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2008

Hunting on natural areas

Many people have the mistaken assumption that once a piece of land is designated as a "natural area" that it must be left alone. Along with activities such as hiking and bird-watching, specific types of hunting are allowed on natural areas. In an effort to make natural areas accessible to a broader segment of the public, the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission (ANHC) entered into a cooperative agreement with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) in 2004 (the agreement was updated this year). In this agreement, select natural areas were incorporated into that agency's Wildlife Management Area system.



Every effort has been made by the AGFC to provide maximum opportunity, maintain safety, protect healthy wildlife populations, and adhere to the conservation values inherent to the ANHC's System of Natural Areas. Since several natural areas are now considered AGFC WMAs, they will also receive the same level of attention from AGFC enforcement staff as do other WMAs. Consequently, all applicable hunting regulations will be enforced on natural areas where hunting is allowed. AGFC officers will also keep tabs on the general condition of natural areas in their respective zones, serving as another set of eyes for the ANHC.

ANHC lands where specific types of hunting are allowed include:

[Falcon Bottoms Natural Area](#) (at right), which consists of over 2,700 acres of bottomland hardwood forests along Bayou Dorcheat in southwestern Arkansas.

[Big Creek Natural Area](#) (Jim Kress WMA), in north-central Arkansas, protects over 1,500 acres of diverse upland forests along with a portion of Big Creek itself, a tributary of the Little Red River.



[Warren Prairie Natural Area](#), at 2,128 acres, is a mix of saline barrens, post oak flatwoods, and pine woodlands in southern Arkansas.

A complete list of natural areas where hunting is allowed is given at the end of this article. Note that some natural areas exist within the bounds of larger AGFC Wildlife Management Areas.

the [AGFC's 2008/2009 Hunting Guidebook](#) before visiting one of these sites. Also, some areas have limited access and it is the hunter's responsibility to obtain permission to access adjacent private landowner's property. Travel within natural areas is limited to foot traffic to minimize erosion and disturbance to sensitive habitats. Motorized vehicles, horses, camping, and construction of permanent deer stands are prohibited on natural areas. To learn more about Arkansas's System of Natural Areas, visit the [Natural Areas Locator Map](#). There you will find natural area descriptions, driving directions, and maps for all natural areas within the System.

Arkansas Oak Natural Area (Poison Springs WMA)
 Benson Creek Natural Area
 Big Creek Natural Area (Jim Kress WMA)
 Cache River Natural Area (Rex Hancock Black Swamp WMA)
 Cherokee Prairie Natural Area
 Coffee Prairie Natural Area (Beryl Anthony Lower Ouachita WMA)
 Cove Creek Natural Area
 Cut-off Creek Ravines Natural Area (Cut-off Creek WMA)
 Devil's Knob-Devil's Backbone Natural Area
 Falcon Bottoms Natural Area
 Garrett Hollow Natural Area
 Goose Pond Natural Area (Ed Gordon Point Remove WMA)
 H.E. Flanagan Prairie Natural Area
 Holland Bottoms Natural Area Willow Oak Forest Preserve (Holland Bottoms WMA)
 Iron Mountain Natural Area
 Kings River Falls Natural Area (Ozark National Forest WMA)
 Miller County Sandhills Natural Area
 Moro Big Pine Natural Area-WMA
 Nacatoch Ravines Natural Area
 Pine City Natural Area
 Poison Springs State Forest Sand Barren and Oak-Pine Forest Preserve (Poison Springs WMA)
 Railroad Prairie Natural Area
 Rock Creek Natural Area (Harold E. Alexander Spring River WMA)
 Roth Prairie Natural Area
 Seven Devils Swamp Natural Area (Seven Devils WMA)
 Singer Forest Natural Area (St. Francis Sunken Lands WMA)
 Slippery Hollow Natural Area
 Smoke Hole Natural Area
 Stateline Sandponds Natural Area
 Sweden Creek Natural Area
 Terre Noire Natural Area
 Warren Prairie Natural Area
 White Cliffs Natural Area
 Wittsburg Natural Area
 - [Michael D. Warriner](#)

Join the Arkansas Wren Survey

Dr. Dan Scheiman, Audubon Arkansas

[Audubon Arkansas](#) and the Department of Biological Sciences at Arkansas State University (ASU) are asking Arkansans to become citizen scientists in search of a rare and declining Arkansas bird – the Bewick's Wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*). Arkansans have the opportunity to contribute significantly to a very important conservation issue. By learning where Bewick's Wrens live and which habitats they prefer, we can make informed decisions about how best to manage for the species.

The Bewick's Wren (pronounced Buick, like the car) was a once-common songbird in Arkansas. Unfortunately, the Bewick's Wren is now a species of high conservation concern throughout much of its range and especially east of the Mississippi River. Arkansas is the frontline for stemming the songbird's decline, since the eastern edge of its range currently runs through our state.



runs through our state.

Scientists speculate that the decline of the Bewick's Wren is due to habitat loss as well as competition with the House Wren for nest sites. Researchers at Audubon Arkansas and ASU need help from ordinary citizens to search for wrens across the state.

While the project's focus is on conserving the Bewick's Wren, participants will also count Carolina Wrens (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) and House Wrens (*Troglodytes aedon*). These species resemble the Bewick's Wren, but are much more common and live in a wider variety of habitats. The Carolina Wren, which looks most like the Bewick's Wren, is a common backyard bird, often visiting feeders. The rare Bewick's Wrens tend to shy away from developed areas, but may visit or even nest in yards if conditions are suitable.

We need your help! To learn more about how you can help, visit the [Arkansas Wren Survey](#). The survey is free, fun, and open to anyone of any age and experience level who can spend at least 4 hours at least twice per year looking and listening for wrens in appropriate habitat.

Participants also can chat with each other, share stories and findings, and ask questions through the project's e-mail discussion group, ARWREN. Funding is provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Arkansas Game and Fish Commission through the State Wildlife Grant program.

Contact me for more information: Dr. Dan Scheiman, Director of Bird Conservation, Audubon Arkansas. dscheiman@audubon.org or telephone 501.244.2229.

Brinkley EAST Lab produces bottomland hardwood documentary

Anna Paige Frein, Brinkley High School

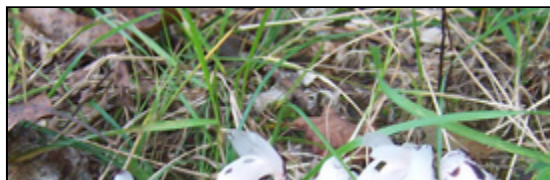
Four students from the Brinkley High School EAST Lab recently completed a documentary, *Arkansas Bottomland Hardwood: Unlike Any Other*, about the bottomland hardwood forests of eastern Arkansas. Cody Griggs, Kathaleene Meacham, Clint Veazey, and I were inspired to create this documentary after seeing the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission's [Natural Communities of Arkansas poster series](#). We became interested in the bottomland hardwood forest community type and found out that these forests once flourished in our region of the state, but have now dwindled to barely 4.4 million acres. We researched the plants, animals, and conservation efforts of these forests and captured the beautiful wildlife on film. We wanted to raise awareness of these unique forests and to promote the ever growing conservation efforts. We will distribute dvd copies of the documentary to all the school districts in Arkansas. We hope that our efforts will increase awareness of our own natural community, while inspiring other students from different natural communities to create their own documentary. You can view our documentary online at [YouTube](#).



A Ghost Plant for Halloween

There are exceptions to almost every rule in nature. After all, we humans make the "rules" for our own benefit in trying to understand the life around us, and when we find exceptions, it just helps to remind us that maybe we haven't quite figured it all out yet.

Plants need chlorophyll, right? Chlorophyll is vital for photosynthesis, which allows plants to obtain energy from light. We all learned this in science class at some time. It turns out that there is a whole group of vascular, flowering



plants that don't need chlorophyll at all, and at least one of them is blooming in Arkansas right now - Ghost Pipe (*Monotropa uniflora*). Since these plants don't have chlorophyll, they are not green but instead a translucent white, hence the common name Ghost Pipe, Ghost Flower and even Corpse Plant. Another common name is Indian Pipe, based on early Native American use of the plant for inflamed eyes, bunions and warts. A root tea was used to treat convulsions and epilepsy. The plant contains glycosides and is probably toxic in large doses. *Monotropa uniflora* can actually grow in dark (and spooooooooky) environments because it is not dependent on light for photosynthesis. This plant is found in rich habitats-- dense moist forests with much surface leaf litter, often in a situation that is too shaded for photosynthetic growth.

Instead of generating energy from sunlight, the Ghost Pipe is parasitic, more specifically a "myco-heterotroph" which is the term for a plant that gets all or part of its food from parasitism upon fungi rather than from photosynthesis. People used to think that the Ghost Pipe lived on decaying leaves and called it a saprophyte. Today we know that it has short, stubby roots that link with a few specific fungal hosts. The fungi extend in a web-like way through dead, rotting leaves and connect to the roots of a tree to form a symbiotic relationship. The fungus receives carbon and nutrients from the tree and, in turn, aids the tree in absorption of water and essential minerals. Thus, there is a three-way relationship between the photosynthetic tree, the fungus, and the parasitic Ghost Pipe plant. The complex relationship that allows this plant to grow also makes propagation difficult. It does flower, produce pollen and seed, usually blooming in September and October. In the picture above (taken September 20 in Newton County) the buds are not yet open and are facing downwards. As the plant blooms, the buds will move to a diagonal position and eventually face straight up.

You may not want to dress up as a Ghost Pipe plant for Halloween but this little fall bloomer is a wonderful example of the complexities of nature and how many of those we have yet to discover!

- [Jane Jones-Schulz](#)

Endemics in 2009

In ecology, the word "endemic" refers to being unique to a place. A plant or animal that is endemic is unique to a defined place or region (in other words only found in that place or region) and not naturally found anywhere else. Endemics can easily become endangered or extinct because of their restricted habitat.

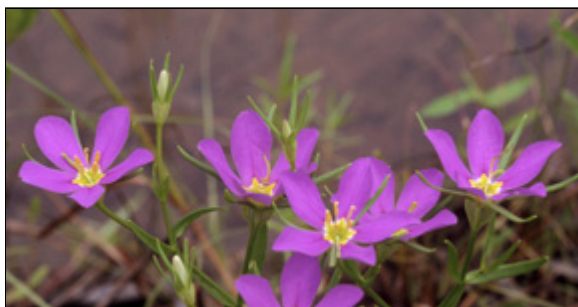
Endemic organisms are not the same as *indigenous* organisms — a species that is indigenous to somewhere may be native to other locations as well. An introduced species, also known as a naturalized or exotic species, is an organism that is not indigenous to a given place or area. Usually the term "endemic" is applied to a discrete geographical unit, a habitat type, or other defined area or zone. For Heritage Month 2009, the ANHC will be focusing on Arkansas endemics for the theme "Only in Arkansas."

There are approximately 117 species and subspecies of plants and animals that are endemic to the state of Arkansas, including 11 plants and 106 animals. The majority of our endemic animals are invertebrates (worms, snails, mussels, crayfish, and insects). Seven vertebrates are state endemics, represented by five fish and two salamander species.

Each month in *Natural News*, we will be spotlighting an Arkansas endemic species. This month we take a look at the endemic plant, Pelton's rose-gentian (*Sabatia arkansana*).

October 2008: endemic species of the month Pelton's rose-gentian (*Sabatia arkansana*)

Pelton's rose gentian was discovered by ANHC botanist Theo Witsell and photographer John Pelton in 2001. The plant was first found by John Pelton in a small shale glade in rural Saline County. After consulting with the world's *Sabatia* expert, Dr. James Pringle of the Royal Botanical Garden in Ontario, Canada, it was verified that this species was indeed new to science. Witsell



and Pringle formerly described the species, giving it a scientific name – *Sabatia arkansana* – that commemorates the state in which it was discovered. Its common name – Pelton's rose-gentian – is in honor of John Pelton. The plant blooms from late spring into early summer. Since the initial discovery, additional populations of this plant were found by Witsell on igneous glades near Bauxite, also in Saline County. Currently, this plant is only known from seven locations in Saline County and nowhere else in the world. It is considered a species of significant conservation concern and is tracked by the ANHC. You can read more about this endemic plant by downloading a PDF copy of:

[Pringle, J.S and T. Witsell. 2005. A new species of *Sabatia* \(Gentianaceae\) from Saline County, Arkansas. SIDA 21:1249-1262.](#)

- [Jane Jones-Schulz](#) and [Michael D. Warriner](#)

Upcoming Events

October 14-17, 2008. [35th Annual Natural Areas Conference.](#) Doubletree Hotel, Nashville, Tennessee.

October 24-26, 2008. [Arkansas Native Plant Society Fall Meeting.](#) Mammoth Spring, Arkansas.

October 29, 2008. Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission Meeting. The Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission will meet Wednesday, October 29, 2008, at 11:00 a.m. in the Witt Stephens Jr. Central Arkansas Nature Center, Little Rock, Arkansas.

November 17-20, 2008. [15th Biennial Southern Silvicultural Research Conference.](#) Hot Springs Convention Center, Hot Springs, Arkansas.

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ARKANSAS NATURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION
An Agency of the Department of Arkansas Heritage
1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Street
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201
Phone: 501.324.9619 / Fax: 501.324.9618 / TDD: 501.324.9150
arkansas@naturalheritage.org

An agency of the [Department of Arkansas Heritage](#)



