

Wings

Over Arkansas

Birding Certificate Program



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From top left, clockwise: Eastern bluebird,
white-breasted nuthatch, tufted titmouse,
northern cardinal, American goldfinch

WOA program materials
This brochure is part of the Arkansas
Game and Fish Commission's **Wings Over
Arkansas** program. Contact the AGFC
at (501) 223-6351 or toll-free at (800)
364-4263 ext. 6351 for additional copies
of the complete Wings Over Arkansas
application package, including the Arkansas
Bird Checklist. Program materials also are
available at www.agfc.com/wingsoverar or
by e-mail at wingsoverar@agfc.com.



LARRY ROBERTS

Arkansas'

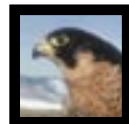
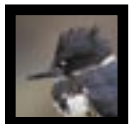
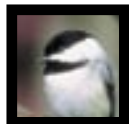
Feathered friends

Arkansas is a beautiful state encompassing a diversity of habitats. From the Ozark and Ouachita mountains to the Mississippi Delta, every corner of the state offers something different. And each habitat is home to an entire cast of feathered friends.

In addition to the birds that are year-round residents, many species of Neotropical migrants can be seen during fall and spring migrations through The Natural State. About 400 species of birds have been documented in Arkansas, and the list grows every year.

american white pelican

Wings Over Arkansas



Wings Over Arkansas is an award-based program recognizing bird watchers' contributions to Arkansas' outdoors. Mail a completed Wings Over Arkansas application and a copy of your current Arkansas Bird Checklist and receive a decorative pin and certificate identifying your level of birding experience. Contact the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission at (800) 364-4263 ext. 6351 or visit www.agfc.com/wingsoverar for more information.

Official rules

- All bird listings must include species name, date and location of sighting.
- All birds listed must be in Arkansas when identified.
- All birds listed must be alive, wild and unrestrained when observed.
- All birds listed must be identified by sight or sound by the person submitting the application.
- Retroactive bird lists are acceptable.

Six levels of achievement



Carolina Chickadee Level

25-49 birds recorded on your Arkansas Bird Checklist



Wood Duck Level

50-99 birds recorded on your Arkansas Bird Checklist



Belted Kingfisher Level

100-174 birds recorded on your Arkansas Bird Checklist



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher Level

175-249 birds recorded on your Arkansas Bird Checklist



Peregrine Falcon Level

250-299 birds recorded on your Arkansas Bird Checklist



Swallow-tailed Kite Level

300 or more birds recorded on your Arkansas Bird Checklist

peregrine falcon



In-the-field Essentials

Just like anglers need fishing line and kayakers need paddles, bird watchers have greatest success and most enjoyment when they bring the right equipment to the field.

The most valuable items a birder can carry in the field include binoculars and a field guide. It can be difficult to



binoculars

see birds well with the naked eye. A pair of 7x35 or 8x42 binoculars is ideal for getting a closer look without weighing you down.

Although many advanced birders feel confident taking to the woods without a field guide, most people should consider investing in one to help with bird identification.



field guides



camera

Many outdoors enthusiasts have discovered the value of taking along a camera on their wildlife hikes. Photographing the birds you see adds another dimension to your bird-watching adventures.

Wearing brightly colored clothing and even a blaze orange vest can make the woods much safer for birders venturing out during hunting seasons. Bright colors identify the wearer and won't spook most birds.

Birding

Ethics



The American Birding Association has developed guidelines to provide the best possible birding experience and protect the animals you are watching:

- Promote the welfare of birds and their environment.
- Support the protection of important bird habitat.
- Avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger.
- Limit the use of recordings and other methods of attracting birds.
- Keep your distance from nests, nesting colonies, roosts, display areas and important feeding sites.
- Stay on roads, trails and paths to prevent habitat destruction.
- Respect the law and the rights of others.



- Do not enter private property without the owner's explicit permission.
- Be courteous to other outdoors enthusiasts you encounter.
- Ensure artificial nest structures, feeders and other attractors are safe.
- Keep dispensers, water and food clean and free of decay or disease.
- Place attractors in areas protected from cats and other domestic animals and clear of dangers from windows and other structures.
- Understand and practice good group birding etiquette.
- Respect fellow birders and other outdoors enthusiasts.
- Freely share your knowledge and experience and be especially helpful to beginning birders.
- Keep groups small enough so they will not interfere with others or impact the environment.



red-bellied woodpecker

Wild lands in Arkansas aren't the only places to see the most colorful creatures in the state. Thousands of bird-watching enthusiasts enjoy the antics of birds in their back yards.



Enhancing your back yard

For the birds

Birds need the same things as all wildlife – food, water and shelter from predators and weather. Most of these things are probably already in your back yard, but you may not recognize it.



Many birds such as this Eastern bluebird enjoy a refreshing dip in birdbaths filled with clean water.

One of the easiest and most effective ways to help the birds in your area is to plant native shrubs, flowers and grasses. Native plants do well in Arkansas' soils and climate, so they require little ground preparation or

watering. They provide better habitat and food for birds, butterflies, frogs and other backyard wildlife. If you still want a turf-like yard, arrange native plants around the edges of your property or in clusters. Many native plants have bright blooms similar to cultivated flowers.

Providing feeders is another excellent way to keep the birds coming to your property. Many home-improvement stores and discount chains carry these inexpensive yard ornaments. You also can make feeders as easily as rolling a pine cone in peanut butter or vegetable shortening and birdseed. When placing your feeders, consider possible dangers, such as run-ins with windows or

the family cat. To reduce the chance of a bird colliding with a window, place feeders far away from windows or very close to them.

Outdoor cats kill millions of birds every year. Consider keeping your cat indoors.

It protects your backyard birds, and your cat will have a much healthier life. Placing feeders near evergreen shrubs provides escape cover from predators. Be sure to clean feeders often to prevent disease.

Once you have frequent visitors, you may want to put up some birdhouses to provide nesting sites for cavity-nesting birds. Bluebirds and purple martins are especially fond of manmade housing, but many other species use them for roosting and nesting. You can buy birdhouses, but many people enjoy building them.

Plans for birdhouses, ranging from the average bluebird box to homes for owls, are available in "Woodworking for Wildlife." The 50-page book includes instructions for building wildlife homes and tips on where to place them in your yard. It costs \$6.50 and can be ordered by calling the AGFC at (800) 364-4263.



Resources

For birders

Birds of a feather

Joining a birding club is an excellent way to meet fellow bird watchers and gather for trips and bird-watching events. Birding clubs also are a great way to learn more about bird identification and conservation, and to pick up tips on how to attract and find more birds in your area. Here are two Arkansas birding organizations that can help you find fellow birders:

Arkansas Audubon Society
www.arbirds.org

Audubon Arkansas
Heritage West Building
201 E. Markham St., Suite 450
Little Rock, AR 72201
(501) 244-2229
www.ar.audubon.org

yellow-bellied sapsucker

Suggested reading

Sibley's Birding Basics. David Allen Sibley. Alfred A. Knopf, 2002.

Birds of Eastern and Central North America. Fifth Edition. Roger Tory Peterson and Virginia Marie Peterson. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002.

Arkansas Birds. D.A. James and J.C. Neal. The University of Arkansas Press, 1986.

Arkansas Watchable Wildlife Guide. Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, 2003. Order at www.agfc.com or by calling (800) 364-4263.

Birding on the Web

Cornell Lab of Ornithology
<http://birds.cornell.edu/>

The American Birding Association
www.americanbirding.org

Birds of Arkansas
www.birdsofarkansas.org

Arkansas Birding Discussion Group
www.arbirds.org/arbirds_discussion.html



Keeping the Natural State natural.

www.agfc.com

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