



Arkansas Birds

Newsletter of the Arkansas Audubon Society

Spring 2026 | Volume 71 | No. 1

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

Distribution and Abundance of Arkansas Birds

By CHRIS KELLNER

AAS Bird Records Committee Curator

The Winter Season

1 December – 28 February, 2026

The Arkansas Audubon Society Bird Records Committee consists of five volunteers: Patty McLean, Charles Mills, Joe Neal, Kenny Nichols, and me as chair. Each season we review records of unusual birds submitted to us and determine whether to accept them based on the information provided. Photographs are very helpful, but they do not always provide enough detail to confirm an identification. In those cases, we rely on the written description submitted with the record. If your photo is unclear—or if you do not have one—please include a careful description of the bird you observed. We also ask that you submit records directly to us (arbirds.org/Records/Report); even if you have also submitted them to eBird.

We review “unusual” birds that are either rarely seen in Arkansas, are rare for a county or region of Arkansas, or are out of season. Examples of each are included in this winter’s report.

The unusual weather we had this winter which was very dry then very warm then an unusually heavy snowstorm that left us with an unusually persistent snowpack probably influenced the unusual birds that were observed. The most unusual sightings were two separate sightings of Scott’s orioles which rarely occur in Arkansas and a western tanager which is also very rare in Arkansas.

Abbreviations: LDNP=Lake Dardanelle Nichols Property (restricted access)

All three North American scoter species were recorded this winter: A surf scoter, the first ever for Sebastian Co., was observed at the James W. Trimble Lock and Dam in Sebastian Co. 19 Dec (Matthew Matlock). A white-winged scoter was photographed on Lake Balboa in Garland Co. 6 Dec (Vic Prislipsky). Finally, a black scoter was observed on LDNP in Yell Co. 8 Dec (Kenny and LaDonna Nichols and Clay Hooten).



Long-tailed Ducks, Franklin Co. | Photo by Sandy Berger

Two long-tailed ducks were photographed on Shores Lake in Franklin Co. (the first county record) 18 Dec (Matthew Matlock).

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



Vermilion Flycatcher | Photo by Michael Linz

Three Inca doves were photographed in Plainview in Yell Co. 23 Dec (Sonya Bonn).

Approximately 5% of rufous hummingbirds have green plumage on their backs. However, the outer tail feathers are diagnostic, so if you can get a photo showing the tail spread, we can distinguish them. A rufous/Allen's hummingbird was photographed in East Central Sebastian Co. 30 Dec. The photo did not show the outer tail feathers (Pamela Logan).

A very late juvenile white ibis was photographed at the Arkadelphia Oxidation Ponds (restricted access) in Clark Co. 10 Jan (Renn and Terry Tumblison).

This time of year, dark ibis can be very difficult to distinguish. A white-faced/glossy ibis was photographed off of Orrick Road in Crawford Co. 31 Dec (Lindsey Turner).

Two separate reports of vermilion flycatchers were submitted this winter. Two adult males were photographed at Lake Chicot in Chicot Co. 12 Jan (Jason True). The second sighting occurred during the Lonoke Christmas Bird Count during which a single adult male was observed along Pettus Rd. in Lonoke Co. 14 Dec (Kevin Krajcir).

A white-eyed vireo with gray eyes (indicating it was born in 2025) was photographed at the Ruth Armstrong Nature Area in Sebastian Co. 2 Jan (Matthew Matlock). A blue-headed vireo was photographed at Bona Dea Trails and Sanctuary in Pope Co. 21 Dec (Dustin Kohler).

Scott's orioles are native to the Southwestern U. S. and are rarely seen in Arkansas, where we now have 11 records. Two of the 11 records occurred this year. One was photographed at a feeder in Hot Springs National Park in Garland Co. 25 Jan (Fred and Mary Gerber). Another sighting was at the Cabin Creek Recreation Area in Johnson Co. 3 Jan (Ryan and Lyndsey Turner).

A very early Louisiana Waterthrush was photographed at Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge in Pope Co. 18 Jan (Dustin Kohler).

The 17th occurrence of a western tanager occurred this winter involving an adult male that

was photographed at a feeder at Hot Springs Village in Saline Co. 23 Jan (Phillip Vogt).

Upcoming Fort Smith Convention

By LYNN FOSTER

AAS President

Have you registered yet? **Cheryl Johnson** has planned a great meeting! On Friday night, AAS member **Ragan Sutterfield**, Episcopal priest, author, and lifelong birder, will present "**There Are No Unsacred Places**": **Learning Grief and Hope with Wendell Berry**. Drawing on over three decades of birding, Ragan Sutterfield will present the work of farmer, environmental activist and writer Wendell Berry to explore grief and hope for the natural world. This presentation will reveal why Berry says that "There are no unsacred places/only sacred places and desecrated places," and how that recognition can empower a deeper conservation ethic.

Saturday afternoon's symposium will feature **Taylor Long**, one of our Arkansas's eBird reviewers. He will take us "**Behind the Checklist: An eBird Reviewer's Perspective**," and will answer any questions we may have. Do you have a question about eBird? Send it in advance to Taylor at mtaylorlong@hey.com.

Saturday night, **Dr. Ragupathy Kannan**, **professor of biology at UAFS since 1994. will be our speaker**. He will talk about the "**Rapid Expansion of Limpkins across Anglo America**." Kannan and his colleague, Dr. Jack Jackson, mentored two local high school students who researched the rapid spread of Limpkins across North America. Their research appeared as the cover story in the *Journal of the Arkansas Academy of Science*. With over 600 downloads, the paper is among the most popular in recent times in that journal!

Field Trip Co-Coordinators **Sandy Berger** and **Matt Matlock** have planned exciting field trips in and around their hometown of Ft. Smith, with 12 guided trips planned over 3 days, including trips to Sequoyah NWR in Oklahoma, Lake Fort Smith State Park, Sunnymede Park, and Frog Bayou. On Sunday, a trip to the Ben Geren Golf Course is planned. We'll ride in golf carts and view the restoration of Massard Prairie on the gold course grounds. If you want to sign up for this new field trip, contact Cheryl Johnson at cjbluebird@comcast.net or register for it at the convention. Register on our website [here](#). We hope to see you there!

New AAS Members

Debbie Milam	Little Rock AR
Jes Farquhar	Sallisaw OK
Beatrice Miller	Houston AR
Paul Whannel	Little Rock AR
David Seals	Hot Springs AR
Nancy Felker	Garfield AR
Michael, Laura-Grace, Jewel, & Abbigail Getty	Cabot AR
Brady Bolding	North Little Rock AR
Delphine Benjamin	Little Rock AR
Katlynn Johnson	Pine Bluff AR

New Life Members

Cody Massery	Conway AR
Valerie Martin	Arkadelphia AR

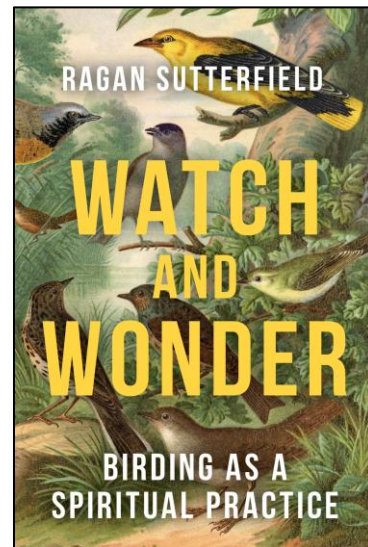
Member News: Spring Has Sprung!

By CAILIN SWINGLE
AAS News of Members Editor

I hope this finds you amidst a wonderful and birdy Spring migration. The tiny window of time

when the first warblers arrive, before the trees have fully leafed out in my backyard, and I can quickly spot them singing in the tree tops, has got to be one of my very favorites each year. Hearing, then seeing, a Black-throated Green Warbler from my patio last Spring is a core memory for me. This year we made memories a little farther from home out in Phoenix, Arizona for baseball Spring Training (go Rangers!). David and I squeezed in a few bird walks and enjoyed seeing Abert's Towhees, Gila Woodpeckers, and our first humming bird of the year - the Anna's!

Watch and Wonder with Ragan Sutterfield



Beautiful birds on the cover of Watch and Wonder: Birding as a Spiritual Practice

Ragan Sutterfield, AAS member and the Friday night speaker at the Spring '26 convention in Fort Smith, just published his 5th book, Watch and Wonder: Birding as a Spiritual Practice. If you've been on a field trip or maybe Christmas Bird Count with Ragan, then you've likely experienced his warm, humble, and inclusive way of birding. While his decades of birding experience and great ear make him a stellar birding guide, his patience and positivity make any outing fun regardless of the resulting list. The book is dedicated to "Bill Shepherd, and the Arkansas birding community, for welcoming

[Ragan] into this common wonder." I asked about any "local" features in the book, and he pointed to mentions of the Little Rock Christmas Bird Count and researching Kentucky Warblers in Holla Bend. Ragan says "AAS members will have birded many of the same landscapes I reflect on." He added, "The book begins with my experience, as a very young birder, being part of finding Arkansas' first Fork-tailed Flycatcher. Seeing such a rare bird opened my eyes to all the extraordinary things that are happening around us all the time, but we usually miss." Grab a copy of this book and reflect on the many ways birding enhances our lives!

~ Cailin Swingle and Ragan Sutterfield

Well Wishes to the Wintering Wayfinders



Volunteers commemorating the 500th bird banded at the Little Rock Audubon Center during the 2025-2026 MoSI banding season.

AAS Conservation Chair, Kevin Krajcir, and his team of volunteers just wrapped up the second season of bird banding for MoSI: El Monitoreo de Sobrevivencia Invernal (Monitoring Neotropical Migrants in Winter) at the Little Rock Audubon Center (LRAC). While the overall encounters (one hundred fifty) and number of unique species (twenty-one) were fewer than the first season, there were many highlight birds and milestones achieved. There were 5 new species added for MoSI banding operations, 4 of which were also

new for all banding at Audubon; these included Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Towhee, Fox Sparrow, LeConte's Sparrow, and Purple Finch! Additionally, as celebrated in the included photo, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet was the 500th bird banded at LRAC through various banding projects led by Kevin. Many of these details and more were shared including up-close bird photos on the LRAC Facebook page, so be sure to Follow it if you don't already!

~ Kevin Krajcir

It's Superman! It's a plane! It's an American Tree Sparrow!



American Tree Sparrow, Faulkner Co. | Photo by Michael Linz

Perhaps the best time to find an American Tree Sparrow, unless you live in Northwest Arkansas, is to go hunting just after a snow storm. We probably get more during winter than we know, and many snow events indicate this is true. When snow covers the ground, this species is forced to feed near the road's edge, and as soon as the snow melts, they disappear again...back to who knows where.

This past February with the hard snow and ice, Michael Linz and Patty McLean found a few different individuals in the Faulkner County area. The word got out and, by the next morning, a good number of birders showed up to see this lovely little sparrow. Viewing continued until the fields were mostly snow free, and then it was not

to be seen again. A life bird for many, a state bird for several, and a first county bird for Patty and Michael.

~ Patty McLean and Michael Linz

Hope is the Thing with Feathers

When Patty McLean heard about the Arkansas Reads Leopold event she was quickly reminded of one of her favorite poems. While not written by Leopold, she just has to believe that the poems of Emily Dickinson influenced young Aldo's view of the world. Regardless, they shared a deep connection to nature and the resulting gift it gives us all, even today in our busy and complicated lives. Here is Emily's poem:

HOPE IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS

*"Hope" is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -*

*And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -*

*I've heard it in the chilliest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of me.*

~ Patty McLean and Emily Dickinson

Arkansas Reads Leopold Events a Success

By LYNN FOSTER
AAS President

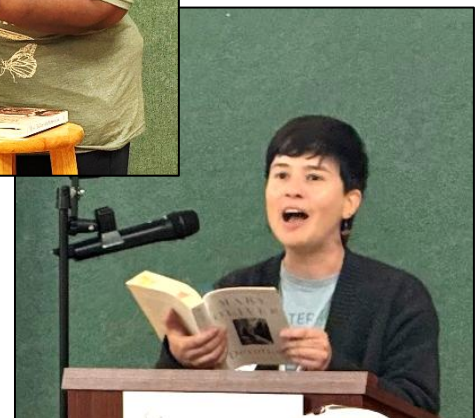
How it all started was an email from the Aldo Leopold Foundation in the summer of 2025 announcing grants to organizations who would



hold community readings of A Sand County Almanac. I held a zoom meeting with the Sierra Club, Ozark Society, Audubon Delta, Central Arkansas Master Naturalists, and other groups, all of whom expressed enthusiasm for the idea. In December 2026 and January 2027, the Arkansas Audubon Society received a grant of \$1000 from the Aldo Leopold Foundation and 440 copies of A Sand County Almanac.



Volunteer readers
Cherrie-Lee Phillip
(top left) and
Ariana Rimmel
(bottom right),
AAS Members



Partners included in the planning were the Arkansas Environmental Education Association, Arkansas Master Naturalists Central, Foothills, and Northwest Chapters, Audubon Delta, Audubon Society of Central Arkansas, Central Arkansas Library System, Faulkner County Library,



Laman Library, Leopold Project, Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society, Northsong Wild Bird Rehabilitation, Ozark Natural Science Center, Ozark Society, Paper Hearts and Wordsworth bookstores, Sierra Club, Unitarian Universalist Church of Little Rock, and Wild Birds Unlimited. Little Rock Public Radio and KUAF (in Northwest Arkansas) also ran PSAs about the events.



Still on the Hill musicians Donna and Kelly Mulhollan (top left) and volunteer Robin Buff (bottom right), AAS member

Nine events took place, beginning on Tuesday, March 3 and ending on Sunday, March 8. Around 300 people attended. Events included the following:

On March 3, a showing of *Green Fire* at the Central Arkansas Library System in Little Rock.

On March 6-7, at the annual convention of the Arkansas Environmental Education Association, Marc and Suzanne Hirrel of The Leopold Education Project had an interactive exhibit, staffed a Show and Tell table, and conducted an interactive one-hour session. Copies of *A Sand County Almanac* served as door prizes. On Saturday, the morning welcome included Marc reading "Think Like a Mountain." It was a great way to start the day, especially because he was howling like a wolf.

On March 7, a community reading was held at the Little Rock Audubon Center, followed by nature walks. Unfortunately, Kevin Krajcir's birding field trip that was to begin the day was rained out.

Also on March 7, both the Maumelle Public Library and the North Laman Public Library hosted a community reading, followed by nature journaling, and requests for similar future programming from Laman patrons. Faulkner County Library in Conway hosted a reading and AAS member Allan Mueller participated!

On March 8, the second Little Rock Audubon Center community reading started with a birding field trip at the Audubon Center led by Ariana Rimmel. AAS member readers over the two days included Ari, Cherrie-Lee Phillip, Anne Holcomb, Ann Bowick Owen, Beth White, Corbin Cannon,

and Lynn Foster, Janet Nye, Debbie Milam, and David Holcomb volunteered during the event.

Also on March 8, two events concluded Arkansas Reads Leopold. The Unitarian Universalist Church of Little Rock featured the short film “Like a Mountain,” with emphasis on environmental ethics, and also hosted a forum. The Ozark Natural Science Center’s event took place at Lake Fayetteville in Springdale. The event featured a guided hike, readings, and educational activities for kids.

We thank the Aldo Leopold Foundation and our partners for the grant and volunteers that helped make all of these events successful!

President’s Column

By LYNN FOSTER

AAS President

Greetings, AAS Members!

This is my last column to you all as President. It has been a tremendous honor to serve as your Vice President from 2022 to 2024, and as your



President for the last two years. This column will serve as my report on what AAS has accomplished during the last two years.

Bylaws. AAS members adopted major Bylaws changes, abolishing one Board position, bringing the Bylaws into compliance with some of the practices of the Board, and improving other practices.

Membership. The Bylaws simplified our membership categories, reducing them from nine to four.

Merch Store. AAS opened a merchandise store on [Bonfire](#). Have you visited it? You can buy an AAS tee shirt. BirdAR tee shirts will be on sale

soon, if they’re not already by the time you read this!

Event Calendar. The AAS website now features an [event calendar](#) that lists birding and nature events across the state. Janet Nye posts events—contact her at jbny14@swbell.net to list an event.

Ad Hoc Committee. In an effort to increase membership and improve outreach, I appointed an ad hoc committee chaired by Patty McLean that made numerous suggestions.

Member Survey. This was one of the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee, and the Board conducted a survey in the summer of 2025. The results were published in the last issue of the Newsletter.

Trust Tax-Exempt Status. After losing tax-exempt status 12 years ago, the Trust’s federal tax-exempt status was restored in the fall of 2025.

Website Redo. Another recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee was to change the look of our website. Thanks to Ann Johnson and Rick Gray for their help with this.

Fictitious Name. Last but not least, the Ad Hoc Committee suggested AAS change its name. It’s true that we are constantly confused with the Little Rock Audubon Center, Audubon Delta, and even Audubon Arkansas, an obsolete name no longer used by the Audubon Center. The Board listened to members and voted to adopt the new fictitious name of Arkansas Bird Alliance (ARBA). We’ll be changing the website, logo, etc. during the near future. Thanks to all of our members who provided feedback.

I’d like to thank the Board, the members of the Ad Hoc Committee, and in particular, Patty McLean, who gave tirelessly of her time and

Donations to the General Fund

Kim Hillis

expertise in things administrative during the last four years.

AAS Board Member Spotlight

By SARAH MORRIS



Name: Emily (Em) Donahue

Where do you live: Jonesboro

Occupation: Graduate assistant (PhD student) at
Arkansas State University

Board role: Newsletter Editor

General “Get to Know You” Questions:

What’s one of your most memorable bird-watching experiences?

Probably the time I watched some young Loggerhead Shrikes practicing impaling leaves on twigs, getting ready for the day they would become full-grown butcherbirds stocking their larders with prey. I have studied Loggerhead Shrikes throughout my master’s and doctoral studies, so I have come to know their fierce and charismatic personalities well. These particular young shrikes were ones I had been monitoring

all season while studying shrike nesting ecology. Their parents were actually two adults I had previously captured and color-banded and monitored for multiple years. This bonded pair lived year-round on a territory in a small cemetery (with some nice cedar trees for nesting) in the agricultural fields of Poinsett County. Seeing the nestlings from this family I had grown so attached to successfully fledge the nest, and seeing them turn into fierce little versions of their parents, was a really special moment for me.

Besides birding, what other hobbies or interests keep you busy?

My graduate studies take up much of my time, and I often spend my free time on more casual birding trips or helping fellow students with fieldwork for their studies on various taxa. I also enjoy running, whether I am training for a race or just getting in a few miles with colleagues on campus, mountain biking the many trails at Craighead Forest Park, and visiting family back in Pennsylvania whenever I get the chance.

What’s a fun fact about you that most people wouldn’t guess?

For my first field job monitoring birds at “Bird Camp” in northern Arizona, I lived in a tent for three straight months with no running water, electricity, or cell service. I loved being so immersed in nature and isolated from technology, and when I moved back indoors, having walls around me felt very confining!

Binoculars, scope, or camera— what’s your first grab?

I would say my camera is my first choice since it has a super zoom that can double as a scope. It is also a crucial field tool when I am out resighting my banded shrikes or other species we have color-banded for research projects over the years.

Role-Specific Questions:

What do you enjoy most about putting together the newsletter?

I enjoy seeing the amazing photos our members submit from their trips into nature, including the birds and other wildlife they captured. I also enjoy looking through the rare bird report photo entries to find images to include in our distribution and abundance of AR Birds column. We have some truly talented wildlife photographers among our membership!

What goes into creating each edition that members might not realize?

Many people may not realize that the newsletter is a true collaborative effort among our board members and our broader membership. We have several regular columns, including a few newer additions such as this one and the member spotlight column, that are put together by different contributors and then sent to me to edit and format into the final newsletter. We also receive many fun submissions for the member news section and occasionally entries sent directly to me. Ultimately, it is the members and their stories of birding adventures, research, and advocacy that truly make the newsletter great!

Have you learned anything new about birding or the organization through this role?

Through serving on the board, I have learned how much effort goes into running a successful society and how much it depends on active, dedicated members. We are fortunate to have such a strong birding community here in Arkansas, with people willing to give their time and energy to conserving our local wildlife. I love seeing how birding brings people together from across Arkansas and beyond.

What's one thing you hope members get out of reading each issue?

I hope that, like me, they get inspired to find some time to slow down, step outside, and enjoy the birds and everything nature has to offer with their fellow bird nerds!

Halberg Ecology Camps: Calling All Campers!

By BARRY HAAS
Ecology Camp Treasurer

"In early March we started accepting 5th, 6th, and 7th grade camper applications for this year's two Halberg Ecology camp sessions that will take place on June 7–12 and June 14–19. Each year we have to wait until the Forest Service confirms our Camp Clearfork rental dates. We had a number of camper families waiting to be notified once applications could be submitted.

If you know of any 5th, 6th, or 7th grade girls or boys who love nature and can't get enough of it, the Halberg Ecology Camp is designed for them. During the Sunday–Friday sessions campers learn about ornithology, herpetology, mammalogy, botany, aquatic biology, geology, and entomology. This is a hands-on camp where campers learn by experiencing things. When the day's nature studies have ended, campers have recreation options like canoeing or swimming.

We have a registered nurse at camp during each session. The entire campgrounds are closed to anyone other than campers and the adults teaching, feeding, or nursing them. Instructors work in teams of two with a group of 8–10 campers, so a very high instructor to camper ratio is maintained.

Our hope is to install in campers a love of nature they will carry with them throughout their lives. Some may go on to careers in the natural

sciences while most will more likely gain an enhanced appreciation for the wonders and complexities of nature.

If you would like to make a donation, you can do so either by mailing a check made payable to "AAS Halberg Ecology Camp" to P.O. Box 242088, Little Rock, AR 72223, or via our website: arbirds.org/EcologyCamp/

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

Ecology Camp Donations

(December 29 – March 20, 2026)

Annual Fall Appeal

Lynn Foster
Patty McLean
Ed Laster & Mary Roark
Leslie Peacock

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Julie Connolly,
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