



Arkansas Birds

Newsletter of the Arkansas Audubon Society

Winter 2025-26 | Volume 70 | No. 4

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

Bird-Friendly Arkansas

By PAM and JACK STEWART

AAS Bird-Friendly Arkansas Committee

After learning about the AAS Bird Friendly program, Park Partners, the volunteer group supporting the Buffalo National River (a designated Important Bird Area – IBA), organized a program to go after one non-native invasive plant discovered along the Lost Valley Trail in Compton, AR. Lost Valley is known for its magnificent spring flowers, which attract visitors from March to May and beyond. In 2015, Japanese Stilt Grass was threatening that natural display.

Japanese Stilt Grass, *Microstegium vimineum*, a graceful, rather harmless-looking, non-native, invasive grass, was found in patches along the lower trail. Stilt Grass is an annual that forms seed during the summer and drops the seed starting in late September throughout winter. It is not harmless! If allowed to spread and re-seed, the grass forms a thatch over large areas of undergrowth, killing native vegetation. As a “non-native,” Stilt Grass is not beneficial to wildlife and insects, and even deer rarely eat it.

Since the discovery, annual “Stilt Grass Pulls” have been organized by Park Partners. The grass is loosely rooted and easy to hand-pull. By pulling it in September before seeds drop, the spread of this destructive plant can be curtailed. (According to the Forest Service, it is best to combine pulling with a herbicidal spray, but in the National Park, spraying is not desirable.)



Melinda Caldwell, who has continued the program started by Pam Stewart (AAS), reported that **on September 6th** this year, 22 hard-working volunteers (*pictured in the above photo*) put in time pulling and bagging the noxious weed to save the wildflowers! She says the volunteers kept saying, “It was so fun to pull!”

Volunteers throughout the years have included the University of AR Sierra Club, local high school students, Master Gardeners, Audubon members, Master Naturalists, Park staff, and numerous other individuals. Melinda says she feels they have made headway, finding less this year than in the past.

**It is necessary to get permission and register as a VIP to remove any plants from a National Park. Time spent must be submitted to the Park’s Volunteer Coordinator and to Resource Management*

Newly Certified Properties:

Yards

Paula White

Pope Co.

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.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

ANNUAL DUES

Student	\$5.00
Individual	\$20.00
Family	\$30.00
Life	\$250.00 (one-time payment)

Note: Memberships paid during October – December will include full membership for the following calendar year

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



Brown-headed Nuthatch, Madison Co. | Photo by Taylor Long

Distribution and Abundance of Arkansas Birds

By CHRIS KELLNER

AAS Bird Records Committee Curator

The Fall Season

1 August – 30 November, 2025

Arkansas was relatively warm and very dry during the fall which may have reduced the number of unusual birds sighted. However, we did have a very exciting 4th record Long-tailed Jaeger along with Sabine's, Laughing and Short-billed Gulls.

Abbreviations: BKWR=Bald Knob National Wildlife Refuge; LDNP=Lake Dardanelle Nichols Property (restricted access); WMA=Wildlife Management Area.

Arkansas's thirty-seventh reported Cinnamon Teal was sighted at Grand Lake in Chicot Co on 30 Aug (Kenny and Ladonna Nichols).

Thirty-nine Red-breasted Mergansers were sighted on LDNP in Yell Co on 11 Nov (Kenny Nichols).

A Common Ground Dove was observed in Bradley, Arkansas in Lafayette Co on 8 Nov (Paul Dickson).

Red Knots are very unusual in Arkansas; our thirty-third recorded individual was photographed at BKWR in White Co on 28 Aug (Michael Linz).

Arkansas's 4th state record Long-tailed Jaeger was photographed at BKWR in White Co on 20 Aug (Ryan Turner).

An adult Laughing Gull was observed at Camp Nine (permission required) in Desha Co on 6 Aug (Dalton Robinson).

This was an exceptionally good year for Short-billed Gulls in Arkansas (four of the state's seven

records occurred in 2025); the fourth individual was photographed at Lee Creek Park in Crawford Co on 23 Nov (Matthew Matlock).

Sabine's Gulls are rare fall visitors in Arkansas. The second record for White Co was photographed at BKWR on 6 Sep (Michael Linz and Todd Green).



Sabine's Gull, White Co.

Photo by Michael Linz

An immature Common Tern was photographed at the James W. Trimble Lock and Dam on 18 Sep in Sebastian Co. (Matthew Matlock).

The third recorded Wood Stork for Calhoun Co was sighted in the Ouachita River Bottoms on 9 Aug (Zachary Abbott).

A Rough-legged Hawk was photographed at the University of Arkansas Experimental Farm (restricted access) in Washington Co on 26 Oct 2025.

Brown-headed Nuthatches are rare in the northern third of Arkansas. The third record for Northwest Arkansas was recorded at McIlroy WMA, Madison Co 11 Oct (Taylor Long; *see photo on page 2*).

A Cave Swallow was observed at Darrell Saul Minnow Farm in Prairie Co on 3 Oct (Kenny Nichols).

Red Crossbills are uncommon in Arkansas. One was identified by its diagnostic call as it flew through the Yvonne Neighborhood in Washington Co on 7 Nov (Mitchell Pruitt).

A Nelson's Sparrow was observed at Chesney Prairie Natural Area in Benton Co on 12 Oct (Jim Landrum).

A very late adult male Orchard Oriole was photographed at Jack Nolen Lake in Sebastian Co on 17 Nov (Matthew Matlock).

AAS Member Spotlight: Robin Buff

By LYNN FOSTER

AAS President

Robin Buff (*pictured below*) is the long-time Director of the Halberg Ecology Camp, and we thank her for that amazing service. But you may not know her connection to the Arkansas Audubon Society and the Camp goes way back—almost 50 years!



In 1978, she started graduate school at the University of Arkansas under the advisorship of Professor Doug James, and she joined AAS at his suggestion. “Graduate school was the best thing that ever happened to me, because I got to be outdoors in the field doing research.” Her passion for birds was kindled in Doug James’s class, at age 25.

Her connection with the Halberg Ecology Camp goes back to its beginnings. She taught entomology at the camp in 1981, during the camp’s second year, while it was still known as the AAS Ecology Camp. The next two summers, she taught ornithology at the camp. She took the next seven years off to have and care for her daughters but returned as kitchen director in 1990. In 2005, she became the camp’s co-director with Jim Gann, and in 2010, its director, a position she has held ever since.

In addition to her leadership position at the Halberg Camp, Robin served as Vice President of AAS in 2016-18, President in 2018-2020, and Immediate Past President in 2020-2022. Both her leadership of AAS and her management of the camp was challenged by the appearance of Covid, which required decisions to be made that had never been made in AAS’s history. What would have been the last convention of her term had to be cancelled. The camp was cancelled for 2 years.

Her biggest challenge was finding the next Vice President, who turned out to be Megan Foll. What she enjoyed the most about her presidency was the opportunity to serve on the Camp Committee and the Trust Committee, with the opportunity to vote on the Camp Committee and the opportunity to learn about all of the research proposals that come to the Trust Committee.

She also noted as achievements conventions she had planned—Mt. Magazine, because it was during the hummingbird festival and AAS received free meeting rooms—and Texarkana, because of the outstanding field trips and bird counts.

I asked Robin how Halberg Camp has changed over the years. She responded with two thoughts—requiring vaccinations (which is in line with most camps) and expanding the grades admitted (adding 7th graders to 5th and 6th graders). She added that she has relaxed over the years and has become more willing to bend established camp rules when it contributes to the well-being of campers.

Robin confessed she did not have a spark bird, although she had been tempted to make up an exciting story. Her most unusual bird experience was during camping in the Boundary Waters as a Girl Scout. She had walked away from camp and heard a loud booming sound. No one could identify it, and it wasn’t until many years later when she listened to Peterson’s bird calls on a record that she could identify it as a Ruffed Grouse.

In addition to her time spent working for AAS, for her day job Robin taught Biology and Field

Biology at Fayetteville High School for 29 years, retiring in May of 2014.

Education remains on her mind. In conclusion, Robin said, "I think that we have to continue environmental education for young people because they're our main hope. We can't have birds if we don't have a healthy environment, so we have to focus on the entire picture. The three main purposes of AAS are research, education, and conservation. We need to do even more now in this time of retrenchment."

Member News: Welcoming Chirps for Cailin!

By CAILIN SWINGLE

AAS News of Members Editor

Hello and Happy New Year to all AAS members! I'm Cailin and I live in west Little Rock with my husband David Swingle and dog Barkley. We began birding shortly after moving to Arkansas from Texas in 2022 and haven't looked back! I have been so inspired by the amazing birders that call Arkansas home, certainly by the many accolades and accomplishments, but even more by the warm welcome to this special community.

Filling the shoes of Dottie Boyles and the 11 years she edited this column would be impossible, but I look forward to carrying the torch for a while! I am honored to compile and share your updates and adventures, so please don't hesitate to reach out with news items throughout the year. Special thanks to all those who contributed to my first column, and with that, happy reading!

Hawaii Endemics and a Pelagic

In early December, Michael Linz, Patty McLean, and Matt Matlock went on a 10-day birding adventure with Mandy Talpas, owner of Hawaii Bird Tours. They covered three islands



Michael, Patty, and Matt at Hakalau Forest

(Oahu, Kauai, and the Big Island) and the North Pacific Ocean in search of Hawaiian endemic and pelagic birds. It was a great trip, currently totalling 95 different species, including the visiting and rare Blue Rock-Thrush, and several highly threatened species seldom seen in recent years. The eight-hour pelagic was off the coast of Kona where they also saw Rough-toothed and Fraser's Dolphins, hungry Skip-Jack and Albacore Tuna, and a few flying fish.



Hawaii Amakihi, an endemic honeycreeper – it uses the lower mandible to hammer on trees and the upper mandible to pry out beetle larvae.

Matt was impressed by the caliber of their guide and group noting that one birder has a life list of almost 6,000 species. Experiencing the majesty of the estimated 1,200-year-old trees in one of the last refuges for the declining honeycreeper populations was a highlight of the trip.

Arkansas Birders in Costa Rica

On another memorable AAST fundraising trip to Costa Rica in December, Dr. Ragupathy Kannan was joined by members Lynn Christie, Chris Kellner, Leslie Peacock, William Rosser, Gretta Vowell, Robin Buff, and other non-members. Leslie has written a wonderful article about the trip published on pages 7–9 in this issue.

Banding and Diet Analysis of Henslow's Sparrows

Kevin Krajcir, AAS Conservation Committee Chair and Biologist/Grants Coordinator at the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, is leading a project to survey, band, and collect samples from Henslow's Sparrows wintering in the rare saline soil barrens and grasslands of southern Arkansas. The main objective of this project is to gain a better understanding of the winter diet of these sparrows in these rare grasslands. To do so, Kevin and volunteers are collecting fecal samples from the birds upon capture. Capturing these mouse-like birds involves walking transects or dragging a rope through the grasslands to attempt to flush these birds into a mist net. Once the fecal sample is collected, the birds are banded and morphometric data, such as wing chord length and body mass, are measured before the birds are released. The fecal samples will be sent to collaborators who use laboratory methods to analyze and identify the DNA fragments of whatever invertebrates or plant material the birds have eaten. Gaining a better understanding of the diet of these rapidly declining songbirds could help inform conservation actions.

Cailin Swingle has volunteered with Kevin and can attest to the unique behavior of these wintering sparrows who rarely make noise or fly, and literally run through the dense grasses to avoid detection. Getting to see the birds' beautiful plumage up close makes the hours of mucking through flooded prairies totally worth it!



*Henslow's Sparrow
(Banded Fall 2025)*

Membership Renewal Reminder!

Are you a student member of AAS? Individual member? Family member? If yes, your membership expired December 31 unless you renewed it for 2026. If you haven't yet renewed, please do so today!

And thanks so much for your support of AAS!

Moving Away but Staying Connected

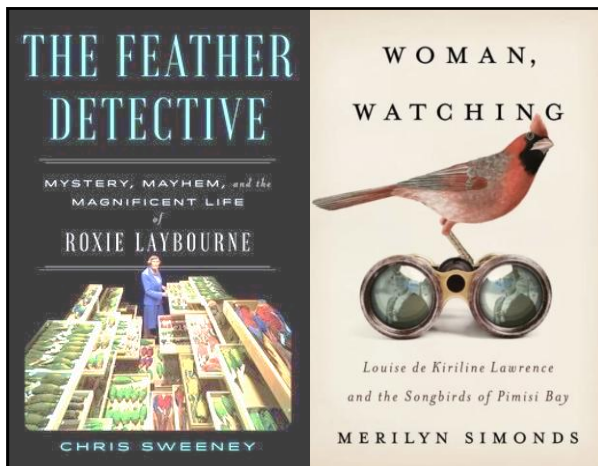
Members Delos and Hazel McCauley are soon moving to Nacogdoches, Texas to be near family. The spring convention was their last, but you can stay in touch by email at mccauleydelos@gmail.com.

Member Mitchell Pruitt, University of Arkansas visiting assistant professor and cofounder and director of the Ozark Bird Conservancy, is starting as a research biologist at Hawk Mountain in Pennsylvania in the spring. Ozark Bird Conservancy and its research will continue, so be sure to follow along at <https://ozarkbirdconservancy.org>. He says he

may not be leaving Arkansas permanently, and we hope that is true!

Feathers Connect Us -Two book Recommendations

By JACK STEWART



It is an unusual experience to read in the pages of a book about someone with whom you have or had a direct connection. There it is in print, producing a mild jolt of recognition. That has happened to me twice recently. The first occurrence was while reading *Woman Watching* by Marilyn Simonds. Actually, Pam was reading the book when she came across a familiar name. “Do we know a Ruth Thomas?” Could this be the same Ruth Thomas of Arkansas? The person in whose name the “Ruth Thomas Fund” was established? The book is about Louise de Kiriline Lawrence, a well-known naturalist, contributor to our knowledge of birds, and one of the first observers to note species in decline. It turns out that Ruth Thomas had an extensive correspondence with Louise. I won’t go into the details, but I recommend this well-written biography of Louise de Kiriline Lawrence, which references Ruth Thomas.

The second surprise occurred within the first two pages of *Feather Detective* by Chris Sweeney. A book lent to me by Audubon member Joan Lipsmeyer. This biography describes the life of

Roxie Laybourne, forensic ornithologist. A few pages into the book triggered a memory from the mid-sixties. I had driven to State College, Pennsylvania, to attend a meeting of the AOU (American Ornithologists Union). Although the main items on the agenda were reports of research results and critiques of them, field trips were offered. I joined a group of about 12 male professors and one female professor. We encountered few birds, but when we did, I was amazed to discover that there was not a single knowledgeable field ornithologist in the group. We trudged along single file down a narrow path. Now and then, someone would spot a feather on the ground and pass it back until, at the end of the line, a very short woman would examine it and pass it forward not only with the identity of the species, but also the part of the body the feather had come from. No one else seemed particularly surprised by this remarkable feat. Later, I learned that the woman was named Roxie Laybourne, but nothing else about her. Until *Feather Detective* was published, describing her amazing career. (Joan, I’m taking good care of your book and will return it as soon as we get back to Arkansas.)

Quetzals, Crakes, and Capuchins: Costa Rica Captivates Arkansas Audubon Birders

By LESLIE PEACOCK

Seeing the Resplendent Quetzal is on everyone’s wish list, and thanks to UAFS professor Ragupathy Kannan and legendary guide Esteban Biamonte, 15 birders got beautiful looks at this near-threatened bird in Costa Rica in December. The flowing-tailed iridescent male and a nearby female were in perfect light, and just off the path at the Curi-Cancha Refugio near the Monteverde Preserve.

It was the 14th stop (including hotels) on the Dec. 14-21, 2025, tour, which raised \$800 for the

Arkansas Audubon Society Trust, given in memory of Professor Douglas James's 100 birth anniversary. (AR-birders have helped Kannan raise a total of \$2,400 on this and two other tours this year.)



Group at the quetzal site in Monteverde

But the quetzal was just one of the terrific birds on this trip in the beautiful and friendly country of Costa Rica. Elusive White-throated and Yellow-breasted Crakes, highly range-restricted Nicaraguan Grackles and stunningly gorgeous Snowcap hummingbirds made the list. Non-feathered wonders included a variety of herps, capuchin monkeys, agoutis, and coatis. The geological features of a volcano were extraordinary; a Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth slept and Central American Spider Monkeys frolicked in the trees on the Cano Negro Natural Lodge grounds.

A follow-up to last year's tour of the mountains and valleys of southeastern Costa Rica, this year's tour got off to a hot start at the lush Tapir Valley Nature Preserve in Bijagua, where among other fabulous finds were a Long-tailed Tyrant, a Great Curassow pair, and Snowcap and Black-crested Coquette hummingbirds. There was a lot of rain, but the

birds — and two yellow Central American Eyelash Vipers curled peacefully in the crooks of trees (some of us didn't get close enough to inspect the eyelashes) — made up for the soggy conditions.

Stripe-breasted Wrens, White-Breasted Wood-wrens, and a Broad-billed Motmot were hanging out together on the steep Rio Celeste trail in the Tenorio Volcano National Park the following day. The highlight of the trail is the waterfall into the blue pool of the Rio Celeste.



Trip leader, Prof. Ragupathy Kannan, at Tenorio waterfall

Birders taken out by boat into the Cano Negro wetlands, near the Nicaraguan border, got to experience one of Costa Rica's — and the world's — most precious wildlife preserves. It was here that guide Renato Paniagua made sure birders found the rarely seen Yellow-breasted Crake. Northern Jacanas ruined a Bare-throated Tiger-Heron's attempt to eat a fish he'd caught; a Boat-billed Heron snoozed in a tree; Snail Kites flew back and forth; and Pacific Screech-Owls looked down on 15 sets of binoculars. Catch of the day were the Nicaraguan Grackles, distinguished by their V-shaped tails, and Lesser Yellow-headed Vultures. Day-glo Green Basilisks, huge, spiky Green Iguanas and Spectacled Caimans added a certain prehistoric feel to the boat ride. On dry

land, when we stopped to get a view of courting Pinnated Bitterns, a sharp-eyed member of the group spotted White-throated Crape chicks scurrying to shelter across the road. The guides weren't through yet, though dark had descended: the van halted for looks at a tree frog, a fer-de-lance crossing the road (yikes!), a Great Potoo atop a pole (pictured at right) and a Black-and-White Owl.



Great Potoo | Photo by Esteban Biamonte

Just before the quetzal was spotted at Curi-Cancha, a private wildlife preserve near the Monteverde Preserve, birders heard the captivating wood-thrush-like call of a Black-faced Solitaire. Feeders at Curi-Cancha gave the group close, if buzzy, looks at the Coppery-headed Emerald hummingbird, a Costa Rican endemic; a glowing Purple-throated Mountain-gem, a Magenta-throated Woodstar, a Violet Sabrewing and a Stripe-Tailed Hummingbird. In all, 21 species of hummingbirds were sighted. Central American White-faced Capuchins greeted us at the beginning of the trail; Coati families accompanied us as we hiked.

The last hike on the trip was the astounding Rincon de la Vieja National Park, one of those rare places on earth – like our Yellowstone Park – where the fire and steam of the planet's core erupt. Trails go by hot, sulfuric ponds, mudpots send forth blooming bubbles of hot mud and the mist of fumaroles creates an otherworldly feel to the forest. If those geological wonders weren't enough, the trail led to the La Victoria waterfall, in which hundreds of gallons of water cascade 115 feet down to the Rio Negro. There were, of course, good birds to see as well, including

lekking Blue-throated Goldentail hummingbirds and noisy White-throated Magpie-Jays.

After hiking the trails of the volcano, birders put aside their binoculars for a dip into the Rio Negro and the hot-spring-fed pools by its side. This was the spa event of the trip, where we covered our bodies and gave ourselves facials of warm mud. Results were stunning.

In all, birders recorded a total of 252 species of birds and expressed hope they could reconnoiter in Costa Rica again next year. Full lists, maps, photos, videos and audios are all embedded in the comprehensive [eBird trip report](#) filed for posterity.

In addition, [Arkansas Audubon's Costa Rica Bioblitz 2025](#), led by Dr. Kannan and documented on iNaturalist, includes 319 photographs and audios of over 200 species of wild organisms from the trip.



Group on the hanging bridges at Heliconius Lodge

Fall Convention Report

By CHERYL JOHNSON AND LYNN FOSTER

The fall convention in Conway was a success, with 65 people attending. The weather forecast was concerning, and we had alternate activities planned, but the rain held off and all field trips took place as planned.

Patty McLean coordinated 11 field trips that showcased the Conway area's best birding! Cailin Swingle ran the silent auction, which brought in over \$750 for the AAS general fund.

Attendees enjoyed hearing about Arkansas black bears from Spencer Daniels and Crowned Cassowaries from Dr. Todd Green.

Symposium speakers Ty Sharrow, Lark Sybrant, and Kevin Krajcir discussed their research projects, all of which were funded by the Arkansas Audubon Society Trust.

AAS was also happy to host a meeting of representatives from the various National Audubon local chapters around the state at the fall meeting. Groups represented were:

- Audubon Society of Central Arkansas
- Arkansas River Valley Audubon Society
- Garland County Audubon Society
- Hot Springs Village Audubon Society
- Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society

Charles Allen, Engagement Manager for Audubon Delta, and Robert Kenny, the new Vice President of Audubon Delta, were also present. Some good exchanges of information took place, and everyone agreed it was a valuable meeting.

Mark your calendars now for the spring convention: April 24-26 at the Fort Smith Wyndham Hotel!

in yards and on field trips. At the same time, more and more people are interested in birding. Let's work to connect these two trends and inspire even more people to take an interest in conservation.

Writing the Member Spotlight, a new feature of the newsletter, has been enlightening and educational for me. This month's member is Robin Buff. You can read about her on pages 4–5, but her support of AAS has been significant and dependable and has spanned almost 50 years. Which brings me to a point I can't make too often: **AAS depends on its members. We are a volunteer organization. The day that folks stop volunteering is the day AAS stops existing. And thank you, all of you who have volunteered in the past or are volunteering now!**

Our fall convention in Conway was a success! Over 60 people attended, participating in 11 field trips, and enjoying presentations about Arkansas bears and Crowned Cassowaries. See the article preceding this one for a full summary.

In a recent email update to members, I mentioned that in January the Board would begin a process to consider and ultimately vote on whether to adopt a "doing business as" name that does not contain "Audubon." Our legal name would not change. This was suggested by the Ad Hoc Insight Committee (charged with suggesting ways to increase membership and improve outreach and communications) in its report to the Board of Directors, along with many other suggestions which the Board has and is in the process of considering. The Board has been working through these suggestions and has been implementing many of them.

By the time you get this newsletter issue, most likely you will have received an email laying out the Committee's reasons for changing our name. The email will also detail process to give all members the opportunity to comment on this proposed action, which, in the end, will require a Board vote. All members will have a chance to

President's Column

By LYNN FOSTER
AAS President

Happy New Year! This year I'm hoping we can do even more for birds and birders. The plight of birds continues to worsen. Many of you are reporting fewer birds spotted



New AAS Members

Debbie Milam	Little Rock AR
Justine Baker	Little Rock AR
Hannah Nichols	Monticello AR
Ronda Cody	Bryant AR
Lindsey Morgan	Little Rock AR
Jenny Wiedower	Little Rock AR
Donna Johnson	Benton AR
Ian MacGregor	Bella Vista AR
Cadence Ventress	Benton AR

New Life Members

Rick Owen & Ann Owen	Little Rock AR
Denise Hilton	Searcy AR

express their opinions. We hope you will. We recognize that this could be a divisive issue, and we hope it will be approached by everyone with respect, consideration, and openness.

Since the last newsletter, on behalf of AAS I've spoken to the Central Arkansas Sierra Club about how to prevent birdstrikes with bird-friendly windows, exhibited at the Bernice Garden plant sale (with new member Zach Abbott); presented on Rowe Sanctuary and sandhill cranes to the Central Arkansas Master Naturalists; attended a Zoom meeting with representatives from the American Bird Conservancy, Sen. Boozman's staff; and Jack Stewart, chaired the Motus Working Group and organized Arkansas Reads Leopold events to take place in March in Fayetteville, Conway, Maumelle, North Little Rock, and Little Rock.

And here's some more good news, as of January 2—you may recall in the last issue I explained that we had regained our federal tax-exempt status but were in danger of becoming an entity that the IRS designates as a "private foundation," which would have undesired tax consequences. Our accountants have informed us that we are in no danger of that at present,

thanks to your year-end "small" contributions. Thanks to everyone who donated in response to our call! Now only one thing remains, and that is to get "charitable organization" status in Arkansas. We've been trying to get the Arkansas Secretary of State to move on this for months. Hopefully it will be granted in the near future.

Thank you for your support of AAS!

Donations to the General Fund

Janet Nye
Ken Graves
Cathi Kindt
Ron Kew
Margaret Nelson
Kathy Wells
Jan Robert,

In Honor of Gary and Becky Wheeler

Robyn Metzger,

In Honor of Ginger Young

Tammy Roberson,

In Honor of Don and Peggy Pipkins

PARKER AWARD NOMINATIONS SOUGHT

The Parker Service Award, named for Max and Helen Parker, was established in 2004. It is given *to individuals or groups* who have demonstrated over an extended period of time outstanding contributions to the Arkansas Audubon Society, its adjuncts, development, and goals.

The Parker Service Award is presented by the President at the spring convention. This year's award committee consists of Sarah Morris (chair), Lynn Christie, Barry Haas (2013 recipient), and Terry Butler (2022 recipient). They are charged with selecting the recipient, although they may decide not to make an award. If given, it will be presented at the Spring Convention. Do you wish to nominate someone? Send an email describing their contributions and exceptional service over an extended period to the AAS to either Sarah

Morris, saraha.morris1@gmail.com, or Lynn Foster, lfoster5211@gmail.com. The deadline for nominations is Feb. 15.

AAS 2025 Member Survey

By LYNN FOSTER

AAS President

In the summer of 2025, AAS sent out a survey to its members. We received 65 responses. All in all, the AAS Board members were pleased by the results because by and large you, our members, are satisfied with your AAS memberships.

Below are the most significant survey results.

Most of our members, whether they responded or not, are life members. Of those responding, 42% were life members, 37% were individual members, and 17% were family members. Three percent were student members and the rest did not know.

Many if not most of our members are long-time members, so the question "How did you first hear about us?" may have gotten responses that are not useful to us today, but of the numerically significant responses, 28% said friends or family, 28% said through birding activities, 11% said through Google searching, and 5% said through our website.

Seventy-seven percent of respondents said they were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with their AAS membership. And no one indicated they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied! We are very pleased by this response, which is the core question of the survey. And 71% of respondents are either very likely or likely to recommend AAS membership to others.

The AAS program or activity most were familiar with was our conventions (88%). Tied for second place (82%) were the summer ecology camps and bird-friendly yard program. In last place was the advocacy AAS conducts on behalf of birds. Right now Kevin Krajcir heads up the

Conservation Committee, which drafts for board approval emails and letters, arranges for testimony on occasion, and signs onto letters from other groups. You can see recent examples of our advocacy on the [Committee page](#) on our website.

This year Michael Ferrara revived our dormant private members-only Facebook group. We know not all of our members are on Facebook, but if you are, we hope you'll join. Only 19% of respondents were familiar with it. Forty-six percent knew about our public Facebook page, which currently has over 5600 followers! Help us out, and like and share our posts!

Thirty percent of respondents said they have never attended an AAS convention. We hope you will join us in Fort Smith in April! See elsewhere in this issue for a description of the convention.

Finally, we were curious about what you'd like AAS to do in future. Two activities tied for first. Sixty-four percent of respondents indicated we should offer 1) day-long field trips to less-traveled hotspots and 2) workshops on topics of interest such as eBird, photography, or planting native plants for birds. In second place, 60% of respondents want weekend field trips to hotspots in or close to Arkansas. The two next most popular ideas, at 40% and 35% respectively, were to offer classes and information for beginning birders and to offer Big Days or bioblitzes. Along with Audubon Delta, ASCA, and NWAAS, we're planning another BirdAR birdathon the second week in May—so mark your calendars!

The penultimate question asked whether you were interested in volunteering. The most popular activity (58% of respondents) is volunteering at conventions, and we can always need help! Email Cheryl Johnson at cjbluebird@gmail.com if you're interested. Next most popular was being a Bird-Friendly Arkansas ambassador. Jack Stewart, jampack1@mac.com, heads that program. One-quarter of respondents indicated interest in being a field trip guide. As

our convention planner, Cheryl is the best person to contact about that also. Our website now contains a [volunteers page](#) where you can list your preferences.

AAS is an all-volunteer organization. We could not exist were it not for the many volunteers who keep us running with their time and expertise. We appreciate all of you who responded to our survey! It will guide future board decisions.

Your Trust at Work: AAS Trust Report

By RAGUPATHY KANNAN

AAS Trust Chair

The Trust met virtually on 20 October 2025. For the Fall 2025 session, the Trustees granted seven awards totaling \$5546.00.

- Patrick Barnes (Undergraduate, ATU) was awarded \$700 for investigating ectoparasite communities in bluebird nests.
- Ella Bollinger (MS, ATU) was awarded \$546 for her study on how biting insects influence corticosteroid levels in nestling bluebirds.
- Jonathon Cantu (MS, UNT) was given \$500 for tagging kestrels to investigate causes of winter mortality.
- Mason Dillard (MS, ATU) made \$500 for studying the impact of grassland management in bird communities.
- Dustin Kohler (MS, ATU) was given \$1300 for researching habitat use in Cerulean Warblers.
- Victoria Langham (MS, UNT) got \$500 to help with fuel costs in her study of delayed plumage maturation in Painted Buntings.
- Jacob Wyco (PhD, ASTATE) made \$1500 for his study on feather mite recolonization in Prothonotary Warblers.

I thank Dr. Than Boves, Lynn Foster, Dr. Maureen McClung, and Cherrie-Lee Phillip for reviewing the proposals, and Megan Foll, AAST Treasurer, for keeping the trust finances in order.

AAS Trust Donations

Research-Educational Fund

Patty McClean

Emily Donahue

Megan Foll

Lynn Foster

Karen Holliday

Rayma Jean and Keith Hawkins

Danette Watkins

Ragupathy Kannan,

Costa Rica and Panama Birding Tours,

In Memory of Prof. Doug James

Sara Wittenberg

Samuel Fletcher

Kevin Krajcir

Stacy Holifield

Ann Gordon,

In Memory of Carolyn Minson

Joseph Parker

Douglas Kunzman

Jeff Short,

In Memory of JoSan Short & Doug James

Halberg Ecology Camps: Fall Appeal Donations Continue

By BARRY HAAS

Ecology Camp Treasurer

"As we near the end of 2025 (as this is being written) we celebrate another year of holding three youth ecology camps. Two sessions of the Halberg Ecology Camp for 5th, 6th, and 7th grade

youth were held in June. The Halberg Ecology Camp is for first- and second-year campers, and held its first session in 1980. One session of the Johnson Advanced Camp was held in July for third-year campers. The Advanced Camp held its inaugural session in 2007.

First-year campers get a sampling of ornithology, herpetology, mammalogy, entomology, botany, geology, and aquatic biology. Second-year campers experience a more advanced curriculum. Third-year campers have the most advanced curriculum at a camp in a different location from the Halberg Ecology Camp.

Over the years we have worked hard to keep the cost of tuition as affordable as possible while offering an exceptional hands-on learning experience for youth who have a love of nature. Our ongoing Fall Appeal, Audubon, and other nature organizations plus memorials and honorariums combine to keep the cost affordable. Our hope is to offer this learning opportunity to every girl or boy regardless of their family's ability to afford the full cost of tuition.

Donations of any size can be made at the AAS website <https://arbirds.org/EcologyCamp/> or by mailing a check made payable to "AAS Halberg Ecology Camp" to P.O. Box 242088, Little Rock, AR 72223. To complete a donation online you must complete your method of payment with either PayPal or credit card. If you didn't have to choose a payment method and complete that information, your donation will not go through.

All donations are tax deductible, and are acknowledged by letter or e-mail. If you have any questions regarding donations, please let me know: bhaas@sbcglobal.net

Ecology Camp Donations

(September 4 – December 28, 2025)

Fall Appeal

Barbara Baker
Susan Hardin & Barry Haas
Sara & Bob Caulk
Marty & Wayne Lynch
David & Terri Luneau
Mary Sanders
Fred Berry

Donations by Individuals

Keith & Rayma Jean Hawkins
David & Jean Parham
Richard & Kathy McCormick
Charles & Ruth Anderson
Chrisanda Button
Steve Arnold
Willa Harkey

Scholarships & Tuition Assistance

Hot Springs Village Audubon Society

Memorials & Honoraria

John & Paula Wright,
In Memory of Pat Jamison Moore
Ed & Sil Pembleton,
In Memory of Joyce Godfrey
Linda Morse,
In Honor of Claire Shaw's birthday

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 to be printed.

ANNUAL ECOLOGY CAMP FALL APPEAL

The Halberg Ecology Camp and Johnson Advanced Camp make an Annual Fall Appeal in an effort to keep camp tuition affordable for more Arkansas families. Please consider either making a donation online (<https://www.arbirds.org/EcologyCamp/>), or mailing your donation with the form at bottom.

Barry Haas, Ecology Camp Treasurer

Please print the following information:

Name(s) _____

Street Address _____

City, State & Zip Code _____

Yes, I want to support the Arkansas Audubon Society youth ecology camps:

\$25 _____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____

\$250 _____ \$500 _____ Other \$ _____

Please return this form with your check made payable to either "AAS Halberg Ecology Camp":

Barry Haas, Treasurer
AAS Halberg Ecology Camp
P. O. Box 242088
Little Rock, AR 72223

All donations are tax deductible as allowed by law. The Arkansas Audubon Society is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization as determined by the Internal Revenue Service.

PLEASE CLIP THE SECTION ABOVE AND INCLUDE WITH YOUR CHECK.

Tuition is \$500 for first-year campers to keep our youth ecology camps affordable for as many Arkansas families as possible. The difference between tuition and the actual cost of camp is funded by this Annual Fall Appeal, donations from Audubon chapters and other nature organizations like the Arkansas Native Plant Society and Ozark Society, honorariums and memorials. We also have three scholarship endowments that fund scholarships and tuition assistance each summer.

The seven Halberg Ecology Camp disciplines- ornithology, aquatic biology, herpetology, mammalogy, geology, entomology and botany- are taught to first-year campers. Two instructors work with a class of about 8 youth. Instructors range from Ph.D. professionals to college instructors to high school teachers to graduate students and in some cases self-taught naturalists. We are fortunate to have a number of long-time staff members. The Camp Committee works throughout the year to make sure adequate funding is in place, and staff have all the essentials needed. It's a combined effort that culminates each June and July as these youth are immersed in all the wonders and complexities of nature.