



Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society

www.nwarkaudubon.org

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2013

NWAAS FIELD TRIPS & TALKS

Saturday July 6, 2013. Chesney Prairie Natural Area near Siloam Springs. See the late summer flora of the Tall-grass Prairie, including blazing stars, other flowers, and interesting insect, plus birds. Meet at Chesney at 8 AM.

Friday July 12, 2013. NWAAS meeting at Nightbird Books, 205 W. Dickson St in Fayetteville, 7 PM. Free and everyone welcome. This program will feature a presentation "Storks and Spoonbills: late summer birds along the Mississippi in southern Arkansas." Snacks and drinks available in the bookstore café.

Saturday August 10, 2013. Western Arkansas River Valley, including Frog Bayou WMA and sod farms. The trip is around an hour from Fayetteville, so we will carpool as much as possible. For the carpool, meet in the parking lot at (meeting place to be set) in Fayetteville by 7 AM. If you choose to drive, we will meet you at the Frog Arkansas River boat ramp around 8:15-8:30. We will bird Frog Bayou and visit adjacent Arkansas River valley habitats.

Sunday September 15, 2013. Lake Atalanta in Rogers. Meet at 9 AM in the parking area near the bathrooms. Fall migrant land birds and interesting native flora.

Sunday October 6, 2013. Ninestone Land Trust in Carroll County. No finer spot to see fall in the Ozarks plus birds typical of the region. Meet at Ninestone by 9 AM.

Saturday November 16, 2013. Lake Fayetteville for the fall waterfowl migration. Meet at 9 AM in parking lot on the north end of the dam (near ball fields on entering boat dock).

Saturday December 6, 2013. Annual meeting at Nightbird Books, 6 PM, featuring a talk on rails (see page 2).

Sunday December 15, 2013. Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count (details later, contact Joe Neal named on page 2)

(See NWAAS web site on how to find the places named.)

Message from the President

by Doug James

HUMMINGBIRDS

Hummingbirds, those jeweled acrobats and conquerors of the air. All of the more than 300 species reside only in the western hemisphere. Arkansas has 10. Only one, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, nests here. The other 9 are fall and winter vagrants.

Every spring people ask me about the scarcity of hummingbirds: "where are they?" Nevertheless, the American Bird Conservancy has announced that Ruby-throats are abundant and holding steady. So what's happening?

I'll explain. In springtime some of the individuals pass through northward, others stay here to nest. Those that stay are distracted by courtship, mating and nesting. Males are courting but then only females build nests and raise the young. She is busy nesting, males visit native flowers. Hummers consume small flying insects too. Crowds of birds at the feeders occur later when hordes of young birds out of the nest follow adults to known feeders. They all feed voraciously to store fat to fuel their migration to Central America, crossing the Gulf of Mexico to Yucatan, 600 miles in 24 to 30 hours. That large population the past fall is what we remember as a measure of the paucity of Ruby-throats each spring. Actually most of the young birds perish over winter added to by a long fall flight and then spring return over the Gulf. The population is much smaller in spring than in fall when in spring the birds are still migrating and otherwise distracted by breeding activities.

(An interesting aside concerns Marguerite Baumgartner, hummingbird bander, when she resided near Arkansas in Jay, Oklahoma. One summer she had 5 to 10 Ruby-throats in her yard at any one time yet she banded a passing parade of around 400 that summer.)

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NWAAS December Meeting

by Joanie Patterson

The December meeting of the Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society will be at Nightbird Books on Saturday, December 6, 2013 at 6 pm. Elections of officers will be held. Auriel Fournier will give the following presentation: A family of Nemesis Birds.

Secretive Marsh Birds, especially Rails, are the bane of most birders. Some even claim that they don't really exist, just a figment of our imagination or a trick in the wind. Auriel Fournier is a graduate student pursuing a PhD at the University of Arkansas trying to better understand rails during migration across Missouri. Before that she worked with them in Ohio. Through some science and stories she will show you that rails are a very interesting group of birds. Also, she will help you learn about rail ecology and habits. Then perhaps rails can stop being such a nemesis but yet another fascinating part of the bird world.

Upcoming Field Trip, and a Summary of Past 2013 Field Trips

by Joe Neal

Field trip to Chesney Prairie Natural Area **Saturday July 6**. Meet at Chesney 8 AM. Birds, prairie plants, pollinating insects, etc. There are mowed trails at Chesney, so the walking is easy. We will concentrate on about a 1-mile loop, but folks can explore other trails as they see fit.

Recent NWAAS field trips, February-June: Since the society was reorganized several years ago, we have been offering at least one field trip per month. We go all over northwestern Arkansas, not just a few special "hot spots" favored by the relatively small cadre of ardent birders. This accommodates members and friends scattered across 100+ miles and we visit a variety of habitats as well. Attendance has been consistently in the range of 12-25, often at least 20, and occasionally as many as 40. The February 2 field trip was to Eagle Watch Nature Trail (EW). Yes, eagles attended: 16 at EW proper, then many of us drove a few miles to Cherokee City and saw another 75! The Great Backyard Bird Count at Devil's Den State Park on February 16 was ALMOST rained out; ALMOST, but a few remained and had great looks at a flock of at least 60 Pine Siskins. The February 17 field trip to Wedington Wildlife Management Area, lead by David Krementz, produced 2 close woodcocks and 3 more at distance. The March field trip was on the 23rd, lead by our society's treasurer, Bill Beall, to the Shores Lake and Fern area of the Ozark National Forest. The target was Brown-headed Nuthatch, and we found 'em! We celebrated an early Earth Day on April 21, at Ninestone Land Trust, and shorebirds at Craig State Fish hatchery in Centerton on Saturday May 25. The June trip, on the 2nd, was to the upper Buffalo River and Cave Mountain areas where once again we found Cerulean Warblers. – Joe Neal

Birding State Lands in the Natural State

by Dan Scheiman, Bird Conservation Director, Audubon Arkansas

Birds abound in the Natural State of Arkansas. State lands provide easy access to view birds and the habitats on which they depend. Managed by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC), Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) across the state should be destinations for any birder. Here are some sites favored by fellow Arkansas birders. Within the Big Woods lies **Sheffield Nelson Dagmar WMA**. Within this WMA is Bayou DeView, dominated by cypress. A hike into Apple Lake Waterfowl Rest Area in winter will be rewarded with waterfowl and up to seven species of woodpeckers as well as the Rusty Blackbird. Also in eastern Arkansas, **Steve N. Wilson Raft Creek Bottoms WMA** is a complex of restored wetlands and prairie. Mottled Duck is a possibility, as are the following: King Rail, Virginia Rail, Sora, Common Gallinule and Purple Gallinule. Prairie patches are reliable for Bell's Vireo, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Blue Grosbeak. Another wetland restoration site is at **Freddie Black Choctaw Island WMA**. Visit the expansive cattail marsh of the WMA's West Unit in spring and summer for a chance at birds such as Mottled Duck, Least Bittern, and King Rail. Later in the season, Wood Stork, Roseate Spoonbill, Anhinga, and Tricolored Heron are possible, and many other waders are likely. Access is walk-in only. Close to Little Rock, **Maumelle River WMA** encompasses Lake Maumelle. From November through March, the lake hosts Common Loons and Red-throated Loons with the occasional Pacific and even Yellow-billed Loon! Prescribed fire is also a key management tool at **Rick Evans Grandview Prairie WMA** near Hope. It is reliable for Painted Bunting, Northern Bobwhite, Loggerhead Shrike, Bell's Vireo, Sedge Wren, Le Conte's Sparrow, and Henslow's Sparrow. Insects of note include the Diana Fritillary and *Microstylum morosum*, the largest robber fly in the state (up to 2 inches). (Continued on page 4)

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

B52
COZB5 207

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



Name: _____

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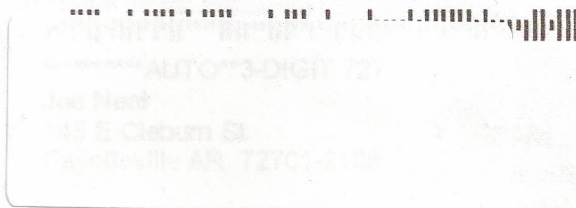
PLEASE SELECT:

_____ **\$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**

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Birding in the Natural State (continued from page 3)

by Dan Schieman

A great place for pine-land specialists such as Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, and Bachman's Sparrow is **Moro Big Pine Natural Area WMA**. Potlatch Forest Holdings, Inc., owns this area in south-central Arkansas, but a conservation easement provides public access and permanent protection. Red-cockaded Woodpecker cavity trees are marked with an orange ring at the base. Habitat management includes thinning and burning. Along the Arkansas River near Fort Smith lies **Frog Bayou WMA**. This former farm turned wetland attracts large concentrations of waterfowl and waders across seven moist soil units, including the Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Least Bittern, or White-faced Ibis. Painted Buntings, Bell's Vireos, and Yellow Warblers are widespread too. Not a wildlife management area, but an area whose management attracts wildlife is **Charlie Craig State Fish Hatchery** in the state's northwestern corner. The hatchery, with its shallow ponds and temporary mudflats, is one of the few wetlands available in the region following the plowing of the Ozark prairies. Thirty-six species of shorebird have been recorded there, including migrating Piping Plovers. Waterfowl, wading birds, and rails also take advantage of the open water habitat and food supply. State rarities include Least Grebe, Snowy Plover, Wilson's Plover and Cinnamon Teal. For details and directions to these and other WMAs, see www.agfc.com/hunting/Pages/wmaList.aspx. Note hunting seasons and restrictions for each site. Wear hunter orange during deer season.