



Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society

www.nwarkaudubon.org

NEWSLETTER

February 2011

FIELD TRIPS SCHEDULE FOR 2011

All NWAAS field trips are free and open to the public. Membership in NWAAS is not a requirement. We try to make our field trips accessible to everyone, all ages & all abilities. Additional details & updates about trips are sent via email a few weeks before the announced date. We try to have field trips on Saturdays and Sundays to accommodate different schedules. For maps and more information about these places, check the Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society web site (nwarkaudubon.org) and the section "Places to bird in northwest Arkansas."

January 22, 2010 (Saturday). Rocky Branch on Beaver Lake and Hobbes State Park-Conservation Area. Meet at 9 AM at Hobbes SP for a caravan down to Rocky Branch (5 miles). We will be looking for all kinds of water birds. We will return to the park by noon (bring your lunch if you are staying).

February 19, 2011 (Saturday evening). American Woodcock field trip to Wedington Wildlife Management Area (Ozark NF west of Fayetteville). Field trip led by woodcock expert David Kremetz. Meeting time: 5:30 PM at Wedington WMA.

March 26, 2011 (Saturday). Trip to mature shortleaf pine habitat in the Shores Lake area of Ozark National Forest. Leader is Bill Beall, veteran birder from Ft Smith (and now the NWAAS Treasurer). We will be seeking Brown-headed Nuthatches and other birds typical of pine forests. Meet at 9 AM at the Shores Lake picnic area entrance on the west side of the lake

April 17, 2011 (Sunday). Woolsey Wet Prairie and Wilson Springs. Meet at 8 AM in the parking area near the front gates of the wastewater treatment plant.

May 6 & 7, 2011 (Friday and Saturday). Birder's Weekend at Devil's Den State Park. The field trip will be on **Saturday May 6**; meet at Lee Creek bridge parking area in the park at 9 AM.

May 13 & 14, 2011 (Saturday and Sunday). International Migratory Bird Day in Benton and Washington counties, with additional counts in at least Carroll County. Coordinated by Mike Mlodinow for Washington and Benton counties.

June 5, 2011 (Sunday). Cave Mountain and the upper Buffalo River in Newton County. Meet at the Boxley Bridge at 8 AM.

July 10, 2011 (Sunday). Chesney Prairie Natural Area. Meet at Chesney at 8 AM.

Message from the President

by Doug James

BIRD NAMES

Some bird names got twisted from the English usage, still in use over there, when settlers crossed the Atlantic. Not being trained biologists pioneers consequently were confused concerning names for birds in the New World. I will discuss only names for diurnal birds of prey, the group we incorrectly call hawks.

First the genus *Buteo*, birds with stout bodies, long broad wings, and broad tails. The British named this the Buzzard and all other *Buteos* are various buzzards. This means our so-called hawks should have been named Red-tailed Buzzard, Red-shouldered Buzzard, Swainson's Buzzard, and Rough-legged Buzzard, etc.. In Britain the term hawk means the genus *Accipiter*, slim bodied birds with short rounded wings and long narrow tails. Our birds in this genus, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Copper's Hawk, and Northern Goshawk, are correctly called hawks. We used to call our American Kestrel the Sparrow Hawk but the USA people in charge of bird names changed it to agree with the related species in Europe. The same pertains to what field guides used to list as Duck Hawk and Pigeon Hawk, now changed to Peregrine and Merlin to agree with the names of the same species in Europe. We now know the previously named Marsh Hawk to be the Northern Harrier to place it in the group of harriers in the Old World.

Some of you know that based on DNA evidence our vultures, often called buzzards in Arkansas, have been re-classified as short-legged storks, not at all related to the raptors. Also, the DNA experts now suggest that the falcons (Peregrine, Merlin, and Kestrel) are unrelated to the hawks and more closely akin to parrots.

Mission of the Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society

The mission of the Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society is to preserve the natural world through education, environmental study, and habitat protection, and to promote awareness and enjoyment of local and regional natural areas.

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NWAAS Programs for Winter/Spring 2011 by Joanie Patterson

H. David Chapman will present a program entitled "History and Bird Life of Lake Fayetteville" on February 5th 2011 at 7:30pm at Nightbird Books on Dickson Street in Fayetteville. This is also a meeting of the Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society, but you do not need to be a member to attend. The event is free and open to the public. David has been studying avian life on Lake Fayetteville for many years, and the birding records go back to the 1950's. The talk will follow the history of the development of the lake; it will be of interest to those who would like to learn more about local history as well as to birders.

After Mr. Chapman's talk, there will be no more public programs scheduled for the first half of the year, in order to give birders more time to emphasize actual birding trips during the height of migration. However, there will be programs scheduled in the latter half of the year, and these will be duly advertised in the August 2011 newsletter. For any questions or suggestions about programs, please feel free to email Joanie Patterson at joaniepatterson@yahoo.com

Changes in the Circle: Fayetteville's Christmas Bird Count by Joe Neal

The modern CBC at Fayetteville began in 1961 and has been held each year (except for 1970). The center is near the intersection of Gregg Street and I-540; radii extend 7.5 miles. The circle changed from modestly urban and open farmland to heavily urban and forested in this half century. In the 1960s, we counted within a human population of 20,000. In 2010, we were part of 74,000. Here are examples of changes drawn from our CBC on December 19, 2010.

Birds of open fields, farmlands, and thickets like **Eastern Towhees**, **Field Sparrows**, **Loggerhead Shrikes**, and **Northern Bobwhite** were quite numerous on early counts, but began to decline by the mid to late 1980s, parallel to accelerated human population growth and development ("urbanization"). **Shrikes** dropped from the 40s to the 1s & 0s. **Bobwhites** went from hundreds to 0s. We had one **Harris's Sparrow** this year, illustrating their long term decline within the count circle.

Steady foresting of the circle -- that is, trees replacing open land including prairie -- has contributed to increase in the number of forest-dwellers. An obvious case involves **Red-shouldered Hawks**. We had 22 this year, a tie with the previous high of 22 last year. Another forest dweller, **Hermit Thrush**, reach a new count high of 20 this year, as did **Winter Wren**, another forest bird, with 10 this year.

Water impoundment associated with human population growth has contributed to an expansion of waterfowl tallies. This year's 269 **Ring-necked Ducks** is the second highest (273 in 1995). The 4 **Greater Scaup** ties our former high (2002). The **Red-breasted Merganser** marks the third time this uncommon transient has remained this far north. The **Eared Grebe** was only the 4th CBC record since 1961. No **Greater White-fronted Goose** was tallied on the count until 2001. They have been tallied in 7 subsequent counts including 3 this year associated with the expanding local **Canada Goose** population.

The **Anna's Hummingbird** is our first local record and one of only a handful for Arkansas; the bird was photographed, captured and banded. The **Grasshopper Sparrow** was also a first, though this species nests in northwest Arkansas. It was photographed in the field. The **Palm Warbler** is the third for our CBC (first in 1985). The yellow eastern subspecies typically winters along the Gulf coast, so perhaps it lingers at behest of moderate weather.

Overall, the 102 species tallied on December 19, 2010, is the highest ever for the Fayetteville CBC. Good weather and good skills helped a lot. Interest in birds and ability of birders who explore the avifauna has grown along with the human population. Protection and enhancement of remaining grassland habitat is needed. Bringing in and offering skills enhancement for new birders is essential as we head into the next 50 years.

Data scientifically collected and analyzed can quantitatively answer questions about our world. That said, CBC day is also about having fun. Here comes 2011. Let's go on out and spend another fun winter day with birds next December.

NWAAS Holds its Annual Meeting, by Joanie Patterson

On December 5th, 2010, at Nightbird Books the NWAAS held its official annual meeting for the election of officers. The nominating committee presented the following slate for election: Doug James for President; Joanie Patterson for Vice President; Bill Beale for Treasurer; Stephanie Cribbs for Secretary; and board members Joe Neal, Michelle Viney, Louise Mann, and Richard Stauffacher. All were elected by acclamation. The main event followed the elections, a presentation by Joanie Patterson entitled "Coastal Louisiana, a Wetland in Peril" about serious threats facing the incredible coastal wetlands of Louisiana and the efforts being made by the National Audubon Society to solve these problems. As many of those present had actually visited the live oak cheniers and witnessed the fallout of hundreds of migratory birds, a lively discussion followed and around thirty people were in attendance.

2011 Trip Information Also Available on Website by Stephanie Cribbs

Joe Neal would like to remind everyone that the Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society Field Trip List for 2011 is now available online on the NWAAS website: www.nwarkaudubon.org. The exception for this is the February 5th field trip to the Eagle Watch Trail in Gentry; the group will meet there in the parking lot of the trail at 9am and directions to this area and other areas of interest in Arkansas can also be found on the website; some of these are now in PDF form and can be downloaded and include detailed directions.



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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Mail to: Bill Beall, Treasurer, 2204 Hendricks Blvd
Ft. Smith, AR 72903-3422

Name: _____

Street: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Email Address: _____

PLEASE SELECT:

\$20 Introductory Membership to the National Audubon Society which is for 1 year and includes subscriptions to both the Audubon Magazine and the NWAAS newsletter, and membership in both the National and Northwest Arkansas Audubon Societies. **Please make check payable to the National Audubon Society.** (Note that after the first year, annual membership is \$40.00 per year.)

\$15 Local Chapter Membership –which includes 1 year's membership in the Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society only. You will receive the NWAAS Newsletter. 100% of your membership fee is used for NWAAS activities in Northwest Arkansas. **Please make check payable to the Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society**