



Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society

www.nwarkaudubon.org

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2012

NWAAS FIELD TRIPS, JUNE THROUGH DECEMBER 2012

Saturday, June 3: Cave Mountain Road/Upper Buffalo. Meet at the Boxley Bridge at 8am

Saturday, July 7: Chesney Prairie. Meet at the prairie at 9am

Saturday, July 7: Dan Scheiman of Audubon Arkansas will describe his birding safari to East Africa. Venue: Nightbird Books on Dickson St. in Fayetteville at 7 pm. Dan will be on the Chesney Prairie field trip (see above) that morning.

Saturday, August 11: Frog Bayou. Meet in Fayetteville to carpool at 7am, location to be announced

Sunday, September 16: Lake Atalanta. Meet in the parking lot at 9am

Sunday, October 7: Ninestone Land Trust. Meet at the trust at 9am

Sunday, November 18: Lake Fayetteville. Meet at the parking lot by the north end of the dam at 9am

Sunday, December (?): Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count. Date to be announced.

(To be informed by e-mail just before each field trip, send an email message to Joe Neal (joeneal@uark.edu) requesting that your name be added to the field trip notification list. NWAAS members and non-members qualify to be on the list.)

Message from the President

by Doug James

Geese Everywhere

When pioneers reached the central USA they found extensive grasslands and prairie wetlands, the Great Plains. This was home to big populations of large birds: Whopping Cranes, the largest crane, Trumpeter Swans, the largest swan, and the largest subspecies of the Canada Goose, the Giant Canada Goose. Subsequent conversion of the grasslands to agriculture had catastrophic adverse effects. Whopping Cranes were reduced to only 16 before rehabilitation began, Trumpeter Swans disappeared except in northwestern mountains, and nine authors writing from 1930s to 1960s declared the Giant Canada Goose extinct.

Then Harold Hanson, my classmate in graduate school at the University of Illinois, after being hired by Illinois Natural History Survey discovered in 1962 Giant Canada Geese occupying a city park in Minnesota. Later he found residual populations in the Dakotas and adjacent Canada. This led to restoration efforts across the USA. Arkansas Game & Fish established a propagation site visible south of I40 west of Russellville. The first geese in northwestern Arkansas wore neck bands from that facility. The operation was so successful the need was discontinued.

Most forms of Canada Geese migrate, but Giants stay year around. Also, they tolerate human disturbance more than the other subspecies. Cattle are grazers and so are geese, so pastures and parks are perfect. Golf courses provide a banquet set for geese.

This reestablishment is truly a marvelous success story, bringing a bird from the brink of extinction to its present abundance everywhere. We should really rejoice in this accomplishment and congratulate ourselves!!

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Audubon Society**
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Good News for Red Cockaded Woodpeckers!

by Joanie Patterson

The Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society celebrated Earth Day by helping the Red Cockaded Woodpeckers with a donation to the Nature Conservancy to help with the expansion of Warren Prairie Natural Area. Here are excerpts from the exciting news that Jeannie Guthrie, of The Nature Conservancy kindly sent:

Warren Prairie Natural Area, home to 19 rare species of plants and animals, is an unusual mosaic of salt slicks, saline soil barrens (often called saline prairie), Delta post oak flatwoods, prairie mound woodlands, pine woodlands, and bottomland hardwood forests, with stands of dwarf palmetto lending a tropical feel. It is open to the public.

Thanks to the oversight of Bill Holloman of Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, in October 2010 and November 2011 seven pairs of federally endangered Red Cockaded Woodpeckers were translocated and reintroduced to Warren Prairie. These translocated pairs have seen two successful fledglings-- contributing to a current population of 14 birds. In June 2011 the Conservancy added another Red Cockaded Woodpecker population when it purchased 3,609 acres from Plum Creek Timber Company in Union County. This beautiful pine flatwoods property contains one quarter of the state's Red Cockaded Woodpecker population. Also, in the pipeline for Warren Prairie are three more additions of land that, if successful, would add another 1,000 acres to the natural area. Jeannie Guthrie

NWAAS Annual Meeting to be held at Environmental Center

by Joanie Patterson

On Saturday, December 8, at 6:30 pm at the Lake Fayetteville Environmental Center, 511 E Lakeview Dr., Fayetteville, AR 72764, the Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society will convene the annual meeting. David Chapman will give the following presentation: "Declines in breeding bird populations in Northwest Arkansas". In addition, officers will be elected. Free and open to the public. For more information call 479-575-6364.

Recent activities performed by the Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society:

1) Birding Basics—on March 31, 2012, the chapter instructed the assembled public on how to choose and use binoculars, plus providing lessons on bird watching, followed by a bird watching trek in the woods at Hobbs State Park. Participants were given birding field guides. Indoor sessions were in the park headquarters building.

2) Chapter funds were sent to The Nature Conservancy to purchase land to expand the Warren Prairie preserve in southeastern Arkansas, which includes pine woodlands for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (see page 2 herein).

3) The chapter provided funding for a scholarship for Selena Ellison of Ozark, Arkansas, to the Halberg Ecology Camp organized by the Arkansas Audubon Society. The chapter also funded a Fledgling Naturalist Scholarship to Honor the late David Nolan for a summer session at the Ozark Natural Science Center.

4) Our chapter sent to the US Congress in support of two national initiatives: 1) the Restore Act for the Gulf of Mexico, and 2) encouraging wind energy development as an alternate means of energy production.

5) Chapter members gave presentations this year to local garden clubs, public school groups, and various civic organizations

6) Between February and July this year friends and members of the NWAAS have been involved in eight field trips or events sponsored by state and national organizations. Six events were society led to Eagle Watch Nature Trail, Wedington Wildlife Management area, Ozark National Forest at Shores Lake, Ninestone Land Trust, the upper Buffalo National River, and Chesney Prairie Natural Area. We also encouraged participation in the Great Backyard Bird Count, Birders Weekend at Devil's Den State Park, and International Migratory Bird Day in both Washington and Benton Counties. We maintain an e-mail list to notify anyone interested in participating (see bottom of left column of page 1 of this newsletter for instructions). A list of all events for the year is available on the NWAAS web site (www.nwarkaudubon.org).

(The Newsletter for the NWAAS is issued twice a year, one in summer, one in winter.)

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION Audubon—preserving the natural world

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Mail to: Bill Beall, Treasurer, 2204 Hendricks Blvd. Fort 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**

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Page 4

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Results of the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count

Organized and compiled by Joe Neal

Date: December 18, 2011

Analyzed by Doug James

The day began just below freezing (30°F) and peaked in the afternoon at a balmy 56°F. The teams of dedicated birders participating in the count seemed unperturbed by the weather.

A total of 81 species of birds were encountered on the day of the count. This is a low total compared to birds found in other recent years when usually 90 plus species were found. Also the birding participants complained about the low populations of birds counted. This matter of low species counts and low numbers of birds was a nationwide phenomenon this past Christmas. In fact, National Public Radio interviewed the scientists at the Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology concerning why the drop in species numbers and populations of birds. The ornithologists said the situation was occurring across the eastern part of the country and was related to the lack of severe weather so far, weather that forces birds southward.

The reason for this is obvious. The national weather experts have announced that we were in a La Nina weather pattern, which means warmer than normal conditions and less precipitation in the central and southeastern regions of the USA. So there you have it, lack of cold weather forcing birds southward.

Some details of our count are as follows. There were 8 Bald Eagles, but more importantly one Northern Harrier, a species that is rare in northwestern Arkansas. As usual the 67 Red-tailed Hawks outnumbered the other hawks. Six Great horned Owls surpassed the other owls. There were 7 woodpecker species with 67 Red-bellied Woodpeckers the most numerous followed by 62 Downy Woodpeckers. Happily, 33 Rusty Blackbirds were counted, a species that has rapidly declined everywhere recently. Another declining blackbird, the Common Grackle, had almost disappeared in Fayetteville. This year a bird roost containing 23,000 grackles was discovered. Welcome back Common Grackle!!