	\$5.00	--

* Memberships paid in this quarter will cover membership through the end (Dec) of that year

** Memberships paid during this period (Oct – Dec) will include full membership for the following calendar year

SPECIAL MEMBERSHIPS

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

Payment of Dues:

Members have two options for payment:

- 1) Online credit card or PayPal payment through account created on the AAS website: <https://arbirds.org>
- 2) Check made to Arkansas Audubon Society and sent to:

Arkansas Audubon Society, P. O. Box 241421, Little Rock, AR 72223



Campers use binoculars to view the birds inhabiting Camp Clearfork during the June 2023 Audubon Camp.

Distribution and Abundance of Arkansas Birds

The Winter Season

1 December 2022 – 28 February 2023

By LYNDAL YORK

AAS Curator

Six dark morph **Ross's Geese** were counted among a group of 23,000 Ross's Geese during the Pine Bluff CBC, Jefferson Co 28 Dec (Kenny & LaDonna Nichols). Perhaps this is the largest number of Ross's Geese observed at one location in the US.

The report of two immature **Trumpeter Swans** at Spring Lake, Garland Co 6 Jan (Ashlyn McKayla Ohm) is a first for that county. Despite the fact that **Tundra Swans** are rare in Arkansas, ten were observed in the Atkins Bottoms, Pope Co 28 Dec (K&LN). Two additional Tundra Swans were found at the Clay Road Pond, White Co 13 Jan (Michael Linz, Patty McLean) while one was found on East Pond, Cleburne Co 14 Jan (Heather & Tony Cook).

There were several additional rare ducks reported for the winter season. Two **Surf Scoters**, male and female, were observed at Norfork Lake, Quarry Park & Campground, Baxter Co 8 Dec (H&TC) and one Surf Scoter at Lake Dardanelle, Inner Delaware Bay, Logan Co 6 Jan (K&LN). The extremely cold weather in December brought three **Long-tailed Ducks** to Arkansas: at Lake Dardanelle, Delaware Recreation Area, Yell Co 5 Jan (Roger Massey); at Lake Dardanelle, Inner Delaware Bay, two females, Logan Co 7 Jan (K&LN, Steve Warmack, Clay Hooten); and at Anderson's Minnow Farm, Lonoke Co 25 Jan (Robert & Anne Watson).

Rare wintering **Common Mergansers** were reported at four different locations: one bird at Lake Fayetteville, Mulhollan Blind, Washington Co 18 Dec (Kevin Krajcir, Robin Buff, Bill Rosser, H&TC); an astounding eight males and three females at Lake Dardanelle, Logan Co 24 Dec (K&LN); three birds at Lake Elmdale, Washington Co 26 Dec (Leslie Ford); and two birds at Lake Dardanelle, Delaware

Recreation Area, Yell Co 5 Jan (RM).

Red-breasted Mergansers were found at four different locations: at Sunnymede Park, Ft. Smith, Sebastian Co 10 Dec (Jerry Wofford); at Beaverfork Lake, Faulkner Co 11 Dec (ML, PM); a pair at Lake Dardanelle, Pope Co 24 Dec (K&LN); and four birds at Frog Bayou WMA, Crawford Co 28 Dec (Sandy Berger).

Only one unusual dove species was observed – three **Inca Doves** in a yard at McNeil, AR, Columbia Co 16 Dec (Katheryn Watson).

Limpkins continued into the winter at Dr. Lester Sitzes III Bois d'Arc WMA, Hempstead Co 16 Oct (Robert Holt); 24 Oct (Keith McFaul, Charles Mills); and 27 Dec (Timothy White). An additional Limpkin was spotted near the Big Creek Site 21 Reservoir, Jonesboro, Craighead Co 1 Feb (Steven Mullen).

A **Spotted Sandpiper** was found in frigid conditions with temperatures in the single digits and 20 mph winds at the Dardanelle Dam riprap, Pope Co 23 Dec (K&LN).



Black-legged Kittiwake | Dardanelle Rock Natural Area, Yell Co. | Photo by Kenny Nichols

Very rare in Arkansas, a **Black-legged Kittiwake** in first winter plumage was photographed at Dardanelle Rock Natural Area, Riverview Recreation Area, Yell Co 23 Dec (K&LN).

An adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, first winter plumage, was discovered at Dardanelle Rock Natural Area, Riverview Recreation Area, on 16 Dec (K&LN). Two Lesser Black-backed Gulls in first winter plumage were present at the same location 23 Dec (K&LN).

An exceedingly rare **Short-billed Gull** was photographed at the Dardanelle Rock Natural Area, Riverview Recreation Area, Yell Co 29 Dec (K&LN). This is only the second record for this species in Arkansas. About a month later another Short-billed Gull, third state record, was found and photographed at Beaverfork Lake, Faulkner Co 2 Feb (ML, PM).

Surprisingly, an **Anhinga**, a common summer resident in South Arkansas, was found in the dead of winter at Spirit Lake, Lafayette Co 24 Dec (Jeremy Chamberlain, Heather Laferte).

Also, unusual were ten adult and ten sub-adult plumaged **Black-crowned Night-Herons** roosting in a small cypress swamp north of Bob Long Road, Lonoke Co 18 Dec (K&LN).

An over-wintering **Osprey** was seen catching fish in a farm pond at Brookhill Ranch, Garland Co 19 Jan (Jeri & Mario Garcia).

Golden Eagles were reported on four occasions: at Rick Evans Grandview Prairie WMA, Hempstead Co 6 Jan (Paul Lowery); at Chaney Road; about 2 miles east of Highway 15, Lonoke Co 16 Jan (Glenn Wyatt); and twice at Atkins Bottoms, Pope Co 26 Jan (Ronald Duval), and 9 Feb (Eric Monaghan).

A very dark subspecies of the **Red-tailed Hawk** was reported on Wet Prairie Road, Benton Co 25 Jan (Betty Evans, HC).

A **Northern Flicker**, red-shafted morph, was noted at Woolsey Wet Prairie, Washington Co 25 Dec (Todd Ballinger, Michael Slay, Gramm Bertram).

A **Merlin** was sighted in the Atkins Bottoms, Pope Co 19 Feb (ML, PM).

Continuing during the winter for several years was a **Prairie Falcon** in the Atkins Bottoms, Pope Co 19 Feb (ML, PM).

Surprisingly in an urban area was a rare **Vermilion Flycatcher** in Don Hughes Park, Pulaski Co 28 Feb (Robert & Christine Becker).

An over-wintering **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was spotted at Cook's Landing, Little Rock, Pulaski Co 17 Dec (Stephanie Sexton, Lance Runion).

A **Gray Catbird** was in a backyard in Fayetteville, Washington Co 30 Jan (M&CS).

The winter's snow and ice brought two **American Tree Sparrows** to Woolsey Wet Prairie, Washington Co 16 Dec (Mitchell Pruitt).

Five **Smith's Longspurs** were photographed at the Magnolia Municipal Airport, Columbia Co 19 Dec (JC). This is the first report of Smith's Longspurs in Columbia Co.

Henslow's Sparrows are not usually found in NW Arkansas during the winter; however, one was reported at the Woolsey Wet Prairie, Washington Co 8 Jan (Taylor Long).

Spotted Towhees were reported in three different locations this winter: on Blue Hole Road, White Co 3 Dec (ML, PM); on Bracebridge Street, Bentonville, Benton Co 31 Jan (Bobbi Bradford); and about 3.5 miles from Butterfield on Gourdneck Valley Road, Hot Spring Co 19 Feb (Cindy Franklin).

Rarely seen in Arkansas was an **Evening Grosbeak** in a yard on W. War Eagle Road, Springdale, Washington Co 1 Dec (Kevin Inkster).

New AAS Members

Spencer Weitzel	Hot Springs
Drew Sweet	Jonesboro
Drew Curtis & Maddie Coats	North Little Rock
Jennifer Wilson	Van Buren
Shane, Aiden, Isabel & Tracy Tilley	Gassville
James McHaney	Little Rock
Elisa & Angeline Button	North Little Rock
Cari, Ruby, Arden & Jody McDonnell	Conway
Crow Kamm	Springdale
Bobby Wood	Cabot
Cameron Curry	Pueblo, CO

New Life Members

Jenny & Taylor Long	Fayetteville
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Member News: Spotting Lifers Locally and Abroad

By DOTTIE BOYLES

AAS News of Members Editor

On May 1, **Dan Scheiman** took coworker **Uta Meyer** to see her life Prothonotary Warbler at Lorange Creek Natural Area. They literally scheduled this months in advance so they wouldn't forget.

A week later Dan acted as tour guide for Rhode Island birder Russell Hack, who had never been to Arkansas before. Along the Buffalo Road in Ouachita National Forest they saw Russ's life Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Brown-headed Nuthatch, but could not find a Bachman's Sparrow. A cruise through Kibler Bottoms netted his life Bell's Vireo plus goodies like Swainson's Hawk, Yellow-headed Blackbird, and Painted Bunting. The next day, a pre-dawn drive along Dan's Breeding Bird Survey route in Saline Co. yielded Russ's life Chuck-will's-widow (heard only), and, after sunrise, his life Worm-eating Warbler (seen well). Then over to the Bald Knob area for more regional specialties like Grasshopper Sparrow and Western Kingbird. A downpour washed out their remaining time together, but not before watching Great-tailed Grackles pick bugs off car grills at Galloway. Russ left satisfied, with five lifers, and many year and state birds.

Fifteen Auduboners and naturalists, including many AAS members, accompanied **Dr. Ragupathy Kannan** and his biology students, May 14-22 and then May 24-June 1, to Belize as part of his University of Arkansas Fort Smith tropical biology course. It was a week each of good birding, field and cultural activities, adventure, and friendship. They focused on tropical plant-animal interactions. The two tours raised \$2,600 for the Arkansas Audubon Society Trust. Here is a video that one of

the honors students, Ryan Jacobs, made as part of his honors course credit requirements:

https://youtu.be/MJzZ3NuRa_w

Birding and wildlife highlights include seeing the rare bamboo specialist, the Blue Seedeater, by the Sibun River; getting photos and videos of nesting Collared Aracaris, Keel-billed Toucans, and Gartered Trogons; seeing King Vultures and White Hawks soar under eye-level from the slate creek overlook; learning about three cooperative breeders in action (Yucatán Jay, Acorn Woodpecker, and Groove-billed Ani); and getting close views and photographs of a coral snake, fer de lance, and Yucatán banded gecko. A personal milestone for Kannan was getting a long-sought lifer, the Rose-throated Tanager, following which, his spontaneous lifer dance was captured on video and shared online.

The team documented nearly 1,500 organisms (by photos or audios) of more than 400 species in the UAFS Belize Biodiversity Blitz project. Check out the project on [iNaturalist](https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/ufaf-belize-biodiversity-blitz).



*Kirtland's Warbler | Jack Pine Forest, MI
| Photo by Michael Linz*

In May, **Michael Linz** and **Patty McLean** drove to Michigan to see the Kirtland's Warbler on its breeding grounds. They went to a special Kirtland's Warbler management area north of Tawas near Lake Huron. The trip leaders were biologists with the American Bird Conservancy, working specifically on the Kirtland's breeding and wintering grounds. The Kirtland's was a life bird for Michael.

After this adventure, they spent several days at some of North America's most famous hotspots: Point Pelee in Canada, and Magee Marsh in Ohio. They added Michigan, Ohio, and Canada to their list of states and countries where they have 100 or more bird species. And according to Michael. "These hotspots live up to their reputations for having lots of birds, birders, and photographers." Patty said, "All in all, it was a wonderful trip, and we highly recommend doing all or any portion of it."

They intentionally avoided The Biggest Week in Birding at Magee Marsh, but only by a few days. According to Patty, "The birds were still thick and so were the birders."

Donations to the General Fund

Jane Harkey,

In Honor of Craig and Marian Berry

Ecology Camp Iola Rea fund

Norman and Cheryl Lavers,

In Memory of Maury Baker

Halberg Ecology Camps: Return to Clearfork

By BARRY HAAS

Ecology Camp Treasurer

As this is being written in late June, the Arkansas Audubon Society Halberg Ecology Camp has just completed its two sessions. This is the first time we have been able to hold two sessions since June 2019, and the first time since then we have been back at our long-time site Camp Clearfork. Camp was suspended in both 2020 and 2021 due to Covid, and last year due to water leaks at Camp Clearfork we ended up holding one camp session at the Ozark Natural Science Center. Everyone was glad to be back at Camp Clearfork this year after what seemed like forever.

Due to the suspension of camp in both 2020 and 2021, our lone camp session in 2022 was for first-year campers only. This year we added returning second-year campers back into the mix.

Holding a camp involving this many nature-loving youth and adults is a complex endeavor. The fact that we have so many experienced individuals who return year after year to share their knowledge and love of nature with camp youth makes things easier. This year we had one instructor with 41 years at camp (all but one year of the 42 years we have been able to host this camp), another with 35 years, two more with 31 years each, one with 24 years, another with 20 years and two more with 19 years at camp. Others were there for the very first time. That wealth of experience means instructors and others are very adaptable, and they understand we always have some unexpected problems to deal with during camp. This year a powerful hailstorm rolled through the Camp Clearfork area mid-week during the first session knocking out power for about 24 hours. Fortunately, Camp Clearfork did not get hit by the hailstones which caused severe physical damage in nearby areas. Everyone pitched in when the power went out and kept things moving along.

We, unfortunately, had openings for more first-year campers that went unfilled. Our hope is that next June we will be full of youth eager to learn all about the wonders and complexities of nature. We receive donations throughout the course of the year. You can make donations online at the Arkansas Audubon Society website, arbirds.org/AAS/Donate.aspx, or send a check made payable "AAS Halberg Ecology Camp" or "Arkansas Audubon Society" to P.O. Box 242088, Little Rock, AR 72223.

Important: to complete the donation online you must complete your method of payment with either PayPal or credit card AFTER it appears you have completed the process. If you didn't have to choose a payment method and complete that information (for example, your credit card number or log in to your PayPal account), your donation has not been completed even though you will receive an e-mail confirmation.

All donations are tax-deductible and are acknowledged by letter or e-mail (please e-mail when possible to save on postage).

42nd Year of Ecology Camp Report

By RENN TUMLISON and TAMZEN BRYANT
Ecology Camp Staff and Director

From June 11-23, 2023, we logged the 60th and 61st sessions of the Halberg Ecology Camp. We lost the ability to have camp for a couple of years due to COVID and restarted with one session last year at Ozark Natural Science Center (ONSC) near Huntsville in NW Arkansas, while issues at our historic site (Camp Clearfork near Mt. Ida in the Ouachita Mountains) were being addressed. This year, we returned to Clearfork for our 42nd year to hold the camp. We expanded back to the two-session approach we have used for many years, and we once again conducted a senior camp. Even with the uncertainties, the resiliency of the people involved in the camp made it work well.



A camper views birds through a scope.

The temperature was reasonably comfortable the first week, and very cool at night. However, there was a lot of rain and even a damaging hailstorm that despite not hitting us too hard, still knocked out our power. We lost power for 36 hours that week, once lasting 24 hours. That meant no cooking, so we ordered 28 pizzas (we still find ways to get things done!). Classes still went well with almost no insurmountable problems despite the power outage. The second week was warmer, but

fortunately not as hot as it became the week after the second camp. We were very thankful for that. Camp progressed smoothly, providing some good experiences for the campers as well as staff.

We often have campers whose parents had been campers themselves. We know of at least 3-4 campers this year who were children of former campers. One father told us he had been a camper 30 years ago, and now had a daughter who was the age to be a camper. He went online to see if the camp was still going, found out that it was, and contacted a friend of his who had also been a camper in 1990 and who also now had a daughter the same age. These two fathers brought their kids to experience this camp. While telling this story, a newspaper clipping was revealed to us that included a photo of the two boys at camp in 1990. Our camp obviously was a great experience for them. It's nice to know that the lifetime experience we have provided in the past has become an event that former campers want their kids to experience!

First-year campers went to six classes twice throughout the week. Molly Wozniak and Blue Brasher-Rue taught Aquatic Biology the first week, and Molly and Tamzen Bryant taught it the second week. Jackie Scott and Robin Buff/Robin Campbell taught Botany during week 1, then Matt Wilson replaced the two Robins for week 2. Adaire Kremetz and Arin Stagg taught Entomology the first week, then Amelia McAllister and Belinda Jonak replaced them for the second week. Renn Tumblison taught Mammalogy, and Kory Roberts taught Herpetology both weeks. Geology was taught by Paul Lowery and Aaron Hinterthuer the first week, then by Ikram Bahram and Arlo Juarez the second week. Ornithology was led by Kelly and Donna Mulhollan week 1, and Chris Kellner and Robin Buff week 2. Jetta Roberg was camp nurse the first week, and Michea Gartin the second week. Stacey Buff was the kitchen director and kitchen staff included Virginia Buff and Mali Ilhuicamina for week 1 and John Goff, Kathy Schaffer, and Sara Camarillo for week 2. Custodian was Eldridge Henley both weeks, but Adaire Kremetz also served during week 1. Recreation director was Amelia McAllister week 1 and Robin Campbell week 2.

Obviously, it takes a lot of coordination and effort to locate and schedule personnel to run the camp.

Senior Camp was led by Janet McAllister and Adam Schaffer week 1, and Jim Gann replaced Adam for week 2. Those campers did separate ecological activities in the field and saw interesting birds and salamanders. On Wednesday of both weeks, they took a field trip guided by Jason Garrett of the US Forest Service and got to see endangered Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (adults and nestlings). Even the bus driver for week 1, Coach Bates, assisted with the campers and called up a Bobwhite quail.

Campers originated from 20 counties in Arkansas, one in Texas, and three parishes of Louisiana (up from 12 last year). This included 32 towns in Arkansas, one in Texas, and three in Louisiana (up from 19 towns last year). Fayetteville and Little Rock were the dominant sources of Arkansas campers, but this year the homes of campers were better scattered around the state. Still, more towns along or north of I-40 were represented compared to towns in the southern half of the state.



A senior camper studies the environment in greater detail.

Evening learning programs kept the campers engaged. Robin Buff presented information about bird-friendly yards during both sessions. Herpetology instructor Kory Roberts presented about alligators and showed a live specimen during week 1, and Jim Gann made the alligator presentation during week 2. Ornithology instructors for the first session, Donna and Kelly Mulhollan (otherwise known as the folk group “Still on the

Hill”), gave a very-well-received concert of bird-based songs during the first session. Mitzi Cole and Betty Crump, retired from the U.S. Forest Service, presented about forestry and fishes the second week. During the second session, Karen Hicks gave a presentation about ultraviolet light and fluorescence. Kids made paintings with fluorescent colors and got to view insects attracted to a white sheet by ultraviolet light. Other activities included get-acquainted games the first evening of camp, a showing of the classic (original) “The Lorax” video by Dr. Seuss, and afternoon learning games related to nature.



Campers in Botany class go afield to learn about all kinds of plants.

The last event on Thursday evening was a review of camp based on images taken by Publicity Director Tamzen Bryant and other camp staff, organized with music to help set a mood. Photos from camp activities are viewable on the [Audubon Camp Facebook page](#) so campers and parents can share the memories. The web page has 980 followers! Some comments by parents or former campers that were added to images posted this year include (with camper’s name redacted):

“I went to this camp when I was 11 and loved it (heart emoji)”

“Thank you for the wonderful experience [my son] has talked about it nonstop...”

“[My son] had such a great time. I hope he continues to share his fun facts for years to come. Thank you for creating such a rewarding experience for our kiddos!”

"My son had such an amazing time! I'm so grateful for you all."

We consistently provide fun classes, great recreational opportunities, and a strong learning environment incorporated into all endeavors. Financial costs for some of the campers were offset by camp donors through scholarships that help some of the campers attend, and they write "thank you" notes to their benefactors. Their comments reflect how this camp affected their lives. Campers often mention their favorite classes, and different classes get mentioned as the favorites of various campers. These are some of their comments (with some spelling corrections):

"I loved it here so much."

"I loved the food...all the classes were fun."

"I wish to come back here...the teachers here are so kind..."

"It was really, really fun here...the food was really good...and all the counselors were really nice."

"The food was good and the campers and camp counselors were nice. I had a lot of fun."

"Thank you for giving me this chance to experience the eco camp...my favorite class was all of them and I got to meet so many new people. I would like to come back."

Ecology Camp Donations

(April 30- June 24, 2023)

Donations by Organizations

Audubon Society of Central Arkansas
Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society

Donations by Individuals

Karen & David Holliday
Leif Anderson

Memorials & Honoraria

Diamond Lakes Chapter—Arkansas Master Naturalists
Arkansas River Valley Audubon Society
Garland County Audubon Society

Memorials & Honoraria

Garland County Audubon Society,
In Memory of Dan Bogler

February 27- March 27, 2023

(unreported in the spring newsletter)

Ann Gordon,
In Memory of Maury Baker
Susan Hardin & Barry Haas,
In Memory of Maury Baker
Vic Prislipsky,
In Memory of Maury Baker
Rebecca Hardin & Grady Hinton,
In Memory of Maury Baker
Ron Kew,
In Memory of Maury Baker
Garland Co. Audubon Society,
In Memory of Maury Baker
Eric & Milanne Sundell,
In Memory of Maury Baker
Ryne & Janet Baker,
In Memory of Maury Baker
Garland Co. Audubon Society,
In Memory of Dan Bogler

AAS Trust Donations

(May 1 – June 12, 2023)

Endowment-Memorial Fund

Elizabeth Adam,
In Memory of Dr. Douglas James
Mary Ryan
Adam Schaffer

Spring 2023 Convention Report

By DAN SCHEIMAN

Our spring meeting was held May 5-6 at the Hilton Garden Inn, Jonesboro. There's nothing like Northeast Arkansas in the spring, filled with the promise of many migrants! And it didn't disappoint. Between trips to crowd-pleaser Craighead Forest

Park, and nearby Lake Frierson and Crowley's Ridge State Parks, we collectively tallied six species of flycatchers, five vireos, four thrushes, and twenty-five warblers, including Golden-winged, Mourning, Cerulean, Blackburnian, and Palm. Besides the usual field trips, our convention planners, VP Lynn Foster, and field trip coordinator Cody Massery, set up special outings led by Arkansas State University grad students to see their study species. Brandon Dunnahoo took folks to Scatter Creek WMA Friday evening to listen for Chuck-will's-widows and Eastern Whip-poor-wills. The latter is uncommon in the Delta, but this site has proven to be reliable. He's studying the former, using satellite telemetry to fill knowledge gaps in their annual life cycle. Alix Matthews led participants on a PROW prowling, i.e. Prothonotary Warbler, at St. Francis Sunken Lands WMA. She's studying the evolutionary relationships between warblers and their feather mites. It turns out that they have their very own specialist mite species. Alex Worm attempted to net and band Eastern Kingbirds for his group; the kingbirds would not cooperate, but he did get to show them Black-throated Green Warblers and other species in the hand. He's studying the taxonomic relationships of various kingbird species. Em Donahue is assessing the effects of agricultural toxin exposure on Loggerhead Shrikes. She received rave reviews because she showed everyone baby shrikes taken from the nest for banding and sampling. I saw photos and can attest that they are adorable. Overall, we tallied 115 species during the convention weekend. The rarest bird observed was technically outside of our convention area, but many members drove to Bald Knob to see the sixth state record Lark Bunting found by Gary & Amber Morris and Emily Roberts during their BirdAR Birdathon Saturday morning.

Our Friday evening presenter was Mike Slay, a biologist for The Nature Conservancy, Arkansas. He taught us about the biodiversity of cave organisms, AKA troglobites, in Blanchard Springs Caverns. He explained there are three kinds of cave-dwelling organisms. Trogloxenes, such as raccoons and bears, simply visit caves for short periods. Troglaphiles, like some salamanders, can live

outside a cave but prefer to be inside it. Troglobites can't survive outside a cave and are specially adapted for life in complete darkness and low nutrient input. Mike surveys for these critters in part using bait, which draws these tiny creatures out of hiding to take advantage of the temporary abundance of food. He and his wife Christy rediscovered a cave pseudoscorpion, *Apochthonius titanicus*, which occurs in this cave and nowhere else in the world. Thanks to their survey efforts over the years, we now know that Blanchard Springs has the highest species diversity of any Arkansas cave. Though he said there is certainly more to discover there and in other caves; it is just a matter of time and effort.

For our Saturday afternoon symposium, our dedicated education committee members Jack and Pam Stewart put together two presentations, one on how to reduce plastic use and the other all about the nuthatch family, Sittidae. You are probably familiar with our US species, but did you know that of the 28 species worldwide 8 of them are threatened? The three endangered species, Algerian, White-browed, and Giant Nuthatches, have small populations due to habitat loss from timber harvesting and agriculture.

Saturday's post-dinner presenter was Bob Dolgan, a birder and environmental documentary filmmaker from Chicago. He screened his latest film, Monty and Rose. This is actually his second documentary about this famous Piping Plover couple. He updated his first movie to expand the story of the pair's origins and the fate of their offspring. Monty and Rose made headline news by being the first Piping Plovers to successfully nest within the city limits of Chicago since 1948. This was at Montrose Beach, hence their names. Piping Plovers face many threats including disturbance by beachgoers and predators, so a cadre of volunteer birders and professional conservationists have devoted themselves to monitoring this pair, protecting their nests and young as best they can, and sharing this story with the public. Monty and Rose have since passed, but their legacy lives on through their offspring and this film. Not incidentally AAS is a sponsor of Bob's latest film,

The Magic Stump, which tells the story of an Illinois tree stump that's attracted a phenomenal variety of wintering raptors through the years, including two rare Prairie Falcons. It is another tale of how birds persevere in a highly altered landscape.

A VERY Informal Survey

By LYNN FOSTER

At the AAS Meeting in Jonesboro, we posted two questions on an easel outside the meeting room. The first was "What was your spark bird"? If you're not familiar with the term, Audubon defines it as "a species that triggers a lifelong passion for birding." Here are our results:

What was Your Spark Bird?

American Redstart
 American Robin
 Barn Swallow
 Black-Capped or Carolina Chickadee (2)
 Brown Headed Nuthatch
 Brown Pelican
 Budgie
 Chicken
 Crow
 Downy Woodpecker
 Great Blue Heron
 House Sparrow
 Mourning Dove
 Northern Cardinal (2)
 Northern Flicker
 Oriole
 Raven
 Red-Headed Woodpecker
 Rose-Breasted Grosbeak
 Scissor-Tailed Flycatcher
 Varied Thrush
 Warbler
 Wild Canaries
 Wren

... did yours make the list?

Mark Your Calendars for the Fall Meeting

By LYNN FOSTER

AAS Vice President

We are very excited for our upcoming fall meeting on October 13-15 at [Mount Sequoyah](#) in Fayetteville. We last met there in 2007, when DeLynn Hearn was President, and I am guessing Jack Stewart was Vice President. Parker Hall has been completely remodeled since then, and if you're coming in from out of town, the cabins have been reserved for us. Several private bedrooms, each with its own bathroom, comprise each cabin along with a common kitchenette and sitting area. Bedrooms are all keyed for privacy—it's a little like a bed and breakfast. NW Arkansas members who have recently met at Mount Sequoyah say it's great space. Lynn Sciumbato of Morning Star Wildlife Rehabilitation Center will speak Friday night on wild bird rehabilitation. Dr. Tim O'Connell of Oklahoma State University will speak Saturday night on preventing bird strikes. Kelly and Donna Mulhollan of [Still on the Hill](#) will be performing bird-themed music at our Saturday reception. Check out their new album, [Out of the Gray](#), created during the pandemic.

Taylor Long has kindly agreed to be our Field Trip Coordinator. We are offering 12 field trips, including research field trips, like those we had in Jonesboro, with University of Arkansas students, a beginners' field trip, and a bird/insect/plant field trip. Taylor will lead the final trip to the beloved [Ninestone Land Trust](#) on Sunday, October 15 as a perfect ending to what will no doubt be a great meeting!

We hope to see you there!

See a full description of the field trips and register on our website at the following link:

<https://arbirds.org/AAS/MeetingDetails.aspx?id=16>

To Opt-out of the Printed Newsletter:

- Log in to your account at arbirds.org, click "My Web Account" from the drop-down menu, check the box next to "Save the cost and send me the AAS newsletter by email," and click update.
- Note:** You may still receive a paper copy because there is a minimum number that must be printed.