BIRDS in and around Northwest Arkansas City

Joseph C. Neal

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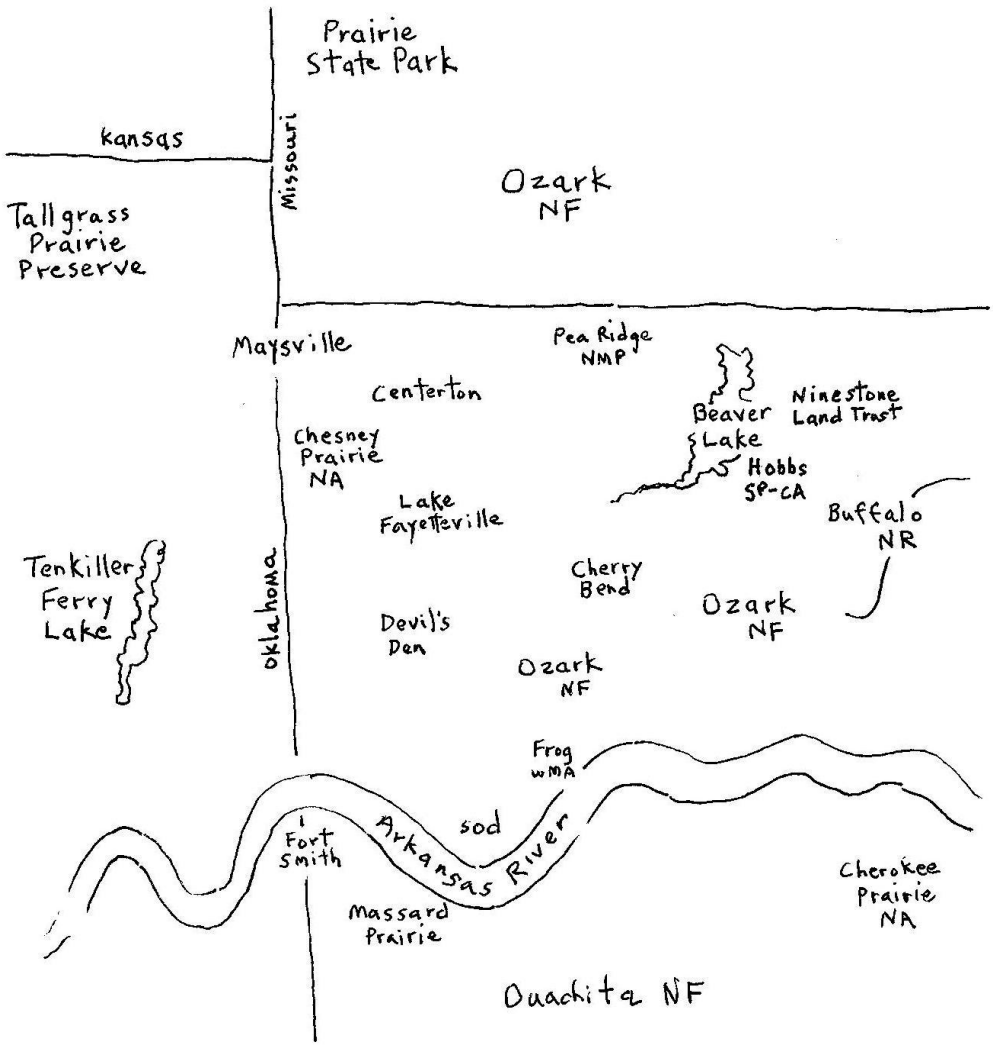

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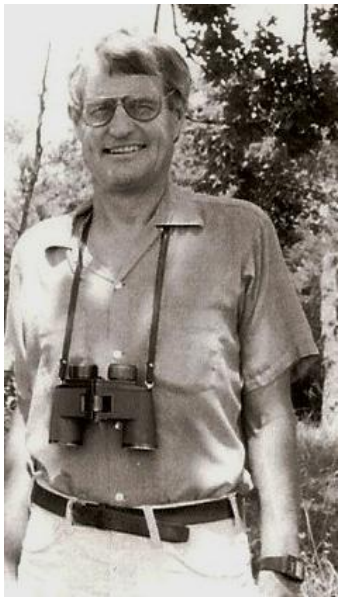
Version of February 22, 2018

For Doug James



Our indispensible ecologist
and ornithologist

coauthor
mentor
teacher
friend

Note to readers of the future

Many apologies if “Northwest Arkansas City” isn’t yet on the map. It includes increasingly connected farms, towns, and cities: Fayetteville, Siloam Springs, Springdale, Rogers, Garfield, Mayfield and the rest. “In and around” encompasses the whole. This includes Fort Smith in the Arkansas River Valley and north to southern Missouri; west to eastern Oklahoma; east to Buffalo National River country. Birds don’t notice state boundaries. A broad geographical perspective is informative.

Looking around the table at a meeting of the Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society Board of Directors, I see birders from Fort Smith, Fayetteville, Springdale, Goshen, and Beaver Lake. In the past we have had board members from Rogers, Bentonville, and elsewhere. Numerous towns are reflected in the make up of field trips. If we are going to understand a Western Kingbird at Centerton, it will help to understand where a lot of them nest, in old downtown Fort Smith.

Fortunately, science is self-correcting. Every field trip and every compilation of bird data tests the hypothesis there’s a lot of interesting bird life here. The more we observe, the broader our perspective, the better we understand.

We live on land that was formerly Tallgrass Prairie. Almost all original, unplowed Tallgrass Prairie has been eliminated. With the exception of a few small, protected remnants, prairie is today pasture, city, and highway. Extensive non-native grasslands remain.

Water development projects have created habitats that did not exist here prior to the 1930s. These include ponds, small lakes, and expansive reservoirs. They provide habitat for geese, ducks, shorebirds, gulls, and terns. The Arkansas River and associated ponds and lakes provide more habitat. Our forests have been extensively logged. Maturing second growth forest occupies at least as many acres as it did historically. The expanse of the Ozark National Forest guarantees a good future for many forest birds.

Hardy native Shortleaf Pine (*Pinus echinata*) forests were harvested early to build our cities. Due primarily to successful wildfire suppression and a lack of planned regeneration, predominantly Shortleaf Pine stands have extensively reverted to predominantly hardwood stands growing up and dominating the remnant pines. Well-managed native pines are good places to find Red Crossbills.

The rugged Boston Mountains has hindered its economic development. The Ozark National Forest occupies much of the area. These forests are part of the vast Central Hardwoods region (Fitzgerald et al. 2002) containing over 15% of the world’s nesting populations of Eastern Wood-Pewees, Acadian Flycatchers, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Yellow-throated Warblers, Blue-winged Warblers, Prairie Warblers, Louisiana Waterthrushes, and Summer Tanagers. And even higher percentages of the following: Worm-eating Warbler and Field Sparrow (20%), Kentucky Warbler (28%), and Eastern Whip-poor-will (35%).

In the 19th century, prairies in a floralistic sense were still common in western Arkansas. Maps produced from compilations of historical sources illustrate our chief prairie areas (see Dale 1986). There were many additional prairies. Fort Chaffee east of Fort Smith was built on former Massard Prairie. The center of Northwest Arkansas City is Prairie Township, now downtown Fayetteville. Who would have thought our famous Farmer’s Market was likely a Greater Prairie-Chicken lek? Rogers-Bentonville-Lowell-Centerton has risen upon Osage Prairie. The 10-acre Searles Prairie Natural Area in Rogers is mute witness to that once 10,000-acre Tallgrass Prairie.

On the other hand, former prairies and prairie woodlands within Pea Ridge National Military Park include examples of prairie and associated woodland, and riparian habitats (Shugart and James 1973). Also included is an extensive warm season grass restoration associated with Leetown battlefield.

While some natural bird habitats have disappeared, others have been created. The bulk of our shorebird records come from Craig State Fish Hatchery, built in a wetland on the former Osage Prairie. Migrating shorebirds once paused to feed and rest in the shallow water and surrounding muddy fields of artesian spring runs and temporary rain-fed pools typical of poorly drained fields in the Springfield Plateau (Smith et al. 1991).

Comparable situations in the vast Arkansas River Valley involve former oxbows, some cut off from the river naturally, forming small natural lakes. Many others were cut during creation of the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River

Navigation System. Shallow flooding of these former oxbows and adjoining crop fields produces ephemeral migration habitat that mirrows, at some level, the way things were in the past for migrating birds. Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area provides a convenient place to them.

The Ozarks have no natural lakes. However since the 1930s, ponds and reservoirs have been constructed by Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Corps of Engineers, cities and towns, and private landowners. Each impoundment damages natural streams while providing habitats for water birds. Adjoining public lands provide habitat for forest birds.

Free-flowing streams have been lost to dam projects, but others remain. The Buffalo River escaped burial under a reservoir as a result of a citizen-lead fight against proposed dams. The epic story of conservation against long odds is well told by Smith (1967, 2004), Compton (1992), and others.

Much of what we know about our avifauna is directly attributable to the life work of ecologist, teacher, and field trip leader, Douglas A. James of the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville. Legions of Arkansans first discovered the joy of birding and an interest in all aspects of natural history on a Doug James field trip.

Beginning in the early 1950s, Doug and others compiled an extensive card file of bird records for the entire state. These records, plus Doug's own research and that of his many students, formed the core of *Arkansas Birds* (James and Neal 1986). They can be viewed on the website maintained by Arkansas Audubon Society.

Since 2002, the data in these files has been augmented by the lively, online Birds of Arkansas discussion list managed by Kimberly G. Smith of the UA-Fayetteville. In 2002, Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society initiated eBird, a user-friendly online checklist program that is continually adding to our understanding.

Ozark Ecological Restoration Inc. provided a grant to assist in preparation of this manuscript. OERI's goal is "Restoring unique Ozark natural communities." Important native grasslands, including Chesney Prairie Natural Area (and many others) are beneficiaries of the vision of OERI founder, Joe Woolbright.

We are alarmed about world-wide bird declines. In preparing this project, I consulted data from the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (2016), including its Watch List. Sadly, our birds appear on this list mainly because of habitat loss. It is happening in western Arkansas, too.

In the following pages, birds are presented in standard phlogenetic order reflecting evolutionary relationships. I adopted the Arkansas list with supporting documentation prepared by Charles Mills (Arkansas Audubon Society home page). This is in turn based upon the American Ornithological Society's Checklist of North and Middle American Birds as amended through the 58th supplement, July 1917.

In the case of birds that have been found in all seasons, I call them residents. Transients pass through. Some are mainly summer residents, others mainly winter residents. A bird is common if it can be found most days in moderate or large numbers. Uncommon -- harder to find, but still expected at times in appropriate habitat and season. A rare bird is a welcome surprise. An irruptive species may not occur every year and numbers when present are highly variable. I use + to indicate additional records.

BIRDS IN AND AROUND NORTHWEST ARKANSAS CITY is a framework, a record of the past and a point of departure. Every field trip is a chance to add to the picture. That's the nature of science and its self-correcting way of doing business. This journey began for me thousands of field trips ago. Hopefully, after I have hung up my binoculars for the last time – gone on to what one friend calls "The Place Where Birding Is Always Good" – you future birders will also enjoy this opportunity. The 2 x 4s are in these pages. There will be many additions and changes in the future.

-- Joseph C. Neal February 2018

Contents

Cover photo: Female Painted Bunting, Callie's Prairie, Lake Fayetteville Park, July 1, 2016
Title page photo: Red-eyed Vireo, Devil's Den State Park, May 9, 2017
Photo of Doug James is from 1985 on the Cicada Project site near Durham, Arkansas

“We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we may belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.”

Aldo Leopold, from his Sand County Almanac

BIRDS in and around Northwest Arkansas City

Order Anseriformes

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, *Dendrocygna autumnalis*

STATUS: Uncommon migrant and local summer resident; DATES: Primarily mid-March through summer into fall, at least through October+.

Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks are well established as a nesting species around Alma-Dyer in the river valley. Sandy Berger recently posted a note to the ARBIRDs list about nesting in Fort Smith. There are no known nesting records north of the valley.

North of the valley, observations are scattered and typically involve just a few birds. They apparently began to expand into the Ozarks in the early 1990s. A single bird was at Bob Kidd Lake near Prairie Grove on November 11, 1994. Terry Stanfill observed and photographed two birds during the period late August to September 2003 and saw two again at about the same time in 2004. Both observations were at the same small pond near Gentry in Benton County. A single bird was present for at least several days at a large pond at University farm in Fayetteville during late September 2005.

The chief action has been in the Valley in vicinity of Alma Wastewater Treatment Facility and adjoining private lands. Here adults with young have been frequently observed. Adults with young have been found by Bill Beall and others in first half of July and as late as second half of October. Bill and Toka Beall tallied 75 at Alama Wastewater September 17, 2009.

Snow Goose, Chen caerulescens

STATUS: Common and occasionally an abundant transient; much less common winter resident; DATES: October 5 to April 11+.

We see flocks of both the white and blue forms of the Snow Goose. Spring passages are associated with strong warm fronts, often in late February and early March. Wave after wave of birds, with flocks of hundreds or even thousands, are associated with huge cold fronts in November.

The distinctive gabbling can be heard as they pass overhead during migration. For example, on November 1, 2003, I was birding the perimeter of former Razorback Park golf course in Fayetteville. At least 19 separate flocks flew south from 1:30-2:30 pm. Each had 200-500 birds of both blue and white forms. I estimated 10,500 geese flew over, give or take a few thousand, in one hour.

Lower numbers visit during winter. Small numbers (typically five or less) have been seen on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count; 72 in 1989 was exceptional. An estimated 900 (both white and blue) were present in fields near Maysville on January 20, 2007.

Some of the out of season birds include a few that occasionally settle among Canada Geese or domestic waterfowl.

Ross's Goose, *Chen rossii*

STATUS: Uncommon transient and winter visitor; DATES: November 10 to April 18+, with scattered observations throughout the year.

A single individual was observed regularly on a farm pond near Fayetteville between December 12, 1973, and April 18, 1974. A bird banded in Canada in 1979 was found dead on about October 27, 1983, on a pond near Springdale. Since 2001, and for several years thereafter, 1-2 birds resided among a few Snow Geese and other waterfowl at Lake Atalanta in Rogers. The eight seen by Doug James at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton March 4, 1992, were among 550 Snow Geese grazing in a pasture south of the hatchery. Four were associated with a flock of at least 900 Snow Geese at Maysville on January 20, 2007. There were 3-4 in a small mixed flock that included five goose species at Centerton on March 2, 2008. There are now many additional records of single birds and small flocks at mid-winter.

Greater White-fronted Goose, *Anser albifrons*

STATUS: Fairly common transient and much less numerous winter resident; DATES: February 22 to April 9+ and September 28 to November 17+.

White-fronted Geese pass overhead during typical goose migration periods. They are often mixed with Snow Geese and other goose species. An estimated 500 in five flocks passed overhead on October 16, 1999. Numerous flocks flew over on October 15, 2008, just ahead of the season's first cold front.

There are also a few records of low numbers on recent Fayetteville Christmas Bird Counts (peak of six in 2003). A few occasionally settle on lakes among domestic waterfowl. They may also be found among Canada Geese in the valley during winter. At least 35 were among Canadas near Alma Wastewater Treatment Facility February 1, 2018.

Cackling Goose, *Branta hutchinsii*

STATUS: Uncommon mid-winter visitor; DATES: October 25 to April 20, but mainly December to February.

What we now call Cackling Goose was formerly classified as a small-bodied form of the Canada. Along with much larger Canadas, cacklers have seen off and on over the years here during migration and winter.

After Cackling Goose was elevated to full species status in 2004, the first local record for *hutchinsii* involved two birds with Snow Geese and Greater White-fronted Geese in a field at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on March 12, 2005. Subsequently, there have been sightings in fall, winter, and spring. The birds made their first appearance on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count in December 2005: approximately 60 were loosely associated with a flock of 180 Canada Geese at the University farm in Fayetteville for several weeks, including count day. The 35 at University farm on February 12, 2011, was a good count and relatively late. There are many additional sightings, including 40 in a mixed species flock at Centerton on March 2, 2008.

Canada Goose, *Branta canadensis*

STATUS: Common; DATES: Resident observed in all seasons on larger ponds and lakes.

Canadas have been found on the Fayetteville CBC most winters since the early 1960s, but not with regularity and in relatively high numbers until the mid to late 1980s. Numbers since that time have increased with the growth of resident flocks.

Most of these geese are presumeably associated with birds that historically nested in central North America, primarily north of Arkansas (Giant Canada Goose Committee 1996). Breeding Canada Geese in our region were largely extirpated by around 1900. The comeback is associated with wildlife management efforts that have included extensive releases of Canadas in both Missouri (1949-1991) and Arkansas (1970-1990). Birds here could have their origins in the releases by Arkansas Game and Fish Commission in the western Arkansas River Valley. On Fayetteville Christmas Bird Counts during the 1960s and 1970s, they were found in only seven of 20 years and never more than 10 birds. Numbers have steadily climbed, with more than 300 on the Fayetteville CBC since the late 1990s and 2,075 on the 2000 count.

The sights and sounds of these large birds flying in formations over busy and rapidly expanding Northwest Arkansas City are welcome and preferable to traffic noise and endless multiplications of parking lots and 24-hour superstores. On the other hand, fecal matter associated with growing flocks is a nuisance in places like golf courses.

Trumpeter Swan, *Cygnus buccinator*

STATUS: Rare transient and winter resident; recent records also include released birds and possibly their offspring.

Doug James and others identified one bird at Beaver Lake on February 10 & 14, 1991. Amy Davis reported two at Siloam Springs February 2, 2005. Red collars on these birds indicated they were from an Iowa flock. Don Nelms photographed two birds on Boxley mill pond in Newton County on December 15, 2005, and 2-3 birds returned the following winter. Four adults and one cygnet were seen at Boxley by Jane Anderson on December 28, 2007. None of these birds had neck collars. At Siloam Springs City Lake, two adults and five juveniles were seen by many observers January 11-13, 2015. There have been additional sightings in more places (e.g., Lake Sequoyah, Lake Leatherwood, Lake Harrison, Bob Kidd Lake, a large farm pond near Fayetteville).

It seems possible that some local records may be associated with Trumpeter Swans wintering yearly at Magness Lake near Heber Springs in Cleburne County (Mosby 2002).

Trumpeters now seen in our area could also be result of efforts to rebuild a historic migratory wintering population in Arkansas led by Karen Rowe from Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. Iowa-reared swans were released at Boxley in January 2008 (Massey 2008) and three had taken up residence on the pond as of fall 2008.

Difficulty of trying to rebuild a wintering Trumpeter Swan population is illustrated at Fayetteville, a city with a reputation for environmental sensitivity. In December 2013, three juvenile Trumpeter Swans took up winter residence on a large pond within a former wetland prairie. This pond and much habitat was lost with rerouting of Van Asche Drive. Commuters and trail users now have a better road. Swans lost their chosen habitat. It's their world, too, except when our expanding urban culture deems otherwise.

Tundra Swan, *Cygnus columbianus*

Rare transient and winter visitor. Charlie Wooten identified three birds at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton November 19-29, 1981. Douglas James and Albert Flaig saw one on Beaver Lake February 10 & 14, 1991; it was associated with a Trumpeter Swan. Joanie Patterson and Donald Ouellette saw three swans on SWEPCO Lake (Eagle Watch Nature Trail) near Gentry on December 18, 2008. Terry Stanfill (and subsequently others) photographed these birds. The three swans were seen off and on by many observers through at least January 2009. Two immature birds were seen December 11, 2009, at Lake Sequoyah during a big ice storm freeze up.

Wood Duck, *Aix sponsa*

STATUS: Common in summer, very uncommon in winter in the Ozarks, more common in the river valley; DATES: Resident that has been observed in all seasons.

Wood Ducks occur along all our larger streams and swampy, forested sections of impoundments. They have been seen in every month, but are scarce especially during the coldest months of winter, December and January.

They begin to return during warming trends, mid-February and the first half of March. I saw at least 35 birds flying to roost along the Illinois River in Benton County on March 8, 2007.

Since they are cavity nesters, they can be found along rivers and ponds where there are mature trees with natural cavities. I see Wood Ducks annually in early June on Boxley mill pond in Newton County. Often there are 2-3 broods of ducklings, escorted by adults, and easily seen from the highway, at least when you first drive up.

Especially high numbers may congregate during October and November before fall migration.

General rarity of Wood Ducks at midwinter in the Ozarks is supported by data from the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count where it has been found on only about a dozen counts since 1961 (but more often since 2009). In comparison to the Ozarks, Wood Ducks are found with greater frequency and in higher numbers during winter in the river valley. The 24 reported for Fort Smith-Moffett CBC in 2015 was a high count for western Arkansas in winter.

National Audubon analysis of data from the past 40 years indicates a northward shift of its center of abundance, presumably associated with climate change.

Blue-winged Teal, *Spatula discors*

STATUS: Common transient; rare summer resident; DATES: July to November 28+ and February 20 to May 14+, but mainly late July to late November and late February to late April.

Blue-winged Teal are the first puddle ducks to reach us during their southward migration in July. Mudflats, ponds, and open areas along streams provide suitable habitat. Single birds or perhaps a few more may arrive during July, but we don't typically find flocks until mid-August. They become very common after late August or early September. There were an estimated 400 in flooded fields near Kibler in the river valley August 23, 2017. Approximately 360 were seen by

David Chapman at Lake Fayetteville September 14, 2011. Most depart to the south upon the arrival of freezing weather in late fall, but there are occasional sightings into December.

Moderating weather in March includes the return of north bound Blue-winged Teals. We see flocks of these transients from first half of March to the last of April or early May. Approximately 980 were in a rice field near Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area on April 5, 2013. Partially flooded moist soil units at Frog provide outstanding habitat for migrating ducks like teal. There were at least 350 Blue-wings at Frog on March 30, 2017. At least 130 were using a flooded former prairie field adjacent Chesney Prairie Natural Area on April 10, 2008.

The birds face many hazards in migration. This is well illustrated in a photograph by Ricky Hobbs of a Northern Harrier with a Blue-winged Teal in its talons, April 9, 2013, in Benton County.

The bulk of the breeding range for Blue-winged Teal lies just to our north and west (including parts of Missouri, Kansas, and Oklahoma), and there is also a nesting population to the southwest (Rohwer et al. 2002). Therefore, it's not altogether a shock that Blue-winged Teal nest here on occasion. An adult female with 10-12 ducklings was at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton July 6, 1993. Bruce Shackleford photographed two adult females and 18 half-grown ducklings at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary in Fayetteville on June 24, 2008. There are additional late May and June observations that might involve nesting.

Cinnamon Teal, *Spatula* cyanoptera

STATUS: Rare transient; DATES: February 21 to May 12

Cinnanmon Teal are common in the western US. Few are seen closer to our area than Great Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge in north-central Oklahoma. We have fewer than 10 observations, all involving 1-4 birds. A male in a partially flooded moist soil unit at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area March 25, 2012, was associated with hundreds of Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal.

Northern Shoveler, *Spatula clypeata*

STATUS: Common transient and winter resident; DATES: August 23 to May 25+.

Shovelers are dabbling ducks that prefer the more shallow areas of lakes and farm ponds in our former prairie region. They use their specialized bill to strain food (like small invertebrates) from the surface water. In migration, they also use flooded fields, like Blue-winged Teal.

During fall, small numbers can be observed during the first half of September, with the first flocks by early October. For example, the 20 shovelers at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on October 2, 2004, were that season's first. Shoveler numbers pick up in early November. During a big mixed-species waterfowl influx on November 7, 2003, Mike Mlodinow and I counted 71 at Bob Kidd Lake, 50 at Centerton, and at least 10 on Lake Fayetteville. Fewer generally remain for winter, but they are often common in the river valley at places like Alma Wastewater Treatment Plant.

As is the case with many duck species, habitat conservation and improvement on northern breeding grounds has resulted in more ducks reaching northwest Arkansas. This is reflected on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count. Shoveler numbers were very low during the 1960s-1980s, with none many years at mid-winter. During the 1990s, numbers increased dramatically, with shovelers almost always found, and some peak counts reaching 94-95 birds by the late 1990s. A total of 337 were on ponds at Fayetteville's Paul R. Noland Wastewater Treatment Plant on December 6, 1997. There were at least 35 shovelers on Siloam Springs City Lake on January 18, 2009, when the lake was drawn down to very low levels.

The 70 shovelers at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management area on March 30, 2017, was a good spring count. Andy Scaboo estimated 200 at Bob Kidd Lake on March 20, 2010. A few shovelers linger into May and there are several observations of a few in June.

Gadwall, *Mareca strepera*

STATUS: Common migrant and winter resident; DATES: August 22 to May 2+.

Gadwalls are common migrants and winter residents appearing on almost any pond or reservoir where there is shallow water and emergent vegetation. They are one of the most common and widespread ducks present in winter here. A few individuals are among the dabbling ducks that reach us often by early September. We don't typically find big flocks until October: approximately 375 at Lake Sequoyah on October 23, 2005, indicated a major migration influx. There were 397 at Lake Fayetteville on November 11, 1995.

Numbers reported on Christmas Bird Counts at Fayetteville were low until the 1970s, but have increased thereafter, with several counts involving 300+. Gadwalls remain among the most numerous of ducks here at least until the end of March. There were approximately 400 at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on March 9, 2003, and 300 on

March 30, 2004. These records reflect migration peaks. Some birds linger: two males and two females were at Lake Elmdale on June 6, 1992.

American Wigeon, *Mareca americana*

STATUS: Fairly common transient and winter resident; DATES: September 12 to May 15+.

American Wigeons are regular transients and fairly regular winter residents, though the number of birds involved is never high. Since 1961, we have found them on about three-fourths of Fayetteville Christmas Bird Counts. Since the early 1990s, peak CBC counts have included 52 (1998), 55 (2002) and 57 (2004). These are considerly higher than counts in the decades of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Numbers have been lower in recent years (including occasional zeroes). Kimberly G. Smith noticed that wigeons frequently were present on ponds at the Paradise Valley Country Club within the Fayetteville CBC circle, making it a good place to visit on count day.

Wigeons declined in the early 1980s (3.5 to 1.8 million) during a widescale drought in the prairies where they nest. Subsequently the population steadily increased to over 3.1 million by 1997, owing to improved habitat conditions during the mid-1990s in western North America and a continued expansion of the breeding range eastward (Mowbray 1999).

Mallard, *Anas platyrhynchos*

STATUS: Common transient and winter resident; local summer resident; DATES: present in all seasons.

Mallards are among the most common and widespread of our waterfowl. They are often present in high numbers at mid-winter and can be seen standing on ice in severe weather.

Most Mallards depart western Arkansas during spring (typically during mid to late March) for northern breeding areas, but some remain here and nest. Overall, Mallard population levels are highest between October and March. They are scattered around all kinds of lakes and farm ponds as long as the weather is mild. Mallards seem to tolerate all kinds of weather, but during long spells of ice and snow, they concentrate in a few places with open water. Here, they can be seen standing on ice, waiting their opportunity to forage in small openings. Kimberly G. Smith and I saw 180 standing on ice at the former Lake Francis on December 27, 1983. There were 920 at Bob Kidd Lake December 25, 1990. Several hundred is not unusual for Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count (range 0-404).

Very few of the sizeable population present here in March remain to summer. They nest annually in low numbers. We see pairs and broods each year in places like Beaver Lake Nursery Pond, Lake Fayetteville, Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton, lakes around Bella Vista, etc.

American Black Duck, *Anas rubripes*

There are a total of seven reports between October 29 and March 3. All but one observation for this species--whose population has been in decline for several decades--occurred prior to 1963. In addition, there are several observations of hybrids with black duck and Mallard characteristics. Mike Mlodinow has observed several of these hybrids at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton. I saw a hybrid associated with Gadwalls on a farm pond near Siloam Springs on November 20, 2008.

Northern Pintail, *Anas acuta*

STATUS: Uncommon transient and winter resident; DATES: August 22 to April 14.

Pintails are rarely numerous in the Ozarks, but they occur more regularly in higher numbers in flooded wetlands and extensive agricultural fields of the Arkansas River Valley.

Sightings in the Ozarks typically involve low numbers, often in the range of 1-5 (there is an older record of 76 on Lake Fayetteville in the first half of February). Since 1961, pintails have been found in only 13 years of the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count or count week. Peaks include 12 (1969) and 8 (1983, 2016). They are also found infrequently on Fort Smith-Moffett CBC in the river valley.

An estimated 300 were at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area on March 2, 2016.

Green-winged Teal, *Anas crecca*

STATUS: Common transient and winter resident; DATES: August 20 to April 18+.

There is an overlap in the fall migrations of our teal, green-wing and blue-wing. Blue-wings arrive first and typically depart before real cold weather. Green-wings remain and are therefore the usual wintering teal. We find both

species in shallows of farm ponds, ponds at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton, swampy shallows of lakes, partially flooded moist soil units at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area.

The females of the two teal species look enough alike that when we spot them well-blended with shorelines we have to spend some time studying the subtle plumage differences to come up with correct identifications. Males are clearly marked. Elegant plumage of male Green-winged Teals rivals that of the more famously attired male Wood Ducks.

Since the early 1960s, Green-winged Teals have been reported on about half of Fayetteville Christmas Bird Counts, with a few CBC records of over 30; the big peak was in 2006, when 102 were found within the count circle.

Green-winged Teal can be observed here through the early part of spring. There were at least 100 Green-winged Teal at Frog Bayou WMA on March 30, 2017; many additional birds couldn't be seen in vegetation. Andy Scaboo estimated more than 250 at Bob Kidd Lake March 20, 2010.

There are several May and June records of single birds.

Canvasback, *Aythya valisineria*

STATUS: Uncommon transient and winter resident; DATES: October 26 to May 2.

Canvasbacks migrate through and generally overwinter in western Arkansas on an annual basis. Many sightings involve just a few birds and occasionally as many as a dozen or so. Doug James made a good count of 14 at Hiwasse in Benton County on January 2, 1997. We saw 12 at a spring fed pond along highway 102 in Centerton on January 26, 2009.

Canvasbacks have been found on 31 Fayetteville Christmas Bird Counts since 1961. At least seven birds were counted in 10 years, but there were no birds in other years. The peak counts (30 in 1969 and 81 in 1976) both occurred before the breeding population went through a period of very low numbers. This population low between 1982 and 1995 resulted in Canvasbacks being placed on various "blue lists" for species of concern (Mowbray 2002).

Redhead, *Aythya americana*

STATUS: Uncommon transient and winter resident; DATES: October 26 to April 19+.

Redheads are never truly common here, with most observations involving just a few birds. But we do experience occasional fall migration peaks. Mike Mlodinow and Jennifer Russell counted 64 at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on November 1, 1996. The 42 Redheads at Bob Kidd Lake on November 7, 2003, were part of an enormous raft of waterfowl that included approximately 2,000 diving duck species; there were at least 20 Redheads at Lake Fayetteville on the same day.

The highest number reported for the winter season was 31 at Lake Elmdale on December12, 1993. Redheads show up in low numbers on about half of Fayetteville Christmas Bird Counts; the peak was 26 in 1993. There were 10-12 Redheads at Centerton February 8, 2018, among more numerous Mallards and others, on a partially open pond during a big freeze up. There are only scattered sightings after mid-March. There is also one extra-seasonal observation.

Ring-necked Duck, *Aythya collaris*

STATUS: Common transient and winter resident; DATES: October 13 to May 4+.

Ring-necked Ducks are among the earliest arriving diving ducks to reach us in fall. They show up with big cold fronts, often in late October and early November. A total of 266 Ring-necks were on ponds at Fayetteville's Paul R. Noland Wastewater Treatment Plant on November 26, 1995. Ring-necks prefer larger ponds and shallow lakes with emergent or submergent plants. They dive for plant foods, primarily seeds and below-ground plant parts (Hohman and Eberhardt 1998).

They are the most numerous of diving ducks at Moberly pond, an extensive stormwater retention facility in Bentonville. There are several eBird checklists from Moberly involving 100 or more Ring-necks from the second week in November through January. Adam Schaffer counted 250 there on November 14, 2014.

They have been found most years during the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count. Low numbers during the 1970s and early 1980s improved considerably during the 1990s, with a peak of 273 in 1995. Mike Mlodinow and David Chapman counted 337 at Lake Wedington on December 30, 1995.

We still find relatively high numbers through March: 35 at Alma Wastewater Treatment Facility March 7, 2017, and a spring peak of 187 at Lake Elmdale on March 13, 1994. Numbers are declining sharply by April. The six at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on April 15, 2007, was a relatively high count so late in the season.

Greater Scaup, *Aythya marila*

STATUS: Uncommon to somewhat rare transient and winter resident; DATES: October 28 to April 7+.

Separating the two scaup species provides much entertainment, of a serious nature, during migration and winter. The serious part involves the fact that there is apparently a long-term rangewide decline of Greater Scaup: "At a distance, Greater Scaup are often indistinguishable from Lesser Scaup, and their similarity is a major challenge to waterfowl managers, who require accurate population information for each species to set harvest limits and develop management policies. Unfortunately, because of identification difficulties, the 2 species are combined during aerial (and most ground) population surveys, so changes in populations of either species are obscured—especially those of Greater Scaup, whose numbers are overwhelmed by the more abundant Lesser Scaup" (Kessel et al. 2002).

A flock of up to eight spent much of the winter at Lake Atalanta in Rogers, December 1985 to mid-March 1986; nine were there January 21, 1989. Eight Greater Scaup were observed on an expansive floodwater retention structure in Bentonville just off Moberly Manor Drive on February 11, 2007; six were there on December 1, 2007, and 25 on March 2, 2008. Moberly pond has proven a fairly reliable place to find them in winter.

Mike Mlodinow counted 28 at Beaver Lake Dam State Park on March 17, 1990. Greater Scaup were reported on 12 Fayetteville Christmas Bird Counts (or during count week) between 1991 and 2016. There is a very late observation for May 12, 2007, at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton.

The difficulty in separating the two scaup species, especially at distance or under harsh weather conditions, certainly contributes to relatively few records. For example, on November 7, 2003, during a surge of migrating waterfowl, a single female Greater was identified on Bob Kidd Lake and a single male on Lake Fayetteville, but one must wonder if there were others among the high numbers of scaups present on the same lakes. It's easy to see why, in looking at masses of migrating scaup at distance and bobbing in rafts, we would prefer a very good view, a fine spotting scope, and a world of patience, to reliably separate the species. It's possible to see and study the interesting and subtle physical differences in more intimate settings, like Moberly pond in Bentonville.

Lesser Scaup, *Aythya affinis*

STATUS: Common migrant and winter resident; DATES: October 13 to May 9+.

This is the common scaup we see in western Arkansas. The huge raft of Lesser Scaup estimated at 1,500 on Bob Kidd Lake November 7, 2003, illustrates the fall influx. At least 200 were at Lake Fayetteville on the same day.

Lesser scaups have been reported on most Fayetteville Christmas Bird Counts, with highest numbers in the 1990s, including 212 in 1991 and 108 in 1995. Since 1961, we have recorded 10 or fewer Lesser Scaup on 21 counts, including six counts when we found none.

Spring peaks are indicated by 84 at Alma Wastewater Treatment Facility March 15, 2017, and 228 at Paul R. Noland Wastewater Treatment Plant in Fayetteville on March 23, 1995. There are several summer observations of up to four birds.

Surf Scoter, *Melanitta perspicillata*

STATUS: Rare transient, primarily in fall; DATES: October 11 to November 26 and March 7 to April 14.

The first scoter I saw was at Lake Fayetteville on a typically stormy second week in November. It was a big dark duck out in the middle of the lake with two white patches on the side of its head. According to Peterson, nothing but a female scoter fit the pattern, but I had no experience with scoters and besides, I said to myself, it couldn't be a scoter, because 35 years ago we had almost no Arkansas records for any kind of scoters. But Surf Scoter it was (November 10, 1981). A second one appeared 10 days later. I found another one at Bob Kidd Lake near Prairie Grove, November 19, 1983. Again, it was a stormy day, this time with wind and rain. My observations and note taking (for a documentation form) were made while squatting under an umbrella on the dam: umbrella held in one hand, the other attempting to keep a diving bird in focus, plus staying warm and dry.

We have seen a few Surf Scoters most falls since. Most of our observations have involved 1-2 birds. There were six at Bob Kidd Lake on October 27, 1990. Mitchell Pruitt observed and photographed five at Lake Fayetteville October 25, 2013.

A Surf Scoter was associated with other diving ducks at Alma Wastewater Treatment Facility March 7-16, 2017. The bird at Craig State Fish Hatchery March 29, 2011, was in summer plumage. David Chapman found a male at Lake Fayetteville on April 14, 2007.

White-winged Scoter, *Melanitta fusca*

STATUS: Rare transient in fall and winter; DATES: October 27 to February 6.

Mike Mlodinow found two immatures on December 9, 1994, and one immature on November 5, 2000, both at Bob Kidd Lake. Jason Luscier and others found an adult at Centerton on November 9, 2003; it remained to November 16. A single bird was seen during a Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society field trip to Bob Kidd Lake November 5, 2006. David Chapman observed one associated with American Coots at Lake Fayetteville at least October 27-29, 2009. There were 2 at Lake Fayetteville November 7, 2017. Rod Wittenberg saw one on Beaver Lake from Lost Bridge North Park February 5, 2017. It was subsequently observed by others.

Black Scoter, *Melanitta nigra*

Mike Mlodinow, with Paige and Mary Bess Mulhollan, observed a male Black Scoter at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on November 10, 2006. Mary Bess Mulhollan took photographs. This bird was still present on the following day.

Long-tailed Duck, *Clangula hyemalis*

STATUS: Somewhat rare transient and winter visitor; DATES: November 16 to March 18.

Most observations involve single birds, or occasionally two, and mainly in mid-winter. Four were found on Lake Fayetteville on December 16, 1979, and five were there January 27, 1980. Overall, Long-tailed Duck has been found on only five Fayetteville Christmas Bird Counts (including two count week records) since 1961.

Sightings have been widely scattered, primarily on larger bodies of water (Beaver Lake, Bull Shoals, Lake Fayetteville, Lake Atalanta,etc), but also on a big settling pond at Paul R. Noland Wastewater Treatment Plant in Fayetteville and at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton. Several of the Beaver Lake birds were associated with much more numerous Common Goldeneyes. One of the most striking records is from Monte Ne arm of Beaver Lake, where a male foraged close enough for striking views. Mike Martin photographed this bird March 14, 2014. He had been seeing it there for several weeks.

Nancy Felker found a spectacular winter male (with long tail) at Beaver Lake off Ventris January 21, 2018. A similar bird was seen by Rod Wittenberg off Beaver's Lost Bridge South Park a few days later. Joan Reynolds and I saw a similar bird in the Prairie Creek area on Beaver February 4. Same bird, moving around the lake?

Bufflehead, *Bucephala albeola*

STATUS: Common migrant and winter resident; DATES: October 26 to April 24+.

These beautiful ducks arrive here from their northern breeding grounds typically from the second week in November and thereafter, with a big peak in numbers mid to late November. They visit all kinds of larger ponds and lakes during fall and spring migration. An estimated 200 were present on Bob Kidd Lake November 7, 2003, and at least 100 on Lake Fayetteville the same day. An amazing 260 were observed on November 23, 2013, at Lake Fayetteville

Flocks of a dozen or more birds remain throughout most winters and can be seen on many lakes and larger ponds. For example, small flocks can be observed closely at places like Moberly pond in Bentonville and Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton. They are tallied most years during the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count, though infrequently as many as 100+ on the CBC for a few years in the 1990s.

Lauren Boerger saw 15 at Lake Atalanta in Rogers on March 20, 2017. This was a good count so late in the season.

Common Goldeneye, *Bucephala clangula*

STATUS: Fairly common and widespread migrant in low numbers on larger impoundments and fairly common locally in winter, especially at Beaver Lake; DATES: October 30 to April 18. Relatively few are seen before mid-November or after first half of March.

Goldeneyes are observed during migration on all kinds of lakes and on occasion, even ponds. By mid-winter we are likely to find goldeneyes only on extensive forested places like Beaver Lake, Lake Fayetteville, etc . The only large flocks have been reported on Beaver Lake, where 40 or more birds have been seen on many occasions at mid-winter. The total was 206 at Beaver Lake Dam site on December 26, 1989. I counted 130 in a cove from the Lost Bridge North Park on Beaver Lake January 7, 2008. There were at least 188 on Beaver January 24, 2018. Goldeneyes were quite rare on Fayetteville Christmas Bird Counts up to 2000, but more frequent since.

A mid-winter birding trip to Beaver Lake can get exciting, especially in presence of one of the larger goldeneye flocks. Whatever aquatic organism goldeneyes are seeking in their dives is obviously attractive to other wintering birds. On January 8, 2017, for example, a Franklin's Gull (very rare here in mid-winter) was loosely associated with 40 Common

Goldeneyes visible off Indian Creek Park. On February 9, 2017, a flock of 70 Common Goldeneyes was visible from Lost Bridge North Park. Among them were two Long-tailed Ducks. Often these larger goldeneye flocks are good places to observe Bonaparte's Gulls, Common Goldeneyes, Hooded Mergansers, and the occasional Common Loon.

Hooded Merganser, *Lophodytes cucullatus*

STATUS: Fairly common migrant, uncommon winter resident; rare during nesting season; DATES: observed in all seasons, but primarily October to February.

We find Hooded Mergansers on all kinds of ponds, lakes, and rivers, mainly during migration and winter. There were 31 at Fayetteville's Paul R. Noland Wastewater Treatment Plant on November 11, 2003, an indication of fall influx. During a major duck migration, 15 were at Bob Kidd Lake and 30 at Lake Fayetteville, both on November 11, 2004. The count was 73 at Lake Sequoyah on December 15, 2011.

Hooded Mergansers were observed irregularly during the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count until the late 1990s. Since then, they have been observed on most counts and in higher numbers. Twenty-one were reported on the 2005 Fayetteville CBC; Mike Mlodinow and David Chapman counted approximately 65 in the same area on the following day. The total was 56 during the CBC held December 15, 2013.

Hooded Mergansers can also be found among more numerous dabbling ducks in partially flooded moist soil units at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area. At Frog the count was at least 15 on March 15, 2017.

There are a dozen or so summer season records of juveniles or occasional adults (on ponds at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton, Beaver Lake Nursery Pond, etc) and an adult female with young on Beaver Lake. Seven were found at Lake Fayetteville May 31, 1992. Two birds at Centerton on June 19, 2015, had poorly defined white chins and small crests typical of juveniles.

Common Merganser, *Mergus merganser*

STATUS: Rare winter visitor; DATES: October 26 to April 18. Most observations at mid-winter.

Common Merganser's rarity here is indicated by the fact that it has been found on only nine Fayetteville Christmas Bird Counts (1961-2016). The highest number recorded was 11 in 1963. Common Mergansers were found on the Siloam Springs CBC in 1979 (7) and 1981 (2).

The 4-5 birds found on December 14, 2003, on Lake Sequoyah remained until at least February 14, 2004. A male and female were viewed by many at Lake Atalanta at least January 10-March 5, 2010. On Beaver Lake, three were visible from Prairie Creek Park on February 5, 2014.

One of the best sightings occurred during a Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society field trip to Eagle Watch Nature Trail on SWEPCO Lake: 10 Common Mergansers on February 5, 2011.

Red-breasted Merganser, *Mergus serrator*

STATUS: Uncommon transient, rare winter visitor; DATES: November 1 to May 28+.

Red-breasted Mergansers regularly appear with advent of real cold weather. They usually remain on our wooded lakes for a few days before continuing south toward the coast, where most are found during winter. During fall, this involves mid-November into December, often during the same period when other migrating diving ducks (scaup, redheads, etc) are present on larger impoundments.

Most observations of Red-breasted Mergansers involve small flocks of a few birds up to seven or so. Andy Scaboo saw 11 at Bob Kidd Lake on November 20, 2010. A very large flock of 42 was observed on Lake Fayetteville by David Oakley and Michael Linz December 6, 2014; they were still present the following day when Mitchell Pruitt and I canoed out for a closer look. Scattered sightings thereafter extend into mild weather of early winter.

Prior to 2005, the only Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count record was one bird in 1982. On December 18, 2005, Kim Smith and his Fayetteville CBC party counted 21. There were also Hooded Mergansers on the same pond. There are a few other winter season records of single birds.

There are several records of small flocks from around mid-March indicative of the northward migration. A Red-breasted Merganser on Lake Fayetteville March 17, 2017, appeared on the same day as three Common Loons. Mike Mlodinow and I saw six at Lake Fayetteville on April 15, 2007. JoAnne Rife saw six at Lake Bull Shoals on April 16, 1991. Three at Beaver Lake Nursery Pond May 1, 2017, included a male and 2 females. There is also a June-July record at Centerton.

Ruddy Duck, *Oxyura jamaicensis*

STATUS: Common transient and much less numerous winter resident; DATES: October 7 to May 15+.

Flocks of up to two dozen birds are not unusual at Lake Fayetteville after the arrival of big cold fronts in November. The migration in fall 2003 was amazing: an estimated 360 ruddies at Bob Kidd Lake November 7, and an astounding 1,200 at Lake Fayetteville on the same day.

Most Ruddy Ducks depart our region by early winter, but a few remain most years. They are found on most Fayetteville Christmas Bird Counts, but the number observed is almost always fewer than 10; 86 counted in 1997 was exceptional. Ruddies often can be found in winter at Alwa Wastewater Treatment Facility. Historical data maintained by National Audubon Society shows that the principal mid-winter distribution in the state is in eastern Arkansas on the Mississippi Alluvial Plain and to the south.

Warming trends in mid to late March include noteable influxes of ruddies, especially when a winter storm halts the northward movement. Such was the case March 20-21, 2010, with a 10-inch snow. Andy Scaboo observed a huge, mixed-species waterfowl flock at Bob Kidd Lake on March 20 that included an estimated 20-50 ruddies. I counted at least 26 at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on the same day.

There are also a few summer season observations of single birds.

Order Galliformes

Northern Bobwhite, *Colinus virginianus*

STATUS: Now only locally common where suitable well-managed grassland habitat persists; DATES: present all year.

Bobwhites have radically declined throughout western Arkansas, largely as a result of habitat loss and widespread fire suppression. They are still fairly common locally in extensive grasslands, abandoned pastures, forest edge, and similar habitat, such as in the native and non-native grassland in and around Chesney and Baker Prairie Natural Areas and at Pea Ridge National Military Park where goals of restoration work include bobwhite recovery. UA-Fayetteville graduate student Alyssa DeRubeis found an adult male with 8 chicks at Chesney Prairie Natural Area September 17, 2017. Work for restoration of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers on the Ouachita National forest has also resulted in quality bobwhite habitat (Masters 2007).

Bobwhite coveys were once expected on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count. Totals of over 100 birds were frequent into the mid-1990s, but plunged to 0 on many counts thereafter. The plunge in bobwhite numbers on Fort Smith-Moffett CBC was noticeable by the early 1980s, though birds persisted to around 2010. The proximate cause is rapid human population growth and consequent radical habitat change within these count circles. They mirror what is happening on a wider scale. Even in the countryside where farms rather than freeways are the norm, bobwhite numbers are depressed. Bobwhites are still reported in on the Crooked Creek CBC in Boone County that includes once extensive Baker Prairie.

The Compton Breeding Bird Survey route in Newton County covers a broad range of habitats once bobwhite-friendly, including small farms, extensive grasslands, and forest edge. Between the late 1960s and late 1980s, bobwhite tallies on the Compton survey often ranged 20-30 birds, with a peak of 45 in 1967. Numbers have plunged since the early 1990s, with no counts exceeding 12 birds. The widespread practice of clean fencerows isn't suitable for bobwhites and other native species requiring cover and travel corridors. Fire that once helped shaped brushy, open habitats with suitable native food plants, including open, park-like pine and hardwood forests, is now largely absent, even in rural areas where small fires were frequent in the past. The best remaining habitats involve the still extensive grasslands of former prairies.

In their study at Pea Ridge, Shugart and James (1973) found bobwhites across a range of grassy early succession habitats, with peak numbers in woody field and forest edge plots. Masters (2007) shows what habitat is available to bobwhites in forests with fire and without fire. The difference is huge, with only a modest amount of available habitat in forests protected from fire.

When I'm asked "What can we do about bobwhites," I first mention that there is nothing biologically limiting about bobwhites. Bobwhites want to build nests and rear their young. The limits have to do with us and our attitudes concerning land health and specifically grassland ecosystems. This applies at both the personal level of one farm and at ecosystem level on public lands. There is now plenty of research illustrating that bobwhites cannot survive urbanization of their former grassland habitats, but they can thrive in other places beyond the urban core. So the relevant question is, "What are WE willing to do for bobwhites?" Are we willing to give up clean fencerows? Control feral cats? Are we willing to encourage native plant species in place of universal fescue? IF we want bobwhites, are we willing to ask ourselves the relevant questions?

Ruffed Grouse, *Bonasa umbellus*

STATUS: Extirpated in the 19th century, but more recently subject to an unsuccessful reintroduction effort.

The 19th Century pioneer literature of northwest Arkansas included references to this "wood hen" (see, for example, Neal 1958 and Donat 1974). This population seems to have been extirpated by around 1900. Professor F. L. Harvey of the University of Arkansas considered it very scarce in the Fayetteville area in 1883 (Howell 1911).

During the 1980s, wild-trapped birds from other regions of North America were released near Ponca in Newton County and near Hagarsville in Johnson County in an attempt to establish a wild population on the Buffalo National River and Ozark National Forest (Arkansas Game and Fish data). These reintroduced grouse didn't flourish. As late as 2008, it might still have been possible to find an occasional bird somewhere in the Ozark National Forest (M. Widner, personal communication, 1/25/08).

Greater Prairie-Chicken, *Tympanuchus cupido*

Extirpated from Arkansas. In the 19th Century, prairie-chickens were resident in the open grasslands of western Arkansas (Ellis 1957, Neal 1958). Prairie townships established in places like Hindsville and Fayetteville were reflective of native grasslands. Generally, the chickens didn't long survive settlement. Albert Lano (1921) was greatly surprised when a bird was killed west of Fayetteville in 1919. Many years ago, Maurice Loux (1913-1997), a native of Maysville, told me he remembered seeing wild chickens during his boyhood. Dean Crooks reported the last one from northwest Arkansas (Baerg 1951), undoubtedly from the native (before fescue) grasslands of Benton County.

The loss of prairie-chickens undoubtedly resulted from unregulated hunting plus conversion of its grassland habitat to the production of wheat, a crop that covered as many as 100,000 acres in northwest Arkansas during the period 1870 to 1920 (see also discussion in Smith and Petit 1988).

From my home in old Prairie Township in Fayetteville, it is now a minimum 2-hour drive to find habitat that still supports Greater Prairie-Chickens. Flocks can still be seen on preserved prairie remnants in the Missouri Ozarks (Wilson 1984; Jacobs and Wilson 1997). I have seen a few birds at Prairie State Park near Joplin and on a few other state-managed prairies in the southwestern corner of Missouri. None of this is that far from Arkansas. Prairie-chickens are a management priority in The Nature Conservancy's extensive Tallgrass Prairie Preserve in the Flinthills north of Pawhuska, in Osage County, Oklahoma (Reinking 2004).

Wild Turkey, *Meleagris gallopavo*

STATUS: Fairly common local resident in extensively forested areas; DATES: present all year.

The original turkey population was greatly reduced by unregulated hunting, forest clearing, and widespread fire suppression that degraded remaining habitat (Widner 1998). In a major effort by Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, remaining local population were augmented by releases starting in 1932. The release of wild birds trapped in southeastern Arkansas since the 1950s (James, et al. 1983) has successfully restored turkeys on public lands and elsewhere with suitable habitat. Releases have been concentrated on public lands, like the Ozark National Forest, where bird densities are in the range of 6-15 per square mile (Widner 1998).

Doug James and his students found 3 flocks totaling 109 birds between Boxley and Ponca in Newton County on December 4, 1998. There were 9 turkeys on the Crooked Creek Christmas Bird Count in 2001. I have seen flocks in the valley of the Buffalo River at Boxley on several occasions. A big gobbler was strutting in a flock of 22 birds March 22, 2011.

Groups like the National Wild Turkey Federation urge the use of prescribed burning to improve habitat for this bird, as well as other animals and plants that flourish in habitats shaped in part by fire.

Order Podicipediformes

Least Grebe, *Tachybaptus dominicus*

Mike Mlodinow and Jacque Brown observed a Least Grebe at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on August 3, 2008. Brown collected images. This was the first state record for Arkansas. It was subsequently viewed by many others until August 7.

James et al. (2008) suggested this grebe may have strayed into Arkansas as a result of displacement associated with Hurricane Dolly in late July. Very high winds were associated with Dolly's passage through western Arkansas.

Pied-billed Grebe, *Podilymbus podiceps*

STATUS: Common transient and winter resident; seen in all seasons; DATES: primarily September through April.

Most observations of Pied-billed Grebes involve transients and winter residents. In migration they utilize all sorts of ponds, but most winter records involve larger impoundments.

The fall migration peak has been noted from late Auguyst to early November. The flock of 16 at Alma Wastewater Treatment Facility August 23, 2017, was early. David Chapman tallied 294 at Lake Fayetteville on September 14, 2011. The 250 at Lake Fayetteville on October 17, 1999, also marked a migration peak. Jason Luscier and Abby Darrah tallied 80 at Bob Kidd Lake on November 6, 2007.

While they are generally present throughout the winter, severe freezing forces them to seek open water habitat elsewhere. Observers on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count have found them almost every year since 1961.

In mid to late March, Pied-billed Grebes headed north pass through as part of the general waterfowl movements associated with warming. For example, on March 20, 2010, a big winter storm front stalled northward migration and grebes were scattered over ponds at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton. On the same day at Bob Kidd Lake, Andy Scaboo found a huge mixed species waterfowl flock that included these grebes.There were at least 25 in flooded moist soil units at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area on April 18, 2017, with many birds vocalizing.

Non-breeding individuals have summered at Lake Fayetteville, Lake Atalanta in Rogers, and Lake Elmdale, and Frog Bayou WMA. Mike Mlodinow found probable evidence of breeding at Lake Elmdale, including adults with possibly three broods, on July 16 and 24, 1994.

Horned Grebe, *Podiceps auritus*

STATUS: Fairly common transient and locally common winter resident; DATES: August 21 to April 24+, but mainly early October through March.

Small flocks of Horned Grebes, often five or fewer birds, can be found on larger impoundments during southward migration. At least 89 were visible from old Glade on Slate Gap Road, north side of Beaver Lake, October 29, 2014. Mike Mlodinow saw 15 at Lake Fayetteville on November 12, 2008 (Chapman 2016). We saw 225 during a boat trip on Beaver Lake November 25, 2017.

Winter season flocks can be observed on Beaver Lake at the dam site, Rocky Branch, and especially from old Glade where there are occasional winter counts of as few hundred. They are generally scarce and in low numbers during winter elsewhere. For example, they have been reported only six times during Christmas Bird Counts (including count week) at Fayetteville.

As spring comes on, Horned Grebes trade bland grays of winter for elegant blacks, rufous, and rich yellows of summer. Birds at Slate Gap for example, have acquired their elegant dress of summer by late February and especially March. Mike Mlodinow counted 240 at old Glade on March 15, 1999. Kyle Jones photographed a particularly elegant bird present at Centerton April 9-21, 2015.

There are scattered summer records of non-breeding birds from Bull Shoals and Beaver Lake.

Eared Grebe, *Podiceps nigricollis*

STATUS: Very uncommon transient and rare winter resident; DATES: September 2 to June 1.

Our observations of this grebe from the far northwest are scattered between September and early June. They are never common here. As David Chapman (2016) observed "… difficult to separate from Horned Grebes when in winter or transition plumage ..." and I would add, far away bobbing up and down on a lake.

Late October to mid-November is typical for fall arrivals. Most observations involve 1-3 birds. The six at Beaver Lake on November 4, 1995, was a high count. Most birds have passed through by late April, but there are later records, including a single bird seen at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on June 1, 1995.

Western Grebe, *Aechmophorus occidentalis* and *Aechmophorus* species

STATUS: Rare transient and winter visitor; DATES: November 4 to March 15.

There have been more than a dozen observations since 1981. All birds seen well so far fit the general pattern of Western Grebe.

On January 21, 1981, members of the Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society saw two *Aechmophorus* grebes from Rocky Branch Park on Beaver Lake. A single bird that wintered on Beaver Lake in 1994-1995 was of the *Aechmophorus* type. I saw and photographed a definitive Western Grebe on several occasions in the Slate Gap Road area (old Glade) on

Beaver Lake January 7-February 19, 2009. Joan Reynolds and I saw three from Slate Gap and another near the dam at Beaver Lake on December 7, 2011. They were still present on December 16, when I returned with Mitchell Pruitt. We may have seen as many as six on the later date. All of these birds were for sure Western Grebes.

Order Columbiformes

Rock Pigeon, *Columba livia*

STATUS: Common resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Rock Pigeons are found in especially high numbers around feedlots and feed mills, benefiting from plentiful waste grains. They can also be seen in more natural habitats like the picturesque bluffs above the Buffalo River. Wherever found, their graceful flights and cooing add much to the delight of the outdoors, a compensation to keep in mind in the face of poisoning and other killing methods use to reduce their numbers in urban areas. Rock Pigeons are common on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count, with hundreds and up to 1,310 in 1994.

Eurasian Collared-Dove*, Streptopelia decaocto*

STATUS: Common resident, at least locally; DATES: Observed in all seasons.

Martha Milburn had one in her yard at Harrison in Boone County June 25-August 1, 1989; it was found dead on August 17. This was our first record for Northwest Arkansas City. Subsequently, collared-doves have spread widely. One was observed for the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count in 2002, and Amy Clifton counted 60 at the Tyson feed mill in Springdale on December 14, 2003, during that year's CBC. The tally was 303 on the 2015 CBC.

At Fort Smith, the first CBC records involved nine birds in 2001. The tally exceeded 300 there by 2011. They are common all over old downtown Fort Smith.

We are now finding them regularly in the poultry-producing areas of Benton County, no doubt a result of plentiful waste grain available throughout the area. I counted a minimum of 39 at a dairy farm near Vaughn in Benton County on December 1, 2007. They are also tallied on the Crooked Creek CBC (5-6 on recent counts).

There is an interesting description of the initial records for Arkansas and how it was determined these were not escaped cage birds (James et al. 1994).

Passenger Pigeon, *Ectopistes migratorius*

Extinct. It was once a plentiful transient and winter visitor last reported in about 1900 (see Howell 1911, Schorger 1955). Passenger Pigeon bones were recovered from the cellar of the historic Ridge House in Fayetteville during archaeological work (Jurney 1978).

Inca Dove, *Columbina inca*

STATUS: Rare transient and apparently local resident; DATES: Scattered throughout the year.

First record for western Arkansas: one found dead and headless at Fayetteville on December 3, 1972. We have scattered observations dating mainly from 1990 and thereafter, presumeably a sign of this bird's range expansion from far south of us. Many of these sightings are from Fayetteville. Another bird was seen in Fayetteville from October 22, 1990, to January 8, 1991. Robert Doster and Lisa K. Mosely identified and photographed an adult male on August 24-25, 2002. Harold J. Hill photographed one in Fayetteville on December 25, 2002.

Mike Mlodinow saw one at Fayetteville October 21, 2007. Sara Barlett has had as many as two doves coming to her feeders, apparently attracted to millet and cracked corn spread on the ground. Mlodinow has found them on several other occasions, including April 2017 near the University farm in Fayetteville.

Inca Doves have been reported on the Fort Smith-Moffett Christmas Bird Count (including count week) most years since 2009. After seeing Inca Doves in her yard at Fort Smith on June 26, 2011, Sandy Berger wrote, "I continue to have Inca Doves on my block and in my yard. They consistently fly through my yard, call from other yards, drink at my bird bath or from the street."

White-winged Dove, *Zenaida asiatica*

STATUS: Uncommon to even somewhat rare visitor, but locally common in Fort Smith; DATES: Observed in all seasons.

Donald and Barbara Holt identified one in their yard in Fayetteville that was present from November 18-December 5, 2000. This was the first record for the Ozarks portion of Northwest Arkansas City. At Fort Smith in the river valley, Sandy and John Berger had close looks at one on March 15, 2001.

In subsequent years there have been a number of sightings scattered all over the Ozarks, usually single birds: Harrison, Bentonville, Centerton, Springdale. Kelly Chitwood observed one west of Fayetteville on February 17, 2007. David Oakley has seen 1-2 at his feeders near Springdale Country Club, mainly in spring and summer. Jacque Brown has had one at at feeders in Centerton on several occasions, including May 15, 2015. David Chapman saw one at Geroge's Feed Mill in Springdale December 14, 2013 (a count week bird for Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count).

The core of our White-winged Dove population is in older neighborhoods and the industrial area of downtown Fort Smith. Many people stop there to record White-winged Doves for their life or state lists. Kenny and LaDonna Nichols counted 34 on January 13, 2013. White-winged Doves were not reported on Fort Smith CBC until 2010 (13). They have since increased: 2014 (38) and 2015 (41).

Mourning Dove, *Zenaida macroura*

STATUS: Common resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Mourning Doves nest throughout Northwest Arkansas City, in both urban and rural areas and they start early: Jack Mobly and Doug James found a nest at UA-Fayetteville campus in which eggs were laid by about February 7, 1992.

Post-breeding season flocks begin to form during July, and large flocks numbering hundreds of birds can be seen in stubble fields and other open fields with waste grain from then on during late summer and fall. There were easily 200 or more around Chesney Prairie Natural Area at Siloam Springs on August 6, 2005. Joe Woolbright, a Siloam native and Chesney Prairie Natural Area land steward, said huge flocks were an annual event. These doves are almost always recorded on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count. Tyical CBC often involves 100-200 (range 0-413). They are also common on the CBC for Fort Smith-Moffett (range 4- 200).

Order Cuculiformes

Yellow-billed Cuckoo, *Coccyzus americanus*

STATUS: Fairly common summer resident, but declining; DATES: April 25 to November 6, mainly late April to late September

During summer these cuckoos nest at the forest edge or in forest openings. During 1985, I observed seven nests with eggs or young at a study site near Durham southeast of Fayetteville from late May to mid-August. The nests were all 12 feet or lower, and were in cedar trees (3), oaks (2), hackberry (1), and winged elm (1). A rat snake ate the contents of one of these nests and a windstorm in early June destroyed another. They often selected a cedar or a small tree covered by vines as nest site.

Li (1994) found and followed outcomes for 11 cuckoo nests in his study area at White Rock in the Ozark National Forest. He reported that 51.2% of nests were successful. The clutch size averaged 2.6, brood size 2.0, and number of young produced for the season was 1.02 per nesting pair. Nest heights averaged 6.02 meters. None of the nests he found had been parasitized by Brown-headed Cowbirds.

In his studies in the Winslow area, Black (1935) found young in "about five different nests on September 11, 12 and 16, all of the young still being in quills." Judith Griffith at Ninestone Land Trust in Carroll County noted young fledging in the second week of September 2017.

Cuckoos are recorded on Breeding Bird Surveys throughout our area. However, on both the Compton and Massard BBS routes, Yellow-billed Cuckoos numbers have been declining since the early 2000s. Some of this, especially on Massard, is attributable to urbanization. However, declines are widespread. "Unfortunately, the future of the Yellow-billed Cuckoo is uncertain. Populations are declining precipitously throughout its distribution" (Hughes 2015).

Forest management studies (Thompson et al. 1995) showed them in stands managed with a variety of treatments, with highest numbers in mature forests.

Black-billed Cuckoo, *Coccyzus erythropthalmus*

STATUS: Rare transient; very rare summer resident.

DATES: April 20 to June 3+ and August 19 to October 19.

Spring records are mostly during May. Rob Doster saw what must have been a late spring bird at Lake Fayetteville on June 3, 2001. Most sightings have involved single birds. An interesting exception to this involved Whitney Mountain on north side of Beaver Lake. Joan Reynolds and I saw and heard at least four Black-billed Cuckoos from one spot on May 1, 2013. There was a lot of vocalizing. We had the impression this was a small flock, so the actual number was possibly higher.

Baerg (1951) published two nesting records. A nest was found at Harrison in 1958. Leif Anderson found one bird at Mountainburg on June 17, 2012. Of this he wrote, "Black-billed started song and immediately 2 Yellow-billed responded with aggresive territorial song and approached the BB. No song from BB afterwards."

Fall sightings are scattered between late August and mid-October.

Black-billed Cuckoos were found during the course of the Missouri Breeding Bird Atlas in the Ozarks bordering Arkansas (Jacobs and Wilson 1997).

Greater Roadrunner, *Geococcyx californianus*

STATUS: Uncommon generally, but locally common resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Roadrunner records here date to at least 1957, when Doug James spotted one northeast of Fayetteville on August 3. They were present on Kessler Mountain, where Doug lived at that time, at least by 1959-1962.

It is easy to almost never see a roadrunner. They are typically found where there is a mixture of open forest and clearings or in lightly developed areas of towns. They occur around farm places and in some areas the birds are seen daily over years. Otherwise, sightings tend to be by chance.

Winters in the late 1970s apparently decimated them in the Ozarks (Evans and Probasco 1982). Severe weather reduces the prey upon which roadrunners depend. Reports since the late 1980s suggest they rebounded. Roadrunners were found on each Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count between 1963 and 1972, with five in 1972. None were found on any count again until 1981. Since 2000, we have missed roadrunner only a few times on Fayetteville CBC (including count week), with numbers ranging 1-3. Roadrunner totals involve 1-3 on the Crooked Creek CBC.

Mary Pledger of Boone County told JoAnne Rife about a series of nests at the base of Gaither Mountain. She saw 3 adults and 5 fledglings there on May 26, 1996.

Kim Smith (et al., in press) documented roadrunners sunbathing in cold weather, with observations and photographs of this behavior during Fayetteville CBC, a neighborhood just east of Rogers, and near Rocky Branch Park on Beaver Lake.

Order Caprimulgiformes

Common Nighthawk, *Chordeiles minor*

STATUS: Common transient and summer resident; DATES: April 24 to October 19+.

Common Nighthawks typically arrive in May, which is also a time for a big flush of insects. They are common in extensively open areas, especially where strong outdoor lights concentrate insect prey. Small loose foraging flocks may swirl above big parking lots during spring and summer. In old downtown Fort Smith, roosting nighthawks sometimes perch sideways on thick powerlines, tending to blend with the wire, like they would on a tree limb.

Nighthawks may pass through in large flocks during fall, some with more than 100 individuals between late August and early October. Very unusual for the high number were the estimated 250 Doug James saw as they migrated southward over Fayetteville during heavy rainstorms on August 27, 1987. Adam Schaffer observed about 100 at Bentonville on August 29, 2011, and 50 there on September 19, 2014.

The five Karen Garrett recorded on her eBird checklist on October 6, 2015, near Centerton, were at the end of migration. There are also a few observations even later, to about mid-November. At that time we have usually experienced a cold front or two with severely reduced flying insect populations.

Chuck-will's-widow, *Antrostomus carolinensis*

STATUS: Common summer resident; DATES: April 14 to September 13.

This and the following species are both often called "whip-poor-wills" by those unfamiliar with the distinctions in their songs, especially when heard far away. "Chucks" usually inhabit the dry open woods near open farmland or other types of forest clearings, especially those in bottomlands, low hills, and low ridges.

Two eggs are laid on leaves, often under a cedar or other small tree. In 1984 and 1985, six clutches of eggs or new hatchlings were observed between May 24 and July 17 during the course of a research project conducted on low, forested hillsides near Durham southeast of Fayetteville. I saw a Chuck-will's-widow on its nest at Ninestone Land Trust in Carroll County on June 14, 2015.

I often hear them at stop one on the Compton Breeding Bird Survey in Newton County. This is in the uplands, where open fields are the norm. Abby Darrah reported hearing seven at Lake Wilson near Fayetteville on May 11, 2008. The birds are recorded annually at Devil's Den State Park, deep in the Boston Mountains, especially in early May, around time of the park's annual Birders Weekend. Leif Anderson recorded four on the Rudy BBS (stops 1-10) on May 27, 2016.

Eastern Whip-poor-will, *Antrostomus vociferus*

STATUS: Common summer resident; DATES: March 26 to September 22.

"Whips" usually arrive in the Ozarks before "chucks." Their calls may be heard almost anywhere during spring migration, including yards in towns. During the breeding season they are common in the upland forests where there are farms and other types of clearings, often seen and heard along gravel roads through the Ozark National Forest and elsewhere. The ranges of "whips" and "chucks" overlap, and it is not unusual to hear both species singing in places like Devil's Den State Park.

Staff at Ozark Natural Science Center north of Huntsville, especially Joanie Patterson and Adam Schaffer, have posted numerous eBird checklists that include whips. The earliest arrival (March 26, 2012) was at ONSC. Adam recorded six for June 15, 2011. Auriel Fournier listed three at Pea Ridge National Military Park on June 3, 2016.

Population trends for these birds are disturbing. Based on Breeding Bird Survey data, between 1970 and 2014, whips may have declined almost 70% (Cink et al. 2017). Whips are on the Watch List prepared by North American Bird Conservation Initative (2016).

Order Apodiformes

Chimney Swift, *Chaetura pelagica*

STATUS: Common transient and summer resident; DATES: March 24 to October 25.

Early swifts ("scouts") may reach Northwest Arkansas City during strong warming trends of late March, but the spring influx – and big concentrations of flying insects—occurs around mid-April and thereafter. An estimated 300 swifts entered a Fayetteville chimney on April 13 and over 1000 entered a chimney near the Washington County Courthouse on April 24. Joan Reynolds and I estimated that 300-400 were entering a chimney in old downtown Rogers on April 29, 2014. These observations mark spring migration movements.

Swifts commonly nest in open chimneys in homes and older buildings. As our human population has expanded, we are losing the big old chimneys that were typical of 50 years ago. Roosting and nesting places for Chimney Swifts disappear as these old chimneys are closed or torn down. We can do our part by leaving chimneys open for their nesting season and accepting the resulting inconvenience. The pay off comes with a sky full of swifts.

Swifts will also use artificial "chimneys." Plans for swift houses and other information are available from Chimney Swift Conservation Association in Austin, Texas.

During fall migration, hundreds and even several thousand may be observed as they fly into chimneys for nighttime roosting. In mid-October, over 1000 roosted in a chimney at a Fayetteville church. An estimated 300+ were entering a chimney in old downtown Rogers on October 7, 2013. We must encourage building owners to keep these old chimneys open for swifts.

David Chapman saw 70 over Lake Fayetteville as late as October 12, 2010.

White-throated Swift, *Aeronautes saxatalis*

A single bird was seen and described by Pat Toops and Norm Geltz as it flew along Big Bluff, 300 feet above the Buffalo National River in Newton County, on December 19, 1981.

Mexican Violetear, *Colibri thalassinus*

There are four records of single birds, July 6 to September 16. Bill Brazelton photographed a bird that visited his feeder in Fort Smith a few times on September 16, 1984. A single bird visited a feeder at the home of Sue and Dan Burlingame north of Lurton in Newton County July 6-23, 1990. Doug James and many observers saw a single bird near

Rogers that was present August 4 to September 5, 1990. Taos Jones obtained video footage of a bird at the Joan and Floyd Bodkin place at Gentry in Benton County August 21-22, 2000. Joyce Shedell and others also saw it.

There is an interesting description of how Doug James was able to clarify the identification of the bird photographed by Bill Brazelton at Fort Smith in 1984 (James and Neal 1986). This is the species formerly known as Green Violetear.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird, *Archilochus colubris*

STATUS: Common transient and summer resident; DATES: April 8 to October 25+.

An occasional Ruby-throated Hummingbird reaches us during the second or third weeks of April, but most arrive later in the month and depart by late September.

Dr. Marguerite Baumgartner of near Jay, Oklahoma (in the Ozarks approximately 15 miles west of Maysville, Arkansas) started banding ruby-throats in 1977. She found that males arrive ahead of females. Young birds recently out of the nest began coming to feeders by around mid-July. Most southward migration occured between late August and early September (personal communication, 1987; Baumgartner 1980).

Besides birds at home feeders, where do we see ruby-throats? They are widespread in all kinds of forest habitat and abundant, in fall where Jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*), a hummer favorite, grows in profusion along shady spring runs. A few examples include Frisco Spring run at Lake Atalanta in Rogers, Historic Van Winkle Trail at Hobbs State Park-Conservation area, Flint Creek Natural Area in Benton County, Natural Falls State Park (in Oklahoma, just a few miles west of Siloam Springs). By late August, with Jewelweed in bloom, ruby-throats concentrate in such places, and activity remains high until southward migration sweeps most away by mid to late September.

A few individuals linger later into fall. In 2009, for example, there were a number of such records. David Chapman (2016) saw an adult male at a feeder near Lake Fayetteville on November 2. In an email posted to the ARBIRDS discussion list on November 3, 2009, ruby-throat expert Bob Sargent suggested that late birds may be derived from some who experienced nest failures early in the season, so as a result, nested later and are also migrating later, a little behind others.

A leucistic hummingbird, probably of this species, was photographed during visits to a feeder at Winslow in summer 2007. An *Archilochus* species hummingbird visited a feeder at Kim Smith's home in Fayetteville on November 20, 2016. Mitchell Pruitt obtained photos. It was either a late ruby-throat or it might have been a Black-chinned Hummingbird. Despite efforts, it was not possible to determine species with certainty.

In presentations about feeding hummingbirds, Doug James always explains that keeping feeders up after usual migration time does not keep ruby-throats from migrating. Their fall southward migration is mainly cued by declining length of day, not presence or absence of feeders.

To those with a particular interest in these birds, I recommend Bob Sargent's book, Ruby-throated Hummingbird (Wild Bird Guide series, 1999).

Anna's Hummingbird, *Calypte anna*

Sara Cain-Bartlett noticed a late hummer at her feeder on Wheeler Road in Fayetteville. The date was November 8, 2010. The bird was photographed on December 5. Bob Sargent identified it as a juvenile male Anna's Hummingbird. It was banded by Bob and Martha Sargent on December 10, 2010. Sara tallied it for the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count on December 19, 2010. She last saw it last on February 9, 2011, just as overnight temperatures plunged to 18 degrees F. It was certainly a memorable bird for the many of us who trooped out to Sara's place to observe it.

Rufous Hummingbird, *Selasphorus rufus*

STATUS: Rare transient and winter resident; DATES: mainly late July to early April+.

Hummer expert Bob Sargent posted a comment about fall Rufous Hummingbirds on the ARBIRDS list on August 1, 2012. This species has reached Alabama, his home, by second half of July. Plus this: "In our work to the east of Arkansas, we have documented Rufous every month of the year except June."

For northwest Arkansas, we accumulated approximately 13 records 1987-2006; 3 of these observations involved *Selasphorus* species that could not be identified. There have been many additional observations post-2006. Most are clustered from September to mid-December. Considering these and subsequent observations (including some that have been photographed), it seems clear Rufous Hummingbirds annually migrate in low numbers throughout western Arkansas. We are in the path, or at least partly, as they move from nesting in the west to wintering in the east.

An adult female Rufous trapped and banded at Fayetteville by Max and Helen Parker was first seen October 2, 2004, and departed April 8, 2005. An adult male first seen on October 25, 1998, remained during a long, mild fall, then died on December 23 during the year's first hard freeze (temperature in teens). "Rufie" visited a feeder at the home of Bob and Sara Caulk on Mt Sequoyah in Fayetteville from about November 8 to December 9, 2005, and disappeared after overnight temperatures fell to 8 degrees F.

Of approximately 11 records identified to species through 2006, 3 were adult females, 2 adult males, 1 an immature female, and 5 immature males. Doug James trapped two (an adult female and an immature female) in Fayetteville on October 20, 1996. Feathers were measured, and samples sent to the collection maintained by William Baltosser at UA-Little Rock.

An especially intriguing Rufous record involves the west side of Kessler Mountain in Farmington. It was identified and photographed on November 20, 2009. Ann Johnson stated that she had been seeing a Rufous Hummingbird for the previous 3 years, including one that summered in 2009. Paige and Mary Bess Mulhollan saw her bird for Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count on December 20, 2009. Good images were collected by Jacque Brown and David Oakley. An adult male Rufous returned to the Johnson feeder on August 2, 2010.

Order Gruiformes

Yellow Rail, *Coturnicops noveboracensis*

Dr David Krementz from UA-Fayetteville found a Yellow Rail among about 30 Soras while rail hunting at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area on October 20, 2016.

King Rail, *Rallus elegans*

Rare transient, mainly in the Arkansas River Valley.

In the past, this classic marshland bird may have been more regular as a migrant and possible summer resident when seasonal wetlands were much more common in the Ozarks and extensive marshes developed along oxbows of the Arkansas River.

Dean Crooks saw a King Rail in Benton County, but this published record was undated (Baerg 1951). Single birds were observed at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on October 10, 1983, and April 10, 1991. These were the only records from the Ozarks until UA-Fayetteville graduate student Alyssa DeRubeis found one at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary in Fayetteville May 29, 2017. It was heard and observed by others thereafter.

In the past few years, King Rails have been found several times at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area. For example, Kings were found there on March 27 and April 10, 2009.

Virginia Rail, *Rallus limicola*

STATUS: Rare transient in Ozarks; more numerous in spring than fall; uncommon or perhaps fairly common transient in Arkansas River Valley; a few winter records; DATES: April 1 to May 13 and October 12 to December8+.

Our Virginia Rail records mainly involve single birds. We usually see or hear them in well-developed marsh vegetation and in the same places as more nunmerous Soras.

There have been many recent observations in extensive suitable habitat at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area. Dr David G. Krementz has found them regularly at Frog while rail hunting, mainly for Soras. UA-Fayetteville graduate student Matt Carroll heard at least eight Virginias vocalizing there just before daylight on December 8, 2010.

Some records illustrate the hazards of migration in a time when most of our former lowland prairie grasslands and seasonal wetlands have been lost to development. Elizabeth Adam found a dead bird in a store parking lot at Fayetteville on August 31, 1987. Bruce Roberts found a live, but injured bird in a storage facility lot near Bentonville on May 1, 2005. Calvin Bay reported a single bird in his strawberry patch in western Fayetteville April 30, 2008.

While western Arkansas does not seem to be part of Virginia Rail's usual wintering area, it appears they may remain here past fall, perhaps in response to mild weather including unfrozen marshes. That could explain the following: Sandy Berger and Ragupathy Kannan found one in a cattail marsh in the river valley January 6, 2006. Mike Mlodinow observed one in the Clabber Creek bottomlands at Fayetteville January 8, 2004.

Sora, *Porzana carolina*

STATUS: Fairly common transient; DATES: March 26 to May 26+ and August 24 to November 10+.

Soras are flushed from well-vegetated edges of marsh-like ponds or ditches in extensive open areas and in fields with dense wet grass. Extensive moist soil units at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area in the river valley provide ideal Sora habitat. The early spring arrival date is from the Eagle Watch Nature Trail in Benton County, where Terry Stanfill saw a single bird on March 26, 2006. Otherwise, there are no observations until the second week in April. There were at least 10 in the former grasslands adjacent what is now Wilson Springs Preserve in Fayetteville May 3, 2002. This habitat was sold by City of Fayetteville and is now covered by housing built on streets with bird names. (Mercifully, there is no "Sora Drive" among the streets in former habitat suitable for Soras.)

Broad edges of ponds at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton have provided good Sora habitat: at least seven in a smartweed patch there on September 22, 2012; 24 on September 23, 2000; and 13 on October 11, 2012. At least eight were vocalizing on the edge of a rice field adjacent Frog Bayou WMA on September 30, 2013. There were at least 30 Soras at Frog on October 20, 2016.

Peak numbers like these provide a view of the past: Soras must have been very common during migration in our former wet, lowland prairie grasslands. These have been drained, leaving only relatively small patches of favorable habitat.

In addition to the above observations, Russell Graham found a single bird in Madison County June 23, 1987, and again on July 20 in same area. Sandy Berger and others found one in the Arkansas River Valley (Ned's Lake near Van Buren) on December 18, 2004. One was tallied for Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count December 20, 2009.

Purple Gallinule, *Porphyrula martinica*

Mike Mlodinow discovered a Purple Gallinule at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary in Fayetteville on April 26, 2011. He refound it on May 12.

Common Gallinule, *Gallinula chloropus*

Rare transient.

I photographed an adult in a marshy pond immediately north of Craig State Fish Hatchery at Centerton on June 17, 2006. It was not seen after this date. One was associated with American Coots at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area on April 18, 2012. Baerg (1951) published the report of one bird at Fayetteville on October 30, 1936, and one at Lake Wedington October 7 and 13, 1949.

Gallinules nest in marshes well to the north and south of our area. This makes the lack of additional migration observations puzzling.

American Coot, *Fulica americana*

STATUS: Abundant transient and winter resident; DATES: September 5 to May 20+.

We easily see coots, usually close to shore, among lily pads and other aquatic vegetation on reservoirs and large ponds. They are often the most common water bird in sight. Highest numbers are present here from about mid-October through winter into April.

If you watch closely, coots occasionally perch near the shoreline on a log. During these times their lobed toes are visible. They obviously lack the webbed feet of ducks.

The abundance of coots here is a direct result of lake construction, just as the dearth of other rails, like Virginia Rails, is partially a result of seasonal wetland loss.

David Chapman estimated 2000 on Lake Fayetteville following a big cold front on October 27, 2009 (Chapman 2016). These are also migration peaks: an estimated 1,325 on November 16, 2003, and 1,900 November 8, 1997, both counts at Lake Elmdale near Springdale. I saw an estimated 1,400 at Bob Kidd Lake on November 2, 2007. High numbers of coots during fall migration at Beaver Lake occur at about the same time as an influx of Bald Eagles. We have often seen the eagles trying to catch coots on Beaver at the time.

Coots are seen annually on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count. The highest count was 942 in 1997. The 16 on December 16, 2016, was one of the lowest.

Visitors to Lake Fayetteville have seen Bald Eagles trying and sometimes catching coots. David Chapman posted one such incident on the Birds of Arkansas discussion list (February 2, 2009). According to Chapman, the eagle made at least thirty diving stoops, stopping short and causing the coots to rise in a mass response. The eagle then entered the water but without a coot. Finally, it entered the water again and then rose with a coot in its talons.

While coots are present in varying numbers all winter, spring influxes involving northbound migrants are also apparent during the general northward waterfowl movements in mid to late March. There were at least 133 at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area on March 30, 2017.

Single birds have been seen on several occasions during the summer months at Centerton, Lake Atalanta, Lake Bentonville, and elsewhere.

Sandhill Crane, *Antigone canadensis*

STATUS: Rare transient.

Sandhill Cranes migrate through western Arkansas from their breeding areas to the north reach the Gulf Coast during the period October to January (Tacha et al. 1992). In Missouri they are considered rare migrants, primarily through the western part of the state, from about mid-October to mid-November (Jacobs 2001). In Oklahoma, they are much more common as migrants in the western one-half of the state, but there are scattered records from northeastern Oklahoma as late as December 11 (Baumgartner and Baumgartner 1992). Our handful of records fit this pattern.

Rose Ann Barnhill and others in her party observed a Sandhill Crane during the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count on December 14, 2003. Barnhill has considerable experience with cranes in Belize and her observation was documented. Six flying cranes at Fayetteville on December 5, 2005, were observed (and documented) by Mary Bess Mulhollan. Art Evans and others saw 20 birds in an upland field near Gravette in Benton County on December 8, 2007. Three cranes were near Chesney Prairie Natural Area on December 10, 2017.

There was an injured Sandhill Crane near a ricefield just northeast of Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area at least August 20-26, 2012. It apprently couldn't fly and may have been there since late July. The injury appeared to affect one wing. Bill Beall and Jim Nieting saw three Sandhill Cranes in the same area on April 6, 2013, and one of them had the same wing injury, but was now capable of flight.

Two cranes were foraging at Frog Bayou WMA, in fields along Sharp Chapel Road, May 2, 2017, and for several days thereafter.

Order Charadriiformes

Black-necked Stilt, *Himantopus mexicanus*

Rare spring transient. We have observed stilts a few times in both the Ozarks and Arkansas River Valley. These are all spring observations from mid-April to late May, during typical shorebird migration periods.

I saw and photographed a single bird at the Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on May 25, 2005. Hatchery employees told me they had first noticed the bird the previous day. Furthermore, they had seen two birds the previous year. Subsequently: Jacque Brown photographed one at Centerton April 26, 2011. Five were in a flooded field at Maysville on May 11, 2013, during a major shorebird movement. One was at Centerton on May 23-24, 2015. The bird at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area on April 18, 2017, remained at least for a few days.

American Avocet, *Recurvirostra americana*

STATUS: Uncommon transient seen most years; DATES: April 9 to June 2 and July 24 to November 3.

While avocets have been seen at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton many times over the years, they are not specifically attracted to mudflats. Other open aquatic habitats, including shallows of lakes, ponds, and flooded fields suffice. Many observations involve just a few avocets, but we also see small flocks.

JoAnne Rife and others enjoyed the 12 avocets along Crooked Creek in downtown Harrison April 24, 1992. David Chapman saw 35 at Lake Fayetteville after passage of a cold front on April 18, 2008 (Chapman 2016). After heavy rain and local flooding, the count was 25 at University farm in Fayetteville on April 26, 2017, with a few birds remaining several days thereafter.

The 16 at Bob Kidd Lake on October 16, 2011, was a good fall count, as were 11 at Bull Shoals Lake in Boone County August 24, 1999. Bob Barber observed 24 at a farm pond behind Union Hill Cemetery in Newton County on October 7, 2009. Mike Mlodinow and Jacque Brown counted 28 at the University farm pond on October 26, 2008. Joan Reynolds and I saw 22 flying over Beaver Lake near Rocky Branch on October 16, 2017.

Black-bellied Plover, *Pluvialis squatarola*

STATUS: Very uncommon transient; DATES: April 22 to June 1 and August 9 to November 3.

We see Black-bellied Plovers in typical mudflat habitat attractive to shorebirds. For example, mudflats along pond margins at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton and mudflats when lakes are drawn-down. We also see them in open crop fields and sod farms like those in the river valley.

Most observations are in May and October. These typically involve single birds. The eight at Centerton on May 17, 2016, were part of a big shorebird movement. Hudsonian Godwits were at the hatchery that day, too. Mike Mlodinow saw an exceptionally high number of 41 at Centerton on May 26, 1994.

American Golden-Plover, *Pluvialis dominica*

STATUS: Common spring transient; very uncommon fall transient; DATES: March 4 to May 19+ and September 9 to December 3.

The northward movements of this long distance migrant include regular stops in western Arkansas, both in the river valley and former prairies in the Ozarks. The birds stop in the river valley's big plowed fields and sod farms. In the Ozarks, clay-rich soils of our former Tallgrass Prairie habitats hold spring rains, forming ephemeral, shallow playa-like ponds in pastures and hayfields. This provides suitable migration stopover habitat for golden-plovers headed for the wide-open spaces of arctic and subarctic tundra.

Some of the biggest counts involve Kibler bottoms in the river valley. Bill Beall and others counted 1,592 on March 24, 2012, many of them in a flooded former oxbow of the Arkansas River. There were at least 1,224 in the same area April 3, 2013. Counts like these are consistent with what Doug James used to see (1950s and 60s) in northern Fayetteville, before extensive seasonal wetland fields were lost to development in the area now occupied by I-49 and Van Ashe Boulevard.

At or near Chesney Prairie Natural Area, there were 71 birds in two flocks using flooded pastures on March 20, 2008, and 210 in the same flooded fields on April 3. Also at Chesney, 35 were observed in a recently burned field on April 2, 2006; there were at least nine more nearby at the Siloam Springs airport. Birds were scattered in fields on the former Beaty Prairie at Maysville on March 15, 2008, with flocks of 11, 20, 9, plus a single bird associated with Killdeer. Joe Woolbright and I counted 184 in a flooded field near Vaughn, in Benton County, on March 21, 2009. The birds were present at least until April 12.

Well-managed wetland conservation projects like Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary in Fayetteville provide quality migration stop-over habitat. The openness of the wetlands mitigation site is important. So is surrounding city-owned grassland. Mike Mlodinow counted 30 golden-plovers at Woolsey on April 1, 2011.

Many fall records involve single birds, but 12 were at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton October 19, 2002. An injured bird was there as late as June 7, 1997.

Snowy Plover, *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Barry Haas and Susan Hardin found this bird at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on May 5, 2001. At the time, this was only the third record for Arkansas. Their discovery came during a joint meeting of Arkansas Audubon Society and the Wilson Ornithological Society in Fayetteville. When Barry and Susan returned to the meeting with the news, their report was initially greeted with friendly skepticism. Right in the middle of that discussion, Kenny and LaDonna Nichols called on their cell phone directly from Centerton to say they had the bird in their scope and had photographed it. Most of us skeptics soon adjourned to the hatchery. The plover provided much productive birding until last seen May 8.

Wilson's Plover, *Charadrius wilsonia*

Nigel Ball discovered one Wilson's Plover at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on May 18, 1986. It was subsequently seen by others, photographed, and remained until May 24.

Semipalmated Plover, *Charadrius semipalmatus*

STATUS: Common transient; DATES: April 11 to June 11+ and July 11 to October 22.

Semipalmated Plovers are common transients from late April to mid-May and during August to mid-September. Semis occupy typical shorebird habitats: drained fish ponds at Centerton, flooded fields in the river valley, pond edges at Alma Wastewater Treatment Facility, etc.

Spring peaks at Centerton include 25 counted by Paige Mulhollan and Mike Mlodinow on April 28, 2007; 45 seen by Joanie Patterson and Mlodinow on May 7, 2012; 40 during a shorebird migration peak May 10, 2017. Fall numbers are much lower, often just a bird or two, and rarely as many as 10. The seven on shallowly flooded fields in the river valley (Kibler bottoms) on August 17, 2017, was a good copunt for fall migration.

Piping Plover, *Charadrius melodus*

STATUS: Rare transient; DATES: April 23 to May 1 and July 4 to September 24.

Piping Plover is Federally-listed as a Threatened Species in the Great Plains region. Most observations involve single birds or occasionally two and most are from Craig State Fish Hatchery at Centerton. Mike Mlodinow and Mike Biven counted eight there on July 8, 1993, one of the highest counts for Arkansas.

Birds migrating through western Arkansas are presumably associated with populations that nest on the northern Great Plains west and north of us (Haig 1992). Stopover mudflats like those associated with drained ponds at Centerton are important to this declining bird.

Killdeer, *Charadrius vociferus*

STATUS: Common resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Killdeer are present here throughout the year though with considerable variation in numbers. They flock at favorable locations during late summer and fall and remain together much of the winter, at least until onset of hard freezes, ice, or snow. We find them in typical habitats favored by transient shorebirds. They often form these flocks in very open, closely grazed pastures. Good examples of late summer flocks: 75 at Highfill and 57 at nearby Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton, both on July 28, 2009 -- first big flocks of the season.

Regardless of the weather, the flocks begin to break up-with the onset of nesting in late winter and early spring. They nest in open places where there are "beaches" of gravel. These can include: gravel along country roads and drives, bare places in fields, flat graveled roofs, pond banks, etc. Adults were accompanying chicks just out of the nest near Chesney on the relatively early date of April 11, 2016.

Killdeer that nested one year at the 112 drive-in theatre in Fayetteville were protected with a roped off space until the young hatched. Joe Woolbright flagged a nest on a gravel drive near Chesney Prairie Natural Area (adult incubating July 2, 2014). A little thoughtful protection can give these birds a chance. Simple decency can make a better place for all living creatures, us included.

During winter Killdeer can be readily observed except during extended periods of extreme cold and freeze-ups. Killdeers have never been missed on a Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count, though there is considerable variation: 10 or fewer on 7 counts, 100 or more on 5 counts. Most of this variation between high and low counts is no doubt related to weather patterns since most Killdeer head south during severe winter weather.

Several Killdeer sightings have involved birds that were either all white or partially white. The bird at Centerton on November 5, 2005, appeared to be an albino. There was a mostly white (leucistic) Killdeer at Vaughn on March 17, 2013.

Upland Sandpiper, *Bartramia longicauda*

STATUS: Uncommon spring and fairly common fall transient; most numerous in Arkansas River Valley; DATES: March 31 to May 16+ and July 2 to September 27.

Upland Sandpipers are heard orf seen flying overhead in extensively open areas like former prairie grasslands and crop fields. Many sightings (and hearings) involve April and August.

Overall, these birds are uncommon in spring, with most sightings scattered between the first week of April and the second week of May. The count was 20 near West-Ark Sod in Kibler bottoms (river valley) on April 21, 2011; and 22 in a heavily grazed pasture adjacent Chesney Prairie Natural Area on April 23, 2011; one had a broken left leg.

In the Fayetteville area we see Uplands on occasion at University farm and at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary. Woolsey sightings involve the wetlands mitigation area as well as the surrounding city-owned grasslands. There were 12 Upland Sandpipers there on April 17, 2011. UA-Fayetteville graduate student Philip Vogrinc saw nine on April 20, 2013, also at Woolsey.

The fall migration is concentrated in August. There were 10 in a recently mowed hayfield on the former Norwood Prairie west of Wedington on August 14, 2005. At least 18 flew over Chesney Prairie Natural Area on August 26, 2006. Fall migration records at West-Ark Sod include 16 on August 4, 2014; 22 on August 6, 2015; and 24 on August 7, 2010. At least 28 in singles and small groups flew west to east in the Kibler bottoms area on August 17, 2017, following a rain storm and a breeze from the northwest.

Baerg (1951) stated that a "small flock" was seen in Benton County on June 30, 1940. Kimberly G. Smith was shocked to observe one southwest of Boxley in Newton County on June 30, 1973. Nesting is confirmed in the Flint Hills prairie region of northeastern Oklahoma (Reinking 2004), including The Nature Conservancy's Tallgrass Prairie Preserve in

Osage County. Several of us on a field trip there June 20, 2009, saw at least 22 Upland Sandpipers. They are present (and nest) in the Missouri Ozarks (Jacobs and Wilson 1997).

In Missouri, Upland Sandpipers were frequently seen in low to medium height grasses, no taller than their backs, and lacking dense ground cover; they were uncommon in fescue pastures, even with heavy grazing, possibly because dense ground cover associated with this grass would impede movement (Skinner et al. 1984).

Whimbrel, *Numenius phaeopus*

STATUS: Rare spring transient; DATES: May 14 to 23.

Elizabeth Adam and I saw two Whimbrels at Bob Kidd Lake near Prairie Grove on May 23, 1984. All other observations are from Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton: May 21, 1987 (one), May 14, 1994 (three), May 14, 1997 (one), and May 19, 1999 (one). Six Whimbrels flew low over Mike Mlodinow and me on May 17, 2002, during passage of a spring rain storm.

Eskimo Curlew, *Numenius borealis*

The spring migration path of this species formerly included the Tallgrass Prairie habitats in central North America (Gill et al. 1998). This northward spring path likely accounts for the report by Professor Harvey of the University of Arkansas of one bird at Fayetteville on March 31, 1883 (Howell 1911). This grassland sandpiper shared migration habitat choices similar to those of other "grasspipers" like Upland Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper and American Golden-Plover.

"Humans' assault on the species, both direct and indirect, began in the 1850s and, by the end of the nineteenth century, had almost eradicated it. Speculation about causes of the near extinction of the Eskimo Curlew is abundant; indeed, much of it has become dogma. Excessive hunting was clearly a major factor, especially along spring migratory pathways in North America, but the concurrent conversion of prairies to agriculture, suppression of wildfires, and extinction of a principal food source the Rocky Mountain grasshopper [*Melanoplus spretus*] also contributed strongly to this bird's precipitous decline" (Gill et al. 1998).

Long-billed Curlew, *Numenius americanus*

A single bird in a flooded field immediately southwest of Chesney Prairie Natural Area in Benton County on April 10, 2008, appeared immediately following a night of heavy rains. A few observers made it in time to see the bird, and it was photographed. It was not seen after April 10. The bird foraged heavily on terrestrial crawfish and large worms.

Long-billed Curlews spend the winter southwest of Arkansas and nest on the Great Plains (Dugger and Dugger 2002). The flooded field, formerly part of once extensive Tallgrass Prairies in the Siloam Springs area, hosted other shorebird species, including yellowlegs, American Golden-Plovers, Wilson's Phalaropes, and Pectoral Sandpipers, as well as migrating Blue-winged Teal.

Hudsonian Godwit, *Limosa haemastica*

STATUS: Somewhat rare spring transient; DATES: April 14 to May 26.

Many of our observations of Hudsonian Godwits are from Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton, but there are additional sightings in other places frequented by shorebirds. The biggest flocks, ranging from 22 to 44 birds, have been recorded from mid-April to mid-May, especially during the second week in May. The biggest flock, 44 birds, was at Centerton on May 10, 2010. Two birds at University farm in Fayetteville during International Migratory Bird Day on May 14, 2005, were associated with mudflat habitat similar to Centerton. Approximately 50 Stilt Sandpipers and 30 White-rumped Sandpipers were also present. Hudsonian Godwits and numerous other shorebird species were at Centerton during this IMBD.

April 18, 2013, was a most remarkable day in terms of godwits in and around northwest Arkansas. The stage was set when a strong warm front collided with a strong cold front. Four inches of rain followed. Big normally dry former prairie fields became bird-filled playas. Mike Mlodinow and I headed for Centerton, but first encountered flooded highways. At Vaughn, just south of Centerton, we hit the jackpot. First were nine Upland Sandpipers, then a Marbled Godwit and Willet, along with Blue-winged Teals, and other duck and shorebird species in flooded fields. We observed another Marbled Godwit in a flooded field adjacent the hatchery, also with Blue-winged Teals. The rain was now tapering off and the air cooling.

We decided to head over toward Chesney Prairie Natural Area at Siloam Springs. As we cut back through Vaughn, the same flooded field we'd observed earlier now held two Marbled Godwits, three Hudsonian Godwits, and three

Willets. Along highway 12 just west of Highfill, we stopped at a much bigger than usual pond. First attraction: a highly vocal flock of 240 Franklin's Gulls, plus another Hudsonian Godwit, teal, yellowlegs, etc. Adjacent Chesney Prairie Natural Area, a former small pond along Bill Young Road had expanded to an extensive shallow lake. Along its new shoreline: Willets (3), Hudsonian (2) and Marbled (2) Godwits, American Golden-Plovers (85), etc. These are the kinds of days that make us into lifelong birders!

Marbled Godwit, *Limosa fedora*

STATUS: Rare transient; DATES: April 11 to May 20 and June 21 to August 13.

Marbled Godwits are rare transients in both spring and fall. Numbers observed are typically modest. A single Marbled Godwit spotted by Bill Beall and Jim Nieting was perched on a log in the Arkansas River adjacent Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area on April 21, 2012. Mike Mlodinow observed eight at Centerton on June 21, 2000, our highest count. These birds were likely southbound transients, among first shorebirds moving through our region.

We had good views of five Marbled Godwits in three different flooded former prairie fields between Centerton and Siloam Springs on April 18, 2013, during a big spring storm with shorebird fall-out. More details are included in the Hudsonian Godwit discussion (above).

Ruddy Turnstone, *Arenaria interpres*

STATUS: Rare transient; DATES: May 14 to June 2 and October 9 to 18 (one record).

Our Ruddy Turnstone observations are from Craig State Fish Hatchery at Centerton and in the Arkansas River Valley. Almost all are spring migrants. At Centerton, peaks include 26 on May 25, 1997, as reported by David Chapman and Mike Mlodinow, and 12 on May 17, 2002. There are also at least 2 late May records from the river valley near Fort Smith.

The only fall record is that of October 9-18, 1983, also at the hatchery. This bird was in molt from summer to winter plumage.

Red Knot, *Calidris canutus*

Written documentation was placed in the Arkansas Audubon Society file for a single bird seen by Tom Haggerty and a number of other observers at Lake Sequoyah in Fayetteville on September 1-9, 1983. This was a fall when the lake was drained for maintenance, exposing extensive mudflats.

Baerg (1951) considered "somewhat doubtful" the report of a bird in Benton County on April 30, 1947. The file of records maintained by Arkansas Audubon Society includes several spring observations elsewhere in Arkansas.

Ruff, *Calidris pugnax*

Mike Mlodinow and Rob Dobbs identified a Ruff at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on April 22, 1994. Joan Renolds and I photographed one near Maysville on May 11, 2013, in a flooded field, among many other shorebird species grounded by a spring storm.

Stilt Sandpiper, *Calidris himantopus*

STATUS: Fairly common transient; DATES: April 23 to June 12 and July 11 to November 16.

Overall, highest numbers of Stilts seem to pass through western Arkansas during the second and third weeks of May, but not always: 266 were observed by Mike Mlodinow and David Chapman on May 4, 2005, at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton. John Prather and others counted 80 there on May 9, 2000. Approximately 50 Stilts Sandpipers and 30 White-rumped Sandpipers were associated with two Hudsonian Godwits at University farm in Fayetteville May 14, 2005. Lucky for us, they were just in time for International Migratory Bird Day. Joanie Patterson observed 24 at Centerton on May 15, 2013.

As in the case of other many other shorebird species, fall counts tend to involve many few individuals. Karen Garrett saw six at Centerton on August 19, 2015, and Joanie Patternson reported eight on September 5, 2009. Both of these field lists were submitted through eBird. There were 8 in the river valley near Kibler on August 17, 2017, and 18 at West-Ark Sod August 23, 2017.

Sanderling, *Calidris alba*

STATUS: Somewhat rare transient; DATES: April 21 to May 28 and July 21 to September 25.

Most Sanderling observations involve single birds, up to three on occasion. Kenny Nichols and others saw 10 at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on May 3, 2006.

Many of our Sanderling observations involved Centerton, but there are additional sightings on extensive mudflat habitat elsewhere, including fields in an old oxbow cut off from the Arkansas River south of Kibler.

Dunlin, *Calidris alpina*

STATUS: Fairly common late fall transient; very uncommon spring transient; DATES: April 19 to June 4 and July 22 to November 22+, but infrequently before last week in October.

In terms of southward migration of fall, Dunlins are one of our latest arriving fall south bound shorebird transients. Most sightings involve just a few birds or small flocks. Mike Mlodinow and Joanie Patterson counted 63 at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on October 31, 2009. Dunlins often continue through late fall and sometimes early winter. There were 20 along the shoreline at Lake Elmdale on November 8, 2003.

Winter season records (December-February) are sparse. Two birds seen from Eagle Watch Nature Trail on SWEPCO Lake January 18 and February 27, 2004, were either Western Sandpipers or more likely Dunlins. I photographed a definitive Dunlin on mudflats at SWEPCO Lake on December 31, 2005. Several of us birding there on February 11, 2006, were surprised by good views of a Dunlin along an exposed mudflat. The abnormally high water temperatures at SWEPCO Lake may encourage these birds to remain somewhat north of their usual winter range. Kim Smith (1985) discussed this heated water situation in regards a wintering Spotted Sandpiper. A single Dunlin was at Centerton January 21, 2018.

During northward spring migration, a few Dunlins may be part of big mixed-species flocks associated with storm front fall-out. With their smart black belly patches and rufous wings, these spring birds really stand out. Andy Scaboo and others saw a Dunlin at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary in Fayetteville on May 4, 2009. While big flocks are infrequent, Sally Jo and J.O. Gibson saw approximately 50 Dunlins at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on May 25, 1997.

Baird's Sandpiper, *Calidris bairdii*

STATUS: Fairly common to uncommon spring transient, very uncommon fall transient; DATES: March 10 to June 11 and July 22 to November 19.

Baird's Sandpiper occurs with fair regularity though often in low numbers on mudflats associated with drained ponds at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton as well as other open mudflat and mudflat-like habitat. At one time Baird's seemed to be rarer than it actually is. Mike Mlodinow and others tested this in 1996, when they obtained counts at Centerton of 1-18 birds during the period March 10-April 29, 1996. The 42 at Centerton on April 2, 2011, was the highest number ever observed here.

After prescribed burns and other events creating open mudflat-like habitat, Baird's Sandpipers may be found at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary in Fayetteville. There were seven on April 25, 2013, and three on May 1, 2009.

Baird's Sandpipers are not often seen during fall migration, to say the least. Most of the few observations involved single birds, up to five (July 22, 1995, at Centerton).

Least Sandpiper, *Calidris minutilla*

STATUS: Common transient in spring mainly April to first half of May; fall late July to early November; fairly common winter resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Least Sandpipers are common on all kinds of mudflats in spring. A few peak counts include 166 on May 4, 2003, and 171 on May 14, 2005, both at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton. There were 60 among numerous shorebird species at Centerton on May 10, 2017.

A Least Sandpiper at the hatchery on May 26, 2013, had a yellow flag attached to one leg, apparently indicating the bird had been banded in Peru or perhaps French Guiana. South America to northwest Arkansas: a small creature accomplishing an incredible migration. It is just too easy to take for granted what they have accomplished.

Records of single birds at the end of May and during early June may be non-breeders remaining on their winter range (Cooper 1994).

Fall migration begins as early as the end of June and certainly by early July; relatively numerous records for the first week in July typically involve single birds or occasionally three. The 70 at Centerton August 28, 2004, was a good fall count. An estimated 175 were in flooded fields of Kibler bottoms in the river valley August 23, 2017. There were at least 65 at Alma Wastewater Treatment Facility on September 28, 2017.

Observations of fewer than a dozen birds at midwinter are typical. Because western Arkansas is on the northern edge of this bird's typical winter range, fluctuation in midwinter numbers are probably associated with severity or mildness of the season. Midwinter observations involve any open area with a mudflat. Examples include Centerton

hatchery, SWEPCO Lake near Gentry, mudflats at storm water retention pond at Noland Wastewater Treatment Facility, certainly any place in the river valley with such habitat. Mike Mlodinow, Amy Clifton, and I saw 32 at Centerton on December 4, 2004. The 15 at Centerton on December 24, 1998, was a good winter count.

Least Sandpipers have been observed on seven Christmas Birds Counts at Fayetteville, including count week. Analysis by National Audubon indicates that during the past 40 years, the center of abundance for Leasts has shifted 57 miles north, presumably in response to climate warming.

White-rumped Sandpiper, *Calidris fuscicollis*

STATUS: Locally common spring transient; very rare fall transient; DATES: April 21 to June 29.

Counts of over 100 birds have occurred on several occasions at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton during the peak period, May 10 to June 3. Mike Mlodinow and others counted 512 on May 14, 2005, and 358 on May 10, 2010. During the big fallout day of May 14, 2005 (International Migratory Bird Day), I was surprised to see 10 white-rumps among other shorebirds in a flooded field with shallow pools in Fayetteville, and later, at least 30 on the mudflat margins of a big pond on the University farm in Fayetteville. It commonly lingers past mid-June. Unlike the high counts in May, these late reports involve just a few birds.

There are only occasion fall reports and none since 1989. The southward migration pattern obviously is different than that of spring.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper, *Calidris subruficollis*

STATUS: Regular though generally uncommon fall transient except in Kibler bottoms in the river valley; very uncommon spring transient; DATES: April 10 to May 21 and July 27 to September 28.

Our fall observations of Buff-breasted Sandpipers tend to range from late July into first weeks of September. During fall 2016, I found them on every trip to the river valley from August 7 to September 13. My highest count was 93 on August 25, 2016. A flock of approximately this size remained into first week of September. These were all at West-Ark Sod south of Kibler. There were two at Alma Wastewater Treatment Facility on August 30.

Sandy Berger saw 20 at at West-Ark Sod on August 20, 2004. Bill Beall and Jim Nieting counted an extraordinary 331 in the Kibler bottoms (including Sod) on August 18, 2012.

Observations in the Ozarks tend to involve many fewer birds. At Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton, Mike Mlodinow counted 16 on August 24, 2000. Mike and Jimmy Woodard counted 20 there on September 9, 1990.

Spring observations are relatively sparse and involve fewer birds. The three at West-Ark Sod on April 10, 2011, were associated with much more numerous American Golden-Plovers. Nine were foraging in plowed fields alongside E. Arnold Road south of Kibler on April 23, 2012. While out for International Migratory Bird Day May 14, 2016, David Chapman and I saw five in a harvested soybean field near Cherokee City. They were associated with Upland Sandpipers. Kenny and LaDonna Nichols observed five at the sod farm along highway 59 east of Van Buren on May 21, 2013.

Pectoral Sandpiper, *Calidris melanotos*

STATUS: Common spring transient; common but with lower numbers in fall; DATES: March 5 to June 17 and June 25 to December 9+.

This “grasspiper” is found in numerous grassy, open habitats including drained ponds or pond margins, low, wet pastures, all types of muddy, weedy, open flats. Fairly high numbers pass through during spring shorebird migration peaks. Mitchell Pruitt counted 15 at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary on March 29, 2017. Matt Gideon reported 75 at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on March 31, 2017. On April 3, 2008, 47 were associated with American Golden-Plovers in a flooded field near Chesney Prairie Natural Area. Mike Mlodinow and David Chapman counted 263 on April 26, 2002, at Centerton. Joanie Patterson observed 174 there on May 7, 2012.

Our fall observations are scattered and numbers observed are low by comparison with the relatively compressed migration of spring. Reports submitted to eBird show high fall counts at Centerton are typically fewer than 20; 18 counted there by JD Willson and others on September 30, 2012, was excellent for southward migration. Also at Centerton, Karen Garrett observed 10 on July 31, 2015, and Adam Schaffer 14 on October 4, 2009. There were an estimated 280 in Kibler bottoms on August 23, 2017.

There are additional scattered records in late June and late December.

Semipalmated Sandpiper, *Calidris pusilla*

STATUS: Common transient, especially in spring; much less common in fall; DATES: April 7 to June 2+ and June 30 to September 29+.

This is one of the common peeps that can be found regularly and in good numbers especially during northward migration of spring, but also with fair regularity though lower numbers during fall. The big peak in spring occurs throughout May (Smith et al. 1991). Records in the Arkansas Audubon Society file show that Mike Mlodinow, David Chapman, and others have tallied over 100 to almost 400 on trips to Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton in the second half of May.

The end of northward spring migration and the beginning of southward fall migration is confused by at several June observations, but 30 on June 30, 2009, must have been southbound transients.

A single bird with an injured leg was still at the hatchery on the unusually late date of October 27, 2007.

Western Sandpiper, *Calidris mauri*

STATUS: Uncommon transient in low numbers; DATES: April 13 to May 28+ and July 8 to September 29+.

Migrating Western Sandpipers are among the common West Coast peeps. Just a few pass through the interior of North America. It is among these few we find our modest sightings. Numbers observed are almost always low (typically 1-2). The eight at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centeron on April 29, 1993, was an exception. As is the case with other shorebirds, many of our sightings involve drained mudflats. A single bird was using similar habitat in a partially flooded field in the Kibler bottoms of the river valley on August 13, 2016.

Several observations, accompanied by photographs, involve mid-winter. Single birds were photographed at the hatchery on January 6, 2013, and January 21, 2014.

Short-billed Dowitcher, *Limnodromus griseus*

STATUS: Very uncommon to somewhat rare transient; DATES: April 30 to May 31 and June 25 to October 21.

Observers separate the two dowitcher species by their different calls and specific plumage characteristics. I always feel more confident about identifying Short-billed Dowitchers when I hear their tu-tu-tu calls.

The big northward push seems to occur here in the second week of May. Following observations are all from Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton. John Prather and Mike Mlodinow observed and studied 215 on May 12, 1997. This is far and away our highest count. A few other relatively high spring counts include 30 seen by Mike with Mary Bess and Paige Mulhollan on May 13, 2006, and 21 on May 13, 2011.

Fewer are seen during southward migration. An observation for June 25, 2015, at Centerton was submitted through eBird by Roy Knispel, who provided details and several photographs. Most fall sightings occur in July and August.

At least some of the Short-billed Dowitchers passing through here are assignable to the *hendersoni* subspecies, which nests in the prairie provinces of Canada. This is appropriate, since our spring counts are usually from the former mesic Tallgrass Prairie habitats including the converted prairie that now is Centerton hatchery and surrounding neighborhoods.

There are also three records of the *griseus* race, as noted by Mike Mlodinow in his submissions to the Arkansas Audubon Society database.

Long-billed Dowitcher, *Limnodromus scolopaceus*

STATUS: Fairly common spring transient sometimes with big flocks; fairly common fall transient generally lower numbers; DATES: March 8 to May 26+ and June 21 to November 11+.

Those who attended the spring 2007 Arkansas Audubon Society meeting in Rogers got a real L-b Dowitcher treat: 155 at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on April 28, 2007. It was a relatively high number. However, during the spring peak, late April into the first two weeks of May, flocks of 50+ are not that unusual.

In 2017, I was out during a series of heavy rain storms, and found L-b Dowitchers regularly in places with suitable habitat. Three were at the University farm in Fayetteville on April 28 during a trip with graduate students Pooja Panwar and Anant Deswhal. Anant and I drove up toward the Centerton hatchery, but stopped in a flooded field along Anglin road, where there were six L-b Dowitchers with many other shorebird species. On the following day, L-b Dowitchers in the same field numbered 63. After another storm on May 2, I saw 30 or more in a flooded field at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area in the river valley. On May 4, former prairie fields became temporary playas around Maysville. L-b Dowitchers numbered 90 in a flooded field with a huge shallow pool just off Tucker Road. Hundreds of other shorebirds were also present, along with a Peregrine Falcon.

Mike Mlodinow and Joanie Patterson found 54 at Centerton on October 16, 2009; 52 were still present on October 25. A flock of 32 was at the hatchery on October 5, 2012, along with the first big fall cold front. In 2015, I found a single L-b Dowitcher at Centerton October 21 and a single bird each trip through November 11.

There are a few observations after mid-November, including a bird that lingered at least until December 8.

American Woodcock, *Scolopax minor*

STATUS: Fairly common transient, rare otherwise; DATES: observed in all seasons, but primarily in spring.

We see woodcocks mainly between mid-February and early March and on into April, because at this time males perform their spectacular nuptial flights where open fields with some bare ground adjoin forests, including pastures and regenerating patches within forests. In such places several males may be seen and heard performing at dawn and dusk during early spring. Open fields along the north side of Lake Fayetteville have served as a regular site for those flights and have drawn appreciative audiences. Mitchell Pruitt and David Chapman both watched woodcock displays on the disc golf course in late February 2016.

Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society holds annual woodcock field trips to Wedington Unit of Ozark National Forest west of Fayetteville. These are led by woodcock expert David Krementz. We usually schedule these late February trips to mowed fields where he and his students have found woodcocks.

In the Ouachita Mountains to the south, Jack Davis has used his dogs to find woodcocks in a mixed pine and hardwood plantation adjoining Lake Nimrod in Yell County. Careful records he shared with me for 2006 and 2007 showed highest numbers during February into the second half of March, with the migration peak from about mid-February into early March.

While many woodcock sightings involve birds displaying in open fields, they can be the highlight of a late winter-early spring hike right in the middle of the forest. Such was the case on March 1, 2014, when two flushed from the forest floor along a trail at Kessler Mountain Park in Fayetteville. Similarly, Joan Reynolds and I saw one on February 14, 2016, in the Shortleaf Pine-oak forest at Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area.

Among nesting records are an adult with four hatchlings near Ponca in Newton County on April 15, 1984, and an adult with four hatchlings in the Wharton Creek area of Madison County on March 31, 1985. David Oakley photographed a bird at his home near Lake Fayetteville on June 10, 2012.

David Chapman (2016) included a few fall records for Lake Fayetteville. Single birds were reported on the Fayetteville CBC in 1975 and 1995. Krementz and others (1995) found that at night, wintering woodcocks were typically in forested habitat and less often in open fields.

Wilson's Snipe, *Gallinago delicata*

STATUS: Common transient and winter resident; DATES: July 17 to May 16+.

These "grasspipers" are widespread in wet, grassy or marshy places in open country and pond edges well vegetated with grasses and other emergent vegetation. Most observations occur between the end of September and the end of April. Data from fall 2004 trips to Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton illustrate the fall influx: first bird on August 20, as many as seven by September 2; 25 on October 16; approximately 100 by October 31; approximately 130 by November 15.

Wilson Snipe probe deeply into mud with their long bills. As a result, severe weather characterized by prolonged freezes reduces feeding opportunities at midwinter. Many of the fall migrants then move south.

Snipe have been observed on almost all Christmas Bird Counts at Fayetteville. Totals vary quite a bit, most likely related to when severe weather moves into our area. The usual number ranges up to 20 or fewer, with low years of only 0-2 snipes.

There are several peak counts indicating major snipe movement in second half of March. Mike Mlodinow and others saw 72 at Centerton on March 20, 2010. Joe Woolbright and I counted 331 in a flooded field near Chesney Prairie Natural Area on March 20, 2008. Both observations reflect spring peaks. My spring 2004 records also illustrate the spring migration at Centerton: six on April 18 (including birds engaging in courtship displays); three on April 24; 0 on May 1. There are also two June records involving single birds.

Spotted Sandpiper, *Actitis macularius*

STATUS: Common transient; rare winter visitor; DATES: April 1 to June 8+ and June 28 to October 25+.

Most Spotted Sandpiper sightings involve early April to early June and early July to mid-October. Very roughly, western Arkansas lies within a relatively narrow band of separation between Spotted's typical summer and winter range

(Reed et al. 2013). This probably accounts for scattered summer season records after typical spring migration and also winter records after typical fall migration.

During migration peaks, as many as 5 to 8 are seen regularly during a day at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton. There were 10 and probably more, along edges at Alma Wastewater Treatment Facility May 2, 2017. At Noland Wastewater Treatment Plant in Fayetteville, the total was 30 on May 4, 2012. They are also commonly seen feeding along streams. There were at least 20 at Alma Wastewater on August 4, 2017.

There are two old records of breeding in the Winslow area (Black 1935), but none since. Callahan (1953) listed Spotted Sandpiper as a common summer resident at Lake Wedington, but without details. Spotted Sandpipers have been found in the Missouri Ozarks in summer, including probable nesting in Barry County, Missouri (Jacobs and Wilson 1997). Late June observations fall between typical end of spring migration in early June and beginning of fall migration in early July (Reed et al. 2013).

Typical winter range for Spotted Sandpiper is close enough to western Arkansas to potentially explain our few winter season observations. One apparently overwintered 1982-1983 at SWEPCO Lake in Benton County, perhaps because of the lake's high water temperature (Smith 1985). Single birds have been found on three occasions during the Fayetteville CBC: 1989, 1992 (December 19, 1992, to at least January 29, 1993), and 2015. Mike Mlodinow and Joanie Patterson saw one at Beaver Lake dam on January 14, 2010. We have also seen Spotted Sandpipers in winter at Tenkiller Lake in northeastern Oklahoma.

Solitary Sandpiper, *Tringa solitaria*

STATUS: Fairly common transient; very rare winter visitor; DATES: March 26 to late May+ and July 4 to November 23+.

Solitary Sandpipers can be found in a variety of habitats, especially open mudflats of ponds, along forested streams, and in the shallows of flooded fields. As is the case with many shorebird species, we find them regularly in migration at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton. We have also found them in good numbers in shallow, playa-like pools at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary in Fayetteville. The following are all records contributed by Mike Mlodinow from Woolsey: nine on March 26, 2012 (early high count); 21 on April 26, 2011; 18 on April 29, 2009.

They are often seen at Eagle Watch Nature Trail near Gentry as they forage on mudflats exposed due to power generation at SWEPCO Lake. Partially flooded moist soil units at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area provide ideal habitat. Just south of Centerton, depressions in a field that filled with spring rains became pools perfect for both Solitary Sandpipers and small flocks of Blue-winged Teal on May 3, 2017.

There are several addition observations: these include single birds in June and December. A single healthy bird was observed along a spring-fed stream and pond near Johnson on January 4, 1986, and was still present a month later.

Lesser Yellowlegs, *Tringa flavipes*

STATUS: Common transient, especially in spring; DATES: March 13 to June 1+ and June 20 to November 16.

Lesser Yellows pass through in both spring and fall, but spring observations almost always involve much higher numbers. By comparison, southward migration occurs over a longer time period and infrequently large flocks.

For northward migration, there are several big peak records involving flocks of 40 or more in late April and early May. Birders attending an Arkansas Audubon Society meeting were treated to 170 at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on April 28, 2007. There were 193, also at Centerton, April 27, 1995. I saw at least 500 birds pass overhead in migrating flocks of 10-50 at Chesney Prairie Natural Area on April 28, 2007. An estimated 200 were part of a huge flock of grounded shorebirds using a temporary pool near Maysville on May 4, 2017.

Fall peaks tend to be much lower, rarely as many as 12. The suggested break between spring and fall (above) is arbitrary. It's based upon the fact that observations after the big spring peaks tend to be singles (these are scattered in June). Observations in the second half of June suggest southward-moving fall migrants. At Centerton, Mike Mlodinow counted 11 on June 21, 2000, and 13 on June 27, 2007. The estimate was 90 in the river valley near Kibler on August 23, 2017.

Willet, *Tringa semipalmata*

STATUS: Uncommon but regular spring transient and somewhat rare fall transient; DATES: April 16 to May 17+ and June 21 to September 4.

Willets migrating through western Arkansas are assignable to the western Willet that nests in freshwater wetlands of the Great Plains and other areas well north of Arkansas (Lowther et al. 2001). We usually spot Willets on mudflats of shallow ponds and also standing in the shallow open edges of forested lakes. Most of our sightings are in spring.

Highest numbers involve the last week of April and the first week of May. Sheree and Hank Rogers saw 22 standing on a grassy lawn in Harrison on April 30, 2009. John Prather saw 97 at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on April 23, 1999. Mike Mlodinow counted 100 at the same place May 1, 1990. JoAnne Rife observed flocks in the Table Rock Lake area: 10 at Cricket Creek boat dock May 3 and 16 on May 10, 1997, in the Long Creek boat dock area. Frank Reuter counted 35 at Lake Leatherwood in Eureka Springs on April 22, 2008. April 27, 2013, was an important day for northward moving Willets: Joanie Patterson and others counted 58-62 in flooded fields south of the Centerton hatchery and Bill Beall and others on the annual Fort Smith Spring Big Day estimated that 100 were flushed by a boat on Lake Fort Smith the same day.

"Fall migration begins in June, about as early as that of any North American sandpiper" (Lowther et al. 2001). Among highly scattered fall migration records are several in late June. Most observations are of single birds, only occasionally as many as 5, and these are primarily in the second half of August. The June 21, 1990, record involved 20 birds at Beaver Lake Nursery Pond east of Rogers. There were 18 at West Ark Sod in the river valley on August 23, 2017.

Greater Yellowlegs, *Tringa melanoleuca*

STATUS: Common transient; DATES: March 1 to June 4+ and July 1 to November 25+.

Greater Yellowlegs are common in migration during both spring and fall. They can be observed in all kinds of open situations including shallow ponds, edges of lakes, and flooded fields. Peak numbers at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton have been noted from mid-March through April, and last week in August to first week in November (Smith et al. 1991).

At least 130 Greater Yellowlegs and other shorebirds paused in a flooded field near Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area on April 2, 2012. Bill Beall estimated at least 500 using partially flooded moist soil units, also at Frog, on April 7, 2017. The 25 in flooded fields near Chesney Prairie Natural Area on April 3, 2008, was a good count in the Ozarks.

Up close, size differences are pronounced between Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs. At distance, these size differences are not so obvious. Some birders just call both "legs."

Mike Mlodinow saw four on June 26, 2003. These birds left the hatchery heading south, suggesting to him that they were fall migrants.

There are 3-4 records in December and Janaury. Perhaps mild weather may account for a few birds lingering in winter? A single bird at Centerton for several days in late December 2003 was missing a foot.

Wilson's Phalarope, *Phalaropus tricolor*

STATUS: Common to fairly common spring and rare fall transient; DATES: March 26 to June 8 and July 2 to October 25+.

While many sightings of Wilson's Phalaropes involve just a few birds, sizeable flocks are sometimes grounded during spring storms, mainly last week in April to around mid-May. On April 26, 2011, a flooded field near Chesney Prairie Natural Area held 300-400 shorebirds, including at least 68 Wilson's Phalaropes.

In spring 2017, I followed spring rainstorms and found these birds in excellent numbers. On April 29, there were approximately 20 in a flooded field along Anglin Road south of Craig State Fish Hatchery. At Alma Wastewater Treatment Facility in the valley, 93 birds were rafting on the finishing pond May 1. On May 4, after another huge rain, at least 25 were rafting or wading in a shallow, playa-like pond along Tucker Road east of Maysville. The count was 22 at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on May 11.

Observations are many fewer in the fall and involve low numbers. There were seven in the river valley near Kibler on August 15, 2017. Adam Schaffer observed one at Centerton on the late date of November 14, 2014.

Red-necked Phalarope, *Phalaropus lobatus*

STATUS: Rare spring transient; very rare fall transient; DATES: May 14 to June 6; September 27 to October 16.

Red-necked Phalaropes are extremely rare transients, with only about 10 observations overall, and mostly in spring. Sightings are almost all from Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton and have involved single birds. Mike Mlodinow saw five at the hatchery on May 19, 1997. Mike also saw a bird at Lake Elmdale on June 6, 1992. Sally Jo Gibson photographed one at the hatchery on May 22, 1998.

There are three records for the southward migration. Bill Beall observed one at Fort Smith on September 14, 1958. Nigel Ball reported three at Centerton on September 27, 1986. Joanie Patterson and Mike Mlodinow identified one on October 16, 2009, at Centerton.

Red Phalarope, *Phalaropus fulicaria*

Mike Mlodinow discovered this bird at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on May 14, 1988. It was subsequently viewed by others, including Doug James, Elizabeth Adam, and me. At the time it was the first spring record for Arkansas. Most of the small handful of sightings in the state have involved fall.

Black-legged Kittiwake, *Rissa tridactyla*

On November 19, 1991, Max and Helen Parker and Doug James were in the Corps of Engineers parks at Lost Bridge on Beaver Lake following the discovery of a Yellow-billed Loon by Mike Mlodinow on November 17. They spotted a Black-legged Kittiwake. Max managed to photograph it. The kittiwake was relocated again by Jeff Wilson (presumably the same bird) on November 23.

Bonaparte's Gull, *Chroicocephalus philadelphia*

STATUS: Fairly common transient and winter resident; DATES: October 9 to early April 8+.

Bonaparte's is primarily a winter gull. They have arrived here by first half of October, but we don't see them regularly until big cold fronts from mid-November and thereafter. During migration we see them on many smaller lakes, but with the arrival of real winter weather, sightings tend to be restricted to larger bodies of water.

Many of our winter Bonaparte's are seen around Beaver Lake. The 180 at Beaver dam on December 12, 1992, was an excellent count. The 115 at Lost Bridge on December 31, 1989, were apparently attracted to a large fish kill, according to notes provided by Russell Graham and Mike Mlodinow. I saw 155 in a raft visible from Lost Bridge North Park, January 7, 2009. Besides Bonaparte's, other birds in the raft included Ring-billed Gulls, Common Goldeneyes, and other duck species. I counted 342, in flocks of 10-30, as they flew into the Beaver Lake dam area, perhaps from Table Rock Lake, 7:30-9:20 AM, on January 14, 2009.

Bonaparte's are seen in many other spots, too. For example, UA-Fayetteville graduate student Auriel Fournier counted 15 along the Arkansas River at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area on February 15, 2013.

Bonaparte's Gull was almost never recorded for Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count until 1995, but subsequently has been on the count eight times (including count week), with up to 10 (1995) and nine (2016). Small flocks visit other places with suitable habitat, including Lake Fayetteville.

These winter gulls remain fairly common in the usual places through March and sometimes into early April. As winter merges to spring, Franklin's Gulls are migrating through our area, so we have to watch out for possible confusion with Bonaparte's Gull.

Laughing Gull, *Leucophaeus atricilla*

STATUS: Rare transient; April 5 to May 4; October 4.

There are only a few observations for this common coastal gull. These all involve 1-2 birds often seen with other gull species. Two sightings include a Laughing Gull with a small flock of migrating Franklin's Gulls. On April 28, 1996, Mike Mlodinow and Mike Bivin saw a Laughing Gull with five Franklin's at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton. On April 23, 2001, Richard Stauffacher, Irene Camargo, and I had a similar observation following a cold front that stopped the typical northward migration. The Laughing Gull, in smart summer plumage, was perched on the mudflats at Centerton with 10-15 Franklin's Gulls, which exhibited the amazing rosy blush of their nesting season breast plumage. There was also a Ring-billed Gull.

The only fall record was submitted on an eBird checklist by Jim Dixon, who had one Laughing Gull with about 50 Ring-billed Gulls, at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area on October 4, 2014.

Franklin's Gull, *Leucophaeus pipixcan*

STATUS: Fairly common fall transient; much less common in spring; DATES: July 31 to November 17 and March 10 to June 8+.

Franklin's Gull nests in the prairie marshes of the northern U.S. and Canada and migrates through the prairie interior of North America to winter in Mexico and further south (Burger and Gochfeld 1994). Its migration path carries it through our former prairies. These southward flowing kettles of gulls can be truly spectacular, especially around mid-

October. For example, there were hundreds near Maysville on October 21, 2012, with flocks extending in a broad front along highway 102 from Maysville approximately 10 miles east toward Decatur. I estimated at least 500 there on October 23. The estimate was 225 off Rocky Branch Park on Beaver Lake October 16, 2017.

We have many observations from Craig State Fish Hatchery at Centerton, a place frequently visited by birders. It occupies former prairie grassland in a very open country where these migrants may be readily observed. The 14 we saw over Bob Kidd Lake near Prairie Grove on November 11, 2002, was a high count late in fall.

Spring observations tend to peak in late April and May. I counted 108 near Chesney Prairie Natural Area on April 24, 2011; most exhibited immaculate pink breasts. The count was 512 in 5 flocks from highway 12 between Centerton and Gentry on April 18, 2013, on a day with big spring storms and lots of migration.

Mike Mlodinow counted 12 at Centerton on June 8, 2007, and a single bird on June 13, 2004.

A Franklin's Gull in spring plumage was associated with Bonaparte's Gulls at Beaver Lake on January 7-8, 2017. The bird was photographed on both days. These observations were from Lost Bridge North Park and Indian Creek Park.

Ring-billed Gull, *Larus delawarensis*

STATUS: Common migrant and winter resident; DATES: August 10 to May 16, but mainly November to March.

These are common winter gulls. While there are a few atypical late summer-early fall sightings, we often see first migrants associated with major cold fronts, late October and early November. Most have departed by late March.

Don Nelms and I observed more than 200 flying low over fields near Maysville on October 31, 2011. The 85 observed at Bob Kidd Lake near Prairie Grove on November 7, 2003, reflected an influx of Ring-billed Gulls; this was also a major peak day for fall waterfowl migration. We also them at Lake Fayetteville (2+), and Craig State Fish Hatchery at Centerton (15) on the same day.

Ring-billed Gulls occur with regularity, and sometimes in high numbers, in the Arkansas River Valley. We always see them in Dyer Bay area adjacent Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area. They are also found with fair regularity during the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count, especially since 2005. It was around this time our local birding community realized Ring-billed Gulls were regulars at the regional landfill in Tontitown. We have found up to 200-300 on the CBC (2009-2015), mainly landfill birds. The zero we posted for the 2016 CBC was a result of severe weather than prohibited access to the landfill. Scott Woolbright and I estimated 800 birds on the ground in a field near Maysville, December 24, 2009, during a winter storm.

We also see them when things ice up. Approximately 175 were standing on ice near Prairie Creek marina, Beaver Lake, on February 9, 2014. They also winter regularly at SWEPCO Lake near Gentry and nearby, on ponds at the Wild Wilderness Drive-Through Safari. Winter kills of small fish at Centerton and on Beaver Lake draw in flocks of gulls, too.

Ring-billed gulls largely depart our region by March. David Chapman saw 116 on Lake Fayetteville March 2, 2013 (Chapman 2016), a good marker for northward spring migration. The total lack of gulls at Safari on March 13, 2011, was also probably a marker, since they had been present there on every trip through winter.

Herring Gull, *Larus argentatus*

STATUS: Very uncommon transient and winter visitor that is more common in the river valley than in the Ozarks; DATES: November 3 to April 14+.

Herring Gulls are infrequently seen in western Arkansas. They are more common in the river valley than in the Ozarks. They occur regularly, and in higher numbers, along the river at least at Kerr Dam (near Sallisaw, Oklahoma, east of Fort Smith) and Lake Dardenelle at Russellville, Arkansas.

We have scattered observations and these mainly involve single birds. An exception seems related to a big spring storm. On March 14, 2011, I photographed 3-4 Herring Gulls at the landfill in Tonitown, along with numerous Ring-billed Gulls (150-200) and a single Lesser Black-backed Gull. I assume these were northbound migrants grounded by the cold front.

In addition to the above observations, Mike Mlodinow saw one at Beaver Lake June 2, 1990.

Lesser Black-backed Gull, *Larus fuscus*

A Lesser Black-backed Gull adult in breeding plumage was photographed at Waste Management's Tontitown landfill on March 14, 2011. It was associated with 150-200 Ring-billed Gulls and 3-4 Herring Gulls. As a result of a spring storm, the landfill was deep in red mud. I went back on March 18 with Joanie Patterson and Jacque Brown, but the front had passed, and so had most of the gulls.

Sooty Tern, *Onychoprion fuscatus*

Mike Mlodinow and Jacque Brown picked out our only known occurrence for this coastal species on September 6, 2008. They observed it from Rocky Branch Park on Beaver Lake. Sooty Terns are widely distributed well to our south in the Gulf of Mexico and elsewhere. They are subject to long-distance displacement by tropical storms (Schreiber et al. 2002). Such was the case in early September 2008 when Hurricane Gustav roared north from the Gulf, displacing many coastal species. Doug James described as a "cargo of birds" numerous Sooty Terns and other coastal species blown into Arkansas by Gustave (James et al. 2010).

Least Tern, *Sternula antillarum*

STATUS: Transient that is uncommon, but also of fairly regular occurrence; nests regularly on sandbars in the Arkansas River Valley. DATES: April 20 to September 7+.

Inland nesting Least Terns are Federally-listed as an Endangered Species. Many sightings involve single migrating birds, but there are occasional sightings of 4-5. Single birds have been observed as they work over the fish-rearing ponds at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centeron into second and third weeks of June. Bill and Toka Beall saw four at Alma Wastewater Treatment Facility on May 28, 2009. There were 40 at Alma Wastewater Treatment Facility on August 2, 2017. Most of these were adults, but there were also fledglings in their elegant cammo plumage.

Least Terns nest on sandbars in the Arkansas River. On July 8, 2009, Richard Stauffacher and I paddled a canoe out to an island off Mulberry where Cattle Egrets were nesting. Part of the island with a long open sandbar hosted about 25 adult Least Terns and many recently hatched young.

Brian Infield, Arkansas Game and Fish manager at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area, took Sandy Berger me out to several sandbars in the river off Frog on July 3, 2013. On one island we saw 35-40 adult terns mostly attending nests with eggs. On a second island we saw 15-20 terns, also attending nests with eggs. Nests on both islands were associated with gravelly humps. Courtship was still underway on this date. Our observations on this trip, and the earlier one with Richard Stauffacher, were primarily from the boat in order to limit disturbance.

Least Terns may appear in non-breeding areas any time in summer, mid-July to early September, especially in August, like three observed by David Chapman at Lake Fayetteville August 31, 2012 (Chapman 2016). One at Beaver Lake October 30, 1994, was very late.

Caspian Tern, *Hydroprogne caspia*

STATUS: Uncommon transient in low numbers mainly in spring; many fewer records in fall; DATES: April 28 to June 6 and June 17 to September 21+.

Most sightings of Caspian Terns involve a few birds or small flocks, occasionally as many as a dozen individuals. Many of our observations involve the peak of spring migration, last week in April to about mid-May. Mike Mlodinow and Mike Bivin observed 10 at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on April 28, 1996. Nine at the hatchery on May 17, 2016, were part of a big spring migration day.

It is more difficult to say what is going on with records in June. That is, are these late spring migrants, perhaps related to late ice breakup in the north, where they nest? Or are they early fall transients? Mike Mlodinow saw 14 adults in 2 flocks at Lake Elmdale on June 6, 1992. Surely these were northbound birds.

Flocks seen in fall often include immature birds being fed by adults. Three Caspian Terns were foraging in the Horseshoe Bend area of Beaver Lake on June 21, 1990. Were these early southbound migrants? David Chapman considered four Caspians on July 10, 2009, early for fall migration at Lake Fayetteville (Chapman 2016).

There are a couple of records from the 1980s, in September, involving as many as 27 to 53 terns. We've had nothing like those high numbers since. At Lake Sequoyah, Andy Scaboo observed five on September 3, 2010. Mike Mlodinow saw a bird in non-breeding plumage at Centerton on October 19, 2010.

Black Tern, *Chlidonias niger*

STATUS: Fairly common transient; DATES: April 28 to June 6+ and June 21 to October 3.

This is the most numerous tern migrating through our region. Single individuals and small flocks are widespread. For example, Butch Tetzlaff saw 20 at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on May 12, 2015. Black Tern migration peaks typically occur in mid to late May. John Prather and Mike Mlodinow counted at least 110 at Centerton on May 19, 1997. On June 6, 1992, Mlodinow observed 76 birds in 4 flocks, all heading north over Lake Elmdale. It has been many years since we have seen Black Terns in such high numbers.

There are some interesting mid-June observations as well: two at Centerton on June 13, 2002, and six at Beaver Lake in the Horseshoe Bend area on June 21, 1990. I am assuming these birds were southbound.

Joanie Patterson counted 25 at Alma Wastewater Treatment Facility on August 10, 2013. David Chapman and Mlodinow saw 32 at Lake Fayetteville on August 17, 2012. Of this observation, David Chapman wrote, "This species is most frequently observed in Aug., small flocks suddenly appearing after heavy rain and then departing within an hour or so…" Mike and I counted 50 at Centerton on August 25, 2007. Mike Powers counted 40 at Centerton on the late date of October 3, 1996.

Common Tern, *Sterna hirundo*

STATUS: Rare transient; DATES: May 2 to 26 and August 12 to September 25.

This tern is easily confused with Forster's Tern, which is much more common in migration here. Some records in both the Audubon file and eBird checklists provide additional dates, but it is unclear to me if some observers differentiated carefully between expected Forster's Terns and unexpected Common Terns.

Mike Mlodinow observed 12 Common Terns at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on on May 23, 1992. According to his notes, "Identification of many birds was made by watching them preen their tail feathers. On these the dark outer webs of the outer tail feathers could be seen clearly." John Prather and Mike observed one at Lake Fayetteville September 27, 1997. Of this bird, Mike wrote, "Despite the date this bird was nearly in breeding plumage; the cap looked almost solid black from the side, but revealed extensive mottling from a frontal view. The black "wedge" on the primaries was very conspicuous."

David Chapman counted 21 at Lake Fayetteville on September 12, 2009. They remained around the lake until at least the following day, when observed again by Chapman, and now also by Joanie Patterson, Mlodinow, and Neil Nodelman.

Forster's Tern, *Sterna forsteri*

STATUS: Fairly common transient; rare winter visitor; DATES: April 1 to June 8+ and June 26 to October 11+.

Forster's Tern is a fairly common or at least regular visitor observed over large ponds, lakes, and the Arkansas River. As David Chapman (2016) observed, "Small flocks can be found during wet, squally weather." Mike Mlodinow observed 22 on April 28, 1996, at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton. The 18 at Centerton on May 17, 2016, were part of a huge fall out of migrants. Sandy Berger was walking the Riverfront trail at Fort Smith when she observed six on May 20, 2017. There are also many reports provided by observers at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area, where Forester's Terns are often seen perched on limbs out in Dyer bay.

There are several June records, both early and late in the month. These could indicate late spring movement and perhaps beginning of fall migration. Joanie Patterson and Jacque Brown saw five at Frog Bayou WMA on August 9, 2014. David Chapman (2016) saw 21 at Lake Fayetteville on September 12, 2009.

In addition, there are now winter season observations, involving December-February. For example, Chapman saw Forster's Tern at Lake Fayetteville on December 10, 2007. Joanie Patterson and Donald Ouelette saw one at Lake Fayetteville February 15, 2016. A single bird was seen during Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count on December 16, 2012. We have often seen them in winter at Kerr dam on the Arkansas River in eastern Oklahoma.

Analysis by National Audubon indicates that during the last 40 years, Forster's Tern has been undergoing a range shift to the north in response to climate change.

Royal Tern, *Thalasseus maximus*

Doug James, who is thoroughly familiar with the much more common and similar-looking Caspian Tern, closely observed a Royal Tern at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on September 4, 2008. This coastal species occurs inland on occasion, especially after tropical storms (Buckley and Buckley 2002). Such was the case in early September 2008, when Hurricane Gustav reached Arkansas bringing with it a fabulous cargo of birds quite rare in inland places like Arkansas (James et al. 2010). There was also a Royal Tern in southern Arkansas during this time.

Order Gaviiformes

Pacific Loon, *Gavia pacifica*

Rare transient and winter visitor.

Charles Mills identified a Pacific Loon near the dam site on Beaver Lake in Carroll County on November 21, 1991. We found a single bird in the Rocky Branch area of Beaver December 29, 2002, and it was observed in the same area as late as March 2, 2003. On the last date we had wonderful views as it flew across the water relatively close to us and near a Common Loon. Compared to Common Loon, Pacific exhibited faster wing beats and was obviously smaller. Joan Reynolds photographed a Pacific Loon associated with Common Loons at Rocky Branch on Beaver Lake November 3, 2014.

Best chance to see one is on a mid-winter trip to Tenkiller Ferry Lake in eastern Oklahoma. Pacifics are of regular occurrence in low numbers.

Common Loon, *Gavia immer*

STATUS: Fairly common transient and uncommon winter resident; DATES: September 7 to May 20+. Fall: mainly November to early December. Spring: mainly second half of March through April.

Common Loons are present regularly during migration fall and spring but are much less common at mid-winter (mainly mid-December through February). They are typically observed on expansive reservoirs, but are also on small lakes and even larger ponds. They are never truly common here, but are present regularly in low number during migration and winter. Rob Dobbs saw a single bird at Lake Wedington on the very early fall date of September 7, 1993.

Overall, we see few loons until big cold fronts in the second half of October into November. The fall migration in 2003 produced some relatively high numbers. At least 10 were present on Bob Kidd Lake on November 11 and at least 12 on Lake Fayetteville the same day. A group of us visiting Beaver Lake counted 11 off Rocky Branch and Twin Coves on November 10, 2007. There were 17 visible from Indian Creek Park on Beaver Lake November 18, 2010. These observations reflect peaks in the southward fall migration.

In their visits to Table Rock Lake, JoAnne and Earl Rife found loons regularly in Long Creek Arm of Table Rock Lake, at mouth of Cricket Creek, near Cricket Creek Boat Dock. JoAnne noted the birds were typically in the larger more open waters, rather than in the narrow branches.

We observe many fewer loons during winter: only four records on Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count 1961-2016. We make a few mid-winter trips each year to Beaver Lake in search of loons. Often, we find a few visible from the area around Rocky Branch and other Corps of Engineers parks on the lake's lower end (e.g., dam site park, Indian Creek).

The much higher numbers (hundreds) wintering on Tenkiller Lake in eastern Oklahoma attracts us to that area because we are likely to see many loons, with a chance to find up to four species. This suggests that compared to Beaver Lake, Tenkiller has a more abundant small fish population. "Seasonal, spatial, and annual variability is due to shifting abundance of small fish" (Mcintyre and Barr 1997).

The northward migration of spring is noted here from late March into early May. Beginning in at least late February, loons begin to molt drab grays of winter, exchanging these feathers for the rich black and white checked pattern on their backs. Thus, loons passing through in the spring often exhibit much, if not all, of the summer plumage. These migrants make brief stops on smaller lakes and ponds. Common Loons that arrived on Lake Fayetteville by March 22, 2017, had acquired most of their summer plumage. The flock of 12 at Prairie Creek on Beaver Lake March 23, 2017, included loons in various stages toward summer plumage. A Common Loon in summer plumage May 20, 2017, was enjoyed by those who attended the Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society field trip to Siloam Springs City Lake.

A Common Loon observed by many at Craig State Fish Hatchery was in brilliant summer plumage when I saw it June 14, 2016.

Yellow-billed Loon, *Gavia adamsii*

Mike Mlodinow identified this bird just above Beaver Lake dam site in Carroll County on November 17, 1991. This was the first record for Yellow-billed Loon in Arkansas. It was photographed on November 19 and seen as late as November 30.

Order Suliformes

Magnificent Frigatebird, *Fregata magnificens*

This bird is sometimes blown far inland from the Gulf Coast by storms. For example, Hurricane Gustav in September 2008 brought numerous rare coastal birds to Arkansas (James et al. 2010). Events of this sort likely explain a single frigatebird observed during the Fayetteville Christmas Bird count on December 21, 1967.

Neotropic Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*

DATES: July 5 to October 13.

Records for Neotropic Cormorants here span the fall migration when we see many Double-crested Cormorants, mainly early July through October. All records are from SWEPCO Lake and associated Eagle Watch Nature Trail.

There were no records for Neotropics here until 2011. One was perched on a snag among Double-crested Cormorants on SWEPCO Lake from at least August 10 to September 23, 2011. This bird was photographed. In 2012, a Neotropic was seen from Eagle Watch starting as early as July 5 and as late as September 24. The latest date for 2013 was October 13. There have been additional observations including July 21, 2014, and July 6 to at least September 5, 2017.

Double-crested Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax auritus*

STATUS: Common transient in the Ozarks that in fall often lingers into winter; common transient and winter resident in the river valley. DATES: Observations throughout the year, but mainly August 13 to December 20 and March 15 to May 28.

This fish-eating bird gathers in flocks throughout western Arkansas, with highest numbers overall in the river valley, but also numerous at least in migration in the Ozarks. They are especially numerous in late September - November. An estimated 500 flew over Chesney Prairie Natural Area on September 26, 2004, and an estimated 80 over the same place October 15, 2005.

In the river valley they are counted in the hundreds on Fort Smith-Moffett Christmas Bird Count. They first appeared on the count in 1980, and more than 1000 were tallied on some counts by 1990. In the Ozarks, December records are primarily from Lake Sequoyah and Lake Fayetteville, but they also linger on SWEPCO Lake at Gentry. No cormorants were reported on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count until 1984, but have been found regularly since, with a 1999 count of 47. Cormorant numbers in the Ozarks decline with arrival of sharp cold and freezing.

During winter they occur regularly and in high numbers in unfrozen, fish-rich waters of the Arkansas River. Thousands winter at various places along the Arkansas. I always see them in Dyer bay during visits to Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area. Perhaps birds further north, in the Ozarks, are spin-offs from these wintering flocks.

An estimated 100 flew north over Chesney on April 1, 2006. We see a few cormorants following the usual northward passage of spring. These scattered records include a few birds that linger on the Arkansas River.

The increase in cormorant numbers is no doubt related to higher nesting success resulting from environmental protection, especially control of chemical pollution severely detrimental to fish-eating birds. Unfortunately, population growth has produced conflict with fish hatcheries and fish farmers. Birds are now being legally shot, sometimes in high numbers (Spencer 1993, Dorr et al. 2014).

Anhinga, *Anhinga anhinga*

Testimony to Anhinga's rarity in northwest Arkansas is that expert observers like Doug James nor Bill Beall -- who have birded our region over many decades -- has even found an Anhinga here. Nevertheless, "Wanders widely, during both spring and fall, to n. U.S. and e. Canada," (Frederick and Siegel-Causey 2000) and has nested as close as Oklahoma's Sequoyah NWR in the Arkansas River Valley (Baumgartner and Baumgartner 1992), only 62 air miles southwest of Fayetteville.

There is one adequately supported sighting of a bird seen briefly at a pond on highway 102 in Centerton on June 15, 1991 (Arkansas Audubon Society document no. 1245). A possible second occurrence lacked adequate contemporaneous documentation. This involved 1-6 birds reported at Bob Kidd Lake between March 8 and April 9, 2008.

Order Pelecaniformes

American White Pelican, *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*

STATUS: Fairly common transient; winter resident in the river valley; rare winter visitor in the Ozarks; DATES: observed throughout the year in western Arkansas.

The main story of pelicans here involves the valley with the expansive Arkansas River. On a breezy day, the river valley and downtown Northwest Arkansas City are separated by little more than a bit of elegant soaring.

We mainly see migrants mid-March to mid-May and mid-September through November. Wintering birds are common along the Arkansas River, but comparatively rare in the Ozarks. A few non-breeding pelicans remain in the valley during summer.

There are few sights more inspiring than flocks of white pelicans in nearly synchronous soaring flight over western Arkansas. Observers have reported big flocks on several occasions during both the spring and fall. For example, Don Nelms photographed hundreds of birds in three flocks as they soared over Newton County on March 15, 2008. They sometimes pause in broad, open shallows of Lake Sequoyah near Fayetteville; 600 there on September 18, 1989, remained several days and a few birds remained several more weeks after most had departed. There were 300 at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area on September 29, 2012.

A flock of 13 soared over nearby Cherokee City December 1, 2010. Expansive Grand Lake with plenty of pelican habitat is just over the line in northeastern Oklahoma. The Arkansas River Valley is just south. These early December flocks probably mark the end of fall migration, but birds have also been observed seven times during Fayetteville Christmas Bird Counts (including count week).

Pelicans were first recorded on the Fort Smith-Moffett CBC in the late 1980s, with impressive counts by the mid-1990s and thereafter. The tally on the 2012 CBC was 131.

There are also several summer records (non-breeding), including the 75-80 observed by Mike Bivin as they soared over Fayetteville on August 14, 1992. Did they come from the Arkansas River?

American Bittern, *Botaurus lentiginosus*

STATUS: Fairly common transient in the river valley; uncommon, local transient in Ozarks; DATES: March 20 to May 25+ and September 3 to October 17+.

When this bittern is found, habitat is usually marshy ditches, edges of impoundments, and other low-lying, open, well-vegetated areas. Overall, records are scattered in all seasons, and for most months, but most involve transients during spring and fall. Marsh vegetation in partially flooded moist soil units at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area provides ideal habitat. Joanie Patterson saw four there on May 2, 2014.

Naturalist Dean Crooks of Rogers found it nesting in Benton County (Baerg 1951) on seasonally wet prairies (former Osage Prairie) that have long since been developed. There were fairly regular reports from Craig State Fish Hatchery at Centerton prior to extensive developement of seasonal wetlands in the Centerton-Bentonville area. Bitterns have also been found in marshy vegetation at what is now Wilson Springs Preserve in the Clabber Creek bottomlands at Fayetteville. Joan Reynolds photographed two in marshy vegetation at Beaver Lake Nursery Pond April 20, 2013. Not all observations involve marsh: Judith Griffith photographed a transient at Ninestone Land Trust in Carroll County on March 21, 2007.

Many observations have involved seasonal wetlands with abundant evidence of Osage burrowing crawfish (*Procambarus liberorum*). Crawfish are an important element in this bittern's diet (Lowther et al. 2009). Marshy habitats at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary adjacent Fayetteville's Westside Wastewater Treatment Facility have yielded numerous observations of 1-5 birds. At least 4-5 were present on March 19, 2014, during a time when crawfish carrying young were much in evidence. These habitats have been enhanced by restoration efforts directed by Bruce Shackleford of Environmental Consulting Operations, Inc. The Fayetteville area was once rich with seasonal wetland habitat suitable for these bitterns. Now, most is lost. Woolsey is the best that remains north of the river valley.

I saw single birds at Stump Prairie near Siloam Springs May 9 and 13, 2009. Stump records involved a cordgrass (*Spartina pectinata*) pool reclaimed as part of prairie restoration efforts by Joe Woolbright of Ozark Ecological Restoration, Inc. This area has numerous chimneys of burrowing crawfish.

One bittern apparently wintered at Woolsey in 2008-2009.

Least Bittern, *Ixobrychus exilis*

STATUS: Rare transient in the Ozarks with most observations in spring; nests in the Arkansas River Valley; DATES: April 27 to October 15.

These bitterns are found in low-lying marshy vegetation, especially cattails. Many of our observations involve migrants in places like Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton where we make regular trips, especially in spring, to look for shorebirds. Additional observations have also involved marshy vegetation along lake edges and Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary at Fayetteville, where I saw them October 15, 2008, and April 27, 2009. There are additional sightings at Woolsey.

We are on the western edge of the nesting and migration range for Least Bitterns (Gibbs et al. 1992). They nest in the river valley (James and Neal 1986). Abby Darrah and Jason Luscier saw two adults on June 10, 2009, at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area. I photographed a fledgling in cattails there July 11, 2009. Recent observations have been associated with extensive cattail marshes along Sharp Chapel Road connected to Frog Bayou WMA.

Great Blue Heron, *Ardea herodias*

STATUS: Common resident; DATES: present all year.

Great Blue Herons are common in the river valley with its many creeks, the river, and old oxbows. They may not have been very common in the Ozarks prior to the 1930s because there weren't any lakes.They are common now throughout the year all over western Arkansas.

Great Blues nest primarily in colonies in tall trees like sycamores in undisturbed forested river bottomlands. I think of these as heron towns, scattered throughout underveloped areas in and around Northwest Arkansas City. Colonies with up to 40 or 50 nests are typical, but smaller ones and even single nests are sometimes seen. These heron towns are quite evident in spring before leaf-out. Great Blues may then be easily visible, standing in nests, sometimes as early as mid-February.

They utilize nesting sites year after year, but these sites are easily disturbed. A man and his two sons killed more than 30 adults at the Osage Creek heronry in 1982. He was subsequently arrested after neighbors reported the shooting (Ivy 1981).

I visited a colony with approximately 40 nests on Butler Creek, west of Beaver in Carroll County on March 15, 2003. The colony was potentially in the path of highway construction on Arkansas 178. Local residents lead by Beverly and Duane Kepford went to bat for the Great Blues.

During winter 2004-2005, Robin Devine of Fayetteville found a new colony on the main fork of the White River where it flows into Lake Sequoyah east of Fayetteville. I visited this site with her on March 19, 2005. We counted approximately 25 nests. Great Blues at that time had started to nest; birds were still feeding a few young in nests into mid-July. One nest was used by an adult Great Horned Owl attending two downy nestlings.

The towns formed by nesting Great Blue Herons are an integral part of what makes western Arkansas an attractive place for those who value and respect wildlife. The places where they nest and forage are some of the best and eternally valuable realestate composing our Natural State.

Great Egret, *Ardea alba*

STATUS: Fairly common transient; nests in Arkansas River Valley; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Great Egrets are seen during spring migration from late March into May. The 38 Great Egrets together at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area on March 30, 2017, may have just arrived from the south.

They nest in mixed-species heron-egret colonies in the river valley immediately south of the Ozarks. One of these places is an island in the river just south of Mulberry.

For the Ozarks, there are only sparse records throughout the summer. A few birds presumably nest in mixed-species rookies with other herons and egrets. Summer records suggestive of local nesting have been obtained from Fayetteville, Bob Kidd Lake, Lake Sequoyah, Lake Elmdale and Lake Harrison (July 14, 1999). At least two nests were associated with a Great Blue Heron rookery at Lake Sequoyah during the 2009 nesting season.

In fall they wander widely through open habitats, mid-July through October. They can be observed along rivers and lakes, ponds, and on mudflats. A total of 36 were at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on September 6, 2003. At SWEPCO Lake in 2010, Terry Stanfill tallied 15 adults on June 19, 25 by July 18, and 37 on August 19, 2010. Great Egrets congregate annually like this and are easily visible from observation blinds at Eagle Watch.

Most have departed the Ozarks by mid-October. David Chapman and I saw 50 at SWEPCO Lake on October 13, 2013. At least 60 flew over Chesney Prairie Natural Area on October 3, 2005. Some birds linger into cold weather. There were 2-4 at Centerton during the first half of November 2009. There is also a recent mid-winter record from Centerton and scattered CBC records from Fort Smith-Moffett.

Snowy Egret, *Egretta thula*

STATUS: Fairly common transient; most numerous in the river valley; nests regularly in low numbers in the river valley and occasionally in the Ozarks; DATES: April 1 to October 20.

We see transient Snowy Egrets along pond edges in all kinds of open areas. Highest numbers occur in favorable habitats in the river valley. For example, they are often seen along edges of ponds at Alma Wastewater Treatment Facility. Birds in a flock of 10 at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area on April 18, 2017, were obviously using their yellow feet as some kind of wiggle lure in the shallows of a flooded moist soil unit.

Snowies nest in a mixed-species heron-egret colony on an island in the Arkansas River just south of Mulberry. In the Ozarks there are mid-summer records suggestive of nesting, including low numbers in rookies with Little Blue Herons and Cattle Egrets.

By July some snowies are on the move, like the bird at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton July 8, 2016. They also occur among other herons and egrets on exposed mudflats visible from Eagle Watch Nature Trail, like the bird there August 6, 2014. We thought there were 2, but the birds were far away. Finally we realized one of them was a juvenile Little Blue Heron.

Little Blue Heron, *Egretta caerulea*

STATUS: Fairly common, widespread migrant in spring and fall; local summer resident; DATES: April 9 to October 26.

Little Blue Herons are at least fairly common as migrants visiting all kinds of ponds and lakes. They are most numerous during late summer and early fall as they wander and forage in such habitats, often same ones used by other herons and egrets. Most striking at this time are the patchy adults – "calicos" some call them -- transitioning from white to blue, and retaining parts of both.

My first Little Blue for spring 2017 was one of these calicos at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton April 17, 2017. My impression was that the 22 Little Blues at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area on May 2, 2017, were recent arrivals; they were all blue.

The nesting story is complicated. The basic part is that they nest regularly on an island in the river immediately south of Mulberry, along with much more numerous Cattle Egrets, and smaller numbers of Great and Snowy Egrets. But dating back at least to the 1980s, Little Blue Herons, often associated with Cattle Egrets, have nested or attempted nesting in upland habitats around the Ozarks. Here they have chosen abandoned fields regenerating with small trees like winged elms and cedars. In at least a few cases, these colonies have been harassed and the vegetation cut down to keep them from returning. This has happened in part because of fear these colonies are too near homes or commercial poultry operations. For example: August 2, 1993, Doug James observed 2432 birds in a colony within Fayetteville city limits. These were mostly Cattle Egrets, but included Little Blues, Great and Snowy Egrets. He also noted there were +/-5000 birds in 1992 -- before bulldozing of trees.

It is understable why people wouldn't want a noisy and smelly colony of nesting egrets near their homes, or why they might fear wild birds could spread avian disease to domestic poultry. But let's take a minute to reflect. It is not the fault of wild birds that our human population is constantly expanding, incessantly consuming the habitats wild birds and other wild creatures need for survival. And what's so great about a smelly, noisy, polluted freeway?

Fall transients include obvious adults but also many white juveniles. These not-so-obvious Little Blues are easily confused at distance with Cattle Egrets and even Great Egrets.

Tricolored Heron, *Egretta tricolor*

STATUS: Very rare transient; DATES: a few spring observations and one in the fall.

A single bird was present in spring 2000 (no date) at SWEPCO Lake in Benton County near Gentry. It was observed by Terry Stanfill and photographed by David Nolan. Mike Mlodinow documented the presence of one at Lake Fayetteville April 7, 1994, and Lake Sequoyah April 10, 1994. Pat Valentik found one at Lake Leatherwood west of Eureka Springs on May 25, 2003. Bill and Toka Beall spotted one at a pond across from Alma Wastewater Treatment Facility on May 20, 2009.

A single Tricolored Heron was observed by Russell Graham and others at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on July 2-3, 1987.

Cattle Egret, *Bubulcus ibis*

STATUS: Common transient and local summer resident; DATES: April 9 to October 27+.

Cattle Egrets begin to arrive here during the first half of April. There were four out in a field with cows just north of Alma on April 9, 2011. While Cattle Egrets may be seen in almost any open country habitat, they are most often observed in pastures associated with cattle. Sometimes they stand on the cows.

In the Ozarks, our initial Cattle Egret nesting records date at least to the mid-1980s. But as in the case of Little Blue Herons, Cattle Egret nesting colonies have been treated as a nuisance and the habitat cut down to keep them from nesting. Birds nesting near semi-rural homes north of Van Buren were considered pests by local residents. Same with cases of nesting attempts in an area with poultry houses, ubiquitous in western Arkansas.

Several thousand Cattle Egrets form the core of a mixed-species rookery on an island in the Arkansas River just downriver from Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area. I saw recently hatched nestlings there on July 2, 2010.

In addition to nesting attempts dating to the 1980s, there is this: approximately 3,500 were roosting in snags at Bob Kidd Lake on September 27, 1987. This must have been a post-breeding season roost formed prior to southward migration. Hundreds of birds form such roosts in the river valley, and are quite visible as they perch in snags out in a pasture across from Alma Wastewater Treatment Facility. I'd counted 200-300 there on September 6, 2016, then realized there were many more, almost out of sight, on the ground.

Few Cattle Egrets remain after October. Mild fall weather probably accounts for a few, scattered November sightings of fall migration stragglers. A single bird Mike Mlodinow and I saw at Centerton on December 5, 2014, was a big surprise.

Green Heron, *Butorides virescens*

STATUS: Common transient and summer resident; DATES: March 29 to October 18+.

Green Herons are found during migration and in summer along the forested edges of streams, reservoirs, and ponds. On July 21, 2012, Green Herons that nested over a small pool at Wild Wilderness Drive-Through Safari in Gentry included recently hatched young still in nests while older juveniles from adjacent nests perched out on branches.

During late summer and early fall they gather in small flocks of a dozen or so at places, like Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton where aquatic prey like frogs, small fish, etc. is abundant. They remain fairly common through much of September. Sightings thereafter involve scattered individuals.

A single bird was seen at the former trout farm in Johnson (Washington County) December 14, 1991, during the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count.

Black-crowned Night-Heron, *Nycticorax nycticorax*

STATUS: Somewhat rare transient and summer resident; DATES: April 9 to October 26+.

Most observations are of single birds, and most of these have involved spring and fall, and presumably transients. Seven flew over Fayetteville on April 15, 2000. The count was 2-3 at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area April 21, 2012. Four were at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on May 8, 2005.

One adult was at Centerton on June 19, 1988. Terry Stanfill photographed one at Wild Wilderness Drive-Through Safari in Gentry on July 19, 2012. Auriel Fournier saw five at Pea Ridge National Military Park on June 3, 2013.

In 1985, adults and immatures (a total of at least three birds) were at Centerton between late August and late October. Two were observed at Lake Elmdale on August 4, 1990. There is also a record of five at Lake Fayetteville October 3, 2007. Two at Centerton lingered as late as December 4, 1987.

Northwest Arkansas City is well within this heron's breeding range (Davis 1993).

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, *Nyctanassa violacea*

STATUS: Very uncommon transient and summer resident; DATES: April 20 to October 5+.

These herons are seen during summer, singly or in pairs, but never in high numbers. Presence around impoundments and along forested streams in summer suggests that nesting here involves isolated pairs. During late summer and fall as many as three adults have been seen at the Lake Sequoyah dam site. Frank Reuter saw 2-4 in the Berryville area (Carroll County) at King's River April 28, 1987. Jack and Pam Stewart saw one bird in Newton County along the Buffalo National River, just upstream from the Erbie Campground, on June 8, 2004. Terry Stanfill saw one along Flint Creek from the bridge adjacent Ozark Academy in Benton County on June 24, 2007, and Joyce Shedell saw one there on June 10, 2008. This bird was subsequently viewed until at least mid-October. There was a juvenile at Flint Creek Nature Area September 6-7, 2017.

In recent years our best observations have been in the river valley at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area and nearby. These records involve both adults and juveniles foraging in the crayfish-rich moist soil units. It seems like they are nesting in bottom land forests there. A single adult flew up the Arkansas River on July 17, 2017. There was a juvenile foraging adjacent Alma Wastewater Treatment Facility at least July 28-August 4, 2017.

In the 1950s, Doug James used to see them foraging for the abundant terrestrial crayfish that inhabit former lowland prairie habitats here. His specific observations involved the University campus in Fayetteville along Razorback Road north of 6th Street (now Martin Luther King). What was once open, seasonally wet fields have been subsequently developed for sporting events and parking. Extensive development of these former lowland prairies negatively impacts all species. Yes, we must have our sports, but the price we pay is irreplaceable loss of all natural features and native creatures.

They were reported during the course breeding bird atlas projects in the Missouri Ozarks (Jacobs and Wilson 1997) and to a lesser extent in the Oklahoma Ozarks (Reinking 2004). Doug James saw a single bird at Fayetteville on the unusual date of January 8, 1991.

White Ibis, *Eudocimus albus*

Rare fall transient, July 15 to September 26.

Our observations of White Ibises involve late summer and early fall and include both adults and juveniles. These are birds wandering north after the nesting season well to our south. They have been seen on several occasions in the river valley at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area. For example, adults and at least one juvenile were seen August 7-16, 2010. At least two adults were also seen on August 8, 2011.

Occasionally they also get into the Ozarks. Mike Martin photographed a juvenile at Eagle Watch Nature Trail east of Gentry on July 15, 2012, and another in the same place on September 26, 2015.

A White Ibis observed on August 3, 1991, at Devil's Den State Park and was still present until at least August 11. A single bird at Lake Sequoyah on September 2, 1989, was still present on September 13.

Glossy Ibis, *Plegadis falcinellus*

Glossy is by far rarest of the ibises here. A single bird was identified at Lake Frances (now drained) near Siloam Springs on August 26, 1986. Another was found at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on May 22, 2002. A single bird associated with nine White-faced Ibises was seen well on May 24, 2002, at Centerton (presumably the same bird as on May 22). A single bird at Centerton October 14-18 was photographed by Jacque Brown.

White-faced Ibis, *Plegadis chihi* and *Plegadis* species

STATUS: Uncommon but regular spring transient; very uncommon in fall; DATES: April 11 to May 24 and August 15 to November 2.

This is the commonest of the ibis species seen in western Arkansas. White-faced Ibises have been frequently observed at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton, at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area in the river valley, and at farm ponds, lakes, and flooded fields. It would be unreasonable to call them common, but they certainly migrate through western Arkansas with regularity, at least in spring. Usual observations involve single birds or small flocks, but there are occasion large flights, especially in second half of April: Mitchell Pruitt saw 50 at Centerton April 20, 2015. There were 18 in a flooded field near Chesney Prairie Natural Area on April 24, 2011. At Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area the tally was 25 on April 21, 2012. The 13 at Centerton on May 8, 2005, was also a good count later in spring migration.

Fall observations are relatively sparse. Many ibises seen are not in obvious beeding plumage. The lack of such records, and the general rarity of Glossy Ibis here, suggests that many difficult-to-identify fall *Plegadis* we see are White-faced. In non-breeding plumage, Glossy and White-faced are difficult to separate. I assume the six *Plegadis* ibises that flew over Chesney on September 9, 2013, were likely White-faced. Karen Garrett saw 17 ibises at Centerton on September 4, 2017, some of them with red eyes. The 21 ibises in a rice field adjacent Frog Bayou WMA on September 20, 2012, included an adult White-faced Ibis; many birds in juvenile plumage exhibited obviously red eyes.

The late date of November 2, 2013, involved two *Plegadis* ibises at Frog Bayou.

Order Cathartiformes

Black Vulture, *Coragyps atratus*

STATUS: Common resident; DATES: present in all seasons.

Black Vultures may be observed flying overhead in the most urban parts of Fayetteville or the much less urbanized places like Rudy in Crawford County, Devil's Den State Park, Beaver Lake, perched on high bluffs in the upper regions of Buffalo National River, and over the Arkansas River valley.

The behavior of two Black Vultures perched close together on a tall snag at Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area on February 23, 2014, suggested a pair near their nest; an apparent pair exhibited same behavior there on February 8, 2015. Nest sites include rocky outcrops or bluffs. On Wedington Ridge in the Ozark National Forest, apparently paired adults perched near a cavern along a bluff line in early January. There were two eggs by February 27. Young with some downy white feathers were present at mid-May. At Ninestone Land Trust in Carroll County, a nest in a cliff grotto high above Piney Creek held two eggs on March 20, 2009.

The Christmas Bird Count provides a fair index of our Black Vulture population. During the 1960s and 1970s, reports of Black Vultures on Fayetteville CBC were irregular with none reported or only low numbers. Since that time, both vulture species have been counted at a winter roost adjacent Lake Sequoyah and along a bluff line within the count circle, with peaks of 92 Blacks in 1999 and 100 on December 15, 2002. The 223 recorded on December 14, 2014, was highest ever for Fayetteville CBC. Black Vultures have been increasing on the Fort Smith-Moffett count in the river valley since the 1980s.

Like Turkey Vultures, Black Vultures benefit from landscape changes including urbanization and many more dead animals (deer kills on roads, etc). Analysis by National Audubon indicates that during the past 40 years they have been expanding north, presumably in response to climate warming. The population has also benefitted from reduction of pesticides in the environment. Black Vultures are often seen at dead cows, but it is not fair to blame them for such losses. In Newton County, for example, dogs killed at least 31 calves, plus other cowes and pigs before residents figured out what was happening (as reported in Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette, January 12, 2018). These vultures are routinely blamed for such losses simply because they are observed at the carcasses.

Turkey Vulture, *Cathartes aura*

STATUS: Common resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

"Tolerant of human activity and adaptable in its diet and choice of nest sites, this species has fared well in our changing landscapes; its populations are generally stable or increasing" (Kirk and Mossman 1998).

Turkey Vultures are observed in flight all over our region, soaring above cities, towns, forests, and grasslands. They seem most numerous from late August through early November, when kettles of TVs including 20 or more birds are common. For example, 55 soared in three loose kettles near Chesney Prairie Natural Area on September 19, 2008. The estimated 40 perched on the ground at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on October 20, 2007, was an exceptionally high number for the hatchery and may represent a southward migrating flock grounded by gusting south winds that day.

Relatively high numbers are attacted to hayfields when cutting and bailing results in considerable mortality to animals trapped and killed in the fields. This is a big lure for these carrion-eaters.

Vultures concentrate in winter roosts with the onset of cold weather. These roosts form where high south or southeast-facing cliffs, or groups of tall snags. This facilitates exposure to morning sun and makes it a little easier to commence soaring. Numbers may be high in these locales during much of the winter, depending upon weather severity. I have often seen them perching in snags along Lee Creek valley at Devil's Den State Park, right along the highway. They also perch in snags with a good eastern exposure on the west side of Lake Sequoyah in Fayetteville.

Numbers of Turkey Vultures observed on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count have increased since the mid-1980s, with 100 or more observed on 14 counts since; highest was 418 on December 14, 2014. Numbers have been increasing on Fort Smith-Moffett CBC since the late 1970s. High numbers are also recorded on the Crooked Creek CBC (Harrison), with data from 2001-2004 involving 140 to 205 birds. This may be a response to new feeding opportunities created by urbanization.

Visitors to Devil's Den State Park see groups of vultures (both species, but primarily TVs) perched in tall snags that have good morning sun. There's nothing quite like the sight of a large bird with its wings completely spread out, facing morning sunlight. Our population drops during severe weather of mid-winter, especially during late December and January. However roosts with lower numbers persist through winter.

Order Accipitriformes

Osprey, *Pandion haliaetus*

STATUS: Fairly common transient at lakes, larger ponds, and rivers; rare in summer and winter; DATES: March 16 to May 29+ and August 19 to November 21+.

Ospreys can be observed during migration as they fish all sorts of large ponds, lakes, and major rivers. Migration peaks have been noted at heavily birded places like Lake Fayetteville and Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton from late March to mid-May and in fall from September into second half of October. Some of our best moments on field trips to Mulhollan Blind on Lake Fayetteville occur during the April peak, with close looks at Ospreys perched in tall sycamores at water's edge, or flying out over the lake, sometimes two at once, as was the case April 23, 2016.

While many observations involve large lakes, they also hunt over farm ponds, like one I saw in south Fayetteville April 12, 2010. An Osprey suddenly plunged for a fish in a pond in an otherwise completely forested part of the Boston Mountains near Devil's Den State Park on April 10, 2012.

Ospreys frequently perch on snags standing out in the water. Many people have obtained their best looks in places like Eagle Watch Nature Trail on SWEPCO Lake, where the big birds perch in a picturesque manner on snags out in the shallows. Terry Stanfill has seen as many as six there during migration.

No nests have been observed, but there several interesting nesting season observations: two seen repeatedly in summer of 1981 in the Prairie Creek area of Beaver Lake. Two were at Rocky Branch on Beaver Lake July 19, 1986. In 1990, single birds were at Beaver Lake on June 22 and August 3. We are close enough to the Osprey's usual breedng range that an occasional nest here seems likely.

Ospreys winter well to the south, but presence of our many lakes and rivers may encourage them to linger in the fall. This could account for one at Siloam Springs City Lake on December 26, 1992. Vicky May photographed one at Lake Atalanta on December 29, 2010. It's possible they linger as long as there is open water and plenty of fish.

Swallow-tailed Kite, *Elanoides forficatus*

Mike Mlodinow observed a Swallow-tailed Kite at Lake Fayetteville on July 28, 2009. Stepehen Marquardt photographed one at Clifty in Madison County on August 23, 2011. It was subsequently seen by many others on August 24. According to folks nearby, the bird had been in the area for about two weeks. The Swallow-tailed Kite and Mississippi Kites in the same general area were all foraging on a huge population of grasshoppers.

There are older records. In his bird list for the Winslow area of Washington County, Smith (1915) stated the following: "The only record that I can recall during my stay in the mountains was that of a single bird, observed by a farmer near Winslow, on October 8, 1913. Old residents were well acquainted with it, and described it to me minutely..." Baerg (1951) received a report involving two birds in Newton County on July 10, 1949.

White-tailed Kite, *Elanus leucurus*

Ellen Turner observed this kite at Rogers on March 23, 2001. She saw the bird perched, heard its vocalization, and had two good looks as it flew. She noted that the tail had distinct wide white edges and was gray in the middle.

Mississippi Kite, *Ictinia mississippiensis*

STATUS: Fairly common summer resident; DATES: May 10 to October 10.

The flock of 18 Mississippi Kites seen by Brian Infield of Arkansas Game and Fish Commission near Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area on May 30, 2017, may have been part of a spring influx. It was not that many years ago that Mississippi Kites in western Arkansas were unusual and unexpected.

Bill Beall spotted three overhead at Fort Smith in May 1993. Nesting was suspected then confirmed by Beall, Sandy Berger, and Ragupathy Kannan in May 2003. By 2006, Mississippi Kites had moved from the river valley to the Ozarks.

Mid-August 2006: my neighbors in Fayetteville, Kelly and Donna Mulhollan, said they had been seeing three Mississippi Kites in central Fayetteville. What did this mean? August is a busy month for kite migration, so were these just migrants? That same year, Doug James found a kite on his Arkansas Breeding Bird Atlas block near Devil's Den State Park.

Skip to spring 2010. Ricky Corder, a UA-Fayetteville graduate student, saw two kites in northeast Fayetteville on May 22, 2010. He said he had been seeing them for several days. Presence of the birds encouraged us to look for a nest, which we found under construction, on May 29, 2010.

There are now many reports scattered around western Arkansas. Besides Fayetteville, some of these include Springdale, Rogers, Bentonville, Berryville, Bella Vista, etc.

Mike Mlodinow found kites at four separate locations in Fayetteville during 2011. In 2014, I photographed a nest, also in Fayetteville, with one nestling on July 31. In July 2016, kites were constructing a nest in Fayetteville's Wilson Park, visible and of great interest to many walking the trail.

One of the best documented nests was on the west side of Lake Fayetteville, in a neighborhood near the Environmental Study Center. According to David Chapman (2016): "In 2014, two first year adults perched on numerous occasions on a dead tree in Lake Road and were observed copulating (May 10-July 25+, 2014 DC). A nest was located and a juvenile subsequently seen. The adults and juvenile remained throughout the summer."

Bald Eagle, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

STATUS: Common transient and winter resident; nests in river valley near Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area, along Buffalo National River, and around Beaver Lake, and doubtless elsewhere; DATES: present all year, but primarily late October to mid-March.

Bald Eagles are most numerous during the period of real cold weather, late October to late March. Don Nelms and I found seven in the Maysville area on October 31, 2011. Joan Reynolds and I watched as 10 eagles (7 adults, 3 juveniles) harass American Coots at Rocky Branch on Beaver Lake November 3, 2011. The population builds towards midwinter, with January as peak eagle month. The pattern reverses in spring.

Terry Stanfill says that he doesn't see eagles in fall until there is a good cold spell with frost or freezing. In spring, the birds all depart with the coming of a good warm front lasting at least three days. Stanfill manages Eagle Watch Nature Trail adjacent SWEPCO Lake west of Gentry.

During winter Bald Eagles are observed at lakes and flying overhead almost anywhere. They are especially common in winter in the poultry producing areas. The count was 71 in a roost northwest of Decatur during January 2001. Up to 400 used this forested river bottom roost during winter 2004-2005 (Rogers 2005) making it one of the largest such roosts in the lower 48 states. There are big concentrations elsewhere, like the 60 birds reported by JoAnne Rife in the Green Forest and Berryville areas of Carroll County during midwinter 1991. Relatively high numbers have also been observed near Lead Hill, just south of the Sugar Loaf arm of Bull Shoals Lake in Boone County.

In past years Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society sponsored an eagle watch weekend featuring boat rides for spotting eagles along Beaver Lake. In recent years this has become a popular program run by Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area, with inexpensive boat trips focused on Bald Eagles.

Midwinter surveys along Beaver Lake have been conducted by the Army Corps of Engineers and volunteers for many years. Results have ranged from a low of 50 in 1995 to several hundred in a few big years. Alan Bland, Park Ranger, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, has led this survey for over 30 years. They cover cover about 400 miles of shoreline and about 30,000 acres of waters. Bland sees eagles making a comeback. His highest 1-day total was 269. The count for 2017 was 105 (80 matures, 25 immatures).

While primarily a winter resident, Bald Eagles are present throughout the year and nesting has been confirmed. At least one of these nests is adjacent Frog Bayou WMA in the river valley (adult on nest February 16, 2018). There are numerous observations of adult eagles during the nesting season along Buffalo National River and also confirmed nesting. A nest with one nestling was observed at Beaver Lake in July 2006 (Putthoff 2006) and a second nest was suspected. By 2018, the number of nests around Beaver Lake had grown to six. Nests monitored in 2017 were located near Pine Creek along the Washington-Benton county line. Another nest is in a cove between Prairie Creek and Rocky Branch parks. Finally there are now three nests near Beaver Dam.

The heartening story of the Bald Eagle's escape from extinction is illustrated by data from the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count. The birds were virtually absent from the count during the 1960s and 1970s, and only began to be found with regularity from 1979 and thereafter. The highest number to date at Fayetteville was 16 adults and 6 immatures in 1985. The next highest tally was 12 on the CBC in 2014.

Bald Eagle recovery is a big win for the American people, triumph of hope over despair. It shows people can change things. In that respect, we might just take back our natural world, eagles in the lead!

One of those who favored saving eagles was a native of Maysville, Mr Maurice Loux. In January 1986 he invited Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society to invade his farm for an eagle trip. He saved up a big batch of dead chickens and dumped them in a field right before we arrived. Those present will never forget Mr Loux and those amazing 115 eagles.

Northern Harrier, *Circus cyaneus*

STATUS: Common transient in low numbers; common in winter in the river valley, much less in the Ozarks; DATES: August 7 to May 8+.

We find harriers in low numbers in open grasslands, especially in our former prairies, but also extensive croplands in the Arkansas River Valley and hunting over moist soil units at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area. Grassy former prairies and wetlands presumeably support high rodent populations.

Occasionally southbound fall transients show up in the river valley in the first half of August, but they aren't regular there in prime habitat until late August and thereafter. They seem widespread by mid-October. In very good habitat they are fairly common through the fall, sometimes into the second half of December.

Starting in 1961, observers working the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count have at times found only 1 or 0 on the count, but in other years the tally is higher, like 10 in 2000 and 6 in 2012. They are also found in good numbers on Fort Smith-Moffett CBC, though like Fayetteville, urbanization is reducing suitable habitat.

During winter, harriers and Short-eared Owls hunt the same kinds of fields. On Januay 6, 2010, Andy Scaboo counted nine harriers working a large open field adjacent Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary. It was not a surprise that Scaboo, Leesia Marshall, and others returned January 14 and discovered six Short-eared Owls roosting in the same field. Bill

Beall and others have found the same relationship in the big fields at Frog Bayou WMA. That is, to find the owls, first find the harrier concentrations.

Rapid population growth in western Arkansas has reduced open country habitat required by harriers. By contrast, much habitat remains outside the heavy population growth. We always expect harriers at mid-winter in the river valley and around Maysville to the north. Four harriers seen around Maysville December 25, 2006, included two adult males, unusual here in mid-winter.

Additional sightings in late May and in summer could be related to a few known instances of nesting in Sebastian and Crawford counties. They have also been recorded in summer in the Missouri Ozarks (Jacobs and Wilson 1997) and northeastern Oklahoma (Reinking 2004), including The Nature Conservancy's Tallgrass Prairie Preserve.

Sharp-shinned Hawk, *Accipiter striatus*

STATUS: Fairly common winter resident, rare summer resident; DATES: observed in all seasons with highest numbers from late September through May.

While Sharp-shinned Hawks are present here all year, most are winter observations. They are reported in low numbers (some years 0-1, peaks of only 5-7 birds) on most Fayetteville Christmas Bird Counts.

Nesting season distribution of sharpies would suggest we are unlikely to find them here in summer. However, Kim Smith saw a pair copulating and vocalizing on the U of A campus in Fayetteville March 30, 2005. A nest found in Newton County June 29, 1994, was approximately 35 feet up in a Shortleaf Pine and held three young. Leif Anderson of the USDA Forest Service documented a series of nests in the Ozark National Forest 2000-2002.

Both of the *Accipiter* hawks catch birds around feeders and so are often seen in town. Unfortunately, they sometimes slam into plate glass windows in pursuit of fleeing feeder birds.

Cooper's Hawk, *Accipiter cooperii*

STATUS: Fairly common resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Cooper's Hawk has gone through severe population fluctuations. In the past it was common (see Baerg 1951), but the population plunged thereafter and there were few nesting season records in two decades up to the 1980s. Data from the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count shows this fluctuation. Between 1961 and 1980, observers found no Cooper's Hawks in about half of these years and the maximum number was two birds. Observations have increased since the early 1980s, especially since 2004. Peak counts include 2010 (9) and 2015 (11).

During the period 1985-2005, summer records became increasingly numerous and nests have been observed in parks, forested neighborhoods, etc. Nests or fledglings are now observed throughout much of urbanized western Arkansas.

For example, in 2004, three fledglings perched together in one tree at the University farm August 11. In 2005, an adult male and female were engaging in courtship activities including copulation near Veterans Park at Lake Fayetteville on March 13. An apparently finished nest was 75 yards away March 18. The nest was approximately 60 feet up in a post oak. Birds were sitting tight on the nest on April 8 and thereafter. This nest was three-fourths of a mile from NW Arkansas Mall, near the lake with its boats, and alongside trails. An active nest (bird apparently incubating) discovered by David Chapman May 9, 2008, on the north side of Lake Fayetteville, was also situated near a trail, city street, and residential neighborhood.

Northern Goshawk, *Accipiter gentilis*

Extremely rare winter visitor. A specimen was taken at Winslow on November 2, 1926 (Black 1935). Baerg (1951) reported one collected near Fayetteville during the winter of 1928-1929. Documentation was placed on file for a bird taking poultry from a yard next to a farmhouse at West Fork, Washington County on December 24-25, 1982. A single bird was photographed November 10, 2012, after it killed a crow near the home of Kathy and John Collier close to Brentwood in Washington County.

Red-shouldered Hawk, *Buteo lineatus*

STATUS: Common resident; DATES: observed all year.

One of the pleasures of late winter and early spring birding is seeing pairs of Red-shouldered Hawks as they soar in tight circles and giving excited, repeated "kee-ya, kee-ya" calls. On February 15, 2007, I watched a male fly to a female perched on a stout post oak limb, with the male giving the kee-ya calls as they copulated. Since the 1980s, nests

have been found at various places in Fayetteville, including neighborhoods, cemeteries, parks, and at private residences. What these areas have in common is mature forest cover.

Adult birds have been seen on nests as early as the first week of March. One nest built high in a mature pine near the swimming pool at Wilson Park in Fayetteville during the 1990s was still being used during the 2005 season. Birds on a nest at Bob and Sara Caulk's home on Mt Sequoyah in Fayetteville began incubating by at least March 8, 2005, and feeding hatchlings by April 15.

Judging from the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count data, these birds have increased here since the early 1960s. The number seen was often 0 or 1 on half of CBCs during the 1960s-1980s. Since the early 1990s, numbers have steadily increased, into the low 20s by 2011. I suspect that increases are related to the growing amount of mature forest in our expanding urbanized landscape. This would certainly be compatible with the hypothesis and research presented in Subirdia by John Marzluff (2014).

Film maker Carl Hitt produced a documentary based upon his 2003-2006 observations of Red-shouldered Hawks in Wilson Park (Hitt 2008).

Broad-winged Hawk, *Buteo platypterus*

STATUS: Fairly common summer resident in extensive, mature forest habitat, including urban areas; DATES: March 30 to October 25.

This forest hawk is at least a common migrant in all kinds of mature forest habitat, with first arrivals in late March or early April. Joyce Shedell videotaped a rare dark morph Broad-winged near Highfill in Benton County April 25, 2004.

During summer the birds are present in areas with extensive mature forests such as the Ozark National Forest, Buffalo National River, and Devil's Den State Park, Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area, etc. They are also summering in urban areas with maturing forests. A nest at Bob and Sara Caulk's place on Mt Sequoyah in Fayetteville held 2 young on July 22, 2013. Broad-winged Hawks in my neighborhood in central Fayetteville started a nest in mid-May 2017, and apparently finished the nesting season by mid-July. Our maturing urban forests are providing increasing amounts of suitable habitat. Perhaps Broad-winged are modest "acceptors," following the ideas presented by Marzluff (2014).

Broad-winged fall migration typically peaks with the same kinds of cold fronts that push Monarch butterflies south. At Ponca in Newton County, Jack and Pam Stewart counted 120 or more hawks overhead in less than five minutes on September 29, 2007. Don Matt observed a kettle of at least 75 as they passed over Ninestone Land Trust in Carroll County on September 19, 2014. Joan Reynolds and I counted 159 as they soared over a ridge above Beaver Lake dam on September 20, 2014.

Swainson's Hawk, *Buteo swainsoni*

STATUS: Fairly common spring migrant, at least in Arkansas River Valley; otherwise uncommon to somewhat rare summer resident; DATES: March 20 to October 14+, mainly second week April to late September.

During spring this western open country hawk seems to stage its migration with stops in the Arkansas River Valley, especially in an old, now cut-off oxbow of the Arkansas River south of Kibler in Crawford County. Birds perch in plowed fields. Most of these observations involve first half of April to first half of May. On April 17, 2011, I observed six at West-Ark Sod and later 12 perched in a plowed field near the UA research station. Both places are in Kibler bottoms. There were 12 in a small area along East Arnold Road on May 12, 2017, also Kibler bottoms.

Swainson's Hawk reaches the easternmost extremes of its regular breeding season occurrences on the prairies of eastern Oklahoma and former prairies of extreme northwestern Arkansas. They are never common or numerous here in summer, but there are confirmed summer sightings in both Washington and Benton counties. Increasingly, as Northwest Arkansas City expands, these sightings are limited to western Benton County. Locations include Chesney Prairie Natural Area, Centerton-Vaughn, Cherokee City (former Round Prairie), and especially Maysville (former Beaty Prairie). Most of these summer sightings involve 1-3 birds. There was an adult with three fledglings not far from Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on August 16, 2009.

In 2008, I performed an informal survey in western Benton County, and found adults at Chesney Prairie Natural Area (August 12 & 31, September 28), Maysville (August 17 and September 21), Bloomfield (August 31). I observed an adult associated with two fledglings near Vaughn in Benton County on August 19. There are also summer records for the bordering Missouri Ozarks (Jacobs and Wilson 1997). In Oklahoma the birds are apparently regular breeders only in the western part of the state (Reinking 2004).

We sometimes see flocks associated with fall migration. At least 29 were at Maysville on September 29, 2011; 20+ perched in a pasture at Maysville September 28, 2012; and 10 on October 14, 2016.

Jacque Brown photographed a bird in juvenile plumage at Centerton on the very late date of December 7, 2007.

Red-tailed Hawk, *Buteo jamaicensis*

STATUS: Common resident; DATES: observed all year.

Red-tailed Hawks are common all year, especially in extensively open areas. Highest numbers are present in winter. Starting in late September-early October, we receive a noteable influx of migrants from other areas including the far reaches of the continent. Numbers remain high into February. We see the fewest overall from March through September, when most if not all birds present are part of the nesting population.

Cold weather is particularly interesting here because these big hawks illustrate how evolution acts over time to fit organisms into the Earth's many and varied opportunities. We observe wintering birds with extreme variation in plumage, ranging from very light to almost totally black. Harlan's Hawk, a dark red-tailed subspecies, is fairly common during winter (fall arrival early October, spring departure, early April) and is sometimes misidentified as Rough-legged Hawk. An important research paper on Harlan's Hawk (Wood 1932) was based in large part on specimens caught with pole traps by poultry farmers here in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Western Red-tailed Hawks (subspecies *calurus*) include color morphs ranging from light to dark. In winter we also see a subspecies formerly named Krider's Hawk that is mostly white. Another very white hawk that might be mistaken for Krider's, is the light morph of Harlan's, not to mention other light plumage variations of red-tails.

For us in the binocular brigade, it's an interesting (if sometimes confusing) winter scene. We have the pleasure of birding the open country of our former prairies, right here in our own back yard.

Red-tailed Hawks are common on Christmas Bird Counts, at Fort Smith-Moffett, Fayetteville, and Harrison (Crooked Creek CBC). More than 100 were tallied on Fayetteville CBC eight years between 1961 and 1994, but not since. My assumption is that the steady expansion of Northwest Arkansas City is decreasing suitable winter habitat. On the other hand, Red-tailed Hawks reported on Fort Smith-Moffett have increased.

Commencement of the nesting season is often apparent in February, when adult red-tails exhibit pair bonds by perching close together in the same tree or the same powerpole. Incubation has been noted as early as late February and nesting widespread in March. Joe Woolbright and I observed seven nests with birds apparently incubating in Benton County on March 21, 2009. I have observed many nests over the years in stout forks of hardwood trees (e.g., post oak) often in groves within generally open areas. This nesting habit conforms to historical patterns in which Tallgrass Prairies included woodlots surrounded by grasslands. In pioneer times there were called barrens or oak barrens. Even with conversion of Tallgrass Prairie habitat to pastures and hayfields of non-native species like fescue, our red-tails seem to have adapted to hunting prey available in greatly altered landscapes. Many oak barrens remain outside developing urban areas. Red-tails provide a living link to our ecological history.

Rough-legged Hawk, *Buteo lagopus*

STATUS: Rare winter visitor; DATES: November 5 to February 15.

This arctic raptor makes rare winter appearances in western Arkansas. Some plumages of Red-tailed Hawks look enough like light or dark phase rough-legs to give us a real start and perhaps mislead. While several decades ago we did see occasional Rough-legged Hawks, they are now very rare here. This may be a result of the marked shift to the north in their winter range since the early 1980s, apparently a response to climate warming (Niven et al. 1990). It may also be a result of steady loss of suitable winter habitat as a result of human population growth. The light morph Rough-legged Hawk at Centerton on January 19, 2011, was a welcome surprise.

It was quite different 40 years ago. Kimberly G. Smith and I saw three Rough-legged Hawks, all of the light plumage, over the course of a long winter day's loop through western Washington and Benton counties on December 27, 1983. One of these was in the broad grasslands of the former Norwood Prairie west of Wedington, and the other two were in large open former prairie fields near Siloam Springs.

In recent years I have often made trips to The Nature Conservancy's Tallgrass Prairie Preserve near Pawhuska, Oklahoma, often just to see Rough-legged Hawks. This is not that far west of Northwest Arkansas City, but there, at least, rough-legs remain fairly common.

Golden Eagle, *Aguila chrysaetos*

STATUS: Rare winter visitor; DATES: October 18 to March 8.

These mainly western birds move east at times during winter, but here they are always much rarer than Bald Eagles. And Bald Eagles in the darker subadult plumages are frequently misidentified as Golden Eagles.

We have only a handul of reliable observations in the past two decades. There involve 1-2 birds. Frank and Joanna Reuter saw two at Berryville in Carroll County October 22, 1988. Mike Bivin saw two from Fly Gap Mountain in Franklin County November 11, 1996. Doug James and Liz Adam saw two fly over Mt Sequoyah in Fayetteville October 27, 2009.

Judith Griffith and Don Matt obtained images from a game camera of a Golden Eagle foraging on a deer carcass at Ninestone Land Trust in Carroll County on January 14, 2015. There are a few additional sightings.

Winter 2013 was a good year for me in terms of Golden Eagles: Joan Reynolds and I had close looks at one in McIlroy Madison County Wildlife Management Area on February 22, 2013. Then a few days later, February 27, we saw one at Maysville. We managed to obtain a few fuzzy images of this one. We also photographed an adult at Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area on January 1, 2018, that seemed to be trying to catch a Green-winged Teal in the waters off Van Hollow.

Order Strigiformes

Barn Owl, *Tyto alba*

STATUS: Mainly rare visitor, but with scattered nesting in the river valley and Ozarks; DATES: Observations in all seasons.

This highly versatile owl favors open habitats, both natural and modified. Many observations from western Arkansas include forests, towns, and former prairies in the Ozarks and Arkansas River Valley.

Baerg (1951) published one report for Washington County. A specimen was collected near Rogers in the summer of 1958. A single bird was at Sonora in Washington County on April 2, 1957. A bird was noted during summer on a study site in Benton County (as reported in Shugart and James 1973). Harold and Margaret Hedges saw one during Buffalo River East Christmas Bird Count December 31, 1987. Bill Beall saw one near Shores Lake in Ozark National Forest on April 23, 1988, and on the Fort Smith CBC in the same year. One was observed in Benton County north of Siloam Springs on December 24, 1989.

There are several records of Barn Owl nests in the Barling-Fort Chaffee area. Bill Beall saw seven eggs in a nest in an abandoned house April 15, 2003. Sandy Berger, Mike Mlodinow, and I saw two young still in the nest in the same place November 13, 2004.

Mlodinow saw one in Fayetteville on October 18, 1998, and another on March 11, 2004. Abby Darrah saw one at former Razorback Park golf course in Fayetteville February 17, 2008.

Lynn Sciumbato of Morning Star Wildlife Rehabilitation Center received a bird struck on I-49 near Rogers on October 31, 2009. RD Madison found a dead bird in the I-49 just south of Pinnacle in Rogers on January 28, 2010. Sciumbato also received a chick from a nest 10 feet up in a stump at Cave Springs on June 1, 2010.

Eastern Screech-Owl, *Megascops asio*

STATUS: Common resident; DATES: heard or seen in all seasons.

Adults with fledglings have been seen flying at dusk in Fayetteville in late May and early June. Roosting birds can be found almost anywhere with mature tree cavities. Large boxes, like those put up for Wood Ducks, are used by screech-owls. In several different years I've had birds in large boxes in my yard in Fayetteville. On sunny days at midwinter they perch at the box entrance, seemingly heedless of the stir this causes for vigilant jays, titmice, and other smaller birds. A few are reported on most Fayetteville Christmas Bird Counts (peak of 6 in 1997 and 2005).

Red-plumaged birds of southern populations are the screech-owls mostly commonly found here. In January 2014, we saw one during a Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society field trip to Rocky Branch Park on Beaver Lake. It blended perfectly with retained red leaves on an oak tree. We also see occasional gray-plumaged birds associated with northern populations. A gray owl that roosted in a box at the Caulk place on Mt Sequoyah in Fayetteville drew many birders for a close look during January 2015.

Great Horned Owl, *Bubo virginianus*

STATUS: Common resident; DATES: heard or seen in all seasons.

These big owls live where broken woods are mixed with open farmlands. They seem fairly tolerant of galloping urbanization.

A hawk's nest one spring became an owl's nest the following two years. At Lake Fayetteville, I saw an adult on the nest on January 22, with two hatchlings on January 29, and young owls climbing out of the nest on February 27. A nest in a small Great Blue Heron rookery at Lake Sequoyah in Fayetteville held two downy young on March 19. The owls had apparently chosen a heron nest in winter, well before the herons returned to the colony site in spring. A nest visible from Mulhollan Blind at Lake Fayetteville in 2017 apparently failed. A nest adjacent I-49 near Rogers held three well-developed young on May 3, 2017; adult was on this same nest January 23, 2018.

At least a few Great Horneds are tallied each year on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count, but not peaks like these: 11 (1973) and 10 (1994).

These owls may for the most part handle how we are modifying their traditional landscape, but they face many hazards that were not part of their evolutionary history. For example: an owl was hanging by a wing entangled on barbed wire January 10, 2014. On December 18, 2016, an owl with an injured wing couldn't fly and had difficulty walking when we spotted it in Wilson Springs Preserve.

These injured birds are stark reminders of the negative impacts resulting from our use of Earth's resources. Earth also belongs to Great Horned Owls. If we accept the profits from using these resources, we must also accept responsibilities incurred. Just like us, Earth is their only home.

Burrowing Owl, *Athene cunicularia*

Burrowing Owls are closely associated with burrows of Black-tailed Prairie Dog towns in western Oklahoma. They are locally common there, but extremely rare in western Arkansas.

Apparently there was some sort of Burrowing Owl movement from the west that reached western Arkansas in early spring 2016. In Logan County, a Burrowing Owl was photographed in Paris bottoms on March 3, 2016. Cara Noble photographed one at Siloam Springs Middle School grounds that was present at least March 14-16, 2016. (A photo link was posted to the ARBIRD list on March 16, 2016). Visitors to Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary in Fayetteville photographed a bird that was also seen by Jeff Hickle, on April 7, 2016. Bruce Shackleford made the identification.

Barred Owl, *Strix varia*

STATUS: Fairly common resident; DATES: heard or seen in all seasons.

Barred Owls are denizens of mature forest. They are recorded in small numbers (often in the range of 1-3) on most Fayetteville Christmas Bird Counts (if there is an owling party). There have been no formal surveys for Barred Owls here, so quantitative data is lacking. However, I have often seen or heard them without special effort during walks on Mt Sequoyah in Fayetteville, at Lake Sequoyah, at night in Lake Fayetteville, Lake Wilson Park in Fayetteville, Lake Atalanta Park in Rogers, Buffalo National River, and in the Ozark National Forest.

I had the good fortune to find a nest at Lake Fayetteville. I was walking the nature trail on the lake's south side in good daylight on March 13, 2005, looking for an early arriving Black-and-white Warbler. I found no warbler, but a Barred Owl called from a hardwood snag whose top had been broken in a storm. A second adult owl perched in a cedar near the nest. Two owlets were visible May 6.

Finding the nest at Lake Fayetteville was a big surprise, and so was hearing two Barred Owls calling in my yard in the middle of highly urbanized Fayetteville April 6, 2017. I soon received a call from a neighbor, about two owls in trees near Wilson Park, only a few blocks away. I saw these owls on April 15. We looked, but never found a nest.

Presence of Barred Owls in the middle of an urban area seems to fit the pattern discussed in "Welcome to Subirdia" (Marzluff 2014). As urban areas develop mature forest habitat, they may become attractive to some "acceptor" species. When I posted a few comments along these lines on the ARBIRDS discussion list, I heard from a number of people scattered around Fayetteville who also had nesting season Barred Owls.

Long-eared Owl, *Asio otus*

STATUS: Very rare winter visitor; DATES: October 18 to April 4.

Albert Lano, an early day Fayetteville ornithologist, considered this owl a fairly common winter visitor (Black 1933). Specimens of four owls, collected from Benton and Washington Counties, in 1924, 1925, 1930, and 1935 are in the University of Arkansas Museum collection. Douglas James saw four in a pine grove east of Rogers on April 4, 1959.

Leesia Marshall and Sheree Rogers provided convincing written documentation for a bird found during the course of the Crooked Creek Christmas Bird Count on December 19, 2007. Allen Mueller and others reported one at

Chesney Prairie Natural Area on November 19, 2011. It was relocated the following day by Karen Holliday and others. According to the record available in the Arkansas Audubon Society data base: “Responded to playback and was presumably a male due to the low hooting response. Alarm call 'kuk' was also heard once.”

Short-eared Owl, *Asio flammeus*

STATUS: Uncommon, local transient and winter visitor; DATES: October 31 to April 11.

Short-eared Owls remind me of Northern Harriers, both in their general appearance and in their behavior of low flight over broad, open grassy fields. They require suitable, high quality open field habitat, which in western Arkansas is often former low-lying prairie grasslands including seasonal wetlands with tall grasses and other cover and big fields like those in the Arkansas River valley. In Missouri, Short-eared Owls roosted in medium-to-tall grasslands that were either moderately grazed or idle (Skinner et al. 1984).

Baerg (1951) attributed an “invasion” of Short-eared Owls (December 4 to March 25) to a heavy infestation of cotton rats. This behavior of congregating in the area of an attractive food source is a well-known characteristic (Holt and Leasure 2006).

Here are a few examples of single owl observations: Wilson Springs Preserve in Fayetteville on February 18, 2001; tall dense native grasses at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on March 12, 2005; University farm at Fayetteville November 6, 2006; Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary in Fayetteville, December 10, 2006, and December 16, 2007, at Stonebridge Meadows golf club just east of Fayetteville. Jacque Brown found one March 28, 2009, a snowy day at Centerton. Joan Reynolds and I saw one at West-Ark Sod in the Kibler bottoms on April 17, 2011. Since 2003, we have found them frequently at mid-winter in tall stands of native grass at Chesney Prairie Natural Area. These have usually been single birds, but there were three at Chesney on December 30, 2010.

Six Short-eared Owls were roosting in a former prairie field immediately east of Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary on January 17, 2010. Observers including Leesia Marshall, Andy Scaboo, and others saw up to 10 Northern Harriers in the same field that winter. Unfortunately, this field was dozed and then developed for housing in spring 2016. More recently, Bill and Toka Beall counted 5 owls in fields at Frog Bayou WMA on January 31, 2018. At least 6 harriers were in the same area. On February 2, 2018, the Bealls counted 4 owls nearby on nearby Black Land Road.

Northern Saw-whet Owl, *Aegolius acadicus*

STATUS: Current research suggests it is a regular fall migrant and winter resident.

Dr. Kimberly G. Smith of UA-Fayetteville and his student Mitchell Pruitt have fundamentally altered our understanding of this small owl. For one thing, they have documented many historical sightings for Arkansas. Pruitt’s field research has demonstrated that this little owl is right under our noses.

It all started with a saw-whet trapped at Ozark Natural Science Center north of Huntsville on the evening of November 20, 2014, by Mitchell, Kim, and Alyssa DeRubeis. Mitchell caught two owls in 2014. In full seasons (fall 2015 and 2016), he netted 22 and 36 owls, respectively. This project became a favorite for birders all over Arkansas and adjoining states. Names of many people who helped or have been involved are associated with records Mitchell posted to the Arkansas Audubon Society bird records database.

He is banding all birds captured. So are other researchers elsewhere in the saw-whet’s range. Two of the birds Mitchell netted at ONSC were initially banded in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

In 2016, radio-transmitters were placed on 11 owls. Two hatch-year females lingered into mid-March, suggesting that birds are also wintering in northwestern Arkansas.

According to Mitchell “Once considered a vagrant, based on our research, the saw-whet appears to be a fall migrant to the state of Arkansas” (Pruitt and Smith 2016).

Kim Smith and others netted a saw-whet at Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area, near the visitor center, on November 9, 2017. Bill Beall netted one at Fern, near Shores Lake in the Ozark NF on November 12, 2017.

There’s just nothing like real facts, and facts in the hand – in this case an owl once thought rare here – to change our understanding about the undiscovered and often remarkable world around us.

Order Coraciiformes

Belted Kingfisher, Megac*eryle alcyon*

STATUS: Common resident; DATES: observed all year.

Kingfishers are common along larger streams, lakes, and ponds like those at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton. They just require a perch near water with fish. During winter kingfishers are widespread as long as open water feeding habitat remains unfrozen. They are found in good numbers on an annual basis in the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count circle: often 10+ with several counts of 20+.

Nesting burrows have been observed on several occasions in high cut banks above or near the Buffalo and Illinois Rivers. Young were being fed in a nest in a high cut bank along the Buffalo River in Newton County on June 27, 2006.

Order Piciformes

Lewis's Woodpecker, *Melanerpes lewis*

This western woodpecker rarely strays into the eastern US. Typically, they range no closer to us than the Oklahoma panhandle. Nevertheless, a Lewis's Woodpecker was observed repeatedly at Evangeline Foldvary's residence on Mt. Sequoyah in Fayetteville from June 30 to July 3, 1967. This is the only Arkansas record. In addition, Dean Crooks collected one in Adair County, Oklahoma, 20 miles from the Arkansas line, on April 3, 1943 (Baerg 1951).

Red-headed Woodpecker, *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*

STATUS: Fairly common resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Red-headed Woodpecker habitat includes mature trees, and dead, barkless, mature trees (snags), in open forest or forest edge (Smith et al. 2000). Mature tree snags preferred by Red-headed Woodpeckers are common along the shoreline of Beaver Lake, a result of tree deaths caused by rising and falling water levels. The big snags provide woodpecker roost and nest sites. The birds forage for acorns and other mast in adjoining mature woodlands.

Red-headed Woodpecker numbers also fluctuate as a result of migration, or at least migration-like movements associated with winter acorn availability (Smith 1986, James and Neal 1986, Neal 1988). Overhead migration of Red-headed Woodpeckers is at times quite evident in mid-September to early October and in late April. At Beaver Lake Nursery Pond, we found 10-12 in a small area on September 21, 2014.

Historically, I assume red-heads were found in the prairie region of western Arkansas in oak barrens (as described by Miller 1972) maintained in an open condition by fire. I make this assumption because this appears to be the case in the current time. Relict hardwood barrens and woodlots with mature trees are still good place to find these birds in both the river valley and Ozarks.

This habitat has an analogue in the Ouachita National Forest of Scott County. There, during the period 1990-2008, I found red-heads in stands of mature trees maintained in an open condition by fire and managed for endangered Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. Such habitat contains a heavy stocking of both Shortleaf Pine and mixed hardwood species, and numerous large-diameter standing pine snags. The forest is open and snags are common.

Information gathered from throughout the broad range in North America indicates a pattern of marked population fluctuations (Smith et al. 2000). Red-headed Woodpeckers are common on Fort Smith-Moffett CBC, but abundant in some years: 54 (1961), 130 (1971), 72 (1973), 85 (1979). The numbers on this count have declined since the mid-1990s. In the Ozarks, numbers of wintering red-heads, dependent upon acorns as a winter food resource, are positively related to hard mast production (Smith 1986, Smith and Scarlett 1987). In past decades, acorn crop fluctuation probably explained why red-heads tended to be common in some winters and rare in others.

One obvious contributing factor to declines evident on the Fayetteville CBC is local habitat loss related to human population growth within the count circle. Tall standing dead trees are routinely removed in urban areas. Oak barrens dating to the pioneer period have been cleared or greatly reduced throughout western Arkansas. As a result, quality habitat for red-heads is reduced.

During fall we see some adults and quite a few brown-headed juveniles. The transition to adult plumage occurs mainly by the end of winter. Birds in October, November, and December show red feathers emerging.

Red-bellied Woodpecker, *Melanerpes carolinus*

STATUS: Common resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

These handsome and even dramatic "red headed" (males have the most red in their heads) woodpeckers are common throughout the year, both in urban areas and forests. They readily visit feeders. When they come to my feeder, it is for black oil sunflower seeds or in winter, also suet. In the woods, they are eating insects, fruit, seeds – whatever is available.

Red-bellied Woodpeckers are numerous on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count, with totals ranging in the 20s-50s and sometimes more. Breeding season point counts from the Ozark National Forest showed an increasing population trend (La Sorte et al. 2007).

It is always fun on a field trip when we actually see the pinkish red color on the belly -- red belly of its name.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, *Sphyrapicus varius*

STATUS: Common transient and winter resident; DATES: September 30 to April 13+.

Sapsuckers are found here in all kinds of mature forested habitat, including urban woodlots, mainly between the second half of October and early April. Neat, telltale lines of their wells show they tap a variety of tree species. Trees with these freshly worked sap wells provide evidence that sapsuckers are in the neighborhood. In places like Devil's Den State Park, for example, Sugar Maple trees at the head of Fossil Flats Trail have numerous sapsucker wells, showing their preference. They readily tap into rich sap flows.

Winter sapsuckers numbers seem on the rise within the urbanized Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count circle. This assumption is based upon the fact that the number of sapsuckers reported per party hour on the CBC has been increasing since the early 2000s. More sapsuckers are likely a result of maturing trees in our increasingly urbanized region. This conforms with Mazluff's hypothesis in the book Subirdia (2014). This change may also conform with predictions about bird population shifts related to climate change. National Audubon's analysis indicates a northward shift in the population center for these sapsuckers during the past 40 years.

Downy Woodpecker, *Picoides pubescens*

STATUS: Common resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Downies are common in all kinds of woodlands, including small woodlots in town and they venture out of the woods into open areas with small trees, fenceposts, etc. Downies are also observed in good numbers on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count. As David Chapman (2016) observed for Lake Fayetteville, "Downy Woodpeckers are common residents and unlikely to be missed on any field trip." Breeding season point counts from the Ozark National Forest indicated a stable population trend (La Sorte et al. 2007).

Hairy Woodpecker, *Picoides villosus*

STATUS: Fairly common resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Hairy Woodpeckers are at least fairly common in extensive forests or larger woodlots with mature trees, including trees with large dead limbs. Their habitat preferences are similar to those of Pileated Woodpeckers. Like pileateds, hairys require mature trees, including "overmature" trees that are beginning to die. Hairy Woodpeckers are observed in towns as well as in forests, but nowhere are they numerous. Breeding season point counts from the Ozark National Forest showed a declinng population trend (La Sorte et al. 2007).

Unlike the situation involved with some other forest dwelling birds, birds per party hour measures from Fayetteville Fayetteville Christmas Bird Counts don't indicate increasing populations of Hairy Woodpeckers, even though there are maturing trees and forest habitat is spreading into former prairies as a result of urbanization. In the eastern US, modest declines in populations in many areas have been detected. Since Hairy Woodpeckers prefer undisturbed over disturbed mature forest, these declines may be a result of fragmentation of original forest (see summary in Jackson et al. 2002).

Anaylsis by National Audubon shows that the center of abundance for Hairy Woodpeckers has in the past 40 years shifted north by 135 miles.

Red-cockaded Woodpecker, *Picoides borealis*

STATUS: Extirpated from the Ozarks.

This Federally-listed Endangered Species was long ago present in the western Arkansas Ozarks. This inference is based upon their known habitat requirements (open stands of mature pines) and the evidence that such habitat existed here in the past. Howell (1911) reported it as late as 1890 from the few remaining virgin Shortleaf Pine stands in Van Buren and Cleburne counties in the Ozarks. Here as elsewhere, loss of this bird was the result of land management decisions including at least the following: (1) rapid cutting of the native, mature Shortleaf Pine forests; (2) failure to regenerate them to pine after virgin stands were cut; (3) widespread suppression of wildfire, which allowed pine stands to be replaced by hardwoods.

Hikers on many trails in the Ozark National Forest (e.g., White Rock to Shores Lake), Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area pass isolated mature Shortleaf Pines without realizing that these are relics of a lost ecosystem. In the 1870s, huge pine timbers used to frame Old Main on the UA-Fayetteville campus (and other big structures in late 19th century northwest Arkansas) were cut and sent to Van Winkle Mill (Rothrock 1973) in present day Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area. "The first sawmills of commercial importance were…around the War Eagle settlements, due to the large quantity and fine quality of pine. An early writer said the supply of pine was 'inexhaustible'" (Funk 1959).

Big mills were active all over northwest Arkansas, e.g., Carroll County (Johnson 1979) and Cleburn County (Thomas 1980, Harral 1980). A huge pine log shown being hauled from Cleburn County (Thomas 1980) may not have been all that unusual. The heavy support pine timbers in UA-Fayetteville's Old Main came from trees whose age, diameter, and other characteristics were compatible with trees required by RCWs.

Guyette and others (2007) explored decline of the Shortleaf Pine ecosystem in the Ozarks. Also, see other relevant papers in Kabrick et al. (2007). The importance of healthy, well-managed stands of Shortleaf Pine for wildlife, including birds, is well-documented (Masters 2007, Eddleman et al. 2007).

Modern birders interested in seeing Red-cockaded Woodpeckers must visit native Shortleaf Pine forests of western Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma, where the Ouachita National Forest has undertaken an ambitious effort to restore over 200,000 acres of pine-grassland habitat, plus other native plants and animals, including RCWs (Neal and Montague 1991, Hedrick et al. 2007).

Northern Flicker, *Colaptes auratus*

STATUS: Fairly common resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Flickers can be observed here all year. They are among the most beautiful and dramatic of our native birds: brown back with black bars, spotted belly, brilliant yellow underwing, red on the head, and easily seen as they forage, unwoodpecker-like, on the ground, seeking ants, a favorite food. Their numbers vary dramatically during the year. Overall, the fewest are present during the nesting season of spring and summer. This situation changes in fall, with migratory influxes evident especially during September and early October. They make spectacular overhead migrations around the same time as we see migrating Blue Jays and monarch butterflies. For example, more than 20 flickers passed over Chesney Prairie Natural Area on October 3, 2004.

Our yellow-shafted form is a fairly common summer resident in mature open forest. This includes urban areas with extensive stands of mature and "overmature" trees and snags. They nest in mature tree cavities. At my home in Fayetteville, they drum loudly on the metal heater vent on my roof, sending a clear territorial signal through the neighborhood, and filling my house with the rhythms.

While flickers remain fairly common in winter, their numbers have declined. This is demonstrated by standardized birds per party hour results from Fayetteville Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count. During the 1960s, results were in the range of 0.82 flickers per party hour. The comparable figure was on 0.49 for 2006-2015. Anaylsis by National Audubon also shows that during the past 40 years, the center of abundance for Northern Flickers has shifted north by 192 miles.

Flickers regularly forage like meadowlarks and robins in extensively open habitats. I see them regularly and in good numbers working exposed soils on recent burns at places like Chesney Prairie Natural Area.

The red-shafted form nesting in western North America is rare here. We see it occasionally in winter.

Pileated Woodpecker, *Dryocopus pileatus*

STATUS: Fairly common resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Pileated Woodpeckers are fairly common residents in extensive mature forests, including those in lightly developed parts of towns. The ecological needs of this species and that of Hairy Woodpecker seem nearly identical. Over the years I have found active Pileated Woodpecker nests around mid-May. These nests have been in large diameter dead trees (snags), especially dead pines. As the young grow, they begin to poke their heads out and are highly vocal in urging the adults to stay busy in their care. Pileateds are numerous on the four most forested Breeding Bird Survey surveys.

Breeding season point counts from the Ozark National Forest showed a stable population trend (La Sorte et al. 2007). This also seems reflected at Fayetteville. Standardized birds per party hour results on the Christmas Bird Count demonstrate only modest change, with slightly fewer per party hour in recent years when results from the 1960s are compared to 2006-2015.

Anaylsis by National Audubon shows that the center of abundance for Pileateds has shifted north by 125 miles during the past 40 years.

Order Falconiformes

American Kestrel, *Falco sparverius*

STATUS: Common transient and winter resident; local summer resident; DATES: present all year.

Kestrels are common in winter and uncommon during the nesting season. There is a noticeable influx of kestrels around mid-September that will winter here. Most depart in late winter and early spring. A few remain to nest.

Our kestrel nesting population is found in open grassland habitats with only scattered trees or buildings, often associated with former prairies. However, they also nest in more urban settings that were historically much more open. In the past they nested on the University of Arkansas campus in Fayetteville in cavities of mature trees, in the eaves of Old Main (before its renovation), and at University farm. Old farm places in open country provide requisite cavities.

Terry Stanfill has kept track of kestrels around the SWEPCO power plant near Genry in Benton County. In 2006, he saw nine adults around the plant on June 11; he'd seen the first kestrel fledgling on May 24, hopping around transformers.

During the summer of 2005, Mike Mlodinow and I made an informal effort to find breeding season kestrels. In Washington County we found them at University farm, on Markham Hill in Fayetteville, and at the former Norwood prairie on the Washington-Benton County line. We found them in a minimum of 12 places in Benton County: Chesney Prairie Natural Area, Center Corner on Highway 264, Centerton, Elm Springs, Decatur, Gentry, at the Regional Airport (Highfill), Cherokee City, former Beaty Prairie near Maysville, and Lake Bentonville. The birds were also seen at Hindsville in Madison County, and Baker Prairie in Carroll County. Our coverage was spotty; no doubt there were others as well.

They nest in old downtown Fort Smith and other open areas of former Massard Prairie.

Based upon birds seen per party hour, kestrel numbers on the Fort Smith-Moffett Christmas Bird Count have increased from 0.41/party hour in the 1960s, to 0.62 in the most recent decade, 2006-2015. For the same period, numbers have fallen on Fayetteville CBC: 0.43/party hour compared to 0.32. The difference may be a result of particularly intense impacts of urbanization upon former prairies in Fayetteville. The human population has surged; kestrels have declined.

National Audubon's analysis shows that during the past 40 years, American Kestrels have been shifting their range north, apparently in response to a warming climate.

Merlin, *Falco columbarius*

STATUS: Uncommon transient and winter visitor; DATES: September 8 to April 23.

We usually observed a few Merlins every winter, but seeing them well is always a prize. On November 15, 2007, I watched in fascination as a Merlin flew straight and swift a few feet above a broad open pasture, its target a mixed-species blackbird flock foraging on the ground in the former Beaty Prairie near Maysville. Blackbirds began to flush as the Merlin approached. The Merlin then darted suddenly upwards into the mass of fleeing blackbirds. In the same general area, on January 1, 2003, Mike Mlodinow and I watched a Merlin that we first saw perched on a snag overlooking an expansive open field. It pursued blackbirds at the start, then swiftly crossing State Line Road into Oklahoma, chased a flock of Horned Larks.

One of the more interesting observations involved a Merlin seen at Fayetteville Country Club regularly from late November 2012 to around mid-February 2013. This was in the same time and place of a major Red Crossbill winter invasion, with crossbill flocks in pines at the country club. While many other bird species were present, on a few occasions we found crossbills in flight and at the same time saw the probable cause: Merlin.

The generally pale coloration of many of these falcons indicates they are derived from the prairie form *F. c. richardsonii*. Western Arkansas forms part of this bird's winter range (Wheeler 2003). Areas like Maysville, and other other former prairies like those in the river valley, provide suitable winter habitat for Merlins and other falcons, as long as these habitats remain predominantly open. Other Merlin sightings, like the bird at Fayetteville Country Club, are attributable to the darker boreal nesting population *F. c. columbarius*.

Peregrine Falcon, *Falco peregrinus*

STATUS: Uncommon transient and winter visitor; DATES: April 5 to May 21 and September 17 to October 14+.

We mainly observe Peregrine Falcons during the peak migrations of shorebirds and ducks. Peregrines are likely in places where there are big concentrations of these birds. Examples of such places include Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton, Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area, and flooded former prairie fields. Sometimes peregrines swoop over

then disappear. At other times, they make several low passes over ponds full of birds. It is during the repeated passes that we get best observations.

The classic example of a good look occurred at Maysville on May 4, 2017. A big rain flooded generally dry fields, creating extensive playa-like shallow pools. There were hundreds of shorebirds and ducks. Long-billed Dowitchers and Blue-winged Teal were forced down by the storm and waiting it out before resuming northward migration. A Peregrine repeatedly swooped over them, putting birds to flight. Finally, after another chase, it settled down and perched on the ground in a field near enough that I was able to see it through the spotting scope.

Another example is from October 3, 2015. David Chapman and I got lucky near Vaughn in Benton County. We came around a corner on an unpaved road and there, fairly close: a Peregrine Falcon perched low on a snag in the field. We had some great looks for a few seconds, then it was off.

There is also a January record.

Like many other birds, Peregrine Falcons suffered huge population declines, especially in the eastern US, directly linked to persistent pesticides in the environment. People worked to regulate the chemicals and to protect the birds. As in the recovery of Bald Eagles, these efforts paid off in a healthier planet where we all, falcon and people, must live.

Prairie Falcon, *Falco mexicanus*

STATUS: Rare winter visitor; DATES: October 21 to February 3.

Most of our observations have been from Benton County and most involved December and January. There have been several sightings in open grasslands at or near Chesney Prairie Natural Area. In late 2012, Joe Woolbright mentioned to me that he had been seeing a large falcon at Chesney. By golly, on December 27 his Prairie Falcon was perched on a wooden post at the entrance.

A single bird that flew over Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton November 11, 2006, presaged what was to be the highest number of Prairie Falcons recorded for our region up to that point. Mike Mlodinow and I counted 3-4 (including two at once) at Maysville on December 26, 2006, and two in the same area January 6, 2007.

Extensive grasslands and prairies of eastern Oklahoma (for example, The Nature Conservancy's Tallgrass Prairie Preserve near Pawhuska) form the normal eastern edge of this bird's winter range (Wheeler 2003), but western Arkansas is little more than a short hop for these big falcons. The unusual records for winter 2006-2007 may have been related to severe weather in the west. For example Denver International Airport was closed by a three-foot accumulation of snow just before Christmas 2006. An extended drought during 2006 that affected eastern Oklahoma could have impacted prey sought by these big falcons.

None of this would apparently account for a series of sightings of single birds in the Wet Prairie area northeast of Maysville in December 2007. The discovery of a Northern Shrike in December 2007 encouraged numerous visits from keen and skilled observers from around Arkansas. Many of them failed to find the shrike, but they often came away with what Kenny Nichols termed "a consolation prize," which was the Prairie Falcon LaDonna Nichols picked out on December 26, 2007.

Finally, Andy Scaboo and Brandon Schmidt saw one at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary during course of the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count, December 16, 2012. It would have been an exceptional addition to the count -- first ever – and was even better because Andy got a diagnostic photo of the big bird in flight.

Order Psittaciformes

Carolina Parakeet, *Conuropsis carolinensis*

Extinct. Carolina Parakeet was not seen here after the 1870s or 1880s (Howell 1911, McKinley and James 1985).

Order Passeriformes

Olive-sided Flycatcher, *Contopus cooperi*

STATUS: Uncommon transient; DATES: April 29 to June 9 and August 7 to September 29.

Olive-sided Flycatchers are never common here, but we do find them regularly during migration, often perched on the upper limbs of dead trees in forest openings or in forest edge habitat. They have excellent views of flying insects from these perches. They often make brief sorties, returning often to the same perches. Most reports involve single birds, occasionally as many as 2-3 during a field trip. We also occasionally hear their "quick! three beers" songs. At Lake Fayetteville, date ranges were May 4 to June 9 and August 12 to September 14 (Chapman 2016).

Eastern Wood-Pewee, *Contopus virens*

STATUS: Common summer resident; DATES: April 18 to October 17.

Pewees are fairly late spring migrants, not often reaching us until the last few days of April or early May. In spring, it's time to plant tomatoes about when the pewees arrive. Warm fronts preferred by tomatoes encourage insect populations required by this flycatcher. So in contrast to planting by average dates of last frosts, here's for pewee arrival! Pewees don't watch the weather on TV. They follow the insects. Pewees know best.

Pewees are most often found in forests and woodlots where there are open, park-like stands of mature trees. "It nests commonly along the wooded hillsides and is one of the most characteristic birds of the region" (Black 1935). Since pewees prefer open forests, it is little surprise that they exhibit only minor responses to forest management. Smith and others (2004) shared this conclusion: pewees were about equally common in relatively undisturbed upland hardwood forest and in forests disturbed by various harvest practices.

Breeding season point counts from the Ozark National Forest showed a stable or slightly increasing population trend (La Sorte et al. 2007). However, Breeding Bird Survey data from the eastern US show significant population declines (McCarty 1996). Modest declines are also evident on the Compton BBS in the region of the Upper Buffalo National River in Newton County. And while we have tended to think woodlands like those at Lake Fayetteville Park and elsewhere around Fayetteville (and by implication, Northwest Arkansas City in general) are pewee-friendly, these declines are also taking a toll here. Veteran birder Mike Mlodinow sent out a note with some of his 2017 results (email, June 29, 2017). He included this comment: "Eastern Wood-Pewee seems almost absent. And this may also be true elsewhere in Fayetteville, as I have not encountered them this summer except for the one Lake Fayetteville trip."

Since most of our "observations" are actually hearing calls, it is not so clear what pewees are up to after the nesting season. The fall migration appears mostly concluded by mid-September with scattered observations into October.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, *Empidonax flaviventris*

STATUS: Somewhat rare to very uncommon spring transient; rare or at least infrequently recorded fall transient; DATES: May 9 to June 4 and in fall August 24 to September 15 (just a few records).

Yellow-bellied Flycatchers are always observed in low numbers. Most observations have occurred from mid to late May. Smith (1915) stated that he found it regularly at Winslow one year from May 16 to May 22 and September 1-23. Black (1935) stated he found it on May 15 and October 23 only. Baerg (1951) published a May 29 report at Rogers.

Anyone who has spent any serious time looking for migrants realizes that identifying the Empidonaxes is no slam dunk, unless the birds are vocalizing and or seen well at close range. Even then, there is overlap in plumages. Lots of caution helps.

Chapman (2016) noted that at Lake Fayetteville, they have often been found in trees along the lake shoreline south of the Environmental Study Center. This is an area with a swampy, relatively young forest along the lake edge. This is also one of the regular birding locales for Mike Mlodinow, who has for many years studied migrating Empidonax flycatchers. Of a late spring migration observation, Mike, who was birding in Finger Park in Fayetteville June 3, 1992, wrote: "An Empidonax about the size of a chickadee that had a conspicuous whitish eye-ring, strongly yellowish underparts that were somewhat more olive on the sides of the breast. The throat was also strongly yellowish. The upperparts were greenish with contrasting black wings (with conspicuous whitish wingbars). The tail appeared relatively short."

The latest fall record was obtained by Mitchell Pruitt, who saw one at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary on September 15, 2016. He included some notes in his eBird checklist.

Acadian Flycatcher, *Empidonax virescens*

STATUS: Common summer resident; DATES: April 14 to September 22.

Acadian Flycatchers are found where there are mature trees and extensive forest: shady stream bottomlands as well as moist, upland forested ravines. As in the case of other forest birds requiring extensive blocks of suitable habitat, Acadians are typically scarce in migration away from such places.

Smith (1977) considered them an "obligatory moist forest species." A nest looked like a wad of fallen oak catkins at former Cherry Bend campground in Ozark National Forest on May 15, 2014. With the bird away from the nest, its valuable contents were therefore rended basically invisible. The nest site was a small tree in a moist ravine that included a small stream and full overhead canopy.

Pingjun Li (1994) found 28 Acadian Flycatcher nests during his study of neotropical migratory songbirds in an extensive forest near White Rock in Ozark National Forest. Nest success was 59.8%, clutch size averaged 2.9, brood size 2.7, and the number of young produced per nesting pair was 1.61. None of his nests were parasitized by Brown-headed Cowbirds. He attributed most nest failures to abandonment or snakes and small mammals.

Forest management studies show that Acadians are most numerous in mature forests and those with moderate cutting, but decline as more of the canopy is removed (Thompson et al. 1995). Smith et al. (2004) found Acadians one of the more common species in relatively undisturbed upland mesic hardwood forest and much less common in forests disturbed by various harvest practices. Breeding season point counts from the Ozark NF showed an increasing population trend (La Sorte et al. 2007). Numbers of Acadians seem little changed between 1968 and 2016 on the Compton Breeding Bird Survey in the Upper Buffalo National River region of Newton County.

Alder Flycatcher, *Empidonax alnorum*

STATUS: Fairly common transient in spring, at least in some places; many fewer records for fall; DATES: May 4 to June 6 and August 5 to September 14.

We find transient Alder Flycatchers every year during spring migration, with a peak from mid-May into the first week of June. They are common at times in the swampy bottomland forest with willows, maples, and other small trees along the north edge of Lake Fayetteville (Chapman 2016). Mike Mlodinow tallied 19 there on May 26, 2011. There are several instances of finding five or more in the migration peak, especially at Lake Fayetteville. But this isn't the only place to find them. Over the years we have observations at the former Lake Frances near Siloam Springs, Devil's Den State Park, Bob Kidd Lake near Prairie Grove, the University farm in Fayetteville, Chesney Prairie Natural Area, Woolsey Wet Pairie Wildlife Sanctuary, Lake Atalanta, and other frequently visited spots.

Fall records at Lake Fayetteville were from August 13-September 14 (Chapman 2016). Mike Mlodinow saw four on September 8, 2001.

Becoming familiar with songs and call notes is an important aid in separating them from other *Empidonax* flycatchers in the same habitat. Hearing the disagnostic peet call helps with identification.

Willow Flycatcher, *Empidonax traillii*

STATUS: Uncommon transient, local summer resident; DATES: May 10 to August 25 (fall status unclear).

Willow Flycatchers migrate through our open country habitats, but they are now present in summer exclusively or at least predictably only on Baker Prairie Natural Area at Harrison. There were at least six singing birds on Baker Prairie on June 16, 2001, and nesting was confirmed (Holimon and James 2003). Bill Holimon noted three territories in 2003 and observed a nest with four eggs on July 10. We found at least three territories with singing birds on June 13, 2009. A nest found by Leesia Marshall did not have eggs that day. On June 19, she saw three Willow Flycatcher eggs and one Brown-headed Cowbird egg. We also noted 6-7 singing Bell's Vireos in the same area.

Willow Flycatchers once nested in prairie ravine thickets in Benton County in Rogers, according to Dean Crooks, who reported nine nests in a half-mile area (Baerg 1951). This habitat was subsequently developed and the breeding population lost. Beginning at least in the mid-1980s, Willow Flycatchers were present in small numbers during summer in former lowland prairie grassland dotted with clumps of trees area adjacent Lake Bentonville in Benton County (Mlodinow 1993). Bell's Vireos were present in the same habitat. A few birds were found there annually through 2003, after which habitat disappeared with drainage and subsequent development of housing and businesses.

I found at least two birds singing in wet thickets of Boxley millpond in Newton County on June 8, 2000, but not later. Willow Flycatchers have been found in migration and early summer in a wet prairie thicket at what is now Wilson Springs Preserve in Fayetteville. This former prairie lowland along Clabber Creek also hosted a summer population of Bell's Vireo. Most recently, I found a Willow Flycatcher singing in suitable old field habitat south of Craig State Fish Hatchery on June 1, 2017 – and in same area Painted Buntings and Bell's Vireo. Unfortunately, this spot is headed for the same type of development sweeping away the old days and bringing in new, all-modern Northwest Arkansas City.

Birds were found in Missouri during the course of the Breeding Bird Atlas (Jacobs and Wilson 1997). Prairie State Park in southwestern Missouri is an easy drive from Fayetteville. On several occasions I've found Willows there, in

situations very much like those at Baker Prairie. For example, there were several in wet thickets along Path of the Sky People May 23, 2012.

How long do Willow Flycatchers remain? Identification becomes more of a challenge once *Empidonaxes* stop signing or calling. For Arkansas as a whole, the latest "for sure" fall Willow Flycatcher date occurs around mid-September (James and Neal 1986). Chesney Prairie Natural Area near Siloam Springs has potentially suitable habitat for Willow Flycatchers, both for nesting and migration. We have found them there in migration. In fall of 2008, I found an *Empidonax* of the "Traill's" type on several occasions August 29-September 15. Calls, habitat, field marks, and behavior made me lean toward Willow. In northeastern Oklahoma, Willow Flycatchers have been reported as late as September 16 (OK Bird Records Committee 2004).

Least Flycatcher, *Empidonax minimus*

STATUS: Common to fairly common transient, with more records in spring than fall; DATES: April 21 to May 30 and July 21 to October 13.

Least Flycatchers are common transients, especially in spring. They migrate through a wide variety of habitats, including urban areas. I see and hear them annually in both spring and fall in my yard in the middle of Fayetteville. They are common during spring peaks: Rob Doster counted 23 at Lake Fayetteville on May 11, 2002, and 15 in the same area on May 10, 2003.

Fall records are based upon presence of a conspicuous, complete eye ring, "whit" calls, and relatively short bills. Mike Mlodinow and Joanie Patterson saw five on September 13, 2011, at Lake Fayetteville. There are several observations in the first half of October.

Empidonax species

Many flycatchers of this genus are difficult to identify unless their full vocalization is heard. The general shape of migration for this genus occupies the period in spring from late April and early May to early June. The fall migration stretches from the second half of July through September with stragglers into October. There is also a recent record of a silent bird found as late as October 27.

If you take into account that two members of this genus, Willow Flycatcher and Acadian Flycatcher, both nest here, birders have *Empidonaxes* to alternately dazzle and vex with regularity for the five months from May through September.

Eastern Phoebe, *Sayornis phoebe*

STATUS: Common transient and summer resident; uncommon in winter; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Phoebes are common primarily from the first periods of warm weather in late winter and early spring until fall when heavy frosts greatly reduce insect populations.

One of the welcome signs of oncoming spring is frequently repeated "phoebe-phoebe-phoebe" calls, given by birds as they perch in trees or on rock ledges, easily heard above the roar of rain-swollen streams. The influx is evident at least in late February and early March. This is also time for early daffodils, woodcock dances, and choruses of spring peepers.

During summer phoebes nest under bridges, rock ledges, and around farms and even neighborhoods in towns, constructing nests under the protective roofs of sheds or porches. At least four pairs of phoebes were on territories at Ninestone Land Trust in Carroll County by March 20, 2009. There was an all but finished nest under a ledge in Historic Van Winkle Trail in Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area on on March 21, 2015.

Most of our phoebes observations fall between early March and mid-October. At least eight in the Ponca area of Buffalo National River on September 28, 2013, indicated they were probably on the move. Scattered single birds are something of a surprise with arrival of real cold weather, especially at mid-winter, but there are now many such records. Phoebes are heavily dependent upon insects, but will also consume some fruit (Weeks 1994).

Anaylsis of climate change by National Audubon shows that during the past 40 years the center of abundance for phoebes has shifted north by 48 miles. Phoebes did not become regular on the Fort Smith-Moffett CBC until 1998 and not at Fayetteville until around 2000. Phoebes are frequently reported on CBCs along Buffalo National River and on Crooked Creek CBC at Harrison.

Say's Phoebe, *Sayornis saya*

STATUS: Rare transient and winter visitor; DATES: October 7 to March 2

This western phoebe is certainly a "good bird" when found. Our initial record is from Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on October 18, 1997. A single bird was observed during a Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society field trip to Fayetteville's Paul R. Noland Wastewater Treatment Plant on February 25, 2006. It remained until at least March 2. A bird found at Centerton on on December 18, 2010, was observed frequently during much of the winter, but not after heavy snows and low temperatures starting in early February 2011. At Maysville, a single bird was foraging alongside a chicken house and photographed there during an ice storm January 7, 2010. One was photographed near Chesney Prairie Natural Area on December 28, 2014, also during hard winter weather. Joe Woolbright saw one at Chesney on November 19, 2017.

One of the most interesting of these records involves Joe and Estra Lee Pattie farm near Lead Hill in Boone County. A bird observed on October 24, 2009, marked beginning of the third winter one had been found at that location.

Vermilion Flycatcher, *Pyrocephalus rubinus*

Ragan Sutterfield found this bird in Washington County on June 13, 1995. Karen Garrett photographed a first summer male at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton September 30, 2017.

Great Crested Flycatcher, *Myiarchus crinitus*

STATUS: Common summer resident; DATES: April 5 to October 10.

This large flycatcher is heard or observed in mature or fairly mature forests, either along the edges or in openings within the forest, including forest fragments and edges. The older trees in such forests develop the type of cavities Great Cresteds require for nests. They are fairly common in urban areas with mature forest. However, they are easily missed if they aren't calling.

At Lake Fayetteville, Chapman (2016) wrote the following about Great Cresteds: "…often heard and seen moving through the branches of trees in wooded areas throughout the park." My impression is that Great Crested Flycatchers exemplify what Marzluff (2014) termed "adapters." That is, a native species that seems capable of adjusting to changes, in this case forest fragmentation associated with urbanization.

Forest management studies showed modest responses to logging of varying intensities (Thompson et al. 1995). Breeding season point counts from Ozark National Forest indicated a declining population trend (La Sorte et al. 2007). "Population numbers are generally stable, perhaps because of this species's wide spectrum of nesting habitats, tolerance for a wide range of kinds and sizes of nest cavities, and tolerance for modification and fragmentation of habitat by humans. However, destruction of snags and other "clean" forestry practices negatively impact populations locally" (Miller and Lanyon 2014).

It is found regularly until late summer, and infrequently thereafter. It attracts attention to itself by distinctive calls, but after summer these calls aren't often heard. I was surprised when I heard one vocalize at Fayetteville Country Club September 12, 2017.

Western Kingbird, *Tyrannus verticalis*

STATUS: Common summer resident in Arkansas River Valley at Fort Smith; otherwise rare transient; DATES: April 16 to October 18.

The main part of the Western Kingbird story involves the Arkansas River Valley at Fort Smith and Van Buren. According to data in the Arkansas Audubon Society file, on May 1, 2002, Bill and Toka Beall with Sandy Berger found six pairs during May-early June 2002. The nests were primarily at Oklahoma Gas and Electric electrical substations scattered around the old downtown and industrial areas of Fort Smith. Nests were built in May with incubation in June. By June 4, 2002, a total of 13 pairs had been found, including two pairs at Van Buren. This number had increased to at least 18 pairs by 2003. By 2005, Bill Beall reported seeing 35-40 birds (including adults and fledglings) in a 10-block area of downtown Fort Smith. In June 23-24, 2007, Beall reported 33 adults in 21 locations; eleven nests with nestlings; one nest with four just fledged young; two nests with an incubating bird; three nests with an adult present, but not incubating. During the survey on July 4, 2017, the totals were 49 adults at 23 locations, 17 active nests, and 14 fledglings.

Bill and Toka checked electrical substations in Washington County in June 2007, but didn't find Western Kingbirds. Oklahoma atlasers had a few records for the Ozarks but did not confirm nesting (Reinking 2004). Jacque Brown saw a Western Kingbird at the Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on May 14 and again on June 3, 2015, near the hatchery. Joanie Patterson saw two at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary on June 7, 2017.

It is unclear when Western Kingbirds actually depart. Bill Beall says they disperse rather quickly when the young fledge. The latest record in the file is October 18, but it is unusual so late in the season.

According to Gamble et al. (2012), "The breeding range of this species has expanded gradually since the late 1800s, when settlers began altering habitats. The Western Kingbird was able to spread eastward across the northern mixed-grass prairies of the Dakotas and southern Canada due to the planting of trees. In other areas, such as Texas, range expansion was made possible by forest clearing and the proliferation of utility poles and wires. Recent survey data indicate that populations are increasing slightly across most of the nesting range."

Eastern Kingbird, *Tyrannus tyrannus*

STATUS: Common transient and summer resident; DATES: April 3 to October 14.

Kingbirds are lords of the open country with scattered mature trees. International Migratory Bird Day, observed during the second weekend of May, often coincides with peak of spring migration. Eastern Kingbirds are always numerous in the open, former prairies around western Arkansas. I usually do a survey at Maysville for IMBD at this time. Kingbirds perch on fences along the roads as single birds, pairs, and flocks within small areas with extensive open fields. I found 30+ around Maysville on several IMBDs since 2013, and 45 on May 10, 2016.

Highest numbers during the nesting season are in open country of former prairies. This can be seen in results from Avoca BBS in Benton County, especially in the early years prior to around 2000 before this route became increasingly urbanized, leading to a considerable drop in kingbird numbers. Prior to 2000, surveyors at times found 20 or more kingbirds.

In their study at Pea Ridge National Military Park, Shugart and James (1973) estimated there were six kingbird territories within about 100 acres of open field in early succession. These included a burned field, one dominated by broomsedge, and another invaded by young persimmon trees.

Flocks numbering in the hundreds of birds have been seen going to roost in willow trees on the edge of Lake Sequoyah during August and early September. The presence of kingbird roosts in this location seemed related to emergences of mayflies (*Ephemerida* species).

Overall, few kingbirds remain after late August or early September, and later birds typically are singles, sometimes associated with Scissor-tailed Flycatchers. Migrating flocks of 5, 15, etc were passing over Lake Fayetteville on August 25, 2007. Adam Leslie saw a late one at Devil's Den State Park on October 14, 2010, and Adam Schaffer had one at Bentonville on October 14, 2014.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, *Tyrannus forficatus*

STATUS: Common summer resident; DATES: March 28 to November 20.

Scissor-tails are common in open farmlands, large open fields, airports, edges of towns, and places like old downtown Fort Smith. They seem to tolerate urbanization and thrive where there are scattered tall trees, power poles, or other structures which provide suitable perches and nest sites. Urbanization has consumed former prairie habitat along Avoca Breeding Bird Survey in Benton County. Scissor-tailed Flycatchers have increased along the route. In this respect they are probably "adapters" as described by Mazluff (2014).

While most seem to migrate south by late August and early September, a fair number linger. More than 100 were perched on fences and wires at Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport in Benton County on August 25, 2007. This number had fallen to 30 by September 1. They remain at least fairly common here until time of our first bug-killing frosts around mid-October. Sandy Berger saw 46 along the Arkansas River on October 10, 2002. There were 23 in an extensive weedy field near Centerton on October 10, 2010. Grasshoppers were abundant. There are sightings of scattered individuals mainly into first half of November.

Loggerhead Shrike, *Lanius ludovicianus*

STATUS: Uncommon in expansive grasslands not yet heavily urbanized; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Shrikes are birds of the open country, essentially former prairie grasslands. While they exhibit rangewide decline, they remain fairly common in former Tallgrass Prairie habitat that retains extensive areas of undeveloped or only lightly developed (e.g., grazing) grassland. They are present throughout the year in these areas. For example, I find them on almost every trip to Chesney Prairie Natural Area and its environs.

Shrike numbers have plunged in the now heavily urbanized former prairies of western Arkansas in the Ozarks and once extensive Massard Prairie at Fort Smith. In past years, they were observed in low numbers on both of the Avoca and Compton Breeding Bird Survey routes. Avoca BBS begins in the eastern sections of the former Osage Prairie north of Rogers and heads south across numerous other former prairies with local names (e.g., Lynch's Prairie at Springdale), all now urbanized. Avoca had the best open country habitat prior to the extensive urbanization of the past two decades. On this

BBS, they were recorded annually from 1969 to 1984: typically 2-3 birds (range 1-6). Since 1985, they have been found only three years, with none since 1990. The Compton BBS includes a relatively smaller amount of suitable shrike habitat; here birds were found in half the years between 1967 and 1989 (total of 16 birds in 10 years), but none since 1990.

This distressing pattern of decline is also visible in winter data drawn from Christmas Bird Counts. They were once common in winter. From the late 1960s to mid-1980s, there were 10 years when Fayetteville CBC totals exceeded 20 birds, but few since. The CBC at Fort Smith-Moffett illustrates the same downward trend. Some of this is predictable: shrikes are birds of native grasslands and unimproved pastures. Marzluff (2014) would term shrikes "avoiders" because they do not adapt to extensive urbanization.

On the other hand, lightly developed areas still have shrikes. We still observed them occasionally in winter at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary on the west side of Fayetteville. However increasing development of this remnant of former prairie will probably be the end of shrikes there.

The 10 birds that Mike Mlodinow and I saw in the Maysville area, December 25, 2006, constituted a very good winter day.

During the nesting season it still builds its bulky nests in thorny shrubs, small thorny trees and fencerows in remaining open country. My observations since 2002 indicate nesting activity from March 26 (nest just finished) to family groups with young out of the nest by May 25 and adults still closely attending fledglings on July 16. There is a big fledging peak in late May. Three family groups on May 30, 2004, were on former Norwood Prairie west of Wedington and two family groups adjacent Chesney Prairie Natural Area. I saw three family groups between Cherokee City and Maysville on May 25, 2014.

Shrike declines are rangewide. "Role of contaminants in decline of this species remains unclear because concentrations required to reduce populations are unknown; species' decline, however, coincides with introduction and increased use of organochlorines in 1940s-1970s" (Yosef 1996).

Northern Shrike, *Lanius excubitor*

Mike Mlodinow and I saw a single bird in the brownish juvenile plumage in the Wet Prairie area north of Maysville, in Benton County, on December 25, 2007 (James et al. 2009). Mike, Dennis Braddy, and Jacque Brown returned and refound the bird on December 30. Brown obtained a diagonistic photograph. Despite subsequent searches in the area, there were no further observations. Neil Nodelman and Joanie Patterson found a Northern Shrike at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary in Fayetteville on March 6, 2011. Mike Mlodinow confirmed the identification on March 10. Like the Maysville bird of 2007, this one was in its first year, but it had mostly acquired the adult plumage.

Several older records were published by Baerg (1951).

White-eyed Vireo, *Vireo griseus*

STATUS: common summer resident; DATES: March 17 to mid-October+.

White-eyed Vireos are widespread, both as migrants and summer residents. They are essentially birds of moist thickets at the forest edge, including yards in towns during migration. Judith Griffith found a singing bird at Ninestone Land Trust in Carroll County on the early date of March 17, 2008. Typical spring arrivals are noted from around mid-April and thereafter. Mitchell Pruitt counted five near Lake Wilson Park at Fayetteville on April 12, 2014. Mike Mlodinow had 12 at Lake Fayetteville on April 16, 2012.

White-eyed Vireos benefit from extensive forest cutting that creates suitable openings (Thompson et al. 1995). Breeding season point counts from the Ozark National Forest showed an increasing population trend (La Sorte et al. 2007).

They remain numerous during the warm, summer-lingering days of September, with lots of singing, at least during the first few weeks. At least six were singing at Lake Fayetteville on September 3, 2013. Most of the birds on Cave Mountain in the upper Buffalo region were also singing on September 13, 2010. They decline through fall with occasional stragglers into late November and rarely into December. Jack and Pam Stewart were surprised by one at Erbie in Newton County November 25, 2008.

Mike Mlodinow has found several single birds in December at Lake Fayetteville. A bird there on December 12, 2014, was included for count week on the Fayetteville CBC. More such winter records may be ahead. Analysis by National Audubon shows that during the past 40 years, White-eyed Vireos have shifted their center of abundance north by 68 miles, presumably in response to climate warming.

Bell's Vireo, *Vireo bellii*

STATUS: Common summer resident in Arkansas River Valley; very uncommon and now local in the Ozarks; DATES: April 8 to September 18.

Bell's Vireo prefers wet thickets associated with prairie or open former grasslands. Frances James (1971) described breeding habitat for Bell's Vireo that was very open and in ecological succession about midway between shrubs and small trees; roughly speaking, somewhere between Prairie Warblers and Brown Thrashers.

It is common in the river valley, in places like Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area and other open habitats with dense thickets. Lauren Thead counted six at Frog on June 22, 2013. To the north, in places like Prairie State Park near Joplin, Missouri, Bell's Vireo is a common summer resident in the same kinds of habitat. However, between the river valley and Missouri prairies, urbanization has consumed much of former Bell's Vireo habitat.

In the Ozarks, they were once common nesting birds in open country, including mesic former prairie habitat that surrounded much of Fayetteville. This was at least into the 1950s. Subsequently, they have been pushed out by changing agricultural practices and urbanization. Avoca Breeding Bird Survey route in Benton County shows this pattern of decline. During surveys from 1967 to 1976, Bell's Vireo numbers ranged from 3-9. By the mid-1980s, this had dropped to 0-2, and thereafter frequently zero. This mirrors increasing pace of urbanization and consequent loss of open grassland habitat. Bell's has also declined throughout much of its range (Brown 1993).

There are still patches of suitable habitat and occasional birds around Fayetteville in places like Wilson Springs Preserve, Lake Fayetteville, and Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary. Birds are also still found in lightly developed areas near Centerton, in Siloam Springs at Stump Prairie and Chesney Prairie Natural Area, and a few spots at Maysville. The broader story is that much of its once extensive habitat in the Ozarks is gone.

Baker Prairie Natural Area in Harrison still provides suitable habitat. Bill Holimon found a nest with three large nestlings (and no cowbirds) on July 10, 2002, and a nest with four vireo eggs (and no Brown-headed Cowbird eggs) on July 3, 2003. During a field trip there on June 13, 2009, we found 6-7 Bell's Vireo territories and two nests with clutches of eggs (including one nest with a cowbird egg).

Restoration of prairie habitat in the Siloam Springs area (Chesney and the nearby, privately-owned Stump) includes moist thickets of rough-leafed dogwood, buttonbush, and cordgrass. These hold good potential for Bell's Vireos.

Yellow-throated Vireo, *Vireo flavifrons*

STATUS: Fairly common summer resident in extensive mature forests; DATES: March 25 to October 11.

Yellow-throated Vireos are inhabitats of mature forests, like those of the Buffalo National River, Ozark National Forest, Devil's Den State Park, and Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area. They are also present in smaller more fragmented mature forests like those on Mt Sequyoah and Kessler Mountain in Fayetteville, Lake Atalanta in Rogers, and elsewhere. Red-eyed Vireos are much more numerous in these forests, but hoarse, slower songs of Yellow-throated Vireos are heard too.

These are among the early spring migrants to reach us. Birds occasionally arrive at the end of March or early April. Hearing that song quickens the pulse on a field trip. Observations pick up by second week in April and thereafter. Adam Leslie and Dick Baxter submitted an eBird checklist with 15 in Ozark NF in Crawford County, April 12, 2015. I saw or heard four during a hike on Kessler Mountain in Fayetteville April 23, 2014.

Yellow-throated Vireos are common in summer at Cherry Bend in Ozark NF. Cherry Bend is one of the upland forest habitats in northwest Arkansas presented in James and Neal (1986). Leif Anderson found six along the Rudy Breeding Bird Survey route on May 27, 2016. They are also common on north side of Beaver Lake, on the slope of Whitney Mountain and apparently also at Devil's Eyebrow Natural Area.

Studies of neotropical migratory birds in Ozark hardwoods show that Yellow-throated Vireos are most abundant in mature forests with either no disturbance or only modest disturbances such as single-tree selection harvests; they declined with increasing disturbance levels (Thompson et al. 1995). Rangewide Breeding Bird Survey data indicate this species is holding its own and perhaps modestly increasing (Rodewald and James 2011).

Blue-headed Vireo, *Vireo solitarius*

STATUS: Fairly common transient; DATES: March 31 to May 31 and August 29 to November 17.

Blue-headed Vireos (formerly Solitary Vireo) migrate through woodlands, from mature forest to dense second growth in places like Lake Fayetteville Park. We regularly observe them as part of transient warbler and vireo waves passing through western Arkansas. Many vireo species may be singing during such waves. In looking up among the dense leaves of a mature post oak, for example, I seek out a bird that sounds a bit slower and a little sweeter than the typical Red-eyed

Vireo. Because of its striking blue head adorned with white spectacles, this bird is always a pleaser, especially during a field trip with birders who for the first time are experiencing the majesty and wonder of spring migration.

While we have seen them unusually as early as the end of March, even the third week in April is a relatively early arrival. The typical peaks in spring migration involve late April into late May and for fall, early October into November. In the spring of 2009, I found them at least moderately common during field trips to forested habitat, with 2-3 birds at Lake Fayetteville, Devil's Den State Park, and Ninestone Land Trust in Carroll County during the first half of May.

Typically, fall observations involve 1-3 on good day in the first half of October. There are no records after mid-November, though they are sometimes found in southern Arkansas in winter. The bird Mike Mlodinow saw on Mt Sequoyah on November 17, 2004, was feeding on bittersweet fruits.

There is another pretty interesting record provided in detail by David Chapman (2016). Mike Mlodinow and Jacque Brown saw a bird at Lake Fayetteville on September 27, 2008. It could have been a Cassins Vireo based upon several plumage characteristics. Jacque obtained a photo.

Philadelphia Vireo, *Vireo philadelphicus*

STATUS: Uncommon transient; DATES: April 24 to May 29 and September 3 to October 15+.

Transient Philadelphia Vireos may be observed in all types of woodlands, including edges and younger forests. Most of our observations are for spring migration and involve 1-3 birds during a day in the field. Peak numbers are sometimes higher. For example, Mike Mlodinow and David Chapman identified eight at Lake Atalanta on May 12, 2007. I observed 5-6 during a walk around Lake Fayetteville on May 11, 2007.

The bird Mike Mlodinow saw at Gregory Park in Fayetteville on November 2, 2000, was quite late.

Warbling Vireo, *Vireo gilvus*

STATUS: Fairly common transient and summer resident at least locally; DATES: April 1 to October 23.

This open country bird is a common transient in all kinds of moist open woodlands, including those of urban areas. At Lake Fayetteville, for example, it can be surprisingly common from mid to late April into the second half of May.

Warbling Vireos are local summer residents in moist open former prairies and similar habitats with scattered trees. It is not unusual to hear them singing in shady yards of farm houses, like those along Holloway Road just south of Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton. They have been found during the nesting season along the edge of Bob Kidd Lake, Withrow Springs State Park, along the Illinois River, scattered tall trees at and adjacent Craig State Fish Hatchery, Siloam Springs City Lake, Lake Bentonville, Eagle Watch Nature Trail, Wilson Springs Preserve in Fayetteville.

There is no evidence the birds nest at Lake Fayetteville. Therefore, birds seen there in July and thereafter are presumed transients. Fall migration records are scattered. This is likely a result of birds not singing and so not so easily seen or identified. There were 3-4 at Lake Atalanta on September 11, 2011, during a Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society field trip.

Red-eyed Vireo, *Vireo olivaceus*

STATUS: Common transient and summer resident; DATES: April 5 to October 13.

Red-eyed Vireos arrive in the second half of April when oaks have mouse ears for leaves and dangling masses of catkins. That is, they take charge of our forests in the fullness of early spring. At this time, mature forests of all kinds seemed filled with a choir of Red-eyed Vireos. It's the announcement that winter is over and spring has arrived.

Red-eyed Vireos are common in all kinds of forested areas, including those of towns, and very common summer residents in mature forests (Thompson et al. 1995). Judged by Breeding Bird Survey data, this species with its relatively loud and regular calls is probably our most numerous forest bird, emblematic of extensive forests. At Pea Ridge National Military Park, they were more numerous in the mesic forest sites as compared to drier sites (Shugart and James 1973).

Pingjun Li (1994) found 62 Red-eyed Vireo nests in his study of neotropical migratory songbirds nesting in an unfragmented forest near White Rock in Ozark National Forest. Nest success rate was only 37.5 %, one of the lowest in his study. Clutch size averaged 3.1, brood size 2.6, and the number of young produced per nesting pair only 0.98. Five nests were parasitized by Brown-headed Cowbirds. He attributed most nest failures to snakes and small mammals.

Highest numbers are attained in forest stands with well-developed midstories of small trees growing under mature canopies, a condition common in forests long protected from wildfire. Numbers have likely increased with regeneration of forests after extensive logging in the early 1900s and in modern times, near total protection from wildfire. The steady increase in numbers is evident on the Lurton route in Newton County: yearly route totals in the 20s-30s were

typical from the late 1960s to late 1980s, 40s-50s to the mid-1990s, 60s-70s+ thereafter. Breeding season point counts from the Ozark NF also document an increasing population trend (La Sorte et al. 2007).

Blue Jay, *Cyanocitta cristata*

STATUS: Common migrant and resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Overhead daytime migrations by Blue Jays are fascinating during spring and fall. These are most easily observed in extensively open areas. The spring peak seems to occur during the second half of April. During the fall of 2008, I was in the field frequently at Chesney Prairie Natural Area and saw relatively high numbers between the last week of September into the second half of October. I counted more than 65 in at least seven flocks on October 5. I was especially impressed by three small flocks I saw on October 22. They were determined to move, even against a south breeze, making short hop flights from tree to tree, steadily working south.

Winter populations sometimes show considerable fluctuation. During Christmas Bird Counts at Fayetteville, jay totals exceeded 100 on 45 counts, with variation from 326 in 1986 to 8 in 1962. Overall, jays are apparently much less common now than they were here in the 1960s. During the first 10 years of the Fayetteville CBC, numbers of jays per party hour averaged 3.28. This compares with the most recent decade (2006-2015), when the comparable number was less by half at 1.42 per party hour.

Some of this fluctuation is attributable to weather on count day, but numbers are also linked to acorns, an important food. Good local acorn production means more jays in winter, and vice versa, though jays also have other food sources in winter, and aren't therefore as tied to acorns as Red-headed Woodpeckers (Smith 1986, Smith and Scarlett 1987). Considering this, one wonders about ultimate effects of the die-off of mature oaks over a vast area as a result of highly elevated red oak borer activity. By late 2001, mature oaks, principally in the red oak group, were impacted in over 300,000 acres of northwest Arkansas (Spencer 2001).

Breeding season point counts from the Ozark National Forest showed a stable population trend (La Sorte et al. 2007). However, Breeding Bird Surveys show significant Blue Jay declines in eastern and central portions of its range (Smith et al. 2013). National Audubon analysis shows that the Blue Jay center of abundance has in the past 40 years shifted 89 miles north, an apparent response to climate warming.

American Crow, *Corvus brachyrhynchos*

STATUS: Common resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

These crows are common in most if not all habitats. Even in winter, 300-500 American Crows are typically observed during the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count. I see or hear them on most stops along the Compton Breeding Bird Survey in Newton County. While the "caw-caw," is recognized by all, they have many other, highly varied vocalizations.

One day, if you have time and you are near some crows, stop and give them a listen. They make conversation, and it's not about politics or the stock market. Even over loud traffic, I can hear their strange gargled "bee-yew" calls and other non-"caw-caws." These varied calls keep them in touch with one another. It also keeps us wondering what they are talking about. They assert title to a landscape we incorrectly view as exclusively our own.

In place of old time "crow shoots," I recommend "crow listening." There is nothing to learn from shooting a crow. There might be highly useful life lessons associated with listening.

Fish Crow, *Corvus ossifragus*

STATUS: Common migrant and summer resident, especialy in both rural and urban areas; DATES: February 5 to November 12+ (and later in the river valley).

Fish Crows have long been common in the river valley, but were unreported in the western Arkansas Ozarks until the early 1980s. They have since become widespread. They are now common in summer along all major streams and reservoirs. They are also now common in summer in urban centers like Fayetteville. In this respect they are one of the "adapters," as discussed by Marzluff (2014). According to McGowan (2001), "It has adapted well to living with people, becoming a familiar urban bird in parts of its range. Its ability to scavenge efficiently along shorelines adapted it well for human-modified environments—a major factor in the recent success of this bird."

I heard a single Fish Crow at Wild Wilderness Drive-through Safari near Gentry on February 5, 2015. On February 15, 2011, Jim Morgan had 13 near Elkins and I found one in Fayetteville on the same day. Spring migration peaks are evident during March. Jim Morgan had 35 along the White River near Elkins on March 8, 2010. A flock of 80 was streaming up the West Fork branch of the White River near Fayetteville on March 27, 2008.

After the breeding season, Fish Crows depart breeding areas and form roosts in areas with food abundance (McGowan 2001). For example, more than 30 were present around a feedlot just south of Chesney Prairie Natural Area August 21, 2005. Both crow species have also maintained late summer roosts at the University farm in Fayetteville. Mike Mlodinow counted 45 at the farm on July 31, 2010, and 95 at the same place August 14, 2011.

Horned Lark, *Eremophila alpestris*

STATUS: Common in plowed farmland of the Arkansas River Valley; uncommon and local in the Ozarks; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Our open country is enrichened by the tinkling, lilting songs of Horned Larks. They seem the spirit of our plowed fields in the Arkansas valley and former prairies. They sing on the wing from above and from the slightly elevated perch afforded a handy dirt clod. They occupy a vast range across North America where they seem to be holding their own (Beason 1995). While still at least fairly common in the plowed fields in the river valley, they have declined in the Ozarks as a direct result of land uses changes, including urbanization of their required habitat: extensively open plowed fields or closely grazed pasture.

They remain common in the river valley fields where soybeans and winter wheat are grown. And they can still be found in modest numbers during the nesting season in our former prairie areas in the Ozarks with field crops. For example, we observe them with fair regularity on the former Beaty Prairie around Maysville. I found singing birds in at least three places near Maysville on February 13, 2005, and that was in a high wind, which meant I heard only birds near the road. On July 2, 2005, Mike Mlodinow and I saw flocks consisting of 20 and 6 Horned Larks in recently harvested bean fields near Maysville. This suggests successful local nesting. I also found singing birds in two places on the former Norwood Prairie west of Wedington on the Washington-Benton county line in 2005 (June 4 and July 16), and saw a flock of four birds overhead in a different part of Norwood on July 24. A male and a female at Hindsville May 31, 2009, suggest they are also nesting in that former prairie habitat. Joyce Shedell observed adults feeding a fledgling at Highfill on April 14, 2014.

In winter, flocks are locally common in harvested crop fields and where the vegetation is sparse. Especially large flocks can be seen during severe cold when the ground is covered with snow. It's impressive to see these flocks flying characteristically low over the fields, blending well to the point of disappearing among the colors of soil and harvested crops. On January 17, 2003, I estimated at least 250 on plowed fields adjacent the Siloam Springs Airport. There were at least 100 in the Maysville area in a heavily grazed pasture January 1, 2003, and 300 or more on February 8. On February 7, 2011, there were 185 in several flocks along highway 72 east of Maysville. Snow covered the fields and the only open ground was along the highway.

It is well within memory that we found flocks of Horned Larks in winter in plowed fields at University farm. Horned Larks were a regular part of the Fayetteville CBC up to about 2000, but they were basically gone from the count by 2008. This result is directly attributable to the increasing pace of urbanization in the metroplex between Fayetteville and Bentonville—Northwest Arkansas City. What is increasingly city was once open farmland and before that, Tallgrass Prairie.

Horned Larks in a Missouri study were common only on very short grasslands, usually heavily grazed pastures (Skinner et al. 1984). Horned Larks were sparsely distributed in Missouri atlas blocks (Jacobs and Wilson 1997) as well as in those in northeastern Oklahoma (Reinking 2004).

We may be richer in a financial sense as we trade our former prairie lands for roads, homes, and commerce. Loss of the spirited songs of Horned Larks is an unfortunate aspect of the change.

Purple Martin, *Progne subis*

STATUS: Common summer resident; DATES: February 26 to September 19.

Purple Martins are birds of the open country, including open areas in towns. "Scouts" may show up during a warm spell toward the end of winter, typically sometime between late February and mid-March. Martins are prized wherever found, especially by many folks who otherwise have only a modest interest in wild birds. Possession of a martin colony confers bragging rights. The lack of birds by those who have put up houses is a disappointment.

It seems that western Arkansas is an important gathering area for martins before they begin their southward migration. They can be especially abundant where they gather into large roosts after the nesting season. Here are a few examples. Kelly Mulhollan saw thousands in a fall roost in the Larue area of Beaver Lake in late July 1987. The 700 perched on utility wires at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on August 17, 2003, declined to 15 by August 30, and none were seen on September 6.

In August 2005 an estimated 30,000 roosted in sweetgum trees near the Arkansas River in Fort Smith. There's no way to say if this huge roost included birds from western Arkansas to the north, but it seems likely. Martins in such

roosts elsewhere have come a distance of 80 km from their natal site (Brown 1997). In Fort Smith, high numbers of birds damaged trees and there was a lot of bird poop on sidewalks around Miss Laura's Social Club, a historic building used as a tourist center. These trees were subsequently cut down to keep birds from returning.

On July 17, 2012, Bo Verser used Nexrad radar to detect a martin roost in Springdale. Several of us followed up and estimated 12,000-18,000 martins on July 22. The roost was within a trailer park southwest of the intersection of 412 and 265. There may have been a roost in this area back to 2004.

Adam Schaffer was bike riding on the Rogers Greenway July 17, 2015, and observed thousands of martins on powerlines. A few days later a few of us counted roughly 5000 martins dropping into a thicket of small trees. They were back in this roost again by mid-July, 2017.

Tree Swallow, *Tachycineta bicolor*

STATUS: Common transient and fairly common summer resident; DATES: February 25 to November 14+.

Tree Swallows are observed either in small flocks or mixed among other swallow species. Early warm-ups in late winter can produce a few birds and large flocks soon follow. There were at least 75 at Lake Fayetteville on March 13, 2005, and 320 at the same place on March 28, 2008. Mixed-species flocks are of regular occurrence in spring migration. These mixed flocks may include Tree, Northern Rough-winged, Cliff, Bank, and Barn Swallows, plus Purple Martins. The birds arrive on warm fronts, but when weather switches back to the north, these flocks may settle into places like Lake Fayetteville or Craig State Fish Hatchery where it is possible to obtain close views. At Lake Fayetteville, David Chapman (2016) noted that "On May 2, 2013, a misty morning following overnight rain, uncountable numbers (1000+) of a mixed flock of swallows … were encountered."

Adults and nests have been observed at many lakes, especially those with suitable nest boxes or with standing snags in the water. Tree Swallows nested in snags at Bob Kidd Lake near Prairie Grove, Siloam Springs City Lake, several coves on Beaver Lake, Table Rock Lake, SWEPCO Lake at Gentry, Lake Leatherwood, Lake Elmdale, several places in and around Fayetteville, and doubtless elsewhere. There are often natural and woodpecker-excavated cavities in these snags.

Tree Swallows also nest in boxes placed in an attractive location. Boxes mainly intended for bluebirds serve Tree Swallows just as well. I saw a male and female using a Purple Martin box adjacent a large pond at Fayetteville Country Club on May 25, 2005. Tree Swallows often nest in the extensive network of boxes placed along golf courses at Bella Vista.

Northwest Arkansas Master Naturalists have taken on stewardship of nest boxes placed as wildlife enhancements around Beaver Lake Nursery Pond east of Rogers. Eastern Bluebirds and Prothonotary Warblers use some of these boxes, but most are occupied by Tree Swallows. As early as March 26, 2014, at least half of these appeared to have been claimed by male Tree Swallows and at least 13 of the boxes held young by June 28. Four of these boxes still contained active nests as late as July 12.

A Tree Swallow was seen well, and photographed, at Lake Fayetteville on the late date of December 3, 2014.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow, *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*

STATUS: Common transient and summer resident; DATES: February 28 to November 2.

Buffalo National River in early spring can be exciting. In March I'll be looking for the first Louisiana Waterthrushes, listening for the first Black-and-white Warblers, and watching the river intently for Northern Rough-winged Swallows. I'm out for spring tonic that includes cheery "git-git" calls as these swallows zip close to the water. That said, I may also hear them overhead, even in my Fayetteville neighborhood, as the first transients arrive and explore.

These cavity nesters have utilized tunnels in hard dirt banks as well as natural cavities in rock bluffs, both above streams. Other cavities will do as well. They have also successfully reared young in square holes in the concrete supports under highway bridges.

At Lake Fayetteville, Mike Mlodinow and Joanie Patterson counted 110 on April 4, 2011, a good marker for the spring migration influx. There were 200-300 on wires near Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area on August 4, 2014, as the birds were moving south. Mlodinow saw 17 at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary on October 15, 2012.

Bank Swallow, *Riparia riparia*

STATUS: Uncommon transient; DATES: March 31 to June 6 and July 13 to September 28.

Bank Swallows can be looked for in the mixed species flocks that forage over open bodies of water during migration. For example, at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton they fly low over ponds and perch conveniently (for observers) on wires, just like a Roger Tory Peterson painting. An estimated 80 were at the hatchery on May 14, 2004. Bank Swallows seemed to comprise about half of a flock of at least 200 birds, including Cliff, Northern Rough-winged, and Barn

Swallows, at Lake Fayetteville on May 13, 2011. This was stormy weather with north winds that likely halted the northward migration.

There is no evidence they nest here. The frequently reported nesting "bank swallow" is our Northern Rough-winged Swallow. But early June observations in Benton and Washington counties raise some interesting possibilities. Nesting was confirmed in Ottawa County, Oklahoma, adjacent Benton County, during the course of the Oklahoma Breeding Bird Atlas project (Reinking 2004) and in McDonald County, Missouri, also adjacent Benton County (Jacobs and Wilson 1997).

Cliff Swallow, *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*

STATUS: Common transient and summer resident; DATES: March 18 to October 6.

Cliff Swallows begin arriving here in the second half of March and are common by mid-April. Six birds observed by Andy Scaboo and Brandon Schmidt under the bridge at Lake Sequoyah on March 30, 2009, were already investigating nest sites.

During summer they frequently nest under bridges, including huge bridges over the Arkansas River. More traditional situations, like bluffs above the White River at Beaver Lake and elsewhere, are also used. They nest under picturesque rock overhangs above the river at Withrow Springs State Park near Huntsville. The number there was approximately 120 on June 7, 2014. During a float trip on May 26, 2017, Flip Putthoff and I also saw them nesting under natural conditions -- rock overhangs above War Eagle Creek near the old War Eagle Mill. Unfortunately, it appeared many nests had been washed away during recent floods.

They have nested under the bridge over Prairie Creek at Lake Atalanta. You can comfortably stand or sit on the bridge and watch the birds flying below.

In May 1999, work on replacement of the Highway 412 bridge east of Sonora (spanning the White River near the Blue Springs area of Beaver Lake) was halted for several months by Arkansas Department of Highways and Transportation in order to accommodate nesting Cliff Swallows. This temporary inconvenience was a laudable example of environmental ethics. We demonstrate our best when we understand, appreciate, and accommodate essential needs of other creatures who also call Earth home.

David Chapman (2016) noted that Cliff Swallows nested on the old water control structure at Lake Fayetteville in 2006. These birds were seen "… on the infield dirt area of the nearby softball field from where they obtained mud for nest building." All birds in this colony departed by August. Birds that nested at Lake Sequoyah in 2009 had all departed by August 19.

Barn Swallow, *Hirundo rustica*

STATUS: Common transient and summer resident; DATES: March 2 to November 16.

Barn Swallows are common in open field habitat throughout western Arkansas. This is the swallow species most often seen sweeping low and gracefully over open fields. Other species do this as well. They sometimes arrive surprisingly early, often before real spring and full development of flying insect populations upon which swallows depend. Barn Swallows usually don't become common until the end of March or the first part of April, when warming trends are clearly underway and flying insects plentiful. After this they seem like they are just about everywhere.

They nest under bridges, in large highway culverts, in open barns, and under porches of houses in lightly developed areas of towns. As urbanization spreads, more and more homes are built in a landscape that was once open and welcoming to these swallows. People get irritated when the swallows build nests within their porches or carports. Instead being offended by these beautiful creatures, why not just be a little tolerant and give them a chance?

After the breeding season, Barn Swallows gather in premigratory flocks, like the 125 birds perched together at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on August 10, 2008. Sightings continue through October, occasionally to early November. The estimated 40 Barn Swallows seen by David Chapman at Lake Fayetteville October 24, 2009, was a high number so late in the season.

Carolina Chickadee, *Poecile carolinensis*

STATUS: Common resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Carolina Chicadees are among our most common yard and feeder birds. They don't migrate, so they remain numerous here throughout the year. We observe them in a broad range of habitats, from forests to brushy edges of fields. Totals in the range of 150-200 birds are typical for Fayetteville Christmas Bird Counts. A comparison of the CBCs in the 1960s with recent years indicates a modest decline in chickadees per party hour. From this I think it reasonable to say

chickadees are tolerant of the landscape changes associated with urbanization. Breeding season point counts from the Ozark National Forest showed an increasing population trend (La Sorte et al. 2007).

In Missouri, both Carolina and Black-capped Chickadees were found in southern counties during the course of their atlas project, but these records are highly unusual, since Black-capped Chickadees became frequent only in central Missouri and further north (Jacobs and Wilson 1997). There is no record for Black-capped Chickadee in northeastern Oklahoma (Wood and Schnell 1984) and no valid record for Arkansas.

Tufted Titmouse, *Baeolophus bicolor*

STATUS: Common resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

During spring, when small understory trees like serviceberry and redbuds are blooming, "peter-peter" calls of the Tufted Titmouse ring through our still leafless forests, proclaiming energy and promise in a new season.

Common and widespread, they were observed frequently across numerous sites in oak-hickory forests in the Ozarks (Patterson and James 2002). In her Ozarks study, Joanie Patterson (2007) found that different resident bird species made use of different tree species. Titmice made frequent use of hickories. "In addition to differing in their use of tree groups, the birds used different sized trees, different tree parts and different positions in trees. According to these results, birds were partitioning resources when foraging. Findings indicate that a diversity of forest tree species and tree sizes in a forest would be the most beneficial for the foraging assemblage of birds in the forests of the southern Ozarks."

Like chickadees, titmice don't migrate so they are present here in all seasons. Smith (1977) found that Tufted Titmouse ranged equally across both dry and moist forests.

Titmice show up regularly on Breeding Bird Surveys and are common on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count. Breeding season point counts from the Ozark NF showed an increasing population trend (La Sorte et al. 2007).

Red-breasted Nuthatch, *Sitta canadensis*

STATUS: Irruptive transient and winter resident in invasion years; DATES: September 7 to May 10.

This typical nuthatch of northern boreal forests and the Rocky Mountain west undergoes periodic irruptive migrations, apparently driven by food shortages (Ghalambor and Martin 1999). They show up in western Arkansas during these irruptions, joining our resident White-breasted Nuthatches.

We see Red-breasted Nuthatches on Christmas Bird Counts at Fayetteville during these irruptions. We found them on 30 CBCs (including count week) 1961-2016. Usually this just involves a few birds, but 38 tallied on the 1993 CBC marked a major irruption. Numbers present vary considerably from irruption year to year, with very few or none seen some years.

In irruption year 2016, we found the first one at Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area on September 26, then on Cave Mountain in the upper Buffalo on October 4. Following up on this, surveys in the Ozark National Forest near Shores Lake resulted in 19 nuthatches on 16 stops on October 12. The tally on October 28 was 16 on 14 stops in Ozark NF at Wedington east of Fayetteville.

White-breasted Nuthatch, *Sitta carolinensis*

STATUS: Common resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

White-breasted Nuthatches are common in mature forests, including woodlots in towns. Mature trees develop the natural cavities nuthatches require for roosting and nesting. Other types of cavities will also do. White-breasted Nuthatches reared young in a bluebird box at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton. At Devil's Den State Park, White-breasted Nuthatches were cleaning out a nest cavity on March 1, 2017, in a rotted spot where a limb had been removed.

Patterson (2007) looked at the foraging behaviors of Ozark forest birds potentially impacted by widespread mature trees deaths caused by red oak borers and other insects (Spencer 2001, Spetich 2004; Smith et al. 2004). She found that White-breasted Nuthatches might eventually suffer negative impacts because of strong reliance on white oaks.

Breeding season point counts from the Ozark National Forest indicated an increasing population trend (La Sorte et al. 2007). As expected, they are also found yearly on Christmas Bird Counts. The number reported from the Fayetteville CBC ranged from 2-64. Fayetteville CBC demonstrates a modest increasing trend in numbers: 0.36 nuthatches per party hour in the 1960s versus 0.45 in most recent decade (2006-2015).

Brown-headed Nuthatch, *Sitta pusilla*

STATUS: Confined to a few locales in the western Ozarks; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Over the years, Bill Beall of Fort Smith has observed Brown-headed Nuthatches in Shortleaf Pines south of Fern, near Shores Lake in the Ozark National Forest. His sightings in 1986 and 1987 were 1.5 miles southeast of Fern in a logged area. A nesting cavity was being excavated there March 7- April 4.

Bill and Toka Beall and Jim Nieting have undertaken a number of field surveys for these nuthatches in the Shores Lake-Fern area, prompted in part by plans to lead Brown-headed Nuthatch field trips for Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society. They did the scouting for the 2016 field trip on on March 12, finding 27 nuthatches at 18 stops. When we had our NWAAS field trip on March 19, our plans were to make each of these stops until everyone had satisfactory views of these birds, which can be difficult to spot in tree tops among small brown cones. Nothing to worry about, however: we had two birds at stop one, two at stop two. We quit nuthatches and went on to other birds.

Beall attributes the relatively high nuthatch numbers to Forest Service management policies in the Boston Mountain Ranger District. The habitat is native pine, much of it mature, and with many large trees. It reminds me of good Red-cockaded Woodpecker habitat in the Ouachita NF. Harvests seem to be done by thinning. This opens the forest, but also leaves many trees. The Forest Service also conducts prescribed burns. This maintains the open condition and sunlight in the forest encourage growth of native grasses and other plants. Based upon our trips to see Brown-headed Nuthatches, it's working.

In the past, these nuthatches seem likely to have been resident in big pine stands including those in Madison, Carroll, and Newton counties. An obligate permanent pine forest resident, they have been almost wholly extirpated from the Ozarks for the same reason that Red-cockaded Woodpeckers were lost: failure many years ago to regenerate and restore once extensive stands of Shortleaf Pine after logging in the 1800s (see comments in the Red-cockaded Woodpecker account). This failure, coupled with long-term fire suppression, has resulted in many native pine stands being replaced by hardwoods that won't support Brown-headed Nuthatches or many other species of plants and animals that require pine forest habitat.

Brown Creeper, *Certhia americana*

STATUS: Common transient and fairly common winter resident; DATES: October 1 to April 21.

Creepers are often observed in mixed-species flocks that include Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets, chickadees, titmice, and other small birds. Numbers present in winter vary considerably, presumeably related to the severity of weather at mid-winter.

They are most numerous during spring and fall, but we also find them on most Fayetteville Christmas Bird Counts: 0-4 in 12 count years, and 10 or more on 15 years. Highest, 24, is from 1991. Analysis by National Audubon shows that the center of abundance for creepers has shifted north 104 miles during the past 40 years, apparently a result of climate warming.

Rock Wren, *Salpinctes obsoletus*

STATUS: Very rare transient and winter visitor; DATES: October 16 to February 22.

This western species has been seen here a few times over the years. Our first record dates to January 1, 1986, when Bob Sanger saw a single bird at a limestone quarry in Johnson, Washington County. It was observed on several occasions thereafter during the first half of January. Frank and Joanna Reuter saw one at Beaver Lake dam in Carroll County on January 21, 1989. Rock Wren was the big avian star of an Arkansas Audubon Society meeting at Lake Fort Smith State Park on October 28-29, 1989.

Aubrey Shepherd photographed one among large boulders in an unfinished housing developement in Fayetteville on October 16, 2011. It was subsequently seen by many others before disappearing a few days later. There was a single bird in rocky riprap around the large storm water retention pond at Noland Wastewater Treatment Plant in Fayetteville. Mike Mlodinow saw it there on December 1, 2012. It was subsequently viewed and photographed by many others. It was also tallied as part of the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count on December 16, 2012. It remained at least until February 22, 2013.

House Wren, *Troglodytes aedon*

STATUS: Common transient and locally common summer resident in the urbanized Ozarks; rare in winter; DATES: primarily April 3 to December 12+.

Most of the summer range of House Wrens is north of Arkansas, but they were nesting at Winslow by the 1930s (Black 1935). Callahan (1953) listed it as an uncommon summer resident at Lake Wedington. House Wrens started

nesting at Fayetteville by the 1970s. They are now common in summer in most of urbanized northwest Arkansas. However, they are not common in summer at Fort Smith in the river valley.

House Wrens are a flexible species. They seem to adapt well to urban yards. During migration they can be found in shrubby open fields and brushy fencerows. Overall, it has replaced Bewick's as the common wren of our urban landscape.

Fall migration is noteable during late September and early October. I found a minimum of 15 in the fields at Chesney Prairie Natural Area on October 7, 2008.

Single birds occasionally show up in winter. On Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count, the first record was in 1981 and it has been tallied on four counts since. There are also occasional birds on the Fort Smith-Moffett CBC (including count week). Mike Mlodinow found them on four occasions in the Fayetteville area during winter 2008-2009.

In Missouri, House Wrens were found in many atlas blocks bordering northwest Arkansas (Jacobs and Wilson 1997). They were also observed in northeastern Oklahoma (Reinking 2004).

House Wren's response to our warming climate over the past 40 years involves a range shift of 34 miles to the north of their former center of abundance, based upon analysis of data by National Audubon.

Winter Wren, *Troglodytes hiemalis*

STATUS: Fairly common transient and uncommon but regular winter resident; DATES: October 2 to April 26.

We find Winter Wrens every year, but always in low numbers. I have heard them singing in my yard in the middle of Fayetteville during migration, but more often they call attention to themselves with a distinctive kip-kip alarm note. Typically, we look for them in rough well-forested habitat with plenty of cover on the ground. Large rocks, tangles of vines, down limbs and other woody material like root wods, all have potential.

They may be more common during mild winters than during those with prolonged periods of severe cold. We don't find them at all on some Fayetteville Christmas Bird Counts (0 recorded in eight years), but in other years they are relatively common: eight in 1983, nine in 1992.

Overall, it appears Winter Wrens are becoming more common here in winter. Birds per party hour data for Fayetteville CBC indicate they have doubled since the 1960s (0.22/party hour in 1960s versus 0.46/party hour in most recent decade, 2006-2015). One contributor to this change may be spread of mature forest habitat as a result of urbanization.

Winter Wren's response to our warming climate over the past 40 years involves a range shift of 139 miles to the north of their former center of abundance, based upon analysis of data by National Audubon.

Sedge Wren, *Cistothorus platensis*

STATUS: Common transient; uncommon and local in late summer nesting season; uncommon to rare in winter; DATES: observed in all seasons.

We find Sedge Wrens in open, low-lying, wet grassy fields, often at the edge of a pond, lake, or small stream. The fall migration stretches from second week in August to around mid-October or early November. Birds are passing through in spring from around late April to mid-May.

Fall peaks are apparent in several observations: 12 birds in the low-lying grassy fields at Lake Bentonville on October 3, 1998, and eight at Chesney Prairie Natural Area on October 6, 2007. Mitchell Pruitt counted 20 at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary on October 12, 2014.

Many spring records involve the period from late April to mid-May. At least four were in the grassy fields at Wilson Springs Preserve in Fayetteville on May 1, 2003. Dan Scheiman saw three there on April 21, 2010.

Sedge Wrens are well-known for nesting outside the usual range and at different times of the breeding season (Herkert 2001). This is supported by data from western Arkansas. Baerg (1951) published the reports of Dean Crooks who in 1947 found Sedge Wrens in Benton County during May, July, and August. Could five birds singing vigorously at Lake Elmdale August 21-September 4, 1988, have been nesting there? Joe Woolbright and I saw four at Chesney Prairie Natural Area on August 14, 2004. In August 2005, three singing birds occupied the low wet fields at Woolsey, and 6-7 at Chesney on August 20. There are additional records like 10 in the big fields at Pea Ridge National Military Park August 24, 2008. At least five were singing in rice fields adjacent Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area on August 20, 2012, and were still there during a repeat trip on September 8.

In his studies in Arkansas rice fields, Meanley (1952) found the migration peak occurred from mid-July to mid-August, with nests from mid-August to mid-September, and no singing after mid-September. He noted that movement of birds into nesting habitat coincided with development of the rice to a suitable height for nest placement.

Very little data is available from breeding atlas projects in adjoining states, possibily because of this wren's late nesting (Jacobs and Wilson 1997; Reinking 2004). In Missouri, they were observed in tall dense vegetation, a result of light grazing or leaving pastures idle; they occupied spring burned prairie by mid-July (Skinner et al. 1984). This habitat was almost identical to that chosen by Henslow's Sparrow.

There have been a number of observations at mid-winter dating back into the 1980s. Many involve single birds. Starting in 1999, we have found them on most Christmas Bird Counts at Fayetteville, at least in part because we are now birding these dense low grasslands. Five were in grassy fields at Wilson Springs Preserve on December 10, 2000; none could be found after a snowstorm three days later. On December 28, 2002, I counted seven, including five together apparently going to roost in the same field at Wilson Springs. Mike Mlodinow had a similar series of observations (3-6) birds in this same area between December 12, 2002, and February 12, 2003. An amazing 11 were counted at Woolsey on December 17, 2017, during the Fayetteville CBC.

Lowland former prairie has become increasingly rare in our rapidly urbanizing region. It would be desirable for conservation agencies or other public entities to acquire such habitat when available and to manage it as open grassland. Open grasslands, with no development, is what is needed to protect birds, amphibians, and other species threatened by urbanization in western Arkansas.

Marsh Wren, *Cistothorus palustris*

STATUS: Transient that is uncommon in spring and fairly common in fall; occasional winter records; DATES: April 15+ to May 12 and August 2 to November 7+.

We observe Marsh Wrens in all kinds of wetlands, especially perennially wet, marsh-like habitat with cattails and other tall, dense vegetation.

Most of the southward fall migration occurs Sepember through October, but we see birds on occasion in August and some linger through late November and into winter. The big peak of southward-moving transients involves early to mid-October. I saw five in dense vegetation in what is now Wilson Springs Preserve on October 2, 2002. In Benton County on October 3, 1998, Mike Mlodinow and David Chapman hit a migration jackpot: 13 at Lake Bentonville and another eight at the Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton. This is similar to my experience at Chesney Prairie Natural Area where I found 10 on October 8, 2004, and at least 12 on October 6, 2007, all in tall, dense native grasses, like big bluestem in marshy parts of Chesney. Karen Rowe and Mitchell Pruitt counted 12 in excellent habitat at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area on October 22, 2013. After October there is a big decline in numbers as most birds continue moving south.

Marsh Wren midwinter distribution is primarily to the south and west. But we have scattered observations for December-February, most involving single birds.

Carolina Wren, *Thryothorus ludovicianus*

STATUS: Common resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Carolina Wrens are at home in forest or in forested urban neighborhoods. Good habitat includes woody material on the ground, vines, and piles of limbs. They make themselves at home around carports, outbuildings, even a boat turned upside down in the yard. They are thriving as western Arkansas becomes increasingly urbanized.

Carolina Wrens are common birds now, but over the years their numbers have fluctuated. They don't migrate and since they are predominantly insectivorous birds, their decimation is inevitable during severe, prolonged cold. The small spiders and insects are hard to find in big freezes. Alternately, the population expands quickly after mild winters.

These trends are reflected in results from the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count as well as on the Compton Breeding Bird Survey. Data from the Fayetteville CBC since the early 1960s shows population lows during periods with cold winters: 1961-1963, 1971-1975, 1977-1981, 1984-1985, plus a sharp dip in 2000. BBS data show roughly similar patterns. However, Carolina Wrens can quickly take advantage of warm winters. This leads to population expansions. Overall, when CBC data from the 1960s is compared to the period 2006-2015, the increase in Carolina Wrens is surprising. We found 0.52 wrens per party hour in the 1960s, compared to 1.22/party hour in the most recent decade.

Carolina Wrens probably also benefit from a warming climate and fewer harsh winters. Over the past 40 years, National Audubon data shows that their center of abundance has shifted 57 miles to the north. Breeding season point counts from the Ozark National Forest shows a strong increasing trend based upon data within the period 1992-2004 (La Sorte et al. 2007).

Carolina Wrens are a fixture in my Fayetteville neighborhood with its many brush piles, porches, neglected corners, and out buildings suitable for nesting. Their songs and busy comings and goings add much pleasure to my yard.

They were busy constructing a nest atop a light fixture in my carport in mid-February, early preparation for the potentially long nesting season ahead.

Bewick's Wren, *Thryomanes bewickii*

STATUS: Rare; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Bewick's Wren has drastically declined here. It now occurs primarily as a somewhat rare transient, a rare summer and even rarer winter resident. Both the eastern (red) and the western (brown) forms have been found here. It favors open habitats and brushy edge. Spreading forests resulting from urbanization have radically altered habitats that were once more open.

Many observations have involved former prairie areas. The widespread suppression of fire has allowed forests to creep into former prairie areas, disfavoring Bewick's Wren. Spreading urbanization may favor House Wren, whose numbers have increased.

Most of our recent observations have involved likely migrants, March-May and again September-October. Spring migrants are noted primarily in March (but notice below that some birds start nesting in March), fall migrants from mid-September through October.

A half century ago, Baerg (1951) considered it "locally common" in summer at Fayetteville, which was then much more open and less forested. It was reported in low numbers (usually 1-2) on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count up to 1973, but was unreported on the count again until 1991 (one) and 2002 (count week), but not since.

Since the mid-1980s there have been almost annual reports between mid-March and July that involved nesting or possible nesting. The observations involve Washington, Benton, Madison, Carroll, and Boone counties. Young fledged from a nest in a gourd between Springdale and Rogers on June 19, 1988. There have been records of singing birds and nesting in Newton County at Steele Creek campground (1992 and 1993); at a nest box on Mt. Sequoyah in Fayetteville on April 27, 1994; near Rhea in Washington County where the birds were nest building in a mailbox on July 15, 1996. JoAnne Rife, Sally Jo Gibson and others in Boone County have provided nest records. Adults with three fledglings were reported on a developed portion of Baker Prairie (near the Natural Area) in Harrison on July 3, 1998. Also at Harrison, Gibson first saw birds on March 15, 2000; they were incubating in a birdhouse on April 4 and three young fledged by May 4.

Mike Mlodinow found an adult at the University farm (a very open area and former prairie) in Fayetteville on March 9, 2000, and later saw three fledglings together on May 29. I found two birds together on Floyd Moore Road on the former Round Prairie near Cherokee City in Benton County on June 18, 2005, and what appeared to be a family group in the same area August 31, 2008. In 2008 and 2009 there were sightings of birds at Lake Fayetteville and near Pea Ridge National Military Park that could have involved nesting.

I participated in a few days of Bewick's Wren surveys in 2009. On May 21, 2009, we found 4-5 birds on what appeared to be three territories east of Maysville on the former Beaty Prairie. In each case, we found them in open areas that included homes and open fields associated with oak barrens (open stands of mature trees associated with former prairies). On a return trip with Doug James and Elizabeth Adam, we noted that at least some of these were brown plumaged birds of the western subspecies. We have found them on several occasions at historic Beaty Cemetery east of Maysville.

There have been observations of migrating birds at Chesney Prairie Natural Area in Benton County: September 19, 2004 and April 2, 2005. I found a bird in Fayetteville farm implement junkyard on December 18, 2002, and one in the same area February 17, 2003--apparently an overwintering individual.

In Missouri, Bewick's was found in atlas blocks bordering northwest Arkansas (Jacobs and Wilson 1997). They were also observed in northeastern Oklahoma (Reinking 2004). Historically, western Arkansas combined elements of both eastern forests and open grasslands of the Tallgrass Prairie. Growing human populations, expanding urbanization and near total suppression of fire favors dense forest and less grassland.

Bewick Wren's response to our warming climate over the past 40 years involves a range shift of 55 miles to the north of their former center of abundance, based upon analysis of data by National Audubon.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, *Polioptila caerulea*

STATUS: Common transient and summer resident; DATES: March 10 to October 7+.

These tiny forest birds arrive early in spring. At times their calls fill the stream bottom and hillside forests where they nest. Nesting begins early, commonly by mid-April. Nests are constructed in both cedars and deciduous trees.

While some species of birds are in decline, our gnatcatchers are holding their own. They seem resilient to disturbances, responding positively to a variety of forestry practices (Thompson et al. 1995). Breeding season point counts from the Ozark National Forest showed increases based upon data within the period 1992-2004 (La Sorte et al. 2007).

Most gnatcachers have departed by the first week in October. A bird seen repeatedly by John Prather and others at Bob Kidd Lake October 19 to November 1, 1997, was late. There are also occasional reports of single birds lingering in December, including one on Crooked Creek Valley CBC in 2002 and two on Fayetteville CBC in 2003.

Golden-crowned Kinglet, *Regulus satrapa*

STATUS: Common transient and fairly common winter resident; DATES: October 2 to April 19.

The high-pitched see-see-see calls of Golden-crowned Kinglets are heard in our woodlands and urban yards by mid-October. They form flocks with other newly arrived winter residents like Brown Creepers, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, plus residents like Carolina Chicadees and Tufted Titmice. These mixed flocks sweep through our woodlots and forests, dominating them as deciduous trees lose their leaves and winter is announced by the first frosts. Mitchell Pruitt counted 12 in the pines at Fayetteville Country Club on October 20, 2016. Joanie Patterson submitted an eBird checklist for nine at Lake Atalanta on October 23, 2010. Mike Mlodinow saw 37 at Fayetteville on November 2, 2000.

The peak of the northward migration seems to occur in March, with only occasional sightings in April.

During winter we look for them where there is good cover, especially where there are clumps of eastern red cedars and pines. Some winters we see a great many of them, in others, none. Results for Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count, 1961 to 2016 shows 26 counts with 0-10 kinglets. There were 30+ on 13 counts, including an extraordinary 125 in 2005.

We have often found both kinglet species on the Fayetteville CBC, but up to around 2000, the one that was most numerous was typically (but not always) Golden-crowned. In about half of the years since 2000, Ruby-crowned Kinglets have been more numerous. When numbers are standardized by expressing CBC results as birds tallied per party hour, the results show that in the 1960s Golden-crowned Kinglets were more numerous than Ruby-crowned (0.21/per party hour versus 0.03). However, in the most recent decade (2006-2015) their numbers are fairly equal: 0.17 for Ruby-crowned versus 0.14 for Golden-crowned.

This difference could be a response to extensive urbanization and the potential that Golden-crowned Kinglet is less tolerant of increasing levels of disturbance. It could also possibly be a response to climate change and the fact that Ruby-crowned is now able to winter further north.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet, *Regulus calendula*

STATUS: Common transient and increasingly common winter resident; DATES: September 12+ to May 26.

David Chapman (2016) found a single Ruby-crowned Kinglet at Lake Fayetteville on the very early date of August 29, 2007. They are quite common during migration in both fall and spring in all types of woodlands and fields with taller saplings. For example, I found 10 within a small area on Cave Mountain in Newton County on October 16, 2008. Most of them depart for the south by the time of hard winter cold, with many fewer observations from December through February.

Northwest Arkansas is on the northern edge of its typical range in winter. Christmas Bird Count data at Fayetteville indicates Ruby-crowned Kinglets are now more numerous in winter than in previous years. Mike Mlodinow (2000) analyzed Arkansas CBC data (including Fayetteville's) and reported this trend toward higher winter numbers.

David Chapman (2016) mentioned that Ruby-crowned Kinglets visited his feeders near Lake Fayetteville during extremely cold weather. I've had the same situation, with a bird regularly foraging on suet in harsh, frigid weather. When weather moderates, the bird disappears. With more severe cold, it's back. I take from this that visiting a suet feeder is a kind of emergency situation. It likely prefers natural cover away from the obvious dangers of flying back and forth to a feeder.

Migration is underway at least during April and into May. The 11 counted by Mike Mlodinow at Lake Fayetteville on May 3, 2011, indicated a spring migration peak.

Eastern Bluebird, *Sialia sialis*

STATUS: Common resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Bluebirds are common in open country, including open farmlands and grassy openings of even a few acres in urban neighborhoods. They disappear as forests or home development replaces grassy openings. Placement of bluebird boxes around ponds and fields is now a standard wildlife management technique. Bluebird trails are common in places like

golf courses. Northwest Arkansas Master Naturalists manage bluebird boxes at Beaver Lake Nursery Pond. These boxes are primarily used by bluebirds and Tree Swallows.

People sometimes say, "We never see bluebirds anymore." Bluebirds certainly disappear from some places as a result of radical land use changes. For example, bluebirds have declined, but only slightly, where only modest land use changes have been occurring along the Compton Breeding Bird Survey in Newton County. This contrasts with sharper declines on the Avoca BBS, with much more extensive land use changes.

Christmas Bird Counts from even heavily urbanized Fayetteville indicate bluebirds are increasing in numbers here, at least in winter. For Fayetteville, more than 100 have been found on 34 counts since 1961, including 200 or more in seven years. Another way to look at this is through standardized birds per party hour data. At Fayetteville, in the 1960s, Eastern Bluebirds were found at the rate of 1.41 birds/party hour. This compares with the most recent decade (2006-2015) when the result was 2.29/party hour.

Bluebird nest box programs also have an impact on local numbers. The Bella Vista Bluebird Society reported 2,390 bluebirds fledged from their boxes in 2017.

Another factor that affects bluebirds here may be a warming climate. National Audubon's analysis of data from the past 40 years shows that the center of abundance for Eastern Bluebirds has shifted 114 miles north.

Townsend's Solitaire, *Myadestes townsendi*

This western species typically gets no closer to us than a few birds that have wintered at Mount Magazine State Park. Doug James and others observed a single bird in a stand of cedars above the White River south of Sonora, Washington County, between December 8, 1963, and January 4, 1964. Another bird was seen by Jack and Pam Stewart and others along Hideout Hollow Trail near Erbie in Newton County October 21-28, 1995.

Veery, *Catharus fuscescens*

STATUS: Rare spring transient; DATES: April 12 to June 6.

This eastern thrush rarely strays as far west as western Arkansas, but we have occasional observations, often associated with birds singing on their northward migration. Almost all are single birds. Sightings are clustered between the last days of April and mid-May. They are quite rare here. The bird that Bill Beall saw at Fort Smith on May 21, 1993, was the only one he had ever seen there in a birding career dating to 1944!

David Lyons found one in Newton County on the very late dates of June 5-6, 1995. This was a straggling transient, like Swainson's Thrushes, who are sometimes still migrating through western Arkansas in early June.

Gray-cheeked Thrush, *Catharus minimus*

STATUS: Transient that is uncommon in spring and rare in fall; DATES: April 23 to May 24.

We find Gray-cheeked Thrushes in the same forested habitats frequented by much more common migrating Swainson's Thrushes, but most observations of Gray-cheeked Thrushes involve single birds. It may be that most migrating thrushes seen on the ground are Swainson's, but the occasional Gray-cheeked is mixed with them.

Three Gray-cheeked Thrushes were observed on Markham Hill in Fayetteville by Rob Dobbs on May 3, 1994. One sang in my yard in the middle of Fayetteville on a daily basis May 9-20, 1981.

The only fall report involved a bird studied closely by David Chapman on October 18, 2008, at Lake Fayetteville. He had a good comparison with a nearby Hermit Thrush.

Swainson's Thrush, *Catharus ustulatus*

STATUS: Common spring transient, very uncommon fall transient; DATES: April 10 to June 4 and September 3 to November 1.

Migrating Swainson's Thrushes arrive around third week in April with a peak in mid-May, with scattered observations into first week of June. Fall migration mainly involves scattered sightings during September, exceptionally to mid-October.

Sometimes Swainson's seems everywhere in spring, from wooded yards in town to forests along the Buffalo National River. Swainson's is conspicuous in wooded yards, parks, and forests, calling attention to its presence with its calls and songs. There are regular accounts of high numbers late April to mid-May. Here are a few examples: a conservatively estimated 30-40 on Mt Sequoyah in Fayetteville on April 28, 2003, and 75+ in the Pelsor area on the Newton-Pope county line on May 10, 1994. We counted 33 at Devil's Den State Park on May 11, 2014, for International Migratory Bird Day. Numbers drop significantly in the second half of May, with only a few scattered observations thereafter.

The migration route for fall is more easterly than the broad migration front characterizing spring (Mack and Yong 2000). Therefore, compared to the northward spring migration, our handful of fall observations reflects the fact that relatively few birds are passing through. Most observations involve single birds. There were 2-3 on Cave Mountain in the upper Buffalo National River on September 15, 2015.

Hermit Thrush, *Catharus guttatus*

STATUS: Common transient and winter resident; DATES: October 5 to May 4.

Seemingly shy and retiring by nature, Hermit Thrushes nevertheless are of regular occurrence here. Habitat includes extensive forests far from the city and urban forests with eastern red cedars. Cedars provide cover from harsh winter weather, plus berries and other winter food. I saw nine birds, including one group of five, in a hillside forest on Cave Mountain in Newton County October 16, 2008. Jack Stewart counted 12 in an area of about one acre at Erbie in Newton County November 10, 2008.

Christmas Bird Count data from Fayetteville show a modest increase for Hermit Thrushes. During the 1960s, Hermits were found at the rate of 0.02 birds/party hour. This compares with the most recent decade (2006-2015) when the result was 0.07/party hour. In the same period, Hermit Thrushes declined modestly on the Fort Smith-Moffett CBC: 0.07/party hour to 0.05. On the Buffalo River (west) Christmas Bird Count, Hermit Thrushes have been recorded most years and frequently in numbers higher than those at Fayetteville.

Spring sightings are regular through March to about mid-April, then scattered to end of April and rarely, first days of May. Joanie Patterson counted three at Cherry Bend in the Ozark National Forest on April 18, 2012. Mike Mlodinow had six at Lake Fayetteville on April 14, 2007. As David Chapman (2016) notes about Lake Fayetteville, "For a few weeks they overlap with Swainson's and Gray-cheeked Thrushes and therefore care needs to be taken in identification."

Overall, Hermits are apparently the only forest thrush species in North America to show stable or even increasing population trends (Dellinger et al. 2012). Data from National Audubon shows that in the past 40 years, Hermits have shifted their center of abundance 93 miles north, presumably in response to a warming climate.

Wood Thrush, *Hylocichla mustelina*

STATUS: Fairly common summer resident; DATES: April 12 to October 15+.

Wood Thrushes are found in migration and summer in open mature forest with an understory of small trees and shrubs. Many years ago around Winslow, Wood Thrush was "very common...especially so in the deep ravines...It is not uncommon to see and hear as high as 100 singing males in a single afternoon around the first of May when the spring migration is at its height" (Black 1935). Unfortunately, the sobering reality is that those days are long, long gone.

I see or hear them regularly in all of the extensively forested areas, including Buffalo National River and Ozark National Forest. However, as is the case with most other North American forest thrushes, Wood Thrushes are declining. The regional decline is a statistically significant annual loss of -0.7 (Sauer et al. 2001). "Destruction and fragmentation of forests in both breeding and wintering areas are factors in the species' declining abundance. Individuals in smaller forest fragments and fragmented landscapes experience more nest predation and more cowbird parasitism (especially in the Midwest) and consequently poorer reproductive success than individuals nesting in larger areas and more forested landscapes..." (Evans et al. 2011).

Pingjun Li (1994) studied neotropical migratory birds, including Wood Thrushes, in an unfragmented oak-hickory forest in White Rock Wildlife Management Area, Ozark NF. He found 22 Wood Thrush nests during his 4-year study. Average clutch size was 3.5, brood size 3.0, with 1.62 young produce per nest. Overall nesting success was about 54%. Of failed nests, he attributed 9.1% to abandonment (including losses to weather), 27.3% to large mammals, 9.1% to birds, and 54.5 % to snakes and small mammals. None of the nests were parasitized by Brown-headed Cowbirds.

Forest management studies showed Wood Thrush numbers highest in undisturbed forests, declining with increasing levels of timber harvest (Thompson et al. 1995). Smith et al. (2004) showed similar results. Wood Thrushes were more common in relatively undisturbed upland hardwood forest as compared to sites disturbed by various forest practices. Breeding season point counts from the Ozark NF showed a declining trend based upon data within the period 1992-2004 (La Sorte et al. 2007).

Wood Thrushes can still be heard in suitable habitat, including lightly developed sections of towns. In Fayetteville we still find a few in mature forests on Mt Sequoyah, Kessler Mountain, and elsewhere, though increasing urbanization will predictably further fragment suitable habitat. Wood Thrushes sing in the forests all around the Newton County seat at Jasper—one of the special delights of visiting the Buffalo National River area.

Finally, there is a highly unusual observation for February 5, 1998. John Prather and Jeff Briggler were birding at Bob Kidd Lake. According to Prather's documentation, "One feeding on greenbriar berries in thicket on edge of lake. Rusty-brown upperparts, white underparts with clear black spots. Pink legs, white eye-ring. This is the study species for my PhD so I am intimately familiar with it."

American Robin, *Turdus migratorius*

STATUS: Common resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Robins are present throughout the year. They are among the most numerous of our nesting birds. They are common, sometimes abundant, in winter.

Their energetic dawn choruses and busy courtships add life to urban areas. They connect us to a world typically wider than that otherwise encompassed by our busy lives. When she was in elementary school, my daughter Ariel did a science project that involved discovering what robins collected while building a nest in our yard. She found that it contained at least 11 different kinds of materials, most of which could have been collected within 30 feet of the nest. I think it is fair to say the extensive, ongoing urbanization has not been detrimental to this wild creature, apparently adaptable to the way we alter the natural environment.

Breeding Bird Survey data illustrates how adapted robins are to towns and farmlands. They have steadily increased over the years on the highly urbanized Avoca BBS. With more than 100 counted some years, robins are among the top five birds on this route. By contrast, they are almost never found on two of the most heavily forested and least urbanized BBS routes, Ozark National Forest and Boston Mountain.

During fall and winter robins may be quite widespread in towns and forests since they form large roosts involving many thousands of birds. This occurs when the crops of wild berries (cedar, hackberry, blackgum, poison ivy, Amur honeysuckle, etc.) are available in abundance. From 1961-2016, data from the the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count showed more than 1000 robins observed in 9 count years. However, robins are scarce in winter some years: 50 or fewer were found during 12 counts.

Gray Catbird, *Dumetella carolinensis*

STATUS: Fairly common summer resident; rare in winter; DATES: April 1 to October 22+.

Loud mewing calls and vigorous singing from conspicuous branches marks the spring arrival of catbirds in my yard, typically around mid-April. Their preferred habitat includes shrubbery in towns, farmyards, and forest edge, but are absent from extensive grasslands and forests. My unkempt Fayetteville yard and woodlot is overgrown with dense thickets of non-native shrubs, including bush or Amur honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii*) and privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*). This is a common situation throughout urban western Arkansas, where these plants form a dense shrubby layer. The good news is that catbirds find the cover to their liking. The bad news is that these invasive shrubs shade out native plant species.

"In the region of Fayetteville, catbirds begin to sing about April 23 and may be heard until near the end of July" (Baerg 1951). In the Winslow area, Black (1935) considered it "perhaps the most common summer bird…" They have been counted in modest numbers on Avoca, Compton, and Lurton Breeding Bird Surveys but are absent from the heavily forested Boston Mountain and Ozark NF routes. They are also occasionally found on the Massard survey in the river valley.

Black noted that "in dry summers they retire to the larger streams about the middle of July, in company with other birds that ordinarily remain more evenly distributed." I have found catbirds at Chesney Prairie Natural Area, where they do not nest, as migrants, primarily during September and early October; my data from Wilson Springs Preserve in Fayetteville is similar.

Most catbirds have migrated south by late October, but a few linger. This leads to occasional records for December, January, and February. It is a prize for the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count, with three records (including count week). A catbird in my Fayetteville yard on December 29, 2008, called from dense patches of privet, still covered with leaves and loaded with berries. I saw two catbirds in early 2015: one in a cane thicket at Steel Creek Campground on the Buffalo National River and on February 22, 2015, one in my yard, visiting the feeder during snow.

Brown Thrasher, *Toxostoma rufum*

STATUS: Common resident except during midwinter, when relatively few are found; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Like towhees, these thicket-dwellers are much in evidence by mid-March as they sing from treetops. Since thrashers are short distance migrants, birds we see during warming trends of February and March could be ones that wintered further south.

Thrashers are similar to mockingbirds in their avoidance of dense forests and preference for shrubby thickets in generally open country. While Brown Thrashers nest in thickets in farmland and former prairies, they also commonly nest in urban areas. Two birds were already building a nest in my yard in Fayetteville on March 19, 2008.

Thrashers are counted in relatively high numbers on the Avoca Breeding Survey route that courses a now heavily urbanized former prairie.

We find them regularly through October and into November, but many fewer thereafter. Presumeably, upon arrival of cold weather, some thrashers probably move south. It is a "good bird" in winter because they are usually hard to find. The number of thrashers reported on the Christmas Bird Count at Fayetteville (1961-2016) varied from 0-10, with 0-1 recorded 16 years, 7+ in 6 years.

Brown Thrashers appear to be making some range changes related to a warming climate. Analysis by National Audubon shows they have shifted their center of abundance north by 34 miles during the past 40 years.

Northern Mockingbird, *Mimus polyglottos*

STATUS: Common resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Mockingbirds are common permanent residents of open country thickets and are also well adapted to urban environments. In towns their frequent and highly varied singing is a good counter to traffic, leaf blowers, and other modern audio horrors. They sing at night, no doubt encouraged by a good moon, but more frequently by city lights. They are often associated with fruit-bearing trees and shrubs. It's even better if these are parts of thickets.

Over the years, mockingbirds have increased in numbers with urbanization in western Arkansas. For example, mockingbirds have been increasing along the Massard Breeding Bird Survey at Fort Smith. This increase is also demonstrated by data from the Christmas Bird Count. Based upon birds per party hour data, mockingbirds on the Fort Smith-Moffett CBC have increased quite a bit from the 1960s to 2006-2015: 0.97/party hour in the 1960s versus 1.45 in recent years. The increase on Fayetteville CBC for the same periods was 1.14/party hour compared to 1.41.

European Starling, *Sturnus vulgaris*

STATUS: Abundant resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

In their dark starry plumage of fall, starlings are handsome birds with a big repertoire of vocalizations. However, as an introduced non-native species, they tend to smother the competition for cavity nest sites, whether that competition be Purple Martins, Red-headed Woodpeckers, flickers, or other obligate cavity nesters. In this respect, they are much like non-native invasive plants capable of out-competing and sometimes eliminating natives. That is, starling flocks smother the competition much like kudzu vines.

Huge flocks numbering hundreds and thousands of birds wheel through the fall and winter skies, a dazzle of symmetry and order. There is now a significant body of research demonstrating such flock behavior helps reduce the danger of being caught by a predator like Cooper's Hawk (Friederici 2009). During winter they congregate into enormous night roosts that often number in the hundreds of thousands of individuals.

Bohemian Waxwing, *Bombycilla garrulus*

No recent records. One record published by Baerg (1931) is vague: 12 to 15 birds at Fayetteville in "April or May" of 1921. The second record involved a single bird associating with Cedar Waxwings at Winslow on May 12, 1931 (Black 1935).

Cedar Waxwing, *Bombycilla cedrorum*

STATUS: Common transient, irregular during winter; very uncommon summer resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

We see Cedar Waxwings in every season, but their appearances are somewhat unpredictable. They are somewhat rare in summer, but nesting is confirmed.

Big flocks arrive with real cold, typically in mid to late November. They are irregular in winter. We see hundreds some years, none in others. Flocks estimated to number several hundred individuals have been observed over the years during March, consuming ripening berries. According to David Chapman (2016), "About 600+ were counted following heavy rains on March 10, 2013, all perched in trees …" adjacent Lake Fayetteville.

Cedar Waxwings remain in western Arkansas during late spring and early summer, foraging on ripening wild fruits, but some of these birds are also nesting. During the 1990s there were at least 10 reports of nests or fledglings. Kim Smith found a nest in a pine at Paradise Valley Country Club in Fayetteville on June 2, 1996; young fledged by June 30.

James Tucker, Mia Ravels, and others found four young in a nest in a sycamore tree at Cass in Franklin County on June 19, 1993. In Boone County, Harold and Mary Jo Loch observed a nest that was built in a pine in the first week of August 1997; young fledged about September 1. Mike Mlodinow and Betty Coody observed a bird with pine needles in its beak at Lake Bella Vista in Benton County on July 9, 1999. In addition, they have been found during the nesting season at lakes Elmdale, Atalanta, Wedington, Sequoyah, as well as at Fayetteville, in Newton and Carroll counties, and elsewhere.

I have seen juveniles on several occasions during late summer at Lake Fayetteville including young being fed out of the nest on August 11, 2008, and a flock of nine, including eight juveniles, on September 10, 2008. Our nesting season records are consistent with known breeding cycles elsewhere, including the habit of late season nesting (Witmer et al. 1997). They have also nested in the Missouri Ozarks adjacent northwest Arkansas (Jacobs and Wilson 1997).

Urbanization in western Arkansas seems to be working in favor of Cedar Waxwings. For example, consider these Christmas Bird Count data: during the 1960s, birds per party hour on the Fort Smith-Moffett CBC equaled 2.00. During the most recent decade, 2006-2015, the number was 4.41 waxwings/party hour. This difference is a bit exaggerated by chance encounters with a few large flocks, but planting of fruiting shrubs in urban environments is attractive to Cedar Waxwings.

Between 1961 and 2016, Cedar Waxwings were found on most Fayetteville CBCs: 100 or more were counted 25 years, and once 824 (1984). Buffalo National River (west) CBC had a high number of 879 in 1982. Fort Smith-Moffett tallied 538 on the 1990 count. However, there are also years when numbers are very low.

Cedar Waxwings in my Fayetteville neighborhood conspicuously consumed persimmons from limbs broken by an ice storm in late January 2009. They reminded me of Audubon's painting of Carolina Parakeets – perching upside down, sideways, and at all angles, in lusty pursuit of ripe fruit.

House Sparrow, *Passer domesticus*

STATUS: Common resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

House Sparrows occur widely and in good numbers around feed mills, older style chicken houses, and small farms with gardens and deteriorating out buildings. During the period 1961-1985, more than 700 House Sparrows were annually observed on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count, up to a peak of 1800 in 1964.

During the past two decades, House Sparrow numbers on the CBC have steeply declined. When the 1960s are compared to 2006-2015, the decline is 90% (13.84 per party hour versus 1.62). Within Fayetteville CBC circle, small farms, deteriorated out buildings, and crop fields have all declined. That is to say, "old timey" Arkansas is going away. It is possible that House Sparrows don't thrive as the region undergoes extensive urbanization. There is certainly a lot less of the rural or small town farm in newly emerging Northwest Arkansas City.

The decline of House Sparrows roughly coincides with arrival of House Finches. Maybe the finches are better adapted to new urban realities?

American Pipit, *Anthus rubescens*

STATUS: Fairly common transient and winter resident; DATES: September 25 to May 8, but mainly second half of October to first half of April.

American Pipits frequent extensively open country, including plowed fields, closely grazed pastures, and mudflats associated with ponds and lakes. Once you learn the high-pitched "pipit pipit" call, it is fairly easy to spot the bird and follow it as it settles back down on the pond flat. Flocks seem to float along until they settle into a field, where they disappear.

During migration and winter, we regularly find single birds and sometimes larger flocks. In the 1980s, when Lake Sequoyah was drawn down exposing big mudflats, we had several late October counts of more than 60. An estimated 120 walked a closely grazed pasture near Cherokee City in Benton County on April 11, 2009. There were 28 in a harvested bean field there on April 11, 2016. Huge agricultural fields in the river valley provide extensive habitat for them.

While pipts are readily found in migration, they are somewhat less numerous during winter. Since western Arkansas is in the northern part of this pipit's usual winter range, presumeably their presence or absence at midwinter is influenced by the weather. However, we usually find a few at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton and fields around Maysville. On January 8, 2009, at Lake Fayetteville, David Chapman (2016) watched one "foraging in the rocks at the base of the spillway when the lake was almost entirely frozen." Perhaps climate change with increasing winter temperatures is allowing these birds to winter further north with greater regularity. Bill Beall estimated 400 in fields of the river valley south of Kibler on January 6, 2018.

Since 2003, we have tallied 40+ on seven Fayetteville Christmas Bird Counts, including 239 in 2016. One of the best places has been plowed fields at University farm.

Sprague's Pipit, *Anthus spragueii*

STATUS: Very rare transient and winter resident; DATES: October 7 to April 17.

Doug James saw 1-5 birds in an open field near Farmington in Washington County between December 15, 1956, and April 17, 1957. James' winter 1956-1957 sightings involved an open pasture with very sparse vegetation somewhat typical of our former prairies.There were at least 1-2 in a harvested field adjacent West-Ark Sod in the river valley on April 8, 2013. On October 23, 2012, 3-4 foraged a closely grazed pasture near Maysville. This is part of former Beatie Prairie and is still largely open and undeveloped. Mike Mlodinow observed one in short grass at University farm in Fayetteville on October 7, 2012.

Sprague's Pipit has been recorded a few times on the Fort Smith-Moffett Christmas Bird Count, but not since 1980. Formerly extensive Massard Prairie has been mostly lost to development.

Sprague's Pipits have been a little easier to find in good habitat adjacent western Arkansas. For example, there were six or more Sprague's in short grass at The Nature Conservancy's Tallgrass Prairie Preserve on April 21, 2006. David Chapman saw Sprague's there on the Christmas Bird Count January 2, 2012. At Prairie State Park north of Joplin, Missouri, we found at least four Sprague's in a wide, closely mowed fire line October 13, 2012.

Evening Grosbeak, *Coccothraustes vespertinus*

STATUS: Rare, irregular winter visitor; DATES: November 1 to June 16.

We have had no records since mid-1990s. During past years, they sometimes crowded home feeders with flocks of 20 to 30 birds. It has been found on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count (including count week) four years since 1961: 1977, 1983, 1990, and 1994. Russell Graham observed 125+ on March 19, 1986, at Nob Hill in Washington County; one remained until April 15.

While it is true Evening Grosbeaks are irregular or irruptive in the southern movements that reach Arkansas, at least part of the reason we are not seeing them now involves declining populations (Sauer et al. 2013). Evening Grosbeak is now on the Watch List of Birds of Conservation Concern. Check this out in State of North America's Birds, North American Bird Conservation Initiative, 2016 Watch List.

House Finch, *Haemorhous mexicanus*

STATUS: Common resident; DATES: in all seasons.

House Finches have partially replaced Purple Finches here in the past 20 years. The first House Finch record for Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count involved 11 birds at a feeder near Lake Fayetteville on November 26, 1988. Numbers recorded on Fayetteville CBC steadily increased in the following decade to reach the population we have today. House Finches were first recorded for the Fort Smith-Moffett CBC in 1990.

Why have these finches become so successful? "The conversion of vast areas of forest, grassland, and desert into uniform areas of lawns, ornamental trees, and buildings created enormous areas of ideal habitat for House Finches" (Hill 1993). In other words, a highly urbanized Northwest Arkansas City is House Finch Heaven. Using Marzluff's (2014) term, House Finches are classic "adapters … mostly native species that thrive on naturally young, open, shrubby, and dissected native habitats. They find and adjust to these situations in our cities and towns …"

Purple Finch, *Haemorhous purpureus*

STATUS: Uncommon transient; irregular and now uncommon winter resident, though locally common some years; DATES: October 8 to May 9+.

"The Purple Finch is noted for quasicyclical irruptions across portions of its winter range, thought to be associated with year to year variation in the production of northern conifer cones" (Wootton 1996). Purple Finches occurred regularly in varying numbers on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count until the early 1990s, at which time House Finch numbers began to climb. Purple Finches have become comparatively uncommon since. There has also been a marked shift north in the Purple Finch winter range, apparently a response to climate warming (Niven et al. 2009). Analysis by National Audubon shows that over the past 40 years, the center of abundance for these finches has shifted 433 miles north.

House Finches arrived as a permanent nesting population in the western Ozarks in the late 1980s, largely replacing Purple Finches. The relationship between lower Purple Finch and higher House Finch numbers is complex. Lower Purple Finch numbers are derived, at least in part, from decline in the breeding population of Purple Finches in the

northeastern US and southern Canada. House Finch invasion into these breeding areas is considered the cause (Wootton 1996).

Winter 2004-2005 was a relatively good year for Purple Finches here. I saw them on several occasions during walks on Mt. Sequoyah in Fayetteville, with a peak of five on March 28. This was at a feeder also visited by House Finches and Pine Siskins. Purple Finches are regulars at feeders on the Ninestone Land Trust in Carroll County, where as many as 12 were observed during February 2009. The 50 at Ninestone's feeders reported by Judith Ann Griffitt on January 1, 2017, was the highest she number she had seen in years. Fayetteville CBC tally of 174 in 2014 was second highest ever there.

Bob and Cathy Ross saw one on their feeders Beaver Lake on the late date of May 9, 1998. Smith (1935) reported nesting at Winslow, the only such record for Arkansas.

Common Redpoll, *Acanthis flammea*

STATUS: Very rare winter visitor; DATES: December 4 to March 17.

These northern finches rarely get as far south as Arkansas. Nevertheless, we have seen them here about 10 times between 1955 and 2013. The earliest record is that of Ruth Armstrong, who found one at Natural Dam in Crawford County on March 6, 1955. The most recent is from Ninestone Land Trust in Carroll County where a female redpoll was present February 14 to March 15, 2013. On March 14, Judith Ann Griffith noted there were an estimated 70 American Goldfinches and 100 Pine Siskins there as well. This observation provides a useful description of the situation in which we are most likely to find them: mixed in or loosely associated with more numerous finches that visit feeders.

These birds also have a lot of star power. The redpoll that Joyce Shedell saw at her feeders March 3 -17, 1985, at Highfill in Benton County was eventually viewed by 50 others. I was among the grateful throng on March 8, 1985.

Red Crossbill, *Loxia curvirostra*

STATUS: Primarily irregular or irruptive visitor that has apparently nested a few times; DATES: observed in all seasons.

The crossed bills of Red Crossbills are an evolutionary adaptation for prying open pine cones to obtain seeds. Hence, our crossbill observations are mainly associated with pine forests. This species is well-known for its nomadic searches for cone crops (Adkisson 1996). Our observations are scattered across most months.

Here are a few high counts: 20 birds on April 10, 1997, in Boone County; of these, 6 birds remained for a week at a sunflower seed feeder at the home of Wayne Bell (this was in one of JoAnne Rife's Arkansas Breeding Bird Atlas plots). Seven birds were in pines at the Fayetteville Country Club on December 19, 1987, and for at least several days thereafter. At Fayetteville, crossbills (up to 12 at one point) arrived at a feeder in the last week of February 1997 and returned daily until June 10 (usually four males, three females), the only crossbills at this feeder in 12 years. Bill Beall has spent many years in the Fern-Shores Lake country. He has seen crossbills basically every year. The 47 on January 23, 1993, was his highest number ever.

Crossbills were particularly widespread during the invasion of 2012-2013 (Smith et al. 2015). This started in early November 2012. Eventually there were flocks of various sizes (up to about 50 birds) in numerous locations. Besides many sightings in Fayetteville, flocks were also seen well at Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area, Ozark Natural Science Center north of Huntsville, Ninestone Land Trust in Carroll County, near Shores Lake in Ozark National Forest, and other places with mature pines. There were crossbill sightings until end of May 2013.

One outcome from this invasion was identification of different call types from audio recordings obtained at Fayetteville Country Club (FCC). Besides native Shortleaf Pines, several other non-native pine species have been planted there over the years. Audio recordings on December 10, 2012, from FCC were analyzed by Matt Young from Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. The results were quite a surprise. Most of the birds recorded were Type 2, the Ponderosa Pine Crossbill. Some were Type 3, Western Hemlock Crossbill. The biggest surprise of all was Type 5, Lodgepole Pine Crossbill, only rarely found so far east. Type 3s were also recorded at Ninestone.

If this wasn't surprise enough: on March 4, 2017, Bill Beall and Jim Nieting were in the Shores Lake area of Ozark NF scouting for an upcoming Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society field trip. They unexpectedly had great looks at four Red Crossbills. Joan Reynolds and I followed up on this and saw at least five birds. Reynolds got photos of 1-2 birds in juvenile plumage, including one being fed out of the nest by an adult. My conclusion: what we were seeing was a family group. They must have nested in the Shores Lake area, rich with mature Shortleaf Pines and an abundant cone crop perfect for crossbills. I returned a few days later with UA-Fayetteville graduate students Anant Deswhal and Pooja Panwar. They collected audio files that confirmed these as Call Type 2 Ponderosa Pine Crossbills.

The Red Crossbill invasion of 2017-2018 has produced additional surprises. Audio recordings by Deswhal and Panwar near Shores Lake in October 2017 indicated Call Type 1 Appalachian Crossbills may have nested there. This invasion produced an additional surprise: their recordings from Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area in mid-December 2017 confirmed presence of Call Type 4, Douglas-fir Crossbills.

From all of this, I think it safe to infer the fascinating evolutionary story of Red Crossbills continues to unfold. Part of that story is happening in Northwest Arkansas City. No doubt, new chapters are ahead.

White-winged Crossbill, *Loxia leucoptera*

Mitchell Pruitt reported six at Devil's Den State Park on February 15, 2013. According to his eBird checklist, "Heard coming back into Lee Creek parking lot from Yellow Rock Trail, then seen taking flight from a sweet gum tree (about 5). One responded a little later to playback from the complete opposite direction the others flew. Unmistakably more nasally and staccato than any of the possible Red Crossbill types. There were also LOTS of Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch and Dark-eyed Junco in the area. Was not able to relocate. Lots of sweet gum in the park, so they could be around somewhere else though searches on 2/16 were extensive ... "

Pine Siskin, *Spinus pinus*

STATUS: Fairly common transient, uncommon winter resident; very rare during nesting season; DATES: observations in all seasons, but mainly late October to early May.

Siskins frequent mature pines or mixed pine-hardwood, but during migration or irruptive movements they can be heard overhead about anywhere. They opportunistically forage on seeds where available. Easiest place to see them is at feeders.

An early arrival date is September 21, but fall birds typically arrive in October. Mike Mlodinow, Joe Woolbright, and I watched four siskins harvesting seeds from ashy sunflowers (*Helianthus mollis*) at Chesney Prairie Natural Area on October 27, 2007. Ten siskins were harvesting Sawtooth Sunflower seeds at Maysville on October 27, 2010. Two flocks of 30-40 birds were harvesting Sawtooth seeds at Maysville on October 17, 2014.

One of the best and easiest places to consistently observed siskins are well-tended feeders at Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area visitor center. Even on a cold day, you can stand or sit comfortably in the center and enjoy siskins outside at the feeders. Many eBird checklists have been submitted after such visits. These show siskins there between November 25 and May 4, but mainly early December to mid-April. Jackie Guzy and others observed 30 at Hobbs on January 16, 2016. The 10 seen by Lauren Thead at Hobbs on May 4, 2013, were relatively late.

Siskins were observed on 16 Christmas Bird Count at Fayetteville, 1961-2016 (high of 37 in 1977).

We see them again in the spring, as they move north. For example, more than 60 were harvesting ripe dandelion seeds on Mt. Sequoyah at Fayetteville in late April and early May of different years.

There are also a few interesting summer records. One bird remained at Carroll and Velma Ridgway's feeder at Bella Vista during the period of June 4-9, 1987. Bob and Cathy Ross, who live near Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area, have observed Pine Siskins for many years at their feeders, including several years when nesting was possible. August 8-9, 2005, they observed a juvenile and watched it begging for food. They had probable nesting in June 2006 as well.

Jacque Brown, David Oakley, and Mike Mlodinow observed two siskins apparently building a nest at Lake Fayetteville on April 4, 2009. The birds weren't found there later.

While the typical breeding range for Pine Siskins lies well to the north of Arkansas, they are present year around much closer to Arkansas both to the north and west. "Reproductive schedule and attachment to a particular breeding area appear to be less rigidly fixed in the Pine Siskin than in many other songbirds. In some cases, members of an irruptive population may linger on a favorable wintering ground long enough to breed" (Dawson 1997).

Lesser Goldfinch, *Spinus psaltria*

This common western species rarely gets as far east as Arkansas. Nevertheless, there are well-documented observations.

A single bird of the green-backed form first appeared at Art Evans' feeder in the summer of 1983 near Gravette, often associated with American Goldfinches. Remarkably, it remained at this locale until an ice storm on January 1, 1991. All other records have involved the black-backed form from Texas.

A single bird was present at the Alan Bowers residence near Rogers May 14-17, 2006. Bowers photographed the bird. One appeared at Joyce Shedell's feeders in Highfull and remained at least May 9-10, 2012. Another bird visited Art Evans' feeders on March 15, 2016.

American Goldfinch, *Spinus tristis*

STATUS: Common resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

This "wild canary" is the symbol of the Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society. It is highly characteristic of shrubby, abandoned fields and is a regular visitor to home bird feeders in winter. In their study at Pea Ridge National Military Park, Shugart and James (1973) found highest numbers of goldfinches in early tree stage plots characterized by open fields with clonal persimmons and especially the woody field.

Goldfinches are present in western Arkansas throughout the year. However, there are marked population fluctuations. Spring migration becomes obvious around mid-April because flocks form choruses of singing birds as they forage in treetops along streams and in forested neighborhoods. For example, I heard choruses along Scull Creek Trail in Fayetteville on April 15, 2010, and then in my neighborhood the following day.

Goldfinches present during the nesting season are augmented by fledglings with numbers peaking by early to mid-September. However, there is a steep decline thereafter. Relative high numbers are present again by late October and early November. These presumeably include migrants that nested north of Arkansas.

For example, at Chesney Prairie Natural Area, native ashy sunflowers (*Helianthus mollis*) have ripe seeds by August. Numerous goldfinches are in attendance, harvesting seeds and filling the open country with their songs and flight calls. Approximately 70 were foraging on Ashy Sunflowers there on September 9, 2013. The estimate was 125 for September 13, 2007. Numerous seed heads of sawtooth sunflowers (*Helianthus grosseserratus*) are also attractive: I saw a big flock swarming sawtooth seedheads near Elkins in Washington County on October 26, 2007.

Goldfinches are widely distributed during summer. They are reported on all Breeding Bird Surveys. Our goldfinches don't start nesting until mid-summer, quite a bit later than most other birds, and nesting runs until just about the start of fall. For example, I found an active nest with incubation underway at Pea Ridge NMP on September 12, 2008. Late season nesting seems to be associated with the ripening patterns of various thistles and thistle down that goldfinches commonly use in nests. The late nesting habitat may also help reduce problems with Brown-headed Cowbirds, whose egg-laying is about over when goldfinches start to nest.

Goldfinches also forage where patches of green algae develop. A few examples include mudflats at Eagle Watch Nature Trail, drained ponds at Craig State Fish Hatchery, the spring run at Lake Atalanta, and many others. Stand back and watch as they gather and consume long strands of algae. When goldfinches consume algae they are obtaining the xanthophylls supporting their trademark canary yellow.

While goldfinches remain common, urbanization equals loss of expansive, woody, open field habitat. Numbers tallied for Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count have declined: 3.37 goldfinches per party hour during the 1960s versus an average of 2.22 for 2006-2015. They remain a useful symbol for Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society, but what with galloping urbanization, what once was a woody field is increasingly a parking lot.

Lapland Longspur, *Calcarius lapponicus*

STATUS: Uncommon but regular transient and winter resident in former prairie habitat; DATES: October 25 to March 4.

During the cold season, November through early February, we listen keenly in extensively open areas for "rattles and tews" of flying Lapland Longspurs. We find Laps in big fields in the river valley and in our former prairies that remain open and undeveloped. These are single birds or small flocks, often fewer than 10 birds, in open country with very sparse vegetation, including plowed fields like those at the University farm in Fayetteville, harvested bean fields in the river valley, and at Maysville, also in big crop fields. Perhaps this habitat at least somewhat resembles the Arctic tundra of the far north where they nest. Sometimes these longspurs are mixed with flocks of Horned Larks or American Pipits.

Laps have been found only only 15 Christmas Bird Counts (including count week) at Fayetteville. Increasingly, the open field habitat they require is disappearing under the galloping blizzard of urbanization. Results are similar on Fort Smith-Moffett CBC and for the same reasons.

Over the years, we have found them at golf courses, airports, University farm in Fayetteville, along highways at midwinter when hard freezes or snow forces birds from open fields, in closely-grazed pastures and big plowed fields. We don't find them on every winter field trip, even in best habitat, but they can sometimes be locally abundant.

Best habitat has been huge fields of young winter wheat or harvested bean stubble. We have found them occasionally in especially impressive numbers from Siloam Springs north into the former Round and Beatie Prairies along the Arkansas-Oklahoma line. An estimated 40 were among approximately 200 Horned Larks in a plowed field near the Siloam Springs airport on January 19, 2003. Approximately 225 foraged in a harvested bean field along Floyd Moore Road

northwest of Gentry on December 1, 2010. On December 7, 2010, the count was approximately 150 in one field and 300-400 inanother, both extensive harvested bean fields southeast of Maysville. My estimate was a minimum of 500 southeast of Maysville March 1, 2013, and just a few still present on March 4.

Chestnut-collared Longspur, *Calcarius ornatus*

A single bird was observed and heard by Tom Haggerty at the University farm in Fayetteville on April 18, 1983. Documentation is on file with the Arkansas Audubon Society.

Smith's Longspur, *Calcarius pictus*

STATUS: Rare transient and winter visitor; DATES: November 13 to February 28.

Smith's Longspur has been seen over the years from the river valley around Fort Smith north to Fayetteville and the former prairies at Siloam Springs. Highest numbers have been recorded in the river valley. For example, Smith's was found at Fort Smith regional airport at least to the mid-1960s. Ben Coffey and Bill Beall counted 155 there on November 26, 1955. Also in the valley, in more recent years, birds have been found on the old Arrowhead landing strip at Fort Chaffee. Bill Holimon and others counted 64 there on February 26, 2004. Sandy Berger, Karen McGee and others saw six on November 13, 2004.

Records further north are much more scattered and have involved fewer birds. Doug James found three north of Lincoln on November 17, 1956. There were a few reports in the 1980s of 1-2 birds from Smith Field at Siloam Springs where they were observed in the *Aristida* species grasses near the terminal building. Mike Mlodinow has found them twice at the University farm in Fayetteville: December 11, 2004, in a partially harvested soybean field and four, also in short grass, on December 2, 2006.

They occur regularly in winter both north and west of us: Prairie State Park in southwestern Missouri and The Nature Conservancy's Tallgrass Prairie Preserve in the Flinthills of northeastern Oklahoma.

Spotted Towhee, *Pipilo masculatus*

STATUS: Very uncommon, but regular winter resident; DATES: October 12 to April 19.

Spotted Towhees nest well to the west of Arkansas, but in winter a few birds move east so that their typical winter range reaches western Arkansas (Greenlaw 1996). We see a few, scattered here and there, almost always single birds.

My favorite Spotted Towhee story dates to fall 2011 when Mitchell Pruitt, then a high school student working on a Big Year, came to Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary in hopes of seeing the Cassin's Sparrow discovered by Mike Mlodinow on October 22. A bunch of us were birding with Mitchell on October 23. Besides Mike, David Chapman, Jacque Brown, David Oakley, and Joanie Patterson were birding. We didn't find Cassin's, but Mitchell had some other birds on his list, including Spotted Towhee. Just about the time he asked about Spotted, one popped out of a thicket and Mitchell got it for his Big Year.

There are five records of single birds on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count 1991 to 2007. We saw one for Great Backyard Bird Count at Devil's Den State Park February 17, 2012. A female spent the snowy, extremely cold days of February 5-9, 2014, at David Chapman's backyard feeder near Lake Fayetteville. Several of us had the pleasure seeing this bird while we sat comfortably in his warm dining room. Doug James and others found two males and one female in dense thickets of regenerating field habitat at Lake Fayetteville on November 11, 2000. Phil Vogrinc saw one at Woolsey on the late date of April 19, 2015.

Eastern Towhee, *Pipilo erythrophthalmus*

STATUS: Common transient and summer resident, less common winter resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

During migration towhees make brief stops in all kinds of thickets, including those in town. They show up around mid-March in my yard in Fayetteville. Towhees were already singing on four territories at Ninestone Land Trust in Carroll County on March 20, 2009. The nine at Lake Fayetteville on March 24, 2011, indicated a migratory influx, as did 11 at the same place on March 25, 2000.

During summer towhees are typically found in fairly open habitats with shrubs and medium-sized trees, including regenerating field habitat. Old farmland provides good habitat. In the Shugart and James study at Pea Ridge National Military Park (1973), towhees occurred in a range of early succession habitats, with highest numbers in woody fields and especially forest edge. This latter plot was characterized as "the junction of a post oak forest and a broom sedge

field. The junction included a dense understory of winged sumac and blackberry." Logging operations also can foster suitable nesting habitat. In the Missouri Ozarks, towhees were common in regenerating clearcuts and present in lower numbers in stands with shelterwood and group selection cutting (Annand and Thompson 1997). Towhees are recorded on all Breeding Bird Survey routes. Breeding season point counts from the Ozark National Forest shows a declining trend based upon data within the period 1992-2004 (La Sorte et al. 2007).

The single towhees seen during two years at Chesney Prairie Natural Area in mid-October were certainly transients. During such times, they remain a day or two at most. The eight birds counted by Jack and Pam Stewart at Erbie in Newton County on November 25, 2008, was a high number so late in the season.

We find towhees most years on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count, but in lower numbers than in the 1960s. Effort on CBCs can be standardized with results expressed as birds per party hours. This shows that towhee numbers in the 1960s averaged 0.17 per party hour. The comparable figure for the most recent decade (2006-2015) was 0.05. This change is likely a direct result of the reduction of open, extensive, woody field habitat as a consequence of urbanization.

Cassin's Sparrow, *Peucaea cassinii*

Mike Mlodinow found a Cassin's Sparrow at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary on October 22, 2011. He called me. I managed to obtain a few photographs to document it. The bird apparently spent at least several hours in an extensive patch of foxtail grasses (Setaria species), rich with seeds.

Bachman's Sparrow, *Peucaea aestivalis*

The only recent record for the old "pine woods sparrow" in the Ozarks involves one bird found by Bill Beall in Franklin County on April 30, 1992. The habitat was a recent clearcut on the Ozark National Forest. Bachman's has been found during summer on the extensively open and frequently burned former Massard Prairie prairie grasslands and shrublands of Fort Chaffee at Fort Smith. Bill Beall saw them there June 6, 1987, noting "Same area where found off and on since 1972 - a controlled burn area by Game & Fish Comm. for deer habitat." Sandy Berger found three there on May 8, 2004.

During my Forest Service years, I found them regularly in good quality Red-cockaded Woodpecker habitat on the Ouachita NF in western Arkansas, also maintained in an open condition with fire. The open park-like mature pine habitat in the Ouachitas includes an understory of native grasses and forbs that provide hiding places for their nests.

As in the case of Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Bachman's must have been more widespread historically. It is strongly associated with the early regeneration of forests (both pine and hardwood) and open, mature pine-dominated forest (James and Neal 1986).

While we live in the northwest corner of Bachman's Sparrow nesting range, our native Shortleaf Pine forests should hold potential for them. Big, well-managed pine stands at Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area, McIlroy Madison County Wildlife Management Area, plus expansive stands of Shortleaf Pine in areas of the Ozark NF (for example, Shores Lake area), all may be attractive to Bachman's Sparrows.

American Tree Sparrow, *Spizelloides arborea*

STATUS: Uncommon winter visitor; DATES: October 18 to April 3.

Tree sparrows are not found here every winter. We usually feel lucky to see a few. However, blasts of snow and severe cold sometimes drive flocks south from their typical winter range. We tramp the big, open fields with brush and weeds. This is habitat similar to that chosen by the much more common White-crowned Sparrows.

Most of our records involve a few associated with other wintering birds, especially White-crowned Sparrows. But on occasion we see many more. A huge influx occurred in early February 2011 following back-to-back snowfalls. First big flocks were on February 5 (30 birds at Cherokee City). My count for February 7, 2011, was 269, in at least 19 flocks, along highways 59, 12, and 43, Siloam Springs through Decatur to Maysville. They were foraging in and beside the roads, the only open areas available. Small amounts of chicken feed spilled on the highway provided a winter bounty. In one place, 27 perched on one fence. There were 58 in a tight flock at Centerton on February 8.

We have observed them in 36 years for Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count (1961-2015). However, overall we are now finding them less often and in lower numbers. Suitable extensive woody field habitat is in decline due to urbanization. Effort on CBCs is standardized with results expressed as birds per party hour. American Tree Sparrow numbers in the 1960s averaged 0.50 per party hour. The comparable figure for 2006-2015 is 0.06.

The warming climate is likely another contributor. Analysis by National Audubon shows that during the past 40 years center of abundance for American Tree Sparrows has shifted north by 54 miles.

Chipping Sparrow, *Spizella passerina*

STATUS: Common transient and summer resident; uncommon in winter; DATES: primarily March to October, but observed in all seasons.

Days of winter begin to shift toward spring at mid-March. I have enjoyed listening for Chipping Sparrows while walking across the broad lawn in front of Old Main on the University campus in Fayetteville. Here and elsewhere, they are frequent especially where there are well-spaced, mature trees, including hardwoods and conifers, and the ground is open and grassy: parks, cemeteries, campgrounds, golf courses, open pasture with a few trees, gardens, and mature open pine woods. Flocks are still passing through into the second half of April, indicating spring migration is still underway.

Chipping Sparrows nest widely in western Arkansas. They are reported on all Breeding Bird Surveys. Breeding season point counts from the Ozark National Forest shows a strong increasing trend based upon data within the period 1992-2004 (La Sorte et al. 2007).

Chipping Sparrows have become more common in winter in recent years. The increase at Fayetteville dates to around the early 1990s. The same situation is documented in the river valley at Fort Smith. Data collection effort on Christmas Bird Counts is standardized with results expressed as birds per party hour. American Tree Sparrow in the 1960s on Fort Smith-Moffett CBC averaged 0.01 per party hour. The comparable figure for 2006-2015 is 0.74. It appears Chipping Sparrows see opportunity in the urbanization of western Arkansas.

Clay-colored Sparrow, *Spizella pallida*

STATUS: Gnerally uncommon transient; DATES: April 9 to May 21 and August 28 to November 1+.

This western counterpart of our familiar Chipping Sparrow migrates mainly through the Great Plains where it nests, but observations are scattered east all the way to the Mississippi Valley (Knapton 1994). In northwest Arkansas, Clay-colored Sparrows are observed regularly in low numbers in open areas including brushy fields and open park-like forest, including those in towns and cities. These sightings are mainly in the Ozarks.

We see a spring migration peak between the last days of April until about mid-May. While many sightings have involved 1-2 birds, Mike Mlodinow and others saw 25 at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton hatchery on April 26, 1996. During International Migratory Bird Day, May 14, 2006, my party (including Rob Wiedenmann and Ricky Corder) found nine Clay-colored Sparrows during the day, most of them at University farm in Fayetteville; they seemed “everywhere.” There were 7-9 at Chesney Prairie Natural Area on April 25, 2011. Some of these birds were singing.

We typically see fall transients from mid- September through late October, with a few scattered records thereafter. At Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary, Mitchell Pruitt counted 11 on October 7, 2013, including one group of five.

There are occasion reports into November. Mike Mlodinow documented a bird in Fayetteville on the unusual date of February 12, 2008.

“The Great Plains is the continent's most endangered major ecosystem. The decline in extent and quality of North American prairies coincides with decreasing populations of many bird species that depend on them, including the Clay-colored Sparrow. The original vegetation of the northern Great Plains has been greatly modified through human settlement, mainly by conversion for agriculture. The quality of remaining prairies is diminished by fragmentation, invasive plants, suppression of fire, and some livestock grazing practices” (Grant and Knapton 2012).

Brewer's Sparrow, *Spizella breweri*

Mike Mlodinow found a Brewer’s Sparrow at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary on December 1, 2011. This was a first state record for Arkansas. The bird was seen and photographed by many observers regularly until early December. After the excitement died down it was apparently not seen again until Mike refound it February 4, 2012, in basically the same place and in loose association with Savannah Sparrows, as it had since the first sightings. The last observation was March 5, 2012.

Field Sparrow, *Spizella pusilla*

STATUS: Common resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

We find these handsome sparrows all year, but movements are apparent during spring and fall. For example, at least 10 Field Sparrows were at Maysville on March 16, 2008; migrants were singing in my yard in Fayetteville during the same time. There were nine Field Sparrows at Wilson Springs Preserve in Fayetteville March 30, 2002. The six birds singing

on Callie's Prairie at Lake Fayetteville on April 23, 2009, seemed to be on territories, but some migrants are probably still moving through western Arkansas in late April.

Field Sparrows are common at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area in the young tree stands planted for bottomland hardwood restoration. Jim Dixon counted 30 Field Sparrows there on August 9, 2009.

Migrants are also apparent from late September into November. At least seven were in Wilson Springs Preserve on September 26, 2005. A flock of eight visited my yard in Fayetteville November 6, 2008.

Field Sparrows inhabit larger open fields with brush, small trees, and thickets. In their study at Pea Ridge National Military Park, Shugart and James (1973) found these birds across a range of fields in early succession, with highest numbers in plots characterized by broomsedge, clonal persimmons, and woody fields. The highest numbers were in the clonal persimmon plot, an "early tree stage" with "small trees separated by expanses of broom sedge and other herbaceous species…Overall the canopy was 83 percent open." This species responds positively to forestry practices, including clearcutting (Thompson et al. 1995).

During June, the sweet song of Field Sparrows can be heard in farmlands all along the Compton Breeding Bird Survey in northern Newton County. However, continental BBS data indicates a significant decline (Hunter et al. 2001). "Based on Breeding Bird Survey data, significant declines in breeding populations, 3.2% per year ($p < 0.00001$) between 1966 and 2003 (1,789 BBS routes). Declines at a rate >1.5% per year through most of the species range" (Carey et al. 2008).

Field sparrows are found annually on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count, but numbers have fallen. In the decade of the 1960s, CBC results were 2.94 Field Sparrows per party hour. In the decade 2006-2015, the comparable number is 0.25. A big contributor is urbanization with consequent reductions in suitable young tree stage fields. Field Sparrow habitat has turned into streets, businesses, and homes.

Vesper Sparrow, *Pooecetes gramineus*

STATUS: Uncommon to fairly common migrant; rare winter resident; DATES: September 22 to November 7+ and February 8 to April 28.

Vesper Sparrows are "fond of grass" as the Latin portion of their name, *gramineus*, suggests. We find them in extensively open areas, including farmland, short grass fields, and roadside thickets. This habitat is also frequented by Savannah Sparrows. They often arrive in the fall by early to mid-October and we see them until mid to late November. On October 16, 2004, a group of us counted three at Chesney Prairie Natural Area, at least seven in a plowed field nearby, and another single bird at Centerton. Richard Stauffacher and I saw at least eight on former Hindsville prairie on October 15, 2005. My total for October 22, 2014, was 22 in five places around former Beaty Prairie at Maysville. Karen Garrett counted three at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on October 28, 2015.

Most of the winter range for Vesper Sparrows is south of western Arkansas, but in the past they were once relatively frequent here, based upon results from earlier Christmas Bird Counts. For example, six were reported for Fayetteville CBC in 1925. A few Vespers were also found on Fayetteville CBCs at Fayetteville, 1961 to 1990, but in only one year since. Some of this change may be a result of urbanization that reduces what was once a fair amount of suitable habitat. Another contributing factor is decline in the nesting population documented in Breeding Bird Surveys.

Land in the eastern United States that was once much more open as pasture, crop fields, and prairie has reforested, reducing suitable nesting habitat (Jones and Cornely 2002). A smaller population means fewer birds heading south, especially for us who reside along the northern edge of the usual winter range.

North bound transients are observed again with the onset of spring weather, from about mid-March and thereafter. Vesper Sparrows were scattered in 1s and 2s along a gravel road in farming country above the Buffalo National River on March 22, 2011. Joanie Patterson saw four at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area on March 26, 2011. David Chapman counted three at Lake Fayetteville on April 1, 2011.

Lark Sparrow, *Chondestes grammacus*

STATUS: Fairly common transient and local summer resident; DATES: March 26 to September 15+.

Lark Sparrows are open country birds. Good habitat here includes extensive croplands like those in the river valley and former prairies with heavily grazed pastures. They are often observed along unpaved roads where there are a few tall trees. It is always such pleasure to see adults, with their faces reminiscent of Northern Bobwhites. The picture is complete when a male pops up on a telephone pole and sings the open country.

Andrew Scaboo counted seven Lark sparrows at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary in Fayetteville on April 19, 2009, an indication of spring influx. Mike Mlodinow counted five at Lake Fayetteville on April 24, 2013. Will Britton saw

three at Sunnymeade Park in Fort Smith May 3, 2015. Patty McLean and Michael Linz reported five in the river valley during a trip through Kibler bottoms on May 15, 2017.

Lark Sparrows have certainly become less common here. They were recorded on both Breeding Bird Surveys in Newton County in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but not since. The last BBS record was one bird on the Avoca route in Benton County in 1993. Lark Sparrows have suffered a significant continental decline (Hunter et al. 2001).

In 2005 I visited former prairie areas and subsequently located a Lark Sparrow population in and around the former Norwood Prairie, just west of Wedington on the Washington-Benton county line. The habitat looks good, with considerable amount of closely grazed pastures and scattered trees. On July 24, 2005, I found 13-14 birds in four family groups, all with fledglings. We also have recent summer records at Centerton, Hindsville, and the former Beaty Prairie around Maysville, and in the river valley.

Lark Sparrows nest across the adjacent Missouri border (Jacobs and Wilson 1997) and widely in northeastern Oklahoma (Reinking 2004).

There are just a few scattered records into first half of September. John Prather observed a bird on the late date of November 1, 1998, at University farm in Fayetteville.

Lark Bunting, *Calamospiza melanocorys*

There is one record for this common western species. Jody Clark submitted written and photographic documentation to the Arkansas Audubon Society for a Lark Bunting in the Lead Hill area of Boone County for several days around June 4, 2009. The bird was a male in breeding plumage and was viewed and photographed by others in the Disorganized Birders Club at Harrison.

These birds are abundant within their normal range. I suspect we would always notice any male in breeding plumage, but a female might get missed among streaky sparrows.

Savannah Sparrow, *Passerculus sandwichensis*

STATUS: Common transient and winter resident; DATES: September 11 to May 15+.

One of my favorite works of art is “Savannah Sparrows” by Richard Stauffacher of Fayetteville. This hand-colored etching depicts two birds peering from the cover of smartweed stalks at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton. It beautifully illustrates where we often find these birds: grassy-weedy fields, croplands with stubble, grassy expanses of airports, and all kinds of edge in extensively open country. They flush from grassy fields and perch on barbed wire fences, allowing easy observation. They are often numerous in open areas that are essentially former prairie habitat, including frequently birded places like the University farm north of campus in Fayetteville.

They arrive mid- September to early October and become one of our common winter sparrows. There were at least 131 along gravel roads surrounded by open fields in western Benton County on November 2, 2008.

When we are birding in good Savannah habitat with a group, someone is bound to ask about how to quickly identify one. Soon as I mention they are pale and streaky, out pops a dark one. Then I say, look at that crown stripe – but there’s one without a stripe. Finally, I say, look for that yellow spot in the supercilium and, oh well, here’s one with barely any yellow. This happens because Savannahs exhibit a wide range of plumage characteristics associated with their equally broad geographical nesting range (Rising et al. 2009). Birds in western Arkansas in winter may, for example, be lightly colored like those typical of the west, dark birds more typical of the east, or something inbetween.

They have been found in most years on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count. Peaks include 104 in 1993 and 82 in 2005. Since 1961, there have been eight count years with only 0-2. The birds may pass unseen as they forage weedy fields, but can be observed in high numbers when forced to roadsides (presumeably for waste grain from poultry feed trucks) when ice or snow covers open fields.

During spring, Savannah Sparrows remain late, until around mid-May. Jason Lucier counted 20 at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary on May 5, 2009. Jacque Brown saw 16 at Centerton on May 10, 2013.

Baerg (1951) reported two observations of nesting birds at Fayetteville, but there have been no such reports since. There is a record from the Missouri Breeding Bird Atlas for for a bordering county (Jacobs and Wilson 1997).

Grasshopper Sparrow, *Ammodramus savannarum*

STATUS: Uncommon transient and local summer resident; DATES: April 6 to October 28+.

Grasshopper Sparrows are restricted to our former native grasslands: extensive fields with native grasses and forbs, or croplands (especially during migration). In past years they were sometimes modestly numerous, especially during spring migration in appropriate habitat. JoAnne Rife and others found 15-20 on May 1, 1997, in Harrison at Lone Star Dairy

and adjoining farms that are part of the original Baker Prairie. My party and I heard and saw at least 20 in the Maysville area (former Beaty Prairie) during International Migratory Bird Day, May 12, 2007.

In Missouri, nesting habitat was characterized as grasslands of low to medium height, in pastures heavily to moderately grazed (Skinner et al. 1984). We always look for Grasshopper Sparrows in the nesting season. Summer records since 2000 are from Hindsville in Madison County (former Hindsville Prairie), former Beaty Prairie at Maysville, former Round Prairie at Cherokee City, former Norwood Prairie west of Wedington, on Baker Prairie and environs at Harrison, University farm at Fayetteville, and elsewhere including several places in the river valley. Mike Mlodinow and David Chapman counted 20 at Fort Chaffee on July 2, 1994.

Grasshopper Sparrows were recorded on bordering Missouri atlas blocks, but were much more common further north (Jacobs and Wilson 1997). They were also found in a few of the adjacent Oklahoma atlas blocks (Reinking 2004). Overall, this species has suffered a significant continental decline (Hunter et al. 2001). The cause for part of this is apparent here.

I saw and heard at least 15 at Hindsville on May 28, 2005. Excellent habitat at Hindsville was subsequently impacted by relocation and widening of highway 412 and then subdivision development. The new highway cut the heart out of the best sparrow habitat. Of course we welcome highway improvements and safety, but we shouldn't ignore the reality of impacts on our native species. After all, it is their world, too. In the same way, Baker Prairie Natural Area and the old, once more extensive former prairie, has been steadily reduced.

Northwest Arkansas City is essentially constructed on our former Tallgrass Prairies between Fayetteville and Bentonville and from Siloam Springs (former Lindsley Prairie) north through Gravette. Fort Smith and communities to its east are constructed on former Massard Prairie. Needs of a growing human population leave no workable habitat for Grasshopper Sparrows. Their loss is one unfortunate cost for building modern cities and safe highways.

For fall, there is a very late observation for November 11. Andrew Scaboo and Brandon Schmidt photographed one at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary during the Fayetteville Christmas Bird count on December 19, 2010. This is presumeably the same bird seen there on January 6, 2011.

Henslow's Sparrow, *Ammodramus henslowii*

STATUS: Rare transient; formerly a local summer resident in moist prairie or prairie-like open country habitat; DATES: April 1 to October 31.

Most of Henslow's Sparrow range lies to our northeast, but we occasionally find a migrant on the move between summer and winter ranges. In the past, we have also had birds in summer.

Mike Mlodinow found a singing Henslow's Sparrow on June 6-26, 2001, in a former seasonal wetland prairie along Clabber Creek in Fayetteville in what is now Wilson Springs Preserve, immediately west of I-49. A collaborative survey effort starting in spring 2002 documented 3-4 territories at Wilson Springs (Holimon et al. 2004). During International Migratory Bird Day May 10, 2003, I found 3-5 Henslow's in a second Clabber Creek lowland field, just southwest of former Razorback Park golf course and therefore about one-fourth mile from the initial Wilson Springs birds. Because of their wet character, up to that point Clabber Creek lowlands had escaped development and therefore preserved many biological characteristics of former Tallgrass Prairies.

A broadly-based local citizen's initiative to protect these properties was partly successful, with Wilson Springs Preserve being one outcome. Unfortunately, the entire area was already in the crosshairs for urbanization. We lost the Henslow's Sparrows.

During International Migratory Bird Day May 14, 2005, Mike and David Chapman found a single singing Henslow's in a large grassy field at Pea Ridge National Military Park. Mike and I returned on July 9, 2005, and located 6-7 Henslow's in a field just outside the visitor center. We located at least three more on Leetown battlefield on July 23. Henslow's were found on several occasions there as late as 2008. Pea Ridge NMP is now involved in restoring native Tallgrass Prairies grasses.

In the river valley, Henslow's Sparrow has also been documented at H.E. Flanagan Prairie and adjacent Cherokee Prairie Natural Areas near Charleston (Holimon et al. 2004), with reports of birds there as late at 2009.

Henslow's Sparrow has suffered a significant continental decline (Hunter et al. 2001). Adjacent the western Arkansas Ozarks is a population on the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve near Pawhuska, OK (Reinking et al. 2000) and at Prairie State Park (north of Joplin) and other prairies in southwestern Missouri (Jacobs and Wilson 1997).

Missouri habitat was characterized as tall, dense cover in lightly grazed or idle grasslands; spring burned prairie was suitable for Henslow's by mid-July. The birds were common in undisturbed grassland even if it had been disturbed the previous year (Skinner and others 1984).

Two Henslow's Sparrows were identified and photographed at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary on October 23, 2011.

LeConte's Sparrow, *Ammodramus leconteii*

STATUS: Uncommon to fairly common transient and winter resident; DATES: October 2 to May 11.

We look for LeConte's Sparrow in tall dense grasses or similar vegetation, usually in low-lying, extensively open fields. The remarkable and attractive buffiness of their plumage blends well with fall and winter grasses. With a little effort, we usually can get the bird to perch up for a look.

In 2005, the City of Fayetteville set aside part of a former prairie seasonal wetland as mitigation associated with the new Westside Wastewater Treatment Facility. Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary now provides excellent migration and winter habitat for LeConte's. Andy Scaboo saw 14 at Woolsey on October 31, 2009. Mike Mlodinow and Joanie Patterson counted an amazing 21 at Woolsey on November 6, 2010. At Chesney Prairie Natural Area, the count was 12-15 on October 27, 2007.

Relatively few are observed between early December and mid-February, but at least six were at Lake Bentonville on January 17, 1998.

This is a much sought-after bird on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count. It has been found in low numbers (1-2) on about half of the counts dating to 1961. Birds per party hour data indicates a slight decline in numbers here when the the 1960s is compared to 2006-2015 (0.53/party hour versus 0.35). However, an astounding 44 were found at Woolsey on December 17, 2017, during Fayetteville CBC.

Nelson's Sparrow, *Ammodramus nelsoni*

STATUS: Rare transient; DATES: October 2 to November 9; May 13 to 20.

Nelson's Sparrow is a rarity here, always sought after and when observed, much-prized. Most observations have involved single birds. Scanning the Arkansas Audubon Society file and eBird, there are 30+ observations, and overwhelmingly, these involve the fall migration, mainly in October. There are only three or so spring sightings. Most of our observations are from frequently visited places like Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton or Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary in Fayetteville.

The three at Woolsey October 6-8, 2012, apparently arrived with our first big fall cold front. JD Willson and others reported a major influx of sparrows including at least Swamp, Clay-colored, and White-crowned. We have found them at Centerton in dense, knee-high vegetation in a drained fishpond and the low-lying overgrown field nearby. Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area in the river valley has a world of potentially excellent habitat for migrating Nelson's Sparrows. Karen Rowe and Mitchell Pruitt saw one there October 22, 2013.

A single bird was seen well by my party on International Migratory Bird Day May 13, 2007. It flushed from dense grass in the former prairie grasslands of what is now Wilson Springs Preserve. Its rich orangish breast and face plumage signaled "good bird."

Fox Sparrow, *Passerella iliaca*

STATUS: Fairly common transient and winter resident; DATES: October 10 to April 13+.

These handsome birds are at least fairly common in western Arkansas during migration and over most winters. They've come a long way to winter here. Fox Sparrows nest in the far north and west, including the northern boreal and western montane forests (Weckstein et al. 2002).

We find them here in open areas such as woody-brushy fields and thick vegetation grading into forest. We usually find them in good numbers in dense woody places at Chesney Prairie Natural Area, Devil's Den State Park during annual Great Backyard Bird Count in February, in similar woody, forested habitats in the river valley. Spots like these are usually a bit swampy, with plenty of woody cover. Even when Fox Sparrows are mainly out of sight, they often sing, so they can be located even in places where they aren't easy to see.

Based upon data from Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count, Fox Sparrows can be scarce in some winters, as illustrated by the fact that in eight years since 1961, totals for the count were 0-2. Fox Sparrows were found with greater frequency and relatively higher numbers on the Buffalo National River (west) CBC in Newton County. Peak numbers there include 33 in 1981 and 46 in 1982. These numbers seem more like Fayetteville's early CBC efforts in the 1920s: with only a few observers in the field, the tally was 50 in 1925! That was long before urbanization turned Fox Sparrow habitat into highways, malls, and suburban neighborhoods.

CBC data standardized as birds per party hour show that Fox Sparrows have declined here. In the 1960s, the birds per party hour total was 3.11. For 2006-2015, the comparable figure was 0.19. It seems urbanization equals much less suitable habitat for wintering Fox Sparrows.

Across their huge breeding range, Fox Sparrows have evolved distinct characteristics leading to numerous subspecies designations. Our sparrows are from the red subspecies *iliaca* that breeds across the far north of North America. Zink (1994) proposed four separate species, one of which would be our red Fox Sparrow.

Song Sparrow, *Melospiza melodia*

STATUS: Common transient and winter resident; DATES: October 7 to May 2+.

Song Sparrows are common in all sorts of dense moist vegetation of extensive open fields. For example, Mike Mlodinow counted 28 at Lake Fayetteville on October 11, 2012, and Phil Vogrinc at least 64 at Chesney Prairie Natural Area on November 4, 2016. There were 117 at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary on December 8, 2010, according to data provided by Mlodinow. These big days are illustrative of fall sparrow movements.

Song Sparrows are common at mid-winter, too. Data from the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count shows more than 100+ tallied on 22 counts held since 1961.

During spring, the main part of the migration is over by the first half of April, with stragglers thereafter. Black (1935) stated that the species nested "rarely" at Winslow. This is our only suggestion of nesting. However, there are several records of singing birds past the normal spring migration. One singing at Lake Bentonville on July 20, 2003 was really unusual. Nesting was confirmed for a breeding bird atlas block in bordering McDonald County, Missouri (Jacob and Wilson 1997).

Lincoln's Sparrow, *Melospiza lincolnii*

STATUS: Common transient, uncommon to rare winter resident; DATES: September 15 to May 27.

Lincoln's Sparrow is a common transient during both the southward and northward migrations. Southward moving birds arrive in suitable grassland habitat during October. At Lake Fayetteville, the count was 41 on October 11, 2012, marking a fall arrival peak. Spring birds are mainly seen in April into second half of May. During the northward migration, they may spend a few days out in the open, foraging on lawns in urban yards. Between migration periods, the few Lincoln's Sparrows that overwinter are scarce and secretive.

Northbound migrants become evident by the second half of March and then can be found in numerous places including my yard in the middle of Fayetteville. They pass through many grassy or brushy places, including open forest edge, pastures and lawns in town. At least 20 were at Lake Fayetteville on April 28, 2011. There were 25+ in open fields at Wilson Springs Preserve in Fayetteville on May 2, 2002.

Fall transients have passed through by winter's onset. We are only marginally within the typical winter range, which is primarily to the southwest (Ammon 1995). Therefore, genuine winter records are scattered and usually involve singles, including birds at feeders. Secretive habits in winter markedly contrast with those during migration. Lincoln's is readily confused with more numerous Song or Swamp Sparrows. They all occupy similar habitats at that season and also share streaking, buffiness, and other plumage characters designed by evolution to make them invisible in the grass.

Lincoln's Sparrows have been found on a little more than half of Fayetteville Christmas Bird Counts dating to 1961. Numbers have always been low. One party on the 2006 CBC reported nine in the bottomland fields now part of Wilson Springs Preserve. The high number caused quite a spirited discussion. Mike Mlodinow returned to the same area on January 10, 2007, a few weeks after the disputed count, and found 1-2 Lincoln's, along with 86 Song and 21 Swamp Sparrows! During the same time, J. Pat Valentik had one visiting his feeder regularly at Eureka Springs.

One bird was observed right along the road at Maysville on February 8, 2011, a day when the countryside was covered with snow. We watch it from inside a heated automobile, marveling at the toughness of this remarkable creature with which we share the planet.

Swamp Sparrow, *Melospiza georgiana*

STATUS: Common transient and winter resident; DATES: September 22 to May 12.

As their name implies, Swamp Sparrows are specialists of marshy open habitat with some woody vegetation like buttonbush. We often find them along edges of ponds, reservoirs, swampy creeks and marshy seasonal wetlands in former prairie fields. You may be in a good spot to find them if you see cattails and other tall acquatic vegetation. My first clue of their presence is usually the distinctive PEET call they give when disturbed.

Swamp Sparrows can be surprisingly common here during influxes of southward-migrating birds, often by second week of October. There were 50+ in fields along Clabber Creek in what is now Wilson Springs Preserve at Fayetteville on October 18, 2002. Karen Rowe and Mitchell Pruitt reported 25 at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area on October 22, 2013. The count was 40 at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary for Jackie Guzy and JD Willson on October 24, 2013. In the same place, Mike Mlodinow observed 70 on December 8, 2010.They are also common in the marshy areas at Chesney Prairie Natural Area and other open marshy habitats.

Swamp Sparrows show up regularly on the Fayetteville Chistmas Bird Count, but there is a lot of variation. For example, 143 were tallied in 2002, but only four in 2004. I assume that some of this difference involves weather patterns, since prolonged winter weather may force birds south to unfrozen habitats. The count in 2002 was held on a rather balmy winter day, with temperature varying from 40 to 71 F. By contrast the count in 2004 was held on a day with temperature variation only from 26 to 35 F.

In spring, most Swamp Sparrows have headed north by mid-April, with stragglers into the first half of May.

White-throated Sparrow, *Zonotrichia albicollis*

STATUS: Common transient and winter resident; DATES: September 26 to May 23+.

When it's time to get the wood pile in shape and check out the furnace, it's also time to start enjoying the winter sojourn of White-throated Sparrows. They quietly sneak in during fall, then become numerous and quite vocal by mid to late October. Big cold fronts and cold weather by late October turns a migration trickle into a vocal flood. By Haloween, they are firmly established for winter.

White-throated Sparrows are associated with dense honeysuckle thickets, Amur honeysuckle bushes, privet hedges, and other signs of urban life. Their close association with honeysuckle as cover, roosting habitat, and winter fruit makes me wonder, only half-humorously, what they did before honeysuckle became so well established? What did they do in the 1920s? Well here's a hint: five birds was a high count on Fayetteville CBCs in the 1920s, roughly same as they tallied for Vesper Sparrows! Of course, it's not just honeysuckle. I have found them in high numbers in the Ozark National Forest during fall migration, using as cover all kinds of low native vegetation like grape vines, blackberry, brush piles, etc. So yes, they do use the non-native vegetation of our urban world and have likely benefitted from it, but no, they don't require it.

They are one of the very common winter residents in urban areas. Birds per party hour data from Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count demonstrates that numbers wintering here have doubled since the 1960s (1.91 versus 3.89). Seemingly, an ever expanding Northwest Arkansas City has been busy making the world a better place for wintering White-throated Sparrows.

Energetic White-throated Sparrow choruses fill spring around the time Pawpaws are blooming, especially mid-April to early May. Most have departed for their northern breeding grounds by this time. There are several summer records, but no indication of nesting.

Harris's Sparrow, *Zonotrichia querula*

STATUS: Uncommon to locally common winter resident; DATES: October 15 to May 13.

Harris's Sparrow nests in the forest-tundra zone of northern Canada, in a landscape mosaic that is very open with scattered trees and shrubs (Norment and Shackleton 2008). Therefore, the best strategy for locating Harris's Sparrow is to head out to dense fencerows in very open and generally undeveloped areas—basically, the same places frequented by much more numerous White-crowned Sparrows, and especially where there are open groves of trees and shrubs somewhat like the forest-tundra zone in Canada. Pastures and chicken houses are likely there. Harris's is also a regular winter visitor to rural home bird feeders. They occur in both the Ozarks and in the river valley.

We expect Harris's Sparrow with the onset of cold weather, especially in early November. Around Maysville, we found 35 during a long day, including one flock of 25, on January 14, 2006. DaNeil Mason counted 10 at Eagle Watch Nature Trail on February 15, 2015. Karen Holliday had 22 at Chesney Prairie Natural Area on November 20, 2011. Vegetation management at Chesney includes prescribed burning. Approximately 14 were foraging in a burned field there on January 1, 2011.

Numbers of Harris's Sparrows found on Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count have declined as urbanization spreads. This decline is best expressed in numbers of birds found per party hour in the field. In the 1960s, the CBC averaged about 0.65 Harris's per party hour. The comparable number had fallen to 0.09 for 2006-2015. The 41 total on 2006 Fayetteville CBC is the highest here since the 1960s.

The single bird in my yard in the middle of Fayetteville on March 17, 2003, was certainly a migrant. The 2-3 birds at Chesney Prairie Natural Area on April 19, 2008, were in heavy molt. Most birds have moved north by the end of April.

White-crowned Sparrow, *Zonotrichia leucophrys*

STATUS: Common transient and winter resident; DATES: September 24 to May 19.

This is the common winter sparrow of our former prairies that reaches us in numbers by November and remains numerous until late April to about mid-May.

White-crowned Sparrows inhabit open woody fields with well-developed hedgerows and other thickets, including blackberries, multiflora rose, etc. They are associated with open field habitat that has developed on our former prairie grasslands and in the river valley. Transients may appear even in urban areas for a few days. During October I see a bird or two in my yard and then again in late April and early May, but they don't remain. First fall migrants reach the high quality habitats at Chesney Prairie Natural Area in early October, with flocks by mid-month, and the highest numbers overall from December through March. There is a sharp decline in numbers by early April, as most birds depart for the far north. Only stragglers then remain. Doug James noted spring migration at his feeder in Fayetteville from 1996-1998, with small numbers of birds (1-6) between April 27 and May 12.

Birds that reach us in fall have made a long distance migration from breeding areas far to the north and west (Chilton et al. 1995). Radio tracking showed that adults use a learned navigation map covering much of North America, whereas juveniles rely upon an innate program to reach wintering grounds (Thorup et al. 2007). I keep such things in mind during field trips to places like Chesney where their overwinter habitat requirements seem well met. The adult sparrows there apparently had this in mind when they took off from northern Canada after the nesting season. Juveniles eventually find it as well, as long as habitat remains suitable. During the cold months, 100 or more White-crowned Sparrows may be observed at or near Chesney, sometimes in big flocks that include Harris's and Savannah Sparrows.

Overall, numbers of White-crowned Sparrows wintering here have increased, based upon data from Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count. Birds found per party hour averaged about 0.44 in the 1960s, compared to 2.29 for the decade 2006-2015. The 339 birds on the 2006 Fayetteville CBC was the highest tally ever. I suspect this increase is temporary, since suitable fields within the CBC circle will in future years be replaced by homes, roads, and businesses.

The 135 birds seen in the Siloam Springs area on May 2, 2011, had all acquired the bold black and white head pattern. None of these northbound birds retained tan colors of juvenile plumage seen in fall and winter.

Dark-eyed Junco, *Junco hyemalis*

STATUS: Common transient and winter resident; DATES: October 9 to April 28+.

Juncos sometimes arrive by early October, but the real flood isn't until real cold, end of October and early November. Then snowbird flocks become common. In fact they are so common it easy to forget how very diverse they are. This is obvious from just casually watching flocks. From November 9, 2002, to February 26, 2003, various birding companions and I made 22 trips to a variety of sparrow habitats (Neal 2003). Most juncos seen were what we think of as typical snowbirds, but others looked like subspecies once considered separate junco species: 13 as *cismontanus*, six as *oregonus*, and one *mearnsi*.

Birds that look a lot or at least a little bit like Oregon Juncos are unusual here, but not actually rare. It is interesting to try and sort this out. Or, if this is too complicated, follow the admonitions of none other than Roger Tory Peterson and "just call them all juncos." Nevertheless, I saw and photographed a "pink-sided" junco at my feeder in Fayetteville on March 21, 2002, and a male Oregon on October 11, 2007. I saw a picture of a mostly white (or leucistic) junco in winter 2016-2017. Kimberly G. Smith at UA-Fayetteville knows these junco races from his research out west and has been very helpful in identifications.

Hundreds are reported annually on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count and more than a thousand in several years, but overall, juncos have declined on Fayetteville CBC. Number of birds per party hour in the 1960s equaled 10.81. This has fallen in the most recent decade (2006-2015) to 7.12. National Audubon's analysis shows that during the past 40 years, the center of abundance for these birds has shifted north by 116 miles. And while juncos seem tolerant of many aspects of urbanization, habitat quality has been reduced within the Fayetteville CBC circle.

The trills of their songs become common by early March. Most have departed for their northern breeding grounds by mid to late March, when serviceberries with their white blooms illuminate our otherwise wintery forests. Only stragglers remain for the redbuds flowering in April. At Ninestone Land Trust's feeders, "last of the last" juncos departed by April 21, 2013. Hank and Sheree Rogers saw a junco on the very late date of May 22, 2008, at Harrison.

Yellow-breasted Chat, *Icteria virens*

STATUS: Common summer resident; DATES: April 16 to October 13.

Chats are kings of dense thickets in extensive, overgrown fields. They rule the dense tangle of forest regeneration following logging and similar disturbances. Their growls and whistles are distinctive and entertaining, but woe to the curious person who wades out for a closer look: briars of all kinds, chiggers, and ticks in brush piles will be the reward.

It is easy to miss chats when they're not vocalizing, so our observations can be pretty sparse. Spring arrivals are noted mainly from last week of April and thereafter. We have fall records during August into first half of September, but few thereafter.

Chats are on the extreme edge of birds using extensive open habitats, sharing this trait with species like Prairie Warbler, Bell's Vireo, and Brown Thrasher (James 1971). At Pea Ridge National Military Park, Shugart and James (1973) found chats in a variety of early successional habitats, with peak numbers in their woody field plot, a late development within the general framework of "early tree stage." Chats benefit from a variety of forest management practices that open the canopy. In the Missouri Ozarks, Annand and Thompson (1997) found chats in low numbers in group selection cuttings, increasing through shelterwoods and clearcuts. Chats show up on most Breeding Bird Surveys. Breeding season point counts from the Ozark National Forest show a stable or increasing trend based upon data within the period 1992-2004 (La Sorte et al. 2007).

Prior to human settlement, chats must have found suitable habitat in parts of the prairies that didn't burn thoroughly. Also, it seems likely that periodical destructive windstorms and forest fires must have provided suitable habitat patches for a species so very well-adapted to changes in the landscape.

Yellow-headed Blackbird, *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*

STATUS: Very uncommon or somewhat rare transient, occasional winter visitor; DATES: April 9 to May 12 and July 18 to October 5+.

Yellow-headed Blackbirds nest primarily to our west and north, so their migratory path just barely includes western Arkansas. Nevertheless, a few turn up most years during migration. They are rare enough that it is always a treat. Sightings for spring occur primarily from mid-April into the second week of May. Southbound transients are clustered primarily between the second half of September and the second half of October. Most observations involve just a few birds.

There was a memorable flock of 41 Yellow-headed Blackbirds at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on April 15, 1984. The flock remained there for more than a week. The 16 males along Airport Road at Siloam Springs on April 26, 2011, were foraging in marsh vegetation along a flooded ditchline and in adjacent flooded yards and fields.

One of the most remarkable sightings for me was the impossible-to-know number of Yellow-headed Blackbirds (50? More than 50?) apparently associated with hundreds of Dickcissels in wheat fields in the river valley's Kibler bottoms on May 2, 2017. Blackbirds and Dickcissels just kept flying up and down across a huge field.

Sightings in fall and winter are much less frequent, usually involve just a bird or two, and are often a bird mixed in with big flocks of other blackbird species. In these big flocks, we are always on the lookout for a bird with bold white wing patches.

Bobolink, *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*

STATUS: Common spring transient; uncommon fall transient; DATES: April 25 to June 1 and August 12 to September 15+.

Bobolinks are birds of our most open and expansive fields. These are kings and queens of the big grasslands. To find them it is necessary to go birding well outside the circle of expanding urbanization. Their bubbling songs are one of the joys and wonders of migration.

Starting in the late 1960s and for several decades thereafter, JoAnne Rife and other Boone County birders tracked Bobolink spring migration. They found them consistently in alfalfa fields in the Crooked Creek valley near Harrison, especially in fields at Lone Star Dairy along Highway 206. Their records show relatively high numbers from April 25 to May 20, and peaks often in the first two weeks of May: for example, an estimated 100 on May 10, 2001, and May 20, 1997. There were "100s" on May 7, 1996, as reported by Rife and Martha Milburn.

There were at least 57 visible in uncut fields south of Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on May 6, 2012. Bobolinks are also common in migration in the big fields of the Arkansas River Valley. There was constant singing by an unknown number of Bobolinks in a big field at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area on May 2, 2017. A minimum of 20+

were literally singing in rain in the big fields of Kibler bottoms on May 12, 2017. This was one of those fortunate or perhaps unfortunate cases where there were so many migrants to see I failed to spend time counting Bobolinks. Big fields at Pea Ridge National Military Park in Benton County are also habitat for their spring migration. The count was 90 on May 10, 1997.

Fall counts are much lower and usually involve just a bird or two, and mainly from last week of August to mid-September. At Frog Bayou WMA and adjoining rice fields, I found up to five several times August 20 and September 8, 2012. Migration peaks are reflected in counts of 18 at Centerton on September 10, 1989. Mike Mlodinow wrote these notes: "Only one of these was seen perched; the rest were seen flying overhead giving pink calls. The perched bird had buff-orange median and eyebrow stripes, dark stripes bordering the median, and dark eye-lines. The malar area and the breast were also buff-orange and the belly whitish. The sides of the breast were streaked brown, the bill pale, and the eye dark. No size comparison was available." There were 12 at University farm in Fayetteville August 12, 2001. Two birds were seen at Chesney Prairie Natural Area during a field trip September 15, 2007.

JD Willson and Mitchell Pruitt found one at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary on the late date of October 20, 2012. Mitchell got the photograph.

Eastern Meadowlark, *Sturnella magna*

STATUS: Common resident of extensive grasslands; DATES: observed in all seasons.

With the onset of spring at mid-March, meadowlark singing seems to dominate the landscape on all but cold, windy days. They are common in western Arkansas in all kinds of extensive grasslands and fields, wherever these occur. High numbers have been recorded along the former prairie fields of Avoca Breeding Bird Survey. However, meadowlarks are declining as urbanization increases and suitable open field grassland is lost. Habitat loss is the source of this bird's declining numbers in other parts of its vast range in eastern North America, too.

The Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count shows what happens to winter meadowlark numbers as a result of urbanization. During the 1960s, 7.55 Eastern Meadowlarks were tallied per party hour. This compares to the most recent decade (2006-2015), when the comparable number was 1.79. Even with this decline, meadowlarks remain relatively common in our grasslands and cropfields.

My section of Fayetteville CBC includes the University farm north of the main campus and adjacent the busy thunder of I-49. The farm retains much of the character of an older, spacious, less busy Fayetteville and western Arkansas. Over the years I have consistently found winter meadowlark flocks of several dozen individual birds or more in its harvested crop fields. But the farm is an ecologically rich island of suitable habitat in a hostile sea of asphalt. Now as we have become "Number 5" on Business Insider's list of the "Top 50 places to live in America," meadowlark habitat is being lost every day. A meadowlark perched and singing atop a "For Sale" sign is not much of an advertisement for the Natural State.

After the nesting season, when I am out birding on a cool, blue sky fall day, I am pleasantly surprised by the chorus of Eastern Meadowlark songs. At first I don't see any of them, but they are out there in the far pastures, out there in the crop fields in the river valley, in that western Arkansas not yet heavily impacted by urbanization. Their songs fill the landscape. They sing in praise of sunshine, perhaps in memory of long summer days.

Western Meadowlark, *Sturnella neglecta*

STATUS: Uncommon winter resident; DATES: September 28 to May 21.

Outward differences between Eastern and Western Meadowlarks are modest; by far, most meadowlarks here are Easterns. However, on occasion a meadowlark can be heard and seen that is singing the Western song or giving "chup" call notes. We have obtained many such records in the fields and feedlots of our former prairies. We find them in cropfields in the river valley, at Fort Chaffee east of Fort Smith, University farm in Fayetteville, environs of Chesney Prairie Natural Area, around Maysville, with many additional records elsewhere. These are all places that are open with extensive grassland or crop fields.

A fall influx was indicated during a long day around Maysville, September 28, 2012: three westerns singing at dawn, before I'd heard a single Eastern Meadowlark. These were early fall arrivals. More typical: at one spot November 11, 2005, there was a minimum of six westerns, some singing a scratchy song that reminded me of juvenile White-crowned Sparrows.

Western Meadowlarks have been found on roughly half of Christmas Bird Counts at Fayetteville since 1961. Numbers have always been low. While meadowlarks of one species or the other are common during mid-winter, actually identifying them without hearing songs or calls requires close and careful observation, which isn't easy in cold winds or when birds are far away. We've had good luck at the University farm. A sunny late winter day February 24, 2002,

encouraged singing by meadowlarks at the farm. There were songs and calls from a small Western Meadowlark flock of at least five birds. Other meadowlarks gave typical Eastern calls or songs. Out looking specifically for Westerns, we tallied at least seven of them on January 14, 2006, at Maysville. Some birds were identified when they responded to playback of their songs and calls.

The count was at least 74 in a compact flock at Maysville March 1, 2013. Many of these birds were singing. They must have been migrants headed west. Most were gone a few days later. There are few Westerns here after mid-March.

Orchard Oriole, *Icterus spurius*

STATUS: Fairly common summer resident; DATES: April 11 to September 17.

Orchard Orioles are the most numerous and widespread of our two oriole species. They occur in open, park-like expanses with scattered trees and especially around farms and other lightly developed and partially cleared areas in the countryside. Sightings are few before the last week in April. I counted 22 in fields at Maysville on May 9, 2009, during International Migratory Bird Day. These migrants were apparently grounded by unfavorable winds.

I have found Orchard and Baltimore orioles in the same places in both western Washington and Benton counties. Both seem most common in the former prairie grassland habitats with much open country and scattered tall trees. Frequently, I find Painted Buntings, Blue Grosbeaks and Dickcissels in the same habitats, but unlike these other birds of open country, Orchard Orioles don't seem restricted to former prairies. For example, they are common in the Boxley valley in the upper Buffalo River area of Newton County (Compton Breeding Bird Survey).

They are widespread as nesting birds throughout western Arkansas. A few examples include: Beaver Lake Nursery Pond east of Rogers, Eagle Watch Nature Trail, Siloam Springs City Lake, Devil's Den State Park, all through the river valley, Baker Prairie Natural Area, Lake Leatherwood at Eureka Springs, Pea Ridge National Military Park.

Baltimore Oriole, *Icterus galbula*

STATUS: Common transient and uncommon summer resident; DATES: April 12 to October 5+.

Baltimore Orioles migrate through western Arkansas in good numbers. Birds are occasionally seen by mid-April, but they are more common by the last week in April and thereafter into first half of May. I hear them singing at Fayetteville when the black locust trees are heavy with their masses of white flowers and are attended by numerous insects. A big spring migration peak was indicated by presence of at least 38 Baltimore Orioles in small flocks in the Maysville area during International Migratory Bird Day, May 12, 2007. My party counted them in fields, fencerows and other places. They were apparently grounded by inclement weather.

Many summer records involve the valley of the Arkansas River around Fort Smith, where they nest in the big cottonwoods. They are also found in western Washington and Benton counties in the watershed of the Illinois River: Lake Frances (now drained), Siloam Springs City Lake, Illinois River bottoms, Lake Elmdale, etc. In summer 2005, I found 4-5 birds along Floyd Moore Road near Cherokee City area. Kimberly G. Smith and Joe Woolbright have noted them during summer on the golf courses at Siloam Springs. The apparent clustering of breeding season records in Benton County is supported by atlas data in adjoining states with breeding confirmed in adjoining McDonald County, Missouri (Jacobs and Wilson 1997) and Ottawa and Delaware counties, Oklahoma (Reinking 2004).

In fall, Baltimores are seen through August and to about mid-September, and infrequently thereafter. There are also occasional observations from late November through winter into early spring. Anant Deswhal and Pooja Panwar had one at their feeder in Fayetteville November 13-14, 2017. Ruth Armstrong had one at Fort Smith January 10-23, 1969. A bird observed and photographed by Alan Bowers of Rogers overwintered in 2002-2003. A bird was at my feeder in Fayetteville on March 8, 2010. I saw it off and on until April 2. There are a few additional records.

A good way to figure out where Baltimore Orioles were in summer is to look for their nests in winter. They are easily seen when the big trees that conceal them in summer are leafless in winter. Seen this way in winter, the nests are evocative. They are seeds promising another spring and another oriole nesting season.

Red-winged Blackbird, *Agelaius phoeniceus*

STATUS: Very common resident; big flocks in winter; DATES: observed in all seasons.

There is nothing quite like hearing male red-wings proclaim OH KEE LAH from a stand of cattails around a big marshy pond during spring and early summer. This business gets pretty serious during spring warm-ups of March and April. Males with their red epaulets flash and call in the effort to establish and then defend territories. There are constant chases

and bouts of singing at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary, Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton, Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area, and other good locales with wetlands and robust nesting populations of Red-winged Blackbirds.

The nest may be fairly well concealed in a Buttonbush. We are so used to seeing these brilliant males that we may pause and wonder about that bird that looks so much like the massed, woven leaves of grass? With a grasshopper in her bill, the female red-wing is headed toward the Buttonbush. Just as nature intended, she looks a lot like the vegetation around her nest.

After the nesting season they gather into big flocks that are noteable in prime feeding areas, feedlots and pastures. Huge night roosts form in winter. Over the years, Doug James and his students at UA-Fayetteville have counted winter roosts in connection with the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count. Some of the big counts were 450,000 (1972) and 182,083 (1981).

Brown-headed Cowbird, *Molothrus ater*

STATUS: Common resident that is abundant in winter flocks; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Cowbirds are common in numerous habitats during the nesting season. In winter they form huge night roosts with other blackbirds and starlings. Folks who enjoy birds in their yards are always disappointed when their favored cardinals produce a nest with cowbirds. I have seen tiny Blue-gray Gnatcatchers trying to feed fledgling cowbirds easily twice their size. Cowbirds get a bad rap because of such observations, plus the fact their brood parasitism is infamously associated with decline of some species. It was our clearing of land and creation of vast cattle herds that opened habitat suitable for today's high numbers of cowbirds. I try to remember that cowbirds were once Buffalo Birds associated with grazing bison on the expansive natural grasslands of the Great Plains (Lowther 1993). I enjoy watching them in a natural situation associated with grazing Bison at the The Nature Conservancy's Tallgrass Prairie Preserve in northeastern Oklahoma.

The cowbird brood parasitism problem is primarily a function of distance: from open pastureland and feedlots where they forage to the nests of their potential hosts in forests. Rate of nest parasitism declines with increasing distance to the potential host nest. Dense tangles of vegetation associated with logging operations are not attractive to foraging cowbirds because logged areas are ecologically unlike short grass pastures.

Pingjun Li (1994) looked specifically at the cowbird problem in his study of neotropical migrantory birds in the relatively unfragmented forests at White Rock in the Ozark National Forest. He found and studied 960 nests of 11 species. Of 24 nests parasitized by cowbirds, eight were successful in fledgling at least one of the host young. "Cowbirds were rare in this study area because the forest was extensive and study sites were located away from major sources of fragmentation and openings."

Cowbird parasitism is a problem where forested areas abut private pastureland. The problem diminishes as the total forested habitat increases. Hence, it is little surprise that cowbirds are found in modest numbers on heavily forested Breeding Bird Survey routes like Boston Mountain and Ozark National Forest where there is little cowbird foraging habitat.

Rusty Blackbird, *Euphagus carolinus*

STATUS: Uncommon transient and winter resident; DATES: October 18 to May 1.

Rusties nest in wet boreal forests well north of other blackbirds (Avery 2013), but knowledge has been pretty limited about them in either their summer or winter ranges. As a PhD student at UA-Fayetteville, Jason Luscier (2009) helped fill in some gaps. He studied habitat use by rusties in their winter range.

Rusties are observed in all kinds of wet ground situations like ditches, swampy forest edge, pond flats. We also see them in feed lots and as part of mixed-species blackbird flocks. They also forage on the forest floor.

In the fall, they arrive fairly late, infrequently before mid-November. There were 50 along the edge of a pond at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on November 25, 2006.

They have been recorded on most (45 of 55) Fayetteville Christmas Bird Counts. Peak CBC numbers include 3029 (1976), 1000 (1980), 700 (1999). These high numbers all involved informed estimations by Doug James and his students out counting mixed-species blackbird roosts. Scott Michaud and I counted 67 on muddy flats along Clabber Creek in what is now Wilson Springs Preserve on January 4, 2009.

Here are a few winter observations. There were at least 75 at Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area December 18, 2012. These birds were on the forest floor flipping leaves and eating dogwood berries and other wild fruits. On February 5, 2014, when ice and snow covered everything, a flock of 25 rusties foraged along the open spring run that forms Prairie Creek at Lake Atalanta Park. At least 55 were foraging under oak trees in front of homes along Red Hill Road in the river

valley February 16, 2018. These observations illustrate importance of natural habitats (forest and spring) in sustaining populations of native birds.

The 18 at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary on March 9, 2014, were probably migrants. Most rusties have departed by the first half of April.

"Rusty Blackbirds have declined alarmingly (85-95%) in numbers over the past 40 years (1970-2010) … Potential factors promoting this decline … include loss of wetlands used by wintering individuals in the Southeast, contaminants on breeding grounds, poisoning of other blackbirds on wintering roosts (with the Rusty as an incidental victim), and increasing disturbance of boreal wetlands where this species breeds. Alone, none of these factors appears adequate to account for the broad and extraordinary loss in numbers of this species, so it is likely we are witnessing synergistic effects…" (Avery 2013).

Brewer's Blackbird, *Euphagus cyanocephalus*

STATUS: Very uncommon transient and winter resident; DATES: October 18 to April 27.

This common blackbird of the western US is infrequently reported in western Arkansas. It seems likely it may be overlooked in mixed-species blackbird flocks that settle onto pastures during winter. At a distance and especially without use of a spotting scope, I have confused male Brewer's for a Rusty Blackbird. However, 12 birds foraging in a burned area at Chesney Prairie Natural Area on October 28, 2017, included many of the richly-colored females and were unmistakeable.

A group of us birding at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on November 10, 2007, had excellent views through spotting scopes of a small blackbird flock. We counted 17 Brewer's, including males and females (with their dark eyes). I had a similar observation on November 20, 2008, with a flock including males and females foraging in an open field adjacent a dairy farm northeast of Maysville. It looked like there were maybe a 100 birds. I was just up to a count of 16 when the birds were flushed by the low pass of a helicopter.

JD Willson and others saw 50 Brewer's during a trip to Maysville December 14, 2013. Brewer's has been found on one-third of Fayetteville Christmas Bird Counts. The 213 birds in 1981 was a high number. They are unusual enough that records are sometimes questioned. I found at least two birds in plowed fields at the University farm on the 2003 Fayetteville CBC. I say "at least" because there were others, but I focused on two in order to collect some evidence. As is his long-standing habitat, Doug James, then the CBC compiler, raised questions as we all gathered to tally up the day. Fortunately, I had "digiscoped" (collected a digital image through my spotting scope) male and female Brewer's perched on a wire. I showed Doug the unmistakable proof.

A late spring record involves 25 Brewer's foraging among cattle adjacent Alma Wastewater Treatment Facility on April 13, 2013. This reminded me very much of the way we see mid-winter Brewer's Blackbirds among Bison at The Nature Conservancy's Tallgrass Prairie Preserve in northeastern Oklahoma.

Common Grackle, *Quiscalus quiscula*

STATUS: Common resident; sometimes abundant in winter; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Common Grackles are present in western Arkansas throughout the year. They are most conspicuous in winter, when they form sizeable roosts. Doug James and his students counted blackbird roosts in the Fayetteville area for many years. Big grackle totals on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count were 201,763 (1972), 150,822 (1972), 60,000 (1983), and 44,000 (1999). These high counts contrast with winters when grackles are scarce: over the same period, there have been 16 count years when 50 or fewer Common Grackles could be found within the Fayetteville CBC circle, or were seen only during count week.

Grackles nest widely in all kinds of open country including urban areas. Of course, they are rarely reported on Breeding Bird Survey routes that are heavily forested (Boston Mountain, Ozark National Forest). They are abundant on highly urbanized routes like Massard in the river valley and Avoca in Benton County.

On March 8, 2011, I sat in my car at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton and watched as a Common Grackle expertly picked at a crawfish marooned on the mudflat of a recently drained pond. A flock of grackles was foraging on the ground for acorns at Lost Bridge South Park on Beaver Lake November 8, 2015. Small acorns fallen from Post Oaks fit their bills. On May 20, 2017, Common Grackles nesting at Siloam Springs City Lake were foraging in the shallows for insects hiding among water-willows (*Justicia americana*).

Seeing how the other half lives is always instructive and broadening.

Great-tailed Grackle, *Quiscalus mexicanus*

STATUS: Locally common in a few places in Benton County, but otherwise very uncommon to somewhat rare; DATES: observed in all seasons.

"During the twentieth century, the Great-tailed Grackle experienced rapid, large-scale expansion of its North American range. In 1900, the northern limits of its range barely extended into Texas; by the end of the century, it had nested in at least 14 states and was reported in 21 states and 3 Canadian provinces. This explosive growth occurred mainly after 1960 and coincided with human-induced habitat changes such as irrigation and urbanization" (Johnson and Peer 2001).

First definite records for Great-tailed Grackles here were obtained at Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton. On April 28, 1984, a pair built a nest and laid three eggs by June 3. This nest was abandoned, apparently after nearby vegetation was cut. Early records from the river valley also date to the 1980s and appear to involve nesting by at least 1987.

Doug James found them roosting with other blackbirds, starlings, and herons in a peach orchard near Farmington in Washington County on August 19, 1990. On May 26, 1991, he observed approximately 50 nesting in the same orchard with Cattle Egrets and Little Blue Herons.

Great-tailed Grackles are least numerous here during the nesting season, approximately mid-April to mid-August. They have nested in a few places in Benton County. Overall, highest numbers occur during fall, winter, and spring when birds that nested elsewhere are overwintering. The situation is dynamic and changing, no doubt a result of their breeding range expansion to the northwest.

They were recorded on most Fayetteville Christmas Bird Counts 1987 to 2003, but not since. Doug James estimated 400 in a mixed species blackbird roost at Fayetteville January 18, 1997.

Many of our records of relatively high numbers have come from the open country (former prairie grasslands) where feedlots are common. Kenny and LaDonna Nichols saw approximately 500 at Bentonville Airport on February 5, 2000. Mike Mlodinow and David Chapman estimated 400-500 at University farm in Fayetteville on March 5, 1995. I counted approximately 300 in small flocks as they flew over Centerton, apparently headed to roost, on March 10, 2007.

We have often seen Great-tailed Grackles just north of Vaughn (immediately south of the Centerton hatchery). They were associated with the cattle, dairy, and poultry farming operations. I have also seen hundreds of them on the grounds of the Wild Wilderness Drive-Through Safari in Benton County, another feedlot situation. Females were carrying nesting materials into Bradford pear trees at Safari on April 11, 2009. On May 24, 2009, I saw 15-20 adults at Lowell in Benton County. These birds were attending nests in three blue spruce trees in front of corporate offices. The females were carrying gobs of worms to nestlings.

Ovenbird, *Seiurus aurocapilla*

STATUS: Common summer resident in extensive mature forest; uncommon transient in smaller forest blocks; DATES: April 7 to October 16.

Ovenbirds are relatively widespread here during migration and summer. We are on the southeastern corner of its nesting range. Nesting birds are found only in the most extensive, mature, undisturbed forests. Smith (1977) considered it an "obligatory moist forest species." A common theme in Ovenbird research is their need for large continuous mature forest habitat in the breeding season (Van Horn and Donovan 1994). Under such conditions, Ovenbirds are sometimes one of the most numerous of our breeding neotropical migrant warblers. They are reported in relatively high numbers on the forested BBS routes.

Pingjun Li (1994) found 18 Ovenbird nests during his study in an extensive forest near White Rock in Ozark National Forest. Nest success was 53.3%, clutch size averaged 4.8, brood size 4.1, and the number of young produced per nesting pair was 2.19. Brown-headed Cowbirds parasitized one of these nests, but it was still successful in fledging young Ovenbirds.

In their study in Benton County, Shugart and James (1973) found Overbirds only in mature forest plots. Amy Salveter (1994) and Salveter et al. (1996) showed that Ovenbirds declined in pine study plots on the Ozark NF after prescribed burning. In their Missouri Ozarks study, Annand and Thompson (1997) found that Ovenbirds were most abundant in undisturbed mature forests and declined with increasing intensity of treatments. Rodewald and Smith (1998) showed that Ovenbirds declined on their study plots in the Ozark NF after treatments that included understory thinning and canopy reduction. Breeding season point counts from the Ozark NF showed a fairly stable trend based upon data within the period 1992-2004 (La Sorte et al. 2007).

"By avoiding fragmented habitat with higher risks of nest predation and brood parasitism, Ovenbird populations may be successful. The future success of Ovenbirds appears to depend on the continued existence of large

areas of core habitat, especially the Ozarks, Appalachia, Pennsylvania, New England, northern Wisconsin, and Quebec and Ontario" (Porneluzi et al. 2011).

Ovenbirds use smaller forest blocks in migration. Joe Woolbright and I were very surprised to find a transient Ovenbird at Chesney Prairie Natural Area (with very little forest cover) on October 3, 2005. Bill Beall's sighting of a bird at Fort Smith on October 16, 1965, is our latest.

Worm-eating Warbler, *Helmitheros vermivorus*

STATUS: Fairly common summer resident in mature forests, especially moist, rocky, upland ravines or rocky slopes; rare as a transient away from such habitat; DATES: April 11 to September 17.

The Worm-eating Warbler in my yard in Fayetteville on April 16, 2004, was a rare bird indeed, for we infrequently observe them far from rich, extensive, rocky woods with a tangle of wild grapevines, low shrubs, and small trees. Examples include slopes below White Rock Mountain and Cherry Bend (both in the Ozark National Forest), Cave Mountain and Lost Valley in the Buffalo National River area, Devil's Den State Park, and Whitney Mountain and Devil's Eyebrow Natural Area on north side of Beaver Lake. We found a singing bird perched on a flowering pawpaw tree on Cartwright Mountain near Devil's Den on April 26, 2008, during a field trip associated with the spring Arkansas Audubon Society meeting.

They are recorded on each forested Breeding Bird Survey route, with highest numbers in the Ozark NF. Pingjun Li (1994) found 20 Worm-eating Warbler nests in an extensive forest near White Rock in Ozark NF. Nest success was 56.4%, clutch size averaged 4.7, brood size 4.3, and the number of young produced per nesting pair was 2.43. None of his nests were parasitized by Brown-headed Cowbirds.

Shugart and James (1973) found them at Pea Ridge National Military Park in their mesic wood plot with sparse understory and an extensive canopy. Smith (1977) also noted extensive canopy. In their study plots in southern Newton County and northern Pope County, Rodewald and Smith (1998) compared mature, untreated plots with plots where the understory (or midstory) had been thinned to encourage oak regeneration. They found fewer Worm-eating Warblers in the treated plots, perhaps because the warblers make extensive use of smaller understory trees for foraging.

Forest management studies (Thompson et al. 1995) also showed them most numerous in the least disturbed forests. In the Missouri Ozarks, Annand and Thompson (1997) noted that it (and others) "usually associated with mature forests, were abundant in group and single-tree selection treatments. A key feature…appears to be the interspersion of small canopy openings containing dense patches of shrubs and tree reproduction…Bird species usually associated with mature forest, however, were likely abundant in the selection treatments due to the presence of intermediate and large-diameter trees." Breeding season point counts from the Ozark NF indicated a stable or slightly increasing trend based upon data within the period 1992-2004 (La Sorte et al. 2007).

At Lake Fayetteville, where Worm-eating Warblers do not nest, David Chapman (2016) considered as fall migrants birds found August 6 to September 4. A single bird seen by Bob Sanger at Pettigrew in Madison County on September 3, 1984, was in "… a loose mixed flock of Indigo Buntings (10+), White-eyed Vireo (2), Northern Cardinal (1). Brown Thrasher (1) Gray Catbird (1), Northern Oriole (2), Eastern Kingbird (4)."

Louisiana Waterthrush, *Parkesia motacilla*

STATUS: Fairly common transient and summer resident along streams and in adjacent floodplain forests; very rare in winter; DATES: March 8 to September 11+.

Louisiana Waterthrushes are common residents along our fast flowing headwaters streams. They show up in these areas early in spring, often by the second half of March. They are conspicuous by their songs through the summer, but are hard to find later with only scattered sightings from late July into first half of September. Leesia Marshall's research (2012) showed the birds arrived in the upper Buffalo area between March 11 and March 24. She typically found the first nests around mid-April.

At Ninestone Land Trust in Carroll County 2005-2017, Judith Ann Griffith recorded arrivals March 8-25, often by third week in March. Last birds were recorded August 10-September 9, often around mid-August.

Louisiana Waterthrushes are early to arrive in spring and early to depart in summer. A bird at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area on July 17, 2017, was a southbound migrant. So was one photographed by Terry Stanfill at Eagle Watch Nature Trail on July 22, 2017.

Breeding Bird Survey routes don't sample long stretches of streams, but these waterthrushes are readily apparent while hiking, swimming, and floating. You can't miss them on a spring or early summer float on Buffalo National

River, Kings River, and other high-quality streams. Over the years I have seen a few of their nests, which are constructed on the ground, well-concealed, and above the typical spring flood stage.

During 2004-2008, Leesia Marshall (2012) caught and banded 227 waterthrushes in tributaries to the Buffalo National River. Based upon working with banded birds, she was able to track the rates birds returned year after year to the same stream segments. Streams least impacted by pollution had highest rates of return. Water pollution that negatively impacted aquatic insect communities forced waterthrushes to extend lengths of their nesting terrritories.

Louisiana Waterthrushes aren't supposed to be as far north as western Arkansas in winter, but several records from the spillway at Lake Fayetteville has changed our outlook. David Chapman found a Louisiana Waterthrush on the spillway December 6, 2009, and remarkably, again on January 9, 2010 (presumably the same bird). Another winter season record involved a bird seen by Mike Mlodinow on February 18, 2011. On March 13, 2011, Joanie Patterson saw one, maybe the same one of February 18? Finally, Mlodinow found a bird on the spillway January 22, 2014, and I photographed it the following day.

Northern Waterthrush, *Parkesia noveboracensis*

STATUS: Common spring and less common fall transient; DATES: April 3 to May 26 and August 16 to October 15.

Northern Waterthrushes can be surprisingly common and widespread during spring migration, including in urban areas. These are usually not the typical places you might expect a Louisiana Waterthrush. At Fayetteville, just about any shady, even modestly swampy or wet place spot will do during their northward passage: a little spring run in my yard, the creek through Wilson Park, a neglected corner along railroad tracks south of campus. These are all urbanized places with bits of shady swampy wetland. They also occur in forested habitat at the edges of reservoirs, along sluggish streams and other pond-like still water. The spring migration mainly involves last week of April and thereafter. At this time it always surprises me how often I hear its very distinctive song.

The swampy fringe of willow trees along Lake Fayetteville has been one of the best places to find these migrants. Peak counts in the spring have involved 3-5 in early May and as many as three in late August. Mike Mlodinow counted nine at Lake Fayetteville on May 7, 2013.

It has been surprising to me to find Northern Waterthrushes with fair regularity at Chesney Prairie Natural Area. Migrating Nothern Waterthrushes forage in shady riparian cover associated with upper Sager Creek coursing through Chesney's grassy expanse.

Mike Mlodinow and I found a waterthrush, or actually, waterthrushes, when we were birding Lake Atalanta in Rogers on August 19, 2006. We couldn't agree on what we were seeing. Separately, we both felt pretty sure about our tentative identifications. Things cleared up when we finally realized we were looking at different birds that were close together—one Louisiana and one Northern.

Bachman's Warbler, *Vermivora bachmanii*

A specimen of this extremely rare, and possibly extinct, species was collected in Washington County on May 5, 1914 (James and Neal 1986). During a visit to the Denver Museum of Natural History, Charles Mills found and verified the 1914 specimen.

Golden-winged Warbler, *Vermivora chrysoptera*

STATUS: Uncommon spring transient; very uncommon fall transient; DATES: April 25 to May 18 and August 17 to October 1.

Most observations involve single birds, primarily between the last week in April into the third week of May. This is the period when neotropical migratory songbirds make their concentrated push northward and hence when we are most likely to find the more unusual species, like Golden-winged Warblers. Fall records are concentrated from the end of August into second half of September.

Ragupathy Kannan counted three at Ruth Armstrong Nature Area in Fort Smith on May 9, 1997. Paul Rodewald and Rob Dobbs counted three on May 4, 1994, during a long day that included birding at Lake Atlanta (1) and the Ozark National Forest (2). Mike Mlodinow saw two (a male and female) at Gregory Park in Fayetteville on May 11, 1990, and I saw two on Mt. Sequoyah in Fayetteville on May 15, 2004; these were part of a huge wave of migrants.

Mike Mlodinow told me in 2007 that his four observations in fall 2006 compared to a grand total of five he had in the previous 20 years! Mike's detailed birding takes some of the confusion out of what Roger Tory Peterson famously called "confusing fall warblers."

Blue-winged Warber, *Vermivora cyanoptera*

STATUS: Uncommon transient and summer resident; DATES: April 10 to October 22.

Most of the migration and summer range of Blue-winged Warblers is to our north and east. However, they can be found here in a variety of suitable habitats. Summer habitats include shrubby, extensive forest openings, Ozark glades, and former Tallgrass Prairie fields. I assume in the past that lightning strikes started wildfires creating suitable extensive forest openings. These warblers must have been in clearings associated with Native American crop fields, clearings by pioneers from the 1820s forward, and more recently, early succession habitat created or maintained by wild fires and prescribed burning on public lands.

We typically find them in larger, very open fields that have grown-up in saplings, including eastern red cedars. The habitat was characterized as "early tree stage" at Pea Ridge National Military Park in Benton County (Shugart and James 1973). The size of these "early tree stage" fields makes a difference: Hunter et al. (2001) found them associated with "larger patches (e.g., greater than 5-ha) with shrub-scrub, early succession and forest edge conditions generally more than three years after disturbance." Callahan (1953) listed it as a "common summer resident" at Lake Wedington, when that area included much abandoned and regenerating farmland. Most of this has now regenerated to forest. They are found in migration in old fields at Lake Fayetteville, but not in summer (Chapman 2016).

Recent summer localities include fields at Pea Ridge NMP, glade habitats around Beaver Lake, Ozark Natural Science Center north of Huntsville, Lake Wedington (dam area plus other places still in early succession), overgrown fields at Devil's Den State Park, Cass area in the Ozark National Forest, old farmlands adjacent the Buffalo National River (Erbie, Cave Mountain, etc.), and elsewhere.

Judith Griffith reported about seven territories June 10, 2009, at Ninestone Land Trust in Carroll County. This involved about 200 acres, much of it Ozark glade habitat that is being restored by removal of invasive woody plants and prescribed burning.

Low numbers of Blue-wings have been reported on Breeding Bird Surveys, including Compton BBS route in northern Newton County where there are extensive fields of former prairies north of Ponca. The birds are disappearing from places like Cave Mountain in the Buffalo National River because former fields are reverting to forest.

Blue-winged Warblers can be looked for in recently logged oak-hickory forest habitat with extensive disturbance (Thompson et al. 1995). This suggests that this species may have been more common and widespread here in the wake of past logging booms (late 1800s-early 1900s) and after the Great Depression (late 1920s-early 1940s) when many farms were abandoned with consequent initiation of young tree forests.

The hybrid form "Brewster's Warbler" has been observed on a handful of occasions.

Black-and-white Warbler, *Mniotilta varia*

STATUS: Common transient and summer resident; DATES: March 17 to October 15.

Come mid-March, I'm ready to step out of winter and look for an FOS (first-of-spring) Black-and-white Warbler. It's not a long drive down to Devil's Den State Park. This is when I start listening for that first "squeaky wheel" song of a Black-and-white. I may get lucky and find a bird freshly arrived in western Arkansas after winter in the tropics. Even if they haven't yet arrived, there's the possibility for a Louisiana Waterthrush or perhaps a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher—all early birds in our local migration calendar.

Black-and-white Warblers are forest birds. They pass through my shady urban yard in migration, but in summer they need more expansive forest. They are present in summer in forest habitat like that at Lake Fayetteville Park. However, any nests attempted so close to urban areas must be routinely parasitized by Brown-headed Cowbirds.

Pingjun Li (1994) found 17 nests in his study of neotropical migratory songbirds in an extensive forest near White Rock in Ozark National Forest. Nest success was 50.4%, clutch size averaged 4.9, brood size 4.4, and the number of young produced per nesting pair was 2.22. Only one nest was parasitized by cowbirds.

Forest management studies (Thompson et al. 1995) showed that when compared to untreated mature forest, these birds appear to benefit from various levels of disturbance. Smith et al. (2004) found only marginal differences when relatively undisturbed upland hardwood forest was compared to sites disturbed by various forestry practices. Breeding season point counts from the Ozark NF showed a stable or slightly increasing trend based upon data within the period 1992-2004 (La Sorte et al. 2007).

Prothonotary Warbler, *Protonotaria citrea*

STATUS: Fairly common summer resident in the larger forested stream bottomlands and forested lakes; DATES: April 5 to September 19.

Prothonotaries occur in in the swampy overflow areas of rivers and forested and swampy backwaters of lakes. JoAnne and Earl Rife found 10+ in Boone County on April 23, 25, and May 1, 1997, on Long Creek Arm of Table Rock Lake, in Blair Creek and Long Creek. Acording to Rife, these birds were primarily singing at or near nest holes, but one was "apparently defending turf in one of the large boat docks at Cricket Creek." There are eBird checklists on lakes throughout the region.

Observers don't often have the boats or time to check out all of the little swampy backwaters of our lakes, but when they do, results can be interesting. One example: I found at least six along a few miles during a float on the West Fork of the White River near Fayetteville on June 8, 2007. Impoundment of White River forming Lake Sequoyah backed water into numerous shallow sloughs, creating outstanding habitat. Joanie Patterson found seven Prothonotaries there on May 30, 2010.

Prothonotaries also readily use nest boxes. Young were being fed in a box placed by Northwest Arkansas Master Naturalists at Beaver Lake Nursery Pond on June 28, 2014.

Swainson's Warbler, *Limnothlypis swainsonii*

STATUS: Rare transient and summer resident; DATES: April 4 to July 29+

Northwest Arkansas is on the northwestern edge of Swainson's Warbler migration and summer range, so perhaps it should not be a surprise that its occurrence here is unusual. Biologist Jim Liles, for example, was surprised on April 4, 2002, by one that sang from his place in Marion County near Buffalo National River. Available records show Swainson's Warblers along larger rivers like the White and Beaver Lake, Buffalo National River, and Mulberry Creek. They have also been found at Fort Chaffee Wildlife Management area. In the latter place, Sandy Berger found Swainson's on May 10, 2003.

In spring 1985, single singing birds were found in dense bottomland forest along the White River in Washington and Madison counties in the first two weeks of May, but not thereafter. A migrant was present on Mt. Sequoyah in Fayetteville on May 11-12, 1988. Another one was in Fayetteville May 10-22, 2000, on Markham Hill near the UA-Fayetteville campus. According to Mike Mlodinow, "1 male. Heard singing and eventually seen in a patch of dense second growth at the edge of a residential area. Though this is an upland area near the top of a hill there is some cane present."

They have been found during summer in a few extensive canebrakes like the one at Buffalo Point on the Buffalo National River and at least during the 1980s in the dense, shady floodplain forest in the Ozark National Forest's Redding campground along the Mulberry River near Cass in Franklin County. It has also been found in summer in cane and dense understory vegetation below the Beaver Lake dam site.

Cannon et al. (2000) searched for Swainson's along the Buffalo National River, finding birds at four locations: Erbie, just upriver from Ozark (two locations), and Hasty. High water interfered with the surveys and probably caused birds to be missed. While they found Swainson's in two canebrakes, they characterized habitat as "deciduous habitats with dense shrub development in moist, but not inundated bottomland hardwood forest" and dense "swampy tangles, thickets and areas with shade and dense understory…"

Jack Stewart showed a Swainson's Warbler to grateful members and friends of Harrison's Disorganized Birder's Club on May 16, 2009. The bird was singing in cane and understory-rich bottomlands of Buffalo National River near Erbie campground north of Jasper.

The status of a bird seen and photographed in dense vegetation at Lake Fayetteville June 1-2, 2015, is unclear. It was not found later so must have been a migrant. The presence of adults still feeding young on July 29, 1983, at Redding indicates they remain here after this date.

Tennessee Warbler, *Oreothlypis peregrina*

STATUS: Common transient in spring; uncommon in fall; DATES: April 3 to May 27+ and August 27 to October 29+.

Tennessee Warblers call attention to themselves by loud and persistant singing during migration. Invariably, they choose mature trees in open, park-like settings, in both the general forest and in urban neighborhoods. "Of all the warblers migrating through the Fayetteville area, this one is easily dominant with its song" (Baerg 1951). This situation is unchanged with the passage of over a half-century. On May 10, 1994, Paul Rodewald provided what he termed a very

conservative count of 100+ around Pelsor and Jasper in Pope and Newton counties. Karen Garrett counted 12 at Devil's Den State Park during Birders Weekend, May 3, 2015.

I saw and heard one in my yard at Fayetteville on the very late date of June 13, 1986. Mike Mlodinow found a single bird at the University farm in Fayetteville on the unusual dates of December 17, 2003, and January 3, 2004.

Orange-crowned Warbler, *Oreothlypis celata*

STATUS: Fairy common transient; very uncommon to somewhat rare winter resident; DATES: April 12+ to May 18 and August 25 to November 27+.

Observations for Orange-crowned Warblers are concentrated primarily between mid-April and mid-May and in fall from second half of September to first week in November, but there are many sightings also in December. I saw four at Chesney Prairie Natural Area on October 15, 2005, and three at Lake Fayetteville, May 9, 2008 – both pretty good days for me in terms of these transients.

Orange-crowneds have been found on a number of occasions outside the usual migration period. There are scattered records, often of single birds, on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count: since 1998, seven records (including count week). They have been reported at least nine times (including count week) on Fort Smith-Moffett CBC. Mike Mlodinow found quite a few of them during winter of 2004-2005. Of this he noted, "Dec. 6, 2004 - Feb. 26, 2005. approximately 12 records this winter. There were no winter records in northwest AR prior to 1981, so this is a surprise. This species was at least formerly rare in winter in northwest AR - its status could be changing ..."

Historical CBC data from National Audubon shows that the typical mid-winter distribution lies well south of us, with only highly scattered records as far as northern Arkansas. Milder winters may account for what appears to be a trend for more individuals remaining here. Data analysis from National Audubon indicates Orange-crowned Warblers have shifted their center of abundance 32 miles north during the past 40 years.

Orange-crowned Warblers also show up in winter at suet feeders. Bill Beall had them coming to his feeder in Fort Smith January 3, 1987 to February 22, 1987. I have had them in my yard at a suet feeder several years right at mid-winter, including January 30, 2009, after an ice storm. The bird we tallied for 2016 Fayetteville CBC was in a cane thicket adjacent Mike Mlodinow's apartment in Fayetteville. One made regulr trips to suet at the home of Kelly and Donna Mulhollan in Fayetteville during severe cold in late December 2017.

Nashville Warbler, *Oreothlypis ruficapilla*

STATUS: Common transient; DATES: March 28 to May 16+ and August 29 to November 4+.

As in the case of Tennessee Warblers, Nashville Warbler songs seem to fill the air during peak periods of spring migration, mid-April to mid-May. They are seen just about anywhere with a few big trees or bushes, including yards in town. Abby Darrah submitted an eBird checklist with six for Lake Fayetteville on May 2, 2009.

Nashvilles are also common during much of October. David Chapman had 15 at Lake Fayetteville on October 4, 2009. They also show up outside the expected migration periods. Mike Mlodinow found a bird that apparently spent much of winter 2001-2002 on Mt. Sequoyah in Fayetteville. There is also a June report from Newton County.

Mourning Warbler, *Geothlypis philadelphia*

STATUS: Uncommon transient; especially in fall; DATES: April 30 to June 6 and August 15 to October 3.

We find Mourning Warblers during spring migration mainly from second through fourth weeks in May. Observations for fall migrants are mainly between the third week in August and mid-September.

In the *Birds of North America* series, Pitocchelli (1993) stated Mourning Warbler is "… a common breeder in cleared but regenerating areas of North America's boreal forest, winters in Central and South America, where it also prefers disturbed areas with thick undergrowth. In favoring such clearings caused by logging or forest fires, this warbler may be one of North America's few Neotropical migrants that has benefited from human settlement." This statement certainly fits occurrences during migration through western Arkansas. In their passage, they utilize all types of semi-open areas with a dense brushy cover of shrubs, bushes, etc. at forest edge, including such edge in urban areas.

Mourning Warblers are highly sought after because in a relative sense, they seem rare, though we typically find them during migration by listening carefully for songs and inspecting all kinds of low dense shrubbery and other low, shady cover. Singing birds may call attention to themselves in spring; otherwise, they're difficult to "pish" out of the bushes for clear views. A male and female remained in my yard in Fayetteville May 20-22, 2002, using the bushes and other low vegetation growing in a 15 foot-wide unmowed strip left just for such purposes. They also show up in places like Chesney

Prairie Natural Area. Jacque Brown and David Oakley obtained fine images of a singing male in the brushy edge at Chesney May 25, 2009. Mourning Warblers were also seen in a brushy edge at Chesney on August 29 and 31, 2008.

Kentucky Warbler, *Geothlypis formosus*

STATUS: Uncommon transient away from nesting habitat; fairly common summer resident in forests; DATES: April 15 to September 30.

We often find Kentucky Warblers in thickets or similarly dense understory vegetation within mature forests or in forest edge. They occur in migration and in summer in low numbers in all kinds of forested habitats, from parks like Lake Fayetteville to the more extensive forests like Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area.

They are often associated with habitat disturbance within forests (Hunter et al. 2001). Research in Missouri and other Central Hardwood states showed that Kentuckies responded positively to forest management, including single-tree and group selection (Thompson et al. 1995). James (1971) demonstrated that Kentucky Warbler habitat choices lay between habitats chosen by Gray Catbird and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.

Pingjun Li (1994) found seven Kentucky nests in his study of neotropical migratory songbirds in an extensive forest near White Rock in Ozark National Forest. Nest success was 45.4%, clutch size averaged 4.3, brood size 3.5, and the number of young produced per nesting pair 1.59. Two of the nests were parasitized by Brown-headed Cowbirds.

Breeding season point counts in the Ozark NF showed an increasing population trend based upon data within the period 1992-2004 (La Sorte et al. 2007). However, according to Mary Victoria McDonald, a long time Kentucky researcher, recent Breeding Bird Survey data "… suggest (along with study by MVM) that since about 1980 the continent-wide population of Kentucky Warblers has been slowly decreasing, although local increases and range expansions seem to be occurring. Increasingly, however, second homes and resorts are appearing in areas considered to be the "core" of the Kentucky Warbler distribution—e.g., Blue Ridge Mtns. and Cumberland Plateau. Sparsely scattered summer cottages in woods are being replaced by extensive developments with lawns, which bring more potential nest predators (human commensals such as cats, raccoons, skunks, and foxes), as well as increased cowbird parasitism."

Fall migrants show up in areas where they don't nest at least by early August. For example, I was surprised to see one at Chesney Prairie Natural Area on August 3, 2008.

Common Yellowthroat, *Geothlypis trichas*

STATUS: Common transient and summer resident; DATES: April 4 to November 11+.

Yellowthroats begin to arrive during the first half of April, but relatively few are seen until around mid-April and thereafter. A few yellowthroats singing from weedy flowerbeds and brushpiles in my yard in Fayetteville provide announcement that northward migration is underway. The count was 13 at Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area on April 22, 2012.

They nest in the moist thickets of extensively open areas, including regenerating clearcuts in forested habitat. James (1971) located yellowthroat habitat between that chosen by Brown Thrashers and Field Sparrows. We correctly associate them with open fields, but during my Forest Service years I often heard them in grassy open pine stands where Red-cockaded Woodpeckers were nesting—essentially open forest with enough sunlight to support the essential ground cover.

Yellowthroats are numerous during fall migration in extensively open grasslands like Chesney Prairie Natural Area. The count was at least 20 during a fall peak October 3, 2004. There is a sharp decline by mid-October, with stragglers thereafter.

Among the lingering and perhaps wintering birds: one seen by JD Willson at Lake Sequoyah December 14, 2014. Patty McLean and Michael Linz saw one at Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary December 29, 2015. Mike Mlodinow found one in Wilson Springs Preserve in Fayetteville January 7, 2009.

Hooded Warbler, *Setophaga citrina*

STATUS: Common summer resident in extensive mature forest; rare transient away from such habitat; DATES: April 12 to October 4.

Hooded Warblers arrive mainly during the period from mid to late April to around mid-May. Dick Baxter and Adam Leslie counted 12 in the Ozark National Forest in Crawford County on April 12, 2015. Andrea Green found six at Devil's Den State Park on May 9, 2010.

During migration they are found in places where the forest is less extensive (e.g. Lake Fayetteville, Lake Atalanta). During summer, Hoodeds are birds of extensive, moist (Smith 1977) mature forests, in both upland and

bottomland situations. James (1971 depicted breeding habitat as highly diverse in tree species, high percentage of canopy cover, relatively tall trees, with numerous small trees in the midstory, and gaps in this canopy.

Hoodeds are common on the forested slopes below White Rock Mountain, Cherry Bend, and other places in the Ozark NF, on Cave Mountain above the Buffalo River, Whitney Mountain on the north side of Beaver Lake, etc. They are found on each of the four forested Breeding Bird Surveys. In their study in Missouri Ozarks hardwoods, Annand and Thompson (1997) reported that Hoodeds responded positively to both single-tree and group selection harvests (also see Thompson et al. 1995). Hoodeds appeared to respond negatively in the short-term to understory removal and partial reduction in the canopy (Rodewald and Smith 1998). Breeding season point counts from the Ozark NF indicated a stable trend based upon data within the period 1992-2004 (La Sorte et al. 2007).

Pingjun Li (1994) found 84 Hooded Warbler nests during his study of neotropical migratory songbirds in an extensive forest near White Rock in Ozark NF. Nest success was 37.5%, clutch size averaged 3.5, brood size 3.2, and the number of young produced per nesting pair was 1.2. Brown-headed Cowbirds parasitized 12 of these nests. Of these 12, five were successful in fledgling at least one Hooded Warbler, four were abandoned, and three lost to predators.

Many Hoodeds were still singing in the upper Buffalo National River on September 13, 2010, and around Shores Lake in the Ozark NF on September 20, 2010. I found at least 15 birds on September 17-18, 2008, in the upper Buffalo, but only one on October 2.

American Redstart, *Setophaga ruticilla*

STATUS: Common transient and summer resident; DATES: April 17 to October 18.

During their migration, American Redstarts occur widely in all kinds of forested habitat, including urban woodlots. I see them during both spring and fall in my yard in the middle of Fayetteville. Rob Doster counted 22 migrants at Lake Fayetteville on May 11, 2002, and Mike Mlodinow 26 in the same place May 15, 2011. The spring migration stretches from last week of April to last week of May.

During summer they are common in extensive moist forests, including riparian forest and moist hillside forests. I typically find them in the plant-rich moist hillside forests that also host Cerulean Warblers: Whitney Mountain on north side of Beaver Lake, Cave Mountain on the Buffalo National River (also Ponca low water bridge, Boxley, Steele Creek area, etc.), and Cherry Bend in Ozark National Forest. At Devil's Den State Park, the birds are "common particularly in the lower streamside trees" along Lee Creek (Tulsa Audubon Society 1973). Black (1935) found it "common in the larger ravines on the slope" at Winslow during summer. They were common in riparian forest along the Buffalo River between Maumee and Rush during a float trip June 26-29, 2006. They have been found most years on the Compton Breeding Bird Survey typically in segments near the Buffalo River.

Redstarts are at least fairly common during fall migration, mainly late August through September to mid-October.

Redstarts have declined in some places, including Arkansas, but "… declines to date are not extensive enough to warrant management concern, because the species is locally abundant, widely distributed, tolerant of range of habitat conditions, and increasing in some locations" (Sherry et al. 2016).

Cape May Warbler, *Setophaga tigrina*

STATUS: Rare spring transient, plus a few observations for fall and winter; DATES: April 30 to May 22+.

Spring observations mainly involve the very end of April to mid-May. Karen McGee saw two Cape Mays at Devil's Den State Park on May 9, 1992, and Mike Mlodinow found a male and a female at Lake Fayetteville on May 19, 2009. There are also a few observations for fall and winter.

At Lake Sequoyah, Doug James, John Harbison, and Mike Mlodinow found one on September 23, 2000: "1 male. A rare fall transient in AR. This bird was associated with a yellow warbler, a pine warbler, a yellow-throated warbler, and several northern parulas in a group of pines near the Lake Sequoyah boat dock."

Wayne Easley and Jim Wampler observed a single bird at Gentry November 28-December 2, 1981. Perhaps most amazing, Mike Mlodinow and David Chapman found one for the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count on December 12, 1999.

Cerulean Warbler, *Setophaga cerulea*

STATUS: Locally common summer resident in moist, mature, extensive forest with a rich understory; rare as transient away from nesting areas; DATES: April 12 to September 6.

When I think about Cerulean Warblers, I associate Doug James with the former Cherry Bend campground in the Ozark National Forest. It has been one of Doug's favorite places, including camping and research. His treatise on Arkansas birds and the environment (James and Neal 1986, especially forest bird communities in Chapter 3) was in part inspired by trips to this lovely, birdy place once reachable only on rough gravel mountain roads. It remains inspiring, even though much easier (and noisier) to reach by paved highway.

Here Ozark Highlands Trail crosses highway 23 along a bench far above a forested stream bottom. It is possible to watch Ceruleans nearly at eye level as they forage in canopies of mature trees growing in the stream bottom below. They sing in the canopy trees growing on steep, plant-rich east and northeastern-facing slopes.

Interest in research continues. Chris Kellner, Than Boves, and Mitchell Pruitt found 16 at Cherry Bend on May 12, 2015. The eBird record included this note: "Observed during survey. Several captured and banded."

Besides Cherry Bend, there is similar habitat with Ceruleans on north side of Beaver Lake at Whitney Mountain and Devil's Eyebrow Natural Area (Jen Mortensen, personal communication, 2017), and on upper slopes of Cave Mountain in Buffalo National River. They have been found in other places, especially in the Ozark NF, with appropriate habitat (James et al. 2001; also numerous eBird checklists). On Cave Mountain, the Ceruleans are found with umbrella magnolia, pawpaws, and cucumber magnolias. These are cool, moist "rich woods," to use a common term.

Ceruleans are tallied on both of the Breeding Bird Surveys in Newton County and also once on the Boston Mountain route (two in 1994). They have been frequently found on both the Lurton BBS and Compton BBS, though not every year. I have missed them on the Compton BBS, but I know they were present, because I returned later and found birds I didn't see or hear during the three-minute stop. They have been found on upper slopes at Devil's Den State Park and nearby Cartwright Mountain.

Red oak borers have killed mature trees over huge areas of Ozark NF (Spencer 2001), including trees at Cherry Bend and many of the other places with Ceruleans. I returned to Cherry Bend many times during this period. Ceruleans remained. I estimated there were at least 12 singing birds during a hike on May 6, 2009. For years, sections of Highway 23 have been sliding downhill in the vicinity of Fly Gap and Cherry Bend. Highway repairs have made sizeable holes in the canopy. Ceruleans remain on slopes above.

"Although the Cerulean Warbler was formerly among the most abundant breeding warblers in the Ohio and Mississippi river valleys, its numbers plummeted in the late 1900s. Concern for the future of this species is warranted. Yet even in the face of these steep declines, populations continue to occur across the breadth of the nonbreeding range, and are currently expanding in the northeastern portion of the breeding range" (Buehler et al. 2013).

At Winslow, Smith (1915) found that Ceruleans arrived "by April 16, and before the trees were fully leafed out, it was readily detected as it moved about in the tops of the highest trees on heavily forested slopes and in ravines. Later as the foliage developed it was less apt to be observed..."

We don't often find Cerulean Warblers away from known breeding areas; therefore their late summer-early fall status is poorly known. Birds have been found between the last week of July and early September in non-nesting habitat, indicating they were migrants.

Northern Parula, *Setophaga americana*

STATUS: Common transient and summer resident in moist mature forests; DATES: March 19 to October 16+.

Parulas are observed in a variety of habitats during migration, but in summer occur mainly in moist forests, especially those in stream bottomlands and in upland ravines. Also observed in smaller forests associated with parks and even urban neighborhoods. At Lake Fayetteville, David Chapman (2016) considered it the "commonest warbler in summer seen on most field trips and occurring through forested areas."

Parulas have been found on all Breeding Bird Surveys in the region. As many as 11 have been counted on Compton BBS in northern Newton County. A long section of this BBS lies in the Buffalo National River bottomlands, plus moist forested ravines north of Ponca and on Cave Mountain. In the latter places, parulas can be heard singing in the same places as Cerulean Warblers, making possible direct comparisons of their somewhat similar songs.

Shugart and James (1973) showed parulas in mature mesic forest. James (1971) characterized their habitat choice as falling between Wood Thrush and White-breasted Nuthatch. Forest management studies (Thompson et al. 1995) showed parulas most numerous in mature forests and remaining numerous with single tree and group selection cutting, but declined as more of the canopy was removed. Breeding season point counts from the Ozark National Forest showed an increasing trend based upon data within the period 1992-2004 (La Sorte et al. 2007).

There are several observations as late as the first half of November.

Magnolia Warbler, *Setophaga magnolia*

STATUS: Fairly common spring transient, very uncommon fall transient; DATES: April 29 to June 4+ and August 28 to October 11.

Magnolias can be found in a variety of habitats as they migrate through western Arkansas. Dense tangles of low bushes and medium-sized trees near the Environmental Study Center at Lake Fayetteville have been an excellent place to find them. Rob Doster counted 12 at Lake Fayetteville on May 12, 2003. Meredith Swartwout counted six near Botanical Garden of the Ozarks on May 10, 2015. I see them annually in my yard in Fayetteville. I observed a singing male on the very late spring migration date of June 15, 2007.

Fall records are many fewer and mainly involve single birds during September.

Bay-breasted Warbler, *Setophaga castanea*

STATUS: Somewhat rare spring transient, very rare fall transient; DATES: April 28 to June 2 and September 14 to October 12.

Bay-breasted Warbler is among the least common though somewhat regular of transient warblers passing through western Arkansas. Spring records are heavily concentrated in the first half of May. Almost all observations involve single birds. JoAnne Rife and others saw two in Boone County on April 28, 1996.

There are only a few fall records. Compared to the northward spring passage, the fall migration route is more heavily concentrated along the Atlantic coast (Dunn and Garrett 1997).

Blackburnian Warbler, *Setophaga fusca*

STATUS: Uncommon spring and rare fall transient; DATES: April 26 to June 4; August 17 to October 1.

Most observations occur during northward migration in spring, and mainly during May. Most are single birds. However, on May 15, 2004, Mike Mlodinow and I led a field trip for Fayetteville Natural Heritage Association around top of Mount Sequoyah in Fayetteville. Temperatures were in the 40s, the mountaintop was in fog, but there was no wind, and the first bird we heard, then saw, was Blackburnian Warbler. We ended the day with at least eight. We went all over the mountain. It was one of those memorable days filled with spring migrants.

There is also an eBird list submitted by George Murphy for five Blackburnians on May 10, 2008, at Lake Wedington in the Ozark National Forest.

There are many fewer reports for the southward migration. These are concentrated in September.

Yellow Warbler, *Setophaga petechia*

STATUS: Common transient; rare summer resident; DATES: April 15 to May 29+; July 28 to September 28+.

Yellow Warblers are widespread in migration and can be seen in numerous open forest and edge habitats, including urban woodlots. Spring migration reaches a crescendo in second and third weeks of May. The eight I saw during International Migratory Bird Day, May 14, 2005, were mostly in the scattered trees of what is now Wilson Springs Preserve along Clabber Creek in Fayetteville. Mike Mlodinow tallied 19 during an excellent day at Lake Fayetteville on May 19, 2009. Early June records may include late migrants.

Fall migrants may be seen by late July and are numerous during August. Terry Stanfill saw four at Eagle Watch Nature Trail near Gentry on July 30, 2012. At Lake Fayetteville, “In mid-Aug Yellow Warblers can be the most frequent warbler encountered” (Chapman 2016). Mike Mlodinow observed 53 at Lake Fayetteville August 17, 2012, and still tallied 14 a week later.

During the nesting season they must be sought in a more restricted habitat, characterized by Frances James (1974) as the willows and cottonwoods “fringing open water of gravel bars along rivers, or in the scattered trees and shrubs of small towns.” They have been found on the Avoca, Lurton, and Compton BBS, but since the early 1980s, only on the Compton route. These reports, involving 1-2 birds, have come from a fringe of tall trees at Boxley millpond in the valley of the Buffalo National River. There are also summer records from the bordering Missouri Ozarks (Jacobs and Wilson 1997) and northeastern Oklahoma (Reinking 2004). Northern Arkansas is on the southern extreme of this bird’s vast nesting range (Dunn and Garrett 1997).

I saw a brilliant male at the University farm on the very late date of November 4, 2006.

Chestnut-sided Warbler, *Setophaga pensylvanica*

STATUS: Fairly common spring transient, uncommon fall transient, rare and local summer resident; DATES: primarily April 21 to June 2+ and August 17 to October 7.

Richardson and Brauning (1995) note this is a bird of "scrubby second-growth areas and forest edges," such as regenerating clearcuts and abandoned farmland. This habitat became common as the human population expanded across North America, including western Arkansas.

Spring migrants are fairly common in both urban and and wooded areas. They are still found in places where they don't nest in May (example: at least six at Lake Fayetteville on May 13, 2011), but also at this time some have settled into what we now recognize as breeding habitat. In 1993, then UA-Fayetteville graduate student Paul Rodewald found four male Chestnut-sided Warblers in Pope and Johnson counties in clearcuts where he also found Black-throated Green Warblers (Rodewald 1993). In June and July 1994, he and Amanda Dumin observed 10 males and two females within a 3-mile radius of Pelsor on the Pope-Newton county line.

Mike Mlodinow has also found them in summer in a group selection cut near the junction of highways 21 and 16 in southwestern Newton County. There were four singing males at two locations in Newton County in June 2001. David Rupe, Jason Garrett, and Heath Martin found nine in hardwood regeneration cuts in the Sassafras Knob area of Newton County on May 29, 2002. A nest there on June 20 held three nestlings.

Jacque Brown, David Oakley, and I found a bird singing in just such an opening in northern Franklin County at Fly Gap along the Highway 23 pig trail on May 22, 2009. This constantly singing bird could have been a transient, or perhaps it was trying to attract a mate.

The Chestnut-sided Warbler that David Chapman saw at Lake Fayetteville August 17, 2012, was an early arrival. Fall observations mainly involve end of August to mid-September.

Blackpoll Warbler, *Setophaga striata*

STATUS: Fairly common spring transient; DATES: April 20 to May 26.

Blackpolls are found only in spring migration. During this time we hear their highly distinctive high-pitched vocalizations in all types of forested habitat including mature and mid-succession woodlands. Most observations involve 1-2 birds, but many more may be present during peaks. Bill Beall found six at Lock & Dam 13, Springhill Park on the Arkansas River, on May 7, 2009, and 11 on May 11. According to Beall, "largest number ever seen by this observer in this area in 60 years." Mike Mlodinow counted 23 at Lake Fayetteville on May 19, 2009.

The southward migration occurs well to the east of Arkansas, accounting for our lack of fall Blackpolls.

Black-throated Blue Warbler, *Setophaga caerulescens*

Mike Mlodinow observed and documented a bird at Walker Cemetery in Fayetteville on October 4, 1986. Mike Mullane observed a male Black-throated Blue Warbler at his feeder on Markham Hill near the University campus in Fayetteville on December 9, 1999. It was relocated for the Christmas Bird Count on December 19 and documented. It was last seen on December 20.

Palm Warbler, *Setophaga palmarum*

STATUS: Uncommon transient with more records in spring than in fall; rare in winter; DATES: April 14 to May 12 and September 25 to October 29+.

Palm Warblers have been found with fair regularity in all kinds of extensive brushy fields, open grasslands, and crop fields like those at the University farm in Fayetteville, Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary in Fayetteville, Chesney Prairie Natural Area, etc. Spring observations are mainly from late April through first week in May. Mike Mlodinow found six in the fields at Lake Fayetteville Park on April 27, 1995.

Fall transients are mainly coming through from the last week of September through October into November (and occasionally later). There were four at the University farm in Fayetteville on September 29, 1999. There were 3-5 in an abandoned subdivision growing up in weeds and woody sprouts near Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton on October 10, 2010. Jackie Guzy and others from the Willson Lab at UA-Fayetteville saw three at Woolsey on October 13, 2016.

While Palm Warblers are never common in Arkansas during winter, there are additional observations scattered between December and late March showing they occasionally overwinter here. Martha Milburn and others saw a single bird at Harrison Lake in Boone County on February 4, 1995. Palm Warblers have been recorded for Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count on four occasions since 1985. A Palm Warbler (eastern race) that Mike Mlodinow found at University farm in Fayetteville on November 13, 2010, was subsequently relocated and tallied for Fayetteville CBC on December 19, 2010. Another was seen at Woolsey December 17, 2017, and recorded for Fayetteville CBC. A bird of the western race was photographed near Highfill January 7, 2018.

Pine Warbler, *Setophaga pinus*

STATUS: Common summer resident, uncommon winter resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Northwest Arkansas borders the extreme north and west of the range occupied year around (Rodewald et al. 1999). They are common here in summer in pine and mixed pine-hardwood stands. Salveter et al. (1996) found that Pine Warblers were the commonest avian species in her pine forest study area and increased in numbers with increasing stand age. They can be numerous in the pines in places like Ozark National Forest, Hobb State Park-Conservation Area, and McIlroy Madison County Wildlife Management Area.

Pine Warblers may be on the move into northwest Arkansas with the warming trends in February, with influxes from mid-February to early March. A bird was in full song in a small mature pine stand at University farm in Fayetteville on February 4, 2013. At Madison County WMA, I counted 16 singing on March 7, 2013. Fall movements are harder to detect, but warblers found at places like Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sansctuary during October and early November are likely post-breeding season birds moving south.

In winter they are generally uncommon and often hard to find. Planted pines within the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count circle have matured, resulting in some suitable habitat. None were recorded for Fayetteville CBC prior to 1985, but subsequently, we have tallied low numbers (1-3) on about one-half of the counts. We do find them sometimes during winter field trips in Shortleaf Pines around Beaver Lake, Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area, and White Rock area in Ozark NF. My experience with Pine Warblers immediately to the south, in the Ouachita NF, is that they are harder to detect up in the canopy during the cold weather when they are much less vocal.

Sometimes we are totally unaware of wintering Pine Warblers, but Bob and Cathy Ross had four at suet feeders during winter 2012-2013. Their home is among mature Shortleaf Pines adjacent Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area. They also come to suet at the Hobbs visitor center.

Pine Warblers respond well to most timber management activities, but decline with extensive canopy removal (Thompson et al. 1995). Breeding season point counts from the Ozark NF showed a stable population trend based upon data within the period 1992-2004 (La Sorte et al. 2007). The five birds Doug James found singing in pines at Eureka Springs on February 28, 1993, likely marked the breeding season onset.

Our Pine Warblers are representatives of a once more robust and widespread pine ecosystem that included Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, Brown-headed Nuthatches, and other plants and animals within the range of native Ozark Shortleaf Pine (see Dale 1986 for map and discussion; and Sargent 1884). For example, in 1880 Professor F.L. Harvey of Arkansas Industrial University (now UA-Fayetteville) estimated that Newton County held 767 million board feet of Shortleaf Pine and neighboring Polk County, 2,592 million (Sargent 1884). Much of this habitat has disappeared and been replaced by hardwoods, with loss of habitat for pine specialists.

Yellow-rumped Warbler, *Setophaga coronata*

STATUS: Common transient and winter resident; DATES: September 10 to May 26.

Almost all of our yellow-rumps are the eastern "myrtle warbler" with a white throat (Dunn and Garrett 1997). Mike Mlodinow has made two observations of "Audubon's Warbler," the form with a yellow throat of the western U.S.

The fall influx of Yellow-rumped Warblers into western Arkansas is most apparent during October and early November. For example, I saw 23 in one flock at Lake Sequoyah on October 10, 2007, and 24+ near the Environmental Study Center at Lake Fayetteville October 13, 2014. They are especially numerous where there are cedars and other wild fruits like poison ivy and wild grapes.

They have benefitted from increasing urbanization of western Arkansas. This is suggested by increases in numbers of wintering birds. For example, on the Fort Smith-Moffett Christmas Bird Count, there were 0.41 birds/party hour in the 1960s, compared to 2.74 for counts held 2006-2015. Fayetteville CBC experienced similar increases.

"Among warblers, this species is one of the most ecologically generalized. Although it is confined largely to coniferous breeding habitat, individuals forage in a broad range of microhabitats and employ a variety of foraging techniques, from fly-catching to foliage-gleaning for insects. During the nonbreeding season, this warbler is found in almost any habitat and expands its diet to include a substantial amount of fruit. Its ability to digest the waxes in bayberries (*Myrica* spp.) make it unique among warblers …" (Hunt and Flaspohler 1998).

The spring migration primarily occupies March and April. They are numerous during this time. A few high counts from Lake Fayetteville make the point: 114 on April 8, 2000, 201 on April 16, 2012. There were at least 22 still at Lake Fayetteville as late as May 4, 2007.

Myrtles commonly sing during later stages of spring migration here and many also acquire their striking nuptial plumage, providing us a peek at how they look (and sound) on their breeding grounds.

Yellow-throated Warbler, *Setophaga dominica*

STATUS: Fairly common summer resident; DATES: March 19 to October 17+.

Yellow-throated Warblers show up fairly early in spring, often by late March. We may just see or hear a bird or two when out birding, but there are occasional records of 4-6 during the peak singing times, late April into second half of June. Mike Mlodinow recorded 2-5 during his Lake Fayetteville birding May 31 to June 27, 2017.

Floating the Buffalo National River, we are heading right into Yellow-throated Warbler country. They sing in mature riparian forest. They sing conspicuously from cedars along the big bluffline. They sing in the mature stands of Shortleaf Pines. Their former name, Sycamore Warbler, was inspired by their presence in common trees like sycamores along the river. They are common throughout such habitats. David Chapman (2016) found them in sycamores and pines at Lake Fayetteville Park.

Forest management studies showed little response by this species to a variety of cutting techniques (Thompson et al. 1995).

A singing bird surprised me in my central Fayetteville neighborhood on July 24, 2017. Perhaps this was an early migrant? They remain common here into mid to late September, with mainly late birds into October. Written documentation was provided for a single bird at Hickory Creek Park on Beaver Lake in Benton County on February 1, 1987.

Prairie Warbler, *Setophaga discolor*

STATUS: Locally common summer resident; otherwise, uncommon transient; DATES: April 5 to September 16.

Prairie Warblers are widespread during spring migration in open field habitats. Most observations occur in the last week of April and thereafter. The fall migration seems to involve the period of late August into early September. Two birds that Mike Mlodinow and I saw at Chesney Prairie Natural Area on August 21, 2005, were fall migrants as were two in the same place on September 9, 2007.

Nesting Prairie Warblers occur primarily in extensive overgrown fields with small trees and shrubs like eastern red cedar. They are present regularly, for example, in the old fields at Erbie where personnel from the Buffalo National River maintain openings with prescribed fire. They have also been found in summer at Ninestone Land Trust in Carroll County where traditional Ozark glade habitats are being restored. They have been found frequently at Ozark Natural Science Center, Pea Ridge National Military Park, and Fort Chaffee Wildlife Management Area.

In the Ouachita National Forest, where Shortleaf Pine is dominant, Prairie Warblers were common in quality Red-cockaded Woodpecker habitat. This is a kind of prairie within an open forest: mature, open, and park-like maintained in an open condition with prescribed burning, timber harvests like thinning, and reduction of midstory hardwoods.

James' (1971) study of habitat ordination showed Prairie Warblers on the extreme end of birds that require open habitat—that is, it had to be very open. In their study at Pea Ridge NMP, Shugart and James (1973) found Prairie Warblers in a variety of open fields including those with broomsedge, early tree stage, and forest edge. They have been found on all Breeding Bird Surveys, but disappear with loss of open field habitat. While Prairie Warblers are absent from heavily forested areas, they can quickly take advantage of forests harvested with shelterwoods and especially clearcuts (Thompson et al. 1995).

Black-throated Green Warbler, *Setophaga virens*

STATUS: Fairly common transient; local summer resident; DATES: March 28 to May 29 and August 11 to November 15; there are also nesting records in June and July.

Spring migration mainly involves late April into second half of May. Mitchell Pruitt saw four on Kessler Mountain in Fayetteville on April 18, 2016. Andy Scaboo also saw four at Lake Fayetteville on May 14, 2010.

UA-Fayetteville graduate student Paul Rodewald found 14 singing males and fledglings on the Ozark National Forest in Pope and Johnson counties in 1993 (Rodewald 1993). This was the first evidence of nesting in Arkansas. Most of its range lies well to the east and north of Arkansas. Birds in summer in Arkansas appear to be largely disconnected from the main breeding season populations (Morse and Poole 2005). Summer records from the Ozarks are mainly from National Forest lands with extensive mature tree stands. Leesia Marshall observed a nest in the Boxley valley in Newton County in 2008 in the upper Buffalo River area (personal comm.).

Rodewald reported that Black-throated Green sites were "rather rich in tree species diversity." This habitat typically involves mature tree stands on north and east-facing slopes. Subsequent to Rodewald's discovery, Forest Service personnel have found them in more areas. Leif Anderson and others found them in summer in the Ozark NF: Richard Creek area of Newton Co., Cherry Bend in northern Franklin Co., Pilot Knob in Johnson Co., etc. No birds were found on the Ozark

NF BBS route in Johnson County in its first year (1991), but low numbers (up to three birds) in most subsequent surveys. I always look for one in summer at the old Cherry Bend campground, where Ozark Highlands Trail crosses highway 23 south of Brashears.

Fall migrants begin passing through around mid-August, but the migration mainly occurs from second week of September into second half of October. I found birds in fall 2010 from early September until mid-October during field trips to places where they don't nest, like Lake Fayetteville and Lake Atalanta.

Canada Warbler, *Cardellina canadensis*

STATUS: Very uncommon transient; DATES: May 1 to June 6 and August 23 to October 6.

During spring and fall, Canada Warblers pass through in modest numbers. Spring transients have mainly been found from second week in May to end of the month, fall transients last week in August to third week in September.

Our records have mainly involved single birds, occasionally as many as three: Andy Scaboo tallied three at Lake Fayetteville on May 14, 2010. Mike Mlodinow counted three on Mt Sequoyah in Fayetteville on August 30, 2005.

"Populations of this warbler have declined steadily over the past 30 years, likely in response to forest succession and loss of forested wetlands, making this species a high priority for management and monitoring. Its wintering grounds along the east slope of the Andes are also under pressure, but the species apparently can use disturbed forests if sufficient stands of trees remain. Still, trends in many parts of its breeding range exceed 2% loss annually, prompting the need for vigilant study and management" (Reitsma et al. 2009).

Wilson's Warbler, *Cardellina pusilla*

STATUS: Common transient; DATES: April 21 to June 3 and August 17 to October 22+.

Wilson's Warbler may be encountered just about anywhere with fairly open edge habitats including urban woodlots, fields with medium sized trees, forest edge, and overgrown fencerows. I always see them in my yard in Fayetteville. They migrate through western Arkansas mainly during May and again mainly September to early October, heading south. They are pleasingly numerous during peaks. Rob Doster counted 15 on May 11, 2002, at Lake Fayetteville, an excellent place to find them. Mike Mlodinow and I found 10 at Lake Atalanta on September 11, 2005, and Mike counted 16 at Lake Fayetteville on September 12, 2006.

Of his unusual June 3, 2004, record Mike Mlodinow noted, "This could have been a member of the western race as the song was atypical, rising at the end in a way reminiscent of the song of Blackburnian Warbler."

There are also a few out of season observations. Leesia Marshall photographed one near Lake Harrison on December 14, 2009, and Alan Gregory saw it December 19. Joan Reynolds found one and photographed it at Lake Atalanta February 22-23, 2012: "Typical male, but with a dark area below the eye toward base of the bill -- perhaps an injury or something. Seemed healthy and was actively foraging."

Summer Tanager, *Piranga rubra*

STATUS: Common transient and summer resident; DATES: April 11 to October 30+; rare in winter.

Our "summer redbird," as the old timers knew it, is a familiar warm season resident of mature forests, including those in modestly developed urban areas with mature forest canopy. It is also common in all extensive forests. The key appears to be large, older mature trees.

Summer Tanagers are recorded in good numbers on each forested Breeding Bird Survey route (but have disappeared from Avoca probably due to its heavy urbanization). In Central Hardwood forests, Summer Tanagers didn't exhibit appreciable change across a broad range of forestry practices (Thompson et al. 1995). However, breeding season point counts from the Ozark National Forest showed a declining trend based upon data within the period 1992-2004 (La Sorte et al. 2007). The same authors noted that "Forest management activities such as prescribed burning and thinning benefit this species."

Summer Tanagers remain here until around mid-September, but thereafter migrants are evident in places where no tanagers nest. Such is the case at Chesney Prairie Natural Area, where I saw two on September 19, 2008, and one on September 30, 2007. There are scattered observations of birds lingering through the leaf-fall month of October.

Some male Summer Tanagers we see are not all red. These patchy birds, with red and some yellow in their plumage, are not juveniles. Males hatched in the previous year do not acquire the full red plumage until late in their first summer as breeding birds (that is, they are at least 1-year old). In some respects this is similar to the situation with other species with males that look different in their first full summer. Examples of familiar nesting birds that illustrate this point include Painted Bunting, Orchard Oriole, and American Redstart.

Summer Tanagers typically winter much further south, to central Mexico and southward (Robinson 1996). However, winter season records are scattered across North America, including a fair number in Arkansas (James and Neal 1986). Steve Erwin reported a bird in yellowish plumage visiting his suet feeder in Fayetteville on February 9, 2009, during the course of the Great Backyard Bird Count. The bird had been present since at least January. I obtained images of this bird on March 4, 2009. It was molting into a male summer redbird by early April. Between December 2015 and February 2016, observers around Northwest Arkansas City documented 11 Summer Tanagers, an extraordinary number for the season (Smith et al. 2016).

Scarlet Tanager, *Piranga olivacea*

STATUS: Common summer resident in extensive mature forests; rare away from such habitat; DATES: April 4 to October 9+.

Scarlet Tanagers are found in very extensive mature forests that are less fragmented, overall, than many of the forests suitable for Summer Tanagers. They seem more numerous at higher elevations than Summer Tanagers. They apparently avoid our urban areas, even in migration. For example: there is only one record for Scarlet Tanager at Lake Fayetteville, a frequently birded place.

They are recorded in good numbers on each of the forested Breeding Bird Survey routes – as many as 20 on the Lurton route and up to 13 on Compton BBS. As compared to Summer Tanagers, Scarlet Tanagers are more associated with undisturbed mature forests. For example, when compared to untreated mature control stands, Scarlets increased in single-tree selection cuts, but declined with increasing levels of forest removal (Thompson et al. 1995). Smith et al. (2004) showed that Scarlets were a fairly common species in relatively undisturbed upland hardwood forest and sites variously disturbed by management practices. The exception involved clearcutting; in these sites Scarlet Tanagers were rare. Breeding season point counts from the Ozark National Forest showed a stable trend based upon data within the period 1992-2004 (La Sorte et al. 2007).

In their study of habitat area requirements of breeding forest birds, Chan Robbins and others (Robbins et al. 1989) included Scarlet Tanagers as one of the area-sensitive species of concern. We are fortunate to live in a region with extensive forests. A few examples: Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area, Devil's Den State Park, Ozark National Forest, McIlroy Madison County Wildlife Management Area, Buffalo National River, etc. These extensive and modestly fragmented forests support populations of many bird species.

Scarlet Tanagers seem to depart relatively early in fall. Records are scattered into second half of September. I found 12 in the upper Buffalo National River in Newton County on September 17-18, 2008, but none on my next trip on October 2. Judith Ann Griffith saw one at Ninestone Land Trust in Carroll County on the very late date of November 12, 2013. According to her report: "Female Scarlet Tanager, very greenish with darker wings and hint of wingbar, seen at bird feeder before the cold front."

Western Tanager, *Piranga ludoviciana*

The Arkansas Bird Records Committee accepted documentation for a Western Tanager observed by Lavaughn Graham on May 14, 1980, near War Eagle Recreation Area in Washington County. According to her report: "Red Head, black upper back, yellow rump, black tail, black wings with yellow shoulder and wing bar, underparts yellow." There are occasional other records of birds called Western Tanagers, but these tend mainly to be young male Summer Tanagers with lots of yellow and red.

Northern Cardinal, *Cardinalis cardinalis*

STATUS: Very common resident; DATES: observed in all seasons.

Cardinals are found all year in shrubby neighborhoods and woody fields, at the forest edge, and even within thickets of extensive forest openings. Their striking appearance and pleasant song adds considerably to the charm of living in western Arkansas. During summer highest numbers are recorded along the open country and urbanized Breeding Bird Survey routes (Massard, Avoca). Breeding season point counts from the Ozark NF showed a strongly increasing trend based upon data within the period 1992-2004 (La Sorte et al. 2007).

Mobley (1994) studied nesting behavior of cardinals at Fayetteville. He found that they made on average about 2.5 nesting attempts each year and overall fledged about two young with these attempts. Only about one-third of the pairs he studied managed to produce offspring. He also found that cardinals abandoned nests if Brown-headed Cowbirds laid in it before cardinal eggs were laid, which may account for why 19% of the nests he found had been abandoned.

Cardinals are tallied annually in high numbers on the Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count, but birds per party hour data show a modest decline in numbers when the 1960s are compared to 2006-2015 (4.64 versus 3.80). Cardinals are still very common here, but the change may result from loss of open field habitat with increasing urbanization.

During winter I often see as many as a dozen birds, both males and females, at my yard feeder. I can see as many, and sometimes more, in the dense thickets formed by giant ragweed, poke, blackberries and small woody plants that develop along roadsides in open farming country. In these situations it is typical to see cardinals in loose flocks with White-crowned Sparrows, Harris's Sparrows, and other species. They are always a delight to see, whether it's the striking plumage of the males or the elegant subtlety of females.

About "bald-headed" cardinals: not too much to worry about. Most of these are seen after the nesting season and may involve juveniles molting into adult plumage, with all the juvenile head feathers lost at once. There could also be some other causes (feather mites, etc.), but usually new feathers grow in within a few weeks.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak, *Pheucticus ludovicianus*

STATUS: Common spring and uncommon fall transient; very rare in summer; DATES: April 18 to May 28+ and September 1 to October 18.

Rose-breasted Grosbeaks are common transients that are easily found if you learn the distinctive "keek" call, which helps a lot in locating them midst the foliage of mature, spreading trees. They are much easier to observe when they crowd around feeders!

There is a big push through western Arkansas in the first week of May. Some examples of this: at least 10, including males and females, at Ninestone Land Trust in Carroll County on May 2, 2009; Karen Garrett counted 10 at Devil's Den State Park on May 3, 2015; and Adam Schaffer recorded seven in Bentonville on May 2, 2016.

There were at least eight on Cave Mountain in Newton County on October 2, 2008, a fall peak. During fall migration they take advantage of abundant, widespread crops of giant ragweed (*Ambrosia trifida*), heavy with seed just at the right time. We observed at least four grosbeaks harvesting ragweed seeds along Frisco Spring at Lake Atalanta on September 29, 2002. I made similar observations at Chesney Prairie Natural Area on September 30, 2007.

In addition to transients, there are a few summer records. Sally Jo Gibson photographed a male visiting her feeder at Harrison June 19, 2009. Doug James was floating Buffalo National River June 12, 1979, when he saw one. During the course of the Missouri breeding bird atlas project, grosbeaks were found nesting widely in the northern half of Missouri, with summer records scattered to the south, including blocks bordering Arkansas (Jacobs and Wilson 1997).

Black-headed Grosbeak, Pheucticus melanocephalus

This common western bird occasionally strays much further east. Harold and Margaret Hedges observed one at close range January 23-26, 1979, in Newton County near Boxley: "First seen in Arkansas by observer having resided here 12 years. First seen in Midwest in 50 years of observation … This bird was possibly a first year male since it did not have the black head or tail. " Doil Felts observed one at Siloam Springs April 12-20, 1993. Jacque Brown photographed one visiting her feeder in Centerton on September 26, 2014. The plumage was consistent with a fall male. It was seen by others at least as late as September 29.

Blue Grosbeak, Passerina caerulea

STATUS: Common summer resident; DATES: April 19 to October 10.

Blue Grosbeaks are widespread in expansive open fields. They arrive in the last days of April and most have departed by mid-September.

They can be found during summer in our former prairie grasslands, overgrown fields, pastures, and croplands. Habitat-wise, I associate them with Painted Buntings and have often found them in the same places. Out in the open country, I stop and listen. At a great distance, I hear what I think is a grosbeak. Or is it the bunting? Differences in their songs are obvious up close, but not so obvious across a big field.

In her study of bird habitat ordinations in Arkansas, James (1971) characterized Blue Grosbeak habitat as very open, shrubby, with isolated larger trees. Field Sparrow and Eastern Kingbird shared these characteristics. The large, open, and frequently shrubby fields along the Compton Breeding Bird Survey in Newton County seem about ideal, with Blue Grosbeaks seen and heard all along the way.

Lazuli Bunting, *Passerina amoena*

STATUS: Rare visitor; DATES: May 2 to 17.

This western species occasionally strays east. There is a big peak in the migration of similar species, like Indigo Buntings, at mid-May. Based upon this, it seems reasonable to conclude that our Lazuli Buntings are off course and arrive with local nesting birds.

Jennifer Russell observed and photographed a first spring male in Washington County on May 9-15, 1996. J. Pat Valentik found one at Lake Leatherwood near Eureka Spring on May 13, 2006. Leesia Marshall and others on a Disorganized Birders' Club field trip observed one at the Elk Education Center in Ponca May 15, 2006. It remained a few days. Sally Jo Gibson obtained photographs. Bill and Toka Beall photographed a male that visited their feeder in Fort Smith, May 2-9, 2008. A male was photographed at a feeder on May 8-9, 2010, in Fayetteville. One visited a feeder at Calvin Bey's home in west Fayetteville on May 13, 2011. It was loosely associated with Indigo Buntings also visiting this feeder. Adam Leslie photographed one at Devil's Den State Park on May 4, 2014.

I photographed a bird at Ponca on May 19, 2013, that was apparently an Indigo Bunting X Lazuli Bunting hybrid.

Indigo Bunting, *Passerina cyanea*

STATUS: Common transient and summer resident; very rare winter resident; DATES: April 12 to October 25+.

Indigo buntings are numerous here in both migration and summer. They are common along the edge of the forest adjoining open farmland and in dense fencerows with trees. There were at least 16 buntings visiting feeding stations at Ninestone Land Trust in Carroll County on May 17, 2008, indicating a spring peak.

They are common as nesting birds in a variety of habitats. In extensive forests, bunting numbers increased with increasing levels of forest removal (Thompson et al. 1995, Rodewald and Smith 1998, Annand and Thompson 1997). Indigos also nest in the forest interior where there are openings of sufficient size. They are common on all Breeding Bird Survey routes in the region. Breeding season point counts from the Ozark National Forest showed an increasing trend based upon data within the period 1992-2004 (La Sorte et al. 2007).

In 1986, at least five birds returned to the same 40-acre research plot near Durham in Washington County where they had been banded in 1985 (personal communication, Jane Fitzgerald).

Indigo flocks of a dozen or more birds are especially noteable from mid-August into first half of October, declining thereafter. These flocks are busy harvesting the seed bounty in fields and along the forest edge. Most are in the predominant brown plumages, though here and there we see a bird with some hints of fine indigo. These patchy birds are striking. Jack Stewart observed approximately 30 birds feeding on seeds of Indiangrass and big bluestem in Newton County on September 10, 2004. It's a good count that is fairly typical of the fall migration peak.

Some relatively late nesting also occurs. At Chesney Prairie Natural Area, I saw a young bird, just out of the nest, accompanied by both adults, on September 19, 2008.

There are also occasional winter observations, December through February, of single birds visiting feeders. Jennifer Russell and others observed one from December 24, 1996 to February 11, 1997, and she also had one in late February 2009. One made regular visits to Adam Schaffer's feeder in Bentonville. He included photos of this bird with his eBird list on January 23, 2013. It was one of the handsome patchy birds, brown and blue.

Painted Bunting, *Passerina ciris*

STATUS: Fairly common summer resident; DATES: April 16 to September 11+.

Painted Buntings typically arrive by the end of April or the beginning of May, sometimes at feeders or in mixed flocks with Indigo Buntings. For example, there was a brilliant male Painted associated with a flock of Indigo Buntings at Devil's Den State Park on May 3, 2008, much to the delight of visitors during the annual Birder's Weekend.

Fall migration seems to be heavy during August. I saw at least seven green-plumaged Painteds in three spots in the Cherokee City area on August 31, 2008. I was riding on the bike trail near Northwest Arkansas Mall on August 2, 2014, and saw seven green Painted Buntings in one place, plus at least one multi-colored male. There was a flock along the roadside at Waldron on August 17, 2005. These seem like fall records, but there is nesting activity in August as well (below).

Painted Buntings are common summer residents in farmlands of the Arkansas River Valley. Over the years I have found Painteds regularly in open country broken by dense thickets or extensive fencerows with some tall trees, often overgrown fields with cedars, neglected railroad right-of-ways, and edges of towns where shrubby-thickety conditions prevail. There is a lot of such habitat in farmlands in the river valley around small communities like Dyer and Alma, and around Frog Bayou Wildlife Management Area. Painted Buntings are common there.

If you want to find them, recognizing the song is critical, because neither the brightly colored males nor the greenish females are often seen. Typically, males become visible only as they sing from the tops of trees in fencerows.

During summer of 2005 I birded regularly on former prairies at Norwood (just west of Wedington on the Washington-Benton County lines), Cherokee City (former Round Prairie), and Maysville (former Beaty Prairie). At Maysville they occur in the mature tree belts along the gravel roads surrounded by open fields. Painted Buntings were common in all of these areas (typically, at least 4-5 per day). I also found them on the former Hindsville Prairie in Madison County, Chesney Prairie Natural Area, and in remaining habitat patches in the Fayetteville area (Callie's Prairie at Lake Fayetteville), in south Fayetteville along Willoughby Road, in Fayetteville Industrial Park, University farm, Wilson Springs Preserve bottomlands. They can still be found in the vicinity of city-owned property adjacent Fayetteville's Westside Wastewater Treatment Facility.

JoAnne Rife has documented a population in Boone County in the Lead Hill-Sugar Loaf-Diamond City Recreation Area on Bull Shoals (Rife 1990). She observed them in the residential area near Sugar Loaf dock, but stated that another way to find them was to go by boat and watch "not-so-steep bluff areas either up in West Sugar Loaf Arm, Deer Cove, or Shoal Creek."

Painted Buntings were also reported in past years on the Avoca Breeding Bird Survey route in Benton County (up to 5-6 in late 1960s to early 1970s), but disappeared almost entirely from that survey as the route was swallowed up by urban development that eliminated obligate habitat of big open field and dense hedgerows. They are still found on the Massard BBS in the river valley, even with urbanization.

Mike Mlodinow has found both adults and fledglings at the University farm in Fayetteville during mid-August several years. I observed two birds in what I assume was a juvenile plumage on August 30, 1987, in south Fayetteville near Drake Field. In two different years I have observed fledglings and adults together at Chesney Prairie during the first half of August.

A bird in green plumage regularly visited a feeder at Paige and Mary Bess Mulhollan's home in Fayetteville November 17- 27, 2007. It was photographed by Mary Bess. This bird disappeared, but within the month, Doug James and Elizabeth Adam, also in Fayetteville, observed a bird in similar plumage at their feeder January 19-23, 2008. Birds sometimes winter even further north (Lowther et al. 1999).

Continent-wide Breeding Bird Survey data shows a significant decline (Hunter et al. 2001). I attended a meeting of the international group Partners-in-flight at McAllen, Texas, in 2005. Some of the presentations there were about this decline. Sadly, part of the problem involves birds captured during winter for the caged bird trade. Captured birds bring as little as 25 to 50 cents each. Many die in the process. Stopping the trade in wild birds by providing alternatives ways to make a living is part of the solution. Even if they evade capture in winter, they face significant reductions in suitable nesting habitat. Extensive old field habitat is lost when the former prairie lands are converted for other uses.

Habitat is lost as the human population of Northwest Arkansas City expands. Also lost: Painted Buntings. Loss of habitat is not as obvious as trapping, but in the end, has the same unfortunate outcome. Why should we squander an opportunity to live among Painted Buntings? Another big box store and parking lot is too high a price to pay for such loss. Why should we accept a lesser form of existence and a world largely deprived of its natural charm and beauty?

Dickcissel, Spiza americana

STATUS: Common migrant and summer resident; DATES: April 18 to October 31+.

Dickcissels are familiar scions of our former prairie grasslands. They habitually sing from open perches on fences and utility lines. They prefer fields with tall grasses and tangles of vegetation like blackberries, persimmon sprouts, etc. In their study at Pea Ridge, Shugart and James (1973) found Dickcissels in a field with broomsedge grasses and sassafras saplings that had burned the winter before their study.

Joanne and Earl Rife noted a big spring migration peak with 50-75 in Boone County west of Harrison on April 28, 1996. There were several hundred on the ground and in trees at University farm in Fayetteville April 29, 2017. There were hundreds in ripening wheat fields in Kibler bottoms south of Alma on May 2, 2017. Yellow-headed Blackbirds were mixed in with these Dickcissel flocks.

Dickcissels frequently attempt to nest in hayfields, but because of mowing, successful nests are likely only along the fencerows or in abandoned fields. It has been found on Breeding Bird Survey routes (Massard, Avoca, Lurton, and Compton) that include farmland, but as expected, not on the two more heavily forested routes (Ozark National Forest, Boston Mountain). Numbers found on the Avoca BBS have declined considerably since the late 1980s, which is consistent with increasing urbanization and loss of open field habitat.

Dickcissel migration is underway by late August and early September. There were at least 38, including one flock of 30, at Chesney Prairie Natural Area on September 9, 2013. Observations after the end of September and into early

December often involve just 1-2 birds. Some of these stragglers are birds derived from late nests. We have found adults feeding fledglings on several occasions in early September.

Dickcissels remain fairly common birds in our former prairie region. But as is the case with many grassland species, continent-wide BBS data shows a significant decline (Hunter et al. 2001).

In 2017, UA-Fayetteville graduate student Alyssa DeRubeleis initiated a study of nesting success of grassland birds. Her project has focused on restored or newly created grasslands and natural grasslands in northwest Arkansas. Study areas in 2017 included Callie's Prairie at Lake Fayetteville Park, Woolsey Wet Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary, and at Siloam Springs, Stump Prairie and Chesney Prairie Natural Area. She has found many Dickcissel nests in these sites. Her study will provide quantative details about how these grasslands are functioning in terms of nesting birds.

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Alphabetized index of common bird names

“Though I do not believe that a plant will spring up where no seed has been, I have great faith in a seed. Convince me that you have a seed there, and I am prepared to expect wonders.” – Henry Thoreau

Baltimore Oriole nest at Maysville December 15, 2015

Joseph C. Neal (BA History 1968, MS Zoology 1992) is a native of western Arkansas who has made his home mainly in Fayetteville since coming to the University of Arkansas in 1964. He worked as a freelance journalist (The *Grapevine*) before joining with Douglas A. James to coauthor *Arkansas Birds* (University of Arkansas Press 1986). Subsequently, he wrote the academic portion of the *History of Washington County Arkansas* (Shiloh Museum 1989). Upon finishing his MS, he joined the USDA Forest Service as a wildlife biologist on the Ouachita National Forest. In retirement he is active with Arkansas Audubon Society, Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society, and maintains his campus affiliation as a visiting scholar.

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS AUDUBON SOCIETY

Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society (NWAAS) is a non-profit organization affiliated with the National Audubon Society. NWAAS's mission 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. Society functions, including monthly field trips, are free and open to the public. Where possible, we seek to make our field trips user-friendly for those with mobility impairments.

Information about NWAAS is available on the society's web site and its facebook page: conservation news, field trip schedules, special events, plus a list of officers and board members. Other features include birding guides, photographs, and links.

Members and non-members interested in birds and birding in western Arkansas may also choose to join Arkansas Audubon Society (AAS), a statewide, independent, non-profit with goals similar to those of NWAAS. AAS publishes an inexpensive field list detailing information about birds throughout Arkansas. See the AAS website for a free downloadable copy of this field list or ordering information for a printed copy.