



# Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society

[www.nwarkaudubon.org](http://www.nwarkaudubon.org)

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2012-13

## NWAAS FIELD TRIPS

[The numbers (nn) refer to site descriptions on the NWAAS web pages—see instructions in column to right.]

**Saturday, Feb 2: Eagle Watch Nature Trail; meet at Eagle Watch at 9am (no. 13)**

**February 15-18: Great Backyard Bird Count. For more information on how to participate, go to [www.birdsource.com/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.com/gbbc)**

**Sunday, Feb 17: American Woodcock Walk at Wedington Wildlife Mgt Area (no. 29); meet at corner of Kincheloe and Forest Service Road 1754 at 5:30pm**

**Saturday, March 23: Shores Lake. Meet at Shores Lake parking lot at 9am (no.27)**

**Sunday, April 21: Ninestone Land Trust; meet at Ninestone at 9am (no.24)**

**Saturday, May 25: Craig State Fish Hatchery; meet at hatchery at 8am (no. 11)**

**Saturday, June 2: Cave Mountain Road, Buffalo National River; meet at Boxley Bridge at 9am (no.28)**

**Saturday, July 6: Chesney Prairie Natural Area; meet at the prairie at 8am (no. 9)**

## NWAAS Public Talks

Joe Neal will give a talk titled "Storks and Spoonbills: Late Summer Birding along the Mississippi River in Southern Arkansas" on July 12, 2013, at 7pm at Nightbird Books on Dickson Street in Fayetteville.

## Message from the President

*by Doug James*

We know we all reside in the "Land of Opportunity." I hereby make the case that in fact it is plural, not "opportunity" but instead "opportunities." I refer specifically to the numerous opportunities to view, directly experience, and enjoy nature in our northwestern Arkansas surroundings. Thirty such sites are named on the web site of the Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society ([www.nwarkaudubon.org](http://www.nwarkaudubon.org)). On the home page click on the left panel "Places to Bird in Northwest Arkansas." These areas are noted for their value for bird watching, but they also are pleasing places to visit by those who just enjoy relaxing in an outdoor environment. How to find the areas are indicated and each one is described. I name below some of the more interesting of the sites and identify them by number shown on the web site, beginning with forested areas: 10, 12, 17, 27 (at 27 continue north to White Rock for a spectacular view). Next areas of mixed forest and fields: 26 and 29. Prairie areas and former prairies (that are bright with summer blooming flowers) 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 30. Aquatic areas and waterbirds: 11 and 12. And don't forget eagles to be viewed in winter at 26 and 29 (best in January). I apologize for doing this by the numbers. It was required to save space.

Fayetteville is the emphasis, and most the sites are relatively nearby. But some are rather distant: 5, 8, 14, 17, 26, 27 but well worth the trip. One far away site (no. 24 in Carroll County) is a place of varied habitat including a glade and magnificent landscapes. Call ahead to be allowed entrance to this private Land Trust.

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## “OTHER” ON FAYETTEVILLE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

*by Joe Neal*

For many years field parties on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count (CBC) have used a list of birds typically found during the day (think Blue Jay). At the end of the list is OTHER. These spaces are used for atypical and RARE birds. In our end tally, we first go through typical, then OTHER, often the darkest of secrets to the end.

For the Fayetteville CBC this past late December, Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society furnished beer, apple juice and pizzas, plus generous spirits brought chocolate and peanut butter cookies. As we licked pizza sauce from our fingers and cookie crumbs from lips, we learned that we tallied 88 species of birds on the typical list, a productive CBC and especially with winter equaling 66°F, plus short sleeves, blue skies, lakes with few diving ducks, robins singing spring. Then OTHER (10 more species).

The Reynolds field party found a Greater White-fronted Goose. We'd never found this one on our CBC until 2002. The Mlodinow-Chapman group observed Northern Pintails (5), Spotted Sandpiper (1; second time on CBC); Forster's Tern (1; previously, we had only "tern species" once on the CBC), and a coveted Rock Wren (1; first on the count) – the latter in limestone riprap at the Noland Wastewater Treatment Facility. The Patterson party turned up Common Loon (1) and American White Pelican (1).

According to Kim Smith, his party had spent an hour or so at Fayetteville Country Club looking for Red Crossbills, then instead they found Dan and Samantha Scheiman looking at crossbills. Warren Fields said 15, with two obvious bill sizes, were perched nonchalantly in a leafless cypress. At least two other out-of-town birders joined the party. Previously, crossbills had appeared on our CBC only in 1987 (7).

And let's hear it for those fast-flying rare falcons! The Slays found a Merlin, only the third record in 50+ CBCs here. And finally, with a drum roll, Brandon Schmidt and Andy Scaboo managed to sit quietly on a very cool OTHER. When it came time for them to speak, Andy held up for all to see a laptop screen featuring a falcon in flight, dark coverts and axillaries plain in the bright sunlight. We wished we were all out there with them. Needless to say, Prairie Falcon is a first for our CBC, uncrowned OTHER king.

Another cheer to Bob Madison, in a canoe, for 11 miles, quite a bit of it dragging, in low water. As a result, we had the highest tallies for Wood Duck (he found 7) EVER on our CBC. We usually get zero.

Tally up was held at the home of Doug James and Elizabeth Adam. Doug decided not to try the walking required as he has done since the 1950s. Instead, he helped his graduate student Andrea Green organize the Lake Fayetteville party and then get pizzas ordered.

We missed Paige Mulhollan who passed last summer. Paige had everybody trained up to standards. The party is now capably led by his wife Mary Bess and their birder son Kelly and a host of his talented fellow musicians. I've heard you can only be in the Mulhollan group if you have original CDs in your professional resume. Just kidding.

Fun day. Thanks to all.

## NWAAS Annual Meeting Features Talk by David Chapman

*by David Chapman*

At a meeting of the Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society at the Lake Fayetteville Environmental Center on December 8, 2012, David Chapman gave a talk on changes in breeding bird populations in northwestern Arkansas. Data were based on the Breeding Bird Survey route at Avoca, Arkansas, which has seen enormous changes since the first count was conducted in 1967. This has involved the loss of grasslands and replacement in many areas by industrial and urban development. Data for 40 species, mainly birds typical of open country, grasslands, and prairies, such as Eastern Meadowlarks, Loggerhead Shrikes, Bell's Vireos, Yellow-breasted Chats, Blue Grosbeaks, Painted Buntings, Orchard Orioles, etc. were analyzed and significant declines noted.

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

COZB5 207

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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 northwestern Arkansas. **Please make check payable to the Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society**



Bald Eagles dominated the field trip to Eagle Watch Nature Trail (EWNT) February 2, hosted by Terry Stanfill and NWAAS. (There were 40 participants in attendance.) Birders brand new and well-seasoned enjoyed at least 16 juvenile and adult eagles. Some younger birders walked quickly down the trail and others ambled and visited; one even joined in an electric chair. After EWNT, we traveled a mile north on Hwy 43 from the Hwy 12 junction for an impressive display of 50+ eagles, and somewhat lower numbers of Red-tailed Hawks and both vulture species. When we arrived there the sun was heating the air and updraft thermals were developing. So we all stood and watched as a parade of thermals drifted slowly to the east in front of us, each updraft with its cargo of soaring raptors. Some thermals were crowded with soaring eagles, others full of Red-tailed Hawks, and others with Turkey and Black Vultures. Two subspecies of Red-tails were seen: 2 pale Krider's drifted by and a light phase Harlan's soared over on this parade of one thermal after another. (This field trip is the first one named on page 1 of this newsletter, now completed)

#### RED CROSSBILL INVASION THIS WINTER *by Joe Neal & Doug James*

Winter 2012-2013 has featured an irruption of Red Crossbills. Vacating the North Woods of the northern states and Canada (food shortage) they have frequented several spots around northwestern Arkansas: the Ozark National Forest near Shores Lake, Ninestone Land Trust in Carroll County, and 3 places in Fayetteville: Mt Sequoyah, Fayetteville Country Club (FCC), and University Farm. Several subspecies are in the mix. Crossbills were found at FCC in mid-November and flocks of 25 and up to about 50 birds have been present since then. Players and staff at FCC have been friendly and helpful to visiting birders. David Oakley presented FCC with one of his professional crossbill photos. This is displayed proudly in the golf shop.