



Taking Fayetteville's Natural Heritage into the Future - since 2003

www.fayettevillenatural.org

Newsletter

May, 2019

Volume 16, Issue 1

Reports from the Fayetteville Natural Heritage Association Annual Meeting

The FNHA annual meeting was held on Sunday, December 9, 2018, from 3:00 to 5:30 pm in the Chillin' Room in the Ozark Mountain Smokehouse.

Guest speaker was FNHA board member Terri Lane, who is Executive Director of the Northwest Arkansas Land Trust. Her topic, "5,000 Acres and Beyond," gave us an update, overview and inside peek at a bold campaign NWALT has embarked on to protect land in Northwest Arkansas. By 2021, they plan to save 5,000 acres of important natural areas, raise \$2.8 million in community support, contribute over 1,600 volunteer hours to care for the land, and open at least six new properties to the public.

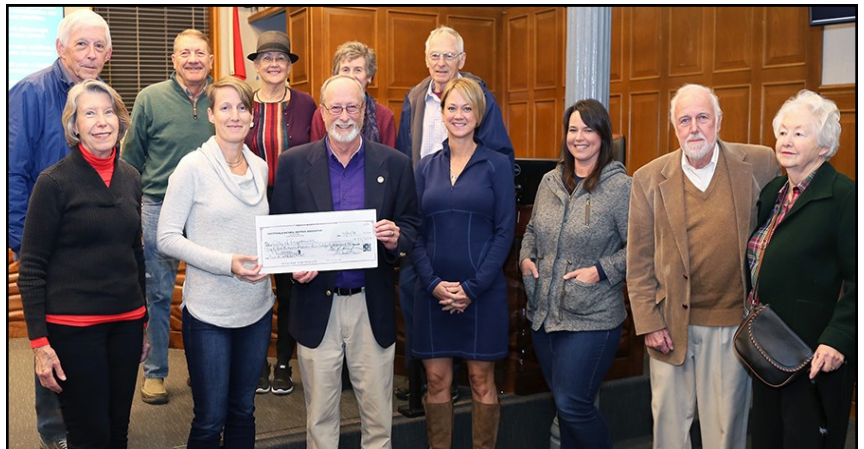
Terri's talk included an update on the Northwest Arkansas Open Space Plan, which was begun by the Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission in late 2014, and included a public process to develop the plan throughout 2015. The plan identifies the natural landscapes and open spaces that make Northwest Arkansas an attractive place to live, and includes a comprehensive strategy for conserving those natural assets. Terri also provided news about NWALT's survey of mammals on Kessler Mountain, recent activities at the Kessler Mountain Outdoor Classroom and more.

Mayor Lionel Jordan was given the 2018 Golden Acorn Award "For his vision in establishing the City of Fayetteville as a leader in conservation, preserving our natural heritage and securing a better future for all."

President Jennifer Ogle reported that FNHA fulfilled the monetary portion of our pledge to the City of Fayetteville, made in 2015 when we partnered with the City to protect 387 acres of land on Kessler Mountain, when we presented our final check of \$52,747 to Mayor Jordan at the City Council meeting on November 8, 2018. Our remaining Kessler pledge is non-monetary and includes our contribution of content to interpretive panels for Kessler; our commissioning of biological inventories, including our contribution of \$6,000 to the Northwest Arkansas Land Trust for their mammal survey; and our work with NWALT on a habitat management plan.

Last November's Kessler Trail Run drew 197 runners, more than 250 people for the after party, more than 30 volunteers, 18 sponsors and partners and raised \$8,659.22 for local land conservation and management.

Jennifer also reported that in 2018, Tom Dureka led two invasive removal events at Brooks-Hummel Nature Preserve. Seventeen volunteers spent a total of 56 hours working on the property. He has been leading these events since 2013, with 407 hours spent removing bush honeysuckle and Chinese privet from the central meadow and east bank of Sublett creek; approximately 2.5 acres have been cleared.



Members and friends of the FNHA board present the final Kessler pledge check to Mayor Jordan.
Photo by Dede Peters, City of Fayetteville

FNHA contributed \$2,000 in 2018 to the Arkansas Audubon Society's Halberg Ecology Camp, providing six scholarships to local fifth and sixth graders at an immersive, week-long ecology camp in the Ouachitas, west of Hot Springs. We also contributed \$2,000 to the Northwest Arkansas Open Space Plan to conduct a poll of likely voters in Benton and Washington counties for a potential conservation-funding ballot measure.

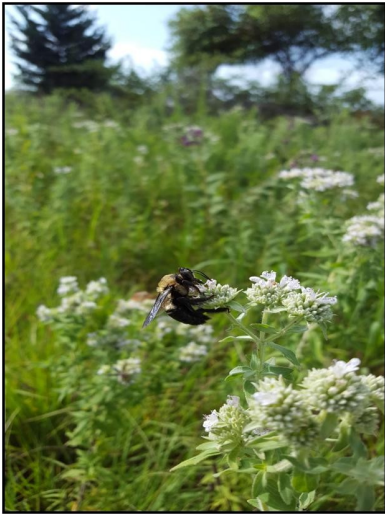
FNHA's recent successful work with the City of Fayetteville in prairie/savannah conservation is detailed on the next page.

Wednesday, May 8 Pack Rat Pint Night Fundraiser Supports FNHA.
See Page 4 for Details

The City of Fayetteville Permanently Protects a Rare Grassland

Have you ever had one of those feel-good experiences that restores your faith in humanity, your belief that people are good and want to do what's right? I had one of those experiences recently.

Last summer, FNHA heard a rumor the City of Fayetteville was working on plans to build a solar array on their land to offset nearly 75% of their current energy usage. While we were very happy to hear that news, our excitement quickly waned when we learned the solar array was slated to be built on land that historically supported tallgrass prairie and oak savanna, two plant community types that have become exceedingly rare in Northwest Arkansas. In fact, throughout the southeastern United States, tallgrass prairie and savanna once formed a mosaic of open grasslands that covered tens of millions of acres. Tragically, most of these grasslands have been converted to agriculture or have been destroyed for development, and today, less than 0.01% of these beautiful, important habitats remain in good or restorable condition.



A bumble bee foraging on hairy mountain mint

The piece of property that was being considered for the solar array was special because it had never seen the plow, meaning it is virgin prairie, and the surrounding savanna supports large, older growth trees. I'm not saying the place is pristine, because it is far from that. For many years, it had been used to grow non-native pasture grasses, so it was dominated by those species when we toured it last August. The fields had also been recently cut, so I didn't have high expectations for finding many native species of interest. However, during my tour of the prairie remnant with Jeff Hickle, who helps manage neighboring Woolsey Wet Prairie, I was pleasantly surprised to see several native wildflowers still surviving amongst the fescue: three species of milkweed (including the rare swamp milkweed, *Asclepias incarnata*), ash sunflower, slender mountain-mint, white wild indigo, clasp bone-set, and ironweed, to name a few. We also saw massive buttonbush shrubs covered in silver-spotted skippers, monarch butterflies, and bumblebees, and several rushes and sedges in the wetter areas of the property. As we were standing on one of the prairie mounds looking out over the surrounding grassland, we heard a bobwhite call in the distance (I'm not making this up!), and right then and there I knew what Jeff and others had already concluded: we had to do something to protect this special place. (Also, my husband Isaac told me that if we didn't save this prairie he would be inconsolable. No pressure, right?)

So, the FNHA board talked with Terri Lane of the Northwest Arkansas Land Trust (and a fellow FNHA board member) to ask if NWALT would want to team up to try and convince the city that they should move the solar array to a more degraded area of the property. We knew it was long shot, but it had to be done. Together we came up with a plan of attack, thinking we might be facing a prolonged battle with the city over this issue: first we would reach out to the Mayor and request a meeting, and at the meeting we would give a moving presentation, complete with PowerPoint and color photos, to convince the Mayor of the importance and beauty of this rare habitat. If that didn't work, we'd move on to Plan B. Terri emailed Mayor Jordan and Peter Neirengarten, the city's Sustainability Director and mastermind behind the solar array, to request the meeting, and when she briefly told them what it was in reference to, the response was, well, shocking.

They agreed to move the solar array. I mean, immediately. Without hesitation. Without even meeting to see our moving PowerPoint presentation complete with color photos. This was their exact response: "Oh! We didn't know! We'll move the solar array!" How often does that happen? Almost never.

We had to regroup and recover from our disappointment that there would be no Battle For The Prairie after all. But once we recovered, we had our meeting with the Mayor and gave our moving PowerPoint presentation in the hope that he would agree to place the property into a conservation easement and dedicate funds to conduct a prairie and savanna restoration. He didn't commit to it during that meeting, but the entire time we were talking I could see he was convinced it was important to permanently protect these 38 acres of remnant prairie and savanna. About a week later he called to say he was on board, and from there it was an easy task to get city council on board too.



A monarch butterfly visiting flowers of the rare swamp milkweed.

-Article continued on next page

Grassland Continued from page 2

We're now sitting tight as the land trust works on a conservation easement and management plan for this newly protected grassland that borders Woolsey Wet Prairie to the west, and we can't wait to see what happens when they start restoration. Will it respond as Woolsey did, which had a similar land use history and experienced the emergence of hundreds of native species from the seed bank after it was burned and the non-natives were removed? We can't wait to find out.

On June 8th, we are partnering with NWALT on a Botany Blitz to inventory the existing flora before restoration work begins. Won't you join us to tour the property and celebrate the permanent protection of a rare grassland? You might just hear a bobwhite call while you're there.



A view of a prairie-in-waiting. As the fields are cleared of non-native grasses and fire is re-introduced into the landscape, we hope to see a host of native prairie plants emerging from the seed bank.

-Article and photographs by Jennifer Ogle

Wetland Ecology Tour Scheduled at Woolsey Wet Prairie May 4th

FNHA is a co-sponsor of the **2019 Wetland Ecology Tour** presented by the South Central Chapter of the Society of Wetland Scientists, to be held on **Saturday, May 4th**, from **7:00 to 10:00 am** at the **Woolsey Wet Prairie Sanctuary**, 15 South Broyles Street in Fayetteville. The tour will include a herpetology hike, a botany hike and a birding hike. Coffee and donuts will be served. **Registration starts at 7:00 and hikes at 8:30.** The fee for adults is \$15, for students and Society of Wetland Scientists members \$10, and children 12 and under may participate free.

Public Input Meeting Held April 17, 2019, for Centennial Park

The City of Fayetteville held a meeting on April 17th at Owl Creek School seeking public input on the Master Plan for the new Centennial Park at Millsap Mountain. FNHA was interested in the plans, not only because the site seems appropriate for a park and has the potential to take some pressure off Kessler Mountain, but because the site contains at least three Ozark Shale Barrens communities, a globally rare grassland type rich in plant diversity and rare species, which should be protected if possible.

Theo Witsell and **Darrell Bowman** of the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission and **Alan Edmondson** of the Northwest Arkansas Land Trust visited the property on July 11, 2018. During that very brief visit, they identified **seven natural community types**, most notably a 2.5-acre upland swale (**seasonal wetland**) and three areas that supported **Ozark shale barrens**. The other community types included **upland oak woodlands**, a small area of **mesic riparian forest, fields, a pond, and disturbed areas**. They also identified **170 plant species** during the visit. Theo noted in the 34-page site report that "the native plant communities over most of the property are in a moderately degraded condition but are, for the most part, restorable." He gave management recommendations for all of the plant communities, and recommended that the shale barrens and upland swale be "avoided or disturbed as little as possible." The city has this report and we hope they will consult it when planning the trails, parking areas, and other infrastructure for the park. In the meantime:

FNHA is developing a white paper on matters such as 1. the definition of various types of trails (hard/soft surface; nature/commuter, slow & easy vs. thoroughfare, etc.) and 2. the differences among a Reserve, a Preserve and a Park so we will be better prepared to address issues concerning rare and vulnerable habitats that are likely to arise as new trails and parks are planned by the City and others. If you would like join FNHA in preparing these definitions for presentation please contact a Board member ASAP <https://www.fayettevillenatural.org/accomplishments-successes-pressroom/meet-our-boards/>

Pack Rat Outdoor Center has selected **FNHA** to be the beneficiary of their family-friendly **Pint Night**

When: **Wednesday, May 8**

Where: **Pack Rat Outdoor Center**

**209 W. Sunbridge Dr.
Fayetteville**

Time: **5:30-8:00 pm.**

Suggested Minimum Donation:

Ages 21+ \$10 cash at the door

Ages 5-20: \$5 cash at the door

Under 5: Free



Gear Sponsor: **LOWA Boots**

Food: **Farrell's Lounge, Bar and Grill** (while it lasts!) Beverages: **Fossil Cove Brewing Co.**

Music: **the Matt Smith Trio**

Bike tune-ups provided by **Phat Tire Bike Shop -Arkansas**
Pedal Pops will bring treats.

First 2019 Bushwack at Brooks-Hummel Nature Preserve



Marco Kaman and Jesse Scarbrough at the steel rectangle

Sunday, March 24th provided glorious weather for five crew members to clear another chunk of the Brooks-Hummel Nature Preserve from invasives. Tom Dureka, his wife Ann Mesrobian, Marco Kaman (who owns the house at the end of Hillcrest), and first-timers Early Brunner and Jesse Scarbrough (in the Master Naturalist program) together made an impressive visual impact on the alien brush.

Their target was a flattish, 1/4-acre area of dense tall grass 40-100m east and uphill of the pond dam. This appears to have been a small fenced pasture, perhaps also a former barn site.

As the group spread into the viney, brush-choked forest, an interesting historic site, worthy of formal recording, became evident. Features included a 1949 Aeroil Heet-Master Tar Kettle. Made for melting tar, pitch and asphalt, it was likely used here for waterproofing roofs. Nearby, a large rectangular steel frame of unknown use may be part of a former building. A number of other metal artifacts and over a dozen large concrete bars were scattered across the terrace. All artifacts were left in place.

The invasive, non-native plants, mostly Amur honeysuckle, Chinese privet, grapes and greenbriar, were uprooted with Pullerbears or cut, then stump-painted with glyphosate. The crew piled the cuttings into a few brush piles for wildlife habitat.



Bushwack volunteers (l. to r.): Early Brunner, Ann Mesrobian, Marco Kaman and Jesse Scarbrough.

Our thanks to Kristina Jones of the City Parks and Recreation Department and Alex French of Feed Communities for lending tools and other equipment.

Registration Now Open for 2019 Kessler Trail Run

The 7th Annual Kessler Trail Run and after-party on Saturday, November 23, 2019, at 9:00 am will raise funds to continue important conservation work by FNHA in our community. The annual event draws more than 250 runners and after-party guests. The 10k and 20k runs will begin at Kessler Mountain Regional Park and end at the old Ozark Mountain Smokehouse (1725 Smokehouse Trail). The after-party with food, music, and beverages will be held at the Smokehouse at 11:00 a.m. To register as a runner, go to www.fayettevillenatural.org/kesslertrailrun. To become a sponsor of the 2019 Kessler Trail Run, (all donations are tax-deductible), please contact FNHA board member **Dana Smith**, this year's Kessler Trail Run Director, at kesslertrailrun@gmail.com or 501-454-8030.

Below are some photos from last year's Kessler Trail Run:



Runners head toward the mountain at the start of the 2018 Kessler Trail Run.
Photo by Steven Ironside, Ironside Photography



Abby Wise runs through Rock City at the end of the Kessler Trail Run 10K
Photo by Steven Ironside, Ironside Photography



Kessler Trail Runners celebrate another year of land conservation for Fayetteville
Photo by Philip Thomas, Novo Studio

Celebrating the Life of Douglas Arthur James

AFTER SERVING ON THE ADVISORY BOARD FOR SEVERAL YEARS DOUG BECAME A MEMBER OF THE FNHA BOARD OF DIRECTORS IN 2007, AND REMAINED ACTIVE UNTIL LATE AUTUMN OF 2018. A RECIPIENT OF THE GOLDEN ACORN AWARD, HE WAS A REMARKABLE SCIENTIST, TEACHER, ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCATE, FRIEND AND FAMILY MEMBER. WE'VE COMPILED SOME REMEMBRANCES OF HIM BY FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES, INCLUDING FNHA BOARD MEMBERS.

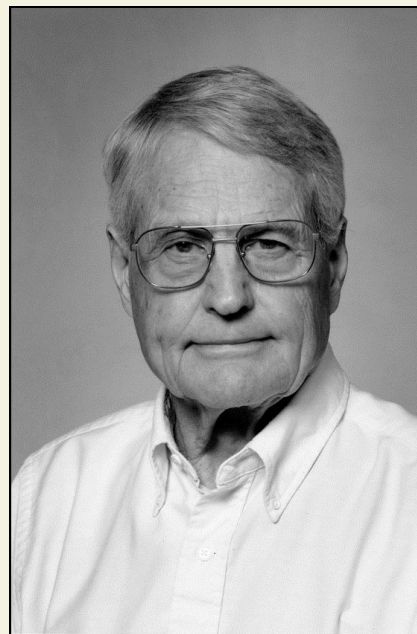
FROM DOUG'S CELEBRATION OF LIFE, HELD ON SUNDAY, MARCH 31, 2019, AT THE MOUNT SEQUOYAH ASSEMBLY CENTER:

Douglas was born in Detroit, Michigan, on July 25, 1925, to Arthur and Sigrid James. He and his first wife, Frances James, raised three daughters, Sigrid, Helen and Avis. His second marriage to Elizabeth Adam was a partnership that brought friendship, support and comfort until the end of his days.

Doug earned his Bachelor and Master of Science degrees from the University of Michigan, and his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois. His graduate work focused on the ecology of roosting blackbirds. He was a faculty member at the University of Arkansas from 1953 until 2016. He educated students in ecology, genetics, behavior and zoology at all levels. He also taught as a Fulbright Scholar in Ghana, Nepal and Belize.

Doug was engaging in the classroom and is remembered for amazing class field trips. He mentored eighty-three graduate students and thousands of undergraduates. He opened minds and instilled enthusiasm about nature. Doug was active in local, state and national organizations to promote scientific knowledge and preserve natural heritage.

Doug loved marathon running, traveling, the arts, hockey and baseball. He had a wonderful sense of humor and an extensive knowledge of natural history. His favorite bird family was the starlings, *Sturnidae*. "Starlings are so beautiful; there are so many species; they are so iridescent; they rival hummingbirds in colors."



THE DAY AFTER DOUG'S DEATH A FACEBOOK POST BY JOE NEAL, HIS CO-AUTHOR OF ARKANSAS BIRDS:

Doug James initiated our Fayetteville Christmas Bird Count in 1961. Yesterday was our CBC, but Doug was in hospice care and could not participate. He passed away last night, peacefully, and with friends and family. Among Doug's many awards, he especially treasured one from Fayetteville Natural Heritage Association in 2011 "for sharing his enthusiasm for the natural world with his students and his many friends over a career spanning several generations and continents. He has nurtured countless natural scientists, amateur ornithologists and conservation champions." Doug has now gone to that place where the birding is always good. He leaves it to us to pick up and carry his enthusiasm forward.

FROM APRIL 27, 2019, NEWS RELEASE ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS:

James was a long-time fixture in the Department of Biological Sciences, in the J. William Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences, who retired in 2016 after 64 years with the university. At his retirement, he had become the longest-serving professor in University of Arkansas history.

He served as a professor of biological sciences at the U of A from 1953 to 2016. He was also considered the authority on the birds of Arkansas, co-authoring *Arkansas Birds* with Joseph C. Neal in 1986. He became one of the state's leading conservationists in the second half of the last century, helping to start the Arkansas Audubon Society in 1955 and the Arkansas Audubon Society Trust in 1972. James also arranged the first meeting of what would become the Ozark Society, which was responsible for saving the Buffalo River from damming.

Starting with studies of scrubland birds in northwestern Arkansas, James expanded to studying scrubland birds in Africa, Nepal and Belize. He is one of the few people to have been given three Fulbright International Scholars awards, and taught as a (See next page)

Celebrating Doug James, continued

Fulbright Scholar in Ghana (1970-1971), Nepal (1981-1982) and Belize (1988-1989). He also spent spring of 1995 as a visiting scholar at Cambridge University in England.

A historical plaque placed outside the science-engineering building on the university campus notes the accomplishments in statistical ecology of James's lab and students. James published a total of 114 scientific articles and received 77 research grants from local and national agencies during his career.

James also filled nearly 150 field notebooks based on his research and travels: 106 from North America (mostly Arkansas), 24 from Central and South America, eight from Asia, seven from Africa, and four from Europe. He always told his students, "If you didn't record it, it never existed."



Doug releasing Trumpeter Swan at Holla Bend NWR October 2004. His joie de vivre is so contagious that even the swan is smiling!

In 2002, James received the prestigious Charles and Nadine Baum Teaching Award, the highest award given by the University of Arkansas to a faculty member for teaching. Then, in 2004, James became the first faculty member in his department to receive the special appointment to University Professor of Biological Sciences.

He also received several lifetime achievement awards, including the W. Frank Blair Eminent Naturalist Award (2006) from the Southwestern Association of Naturalists, which recognizes excellence in a lifetime of commitment to outstanding study or conservation of the flora or fauna of the southwestern United States, Mexico and Central America; and the William and Nancy Klamm Service Award (2014) from the Wilson Ornithological Society, which honors the history of service and dedication to the society. He received 14 awards for his excellence in teaching and research from various entities, both locally and nationally, as well as an international teaching award.

AN UPDATED VERSION OF AN ARTICLE WRITTEN BY FNHA BOARD MEMBER PETE HEINZELMANN ON THE OCCASION OF DOUG'S RETIREMENT:

I talked in late spring of 2016 with Doug James about his life and career, on the eve of his retirement from the University of Arkansas. Doug was a founding board member of the Fayetteville Natural Heritage Association and a vital contributor to its mission to conserve native habitats in and around Fayetteville. While getting the facts about his life and career, I was treated to a conversation with a man who, from a very young age, has been fascinated with the natural world and who has, through his career, passionately studied it to figure out how it works.

Doug grew up near Detroit, Michigan. He would soon turn 91 when I interviewed him. As early as the third grade it was obvious to his teachers that he knew a lot about plants and animals, so they enlisted him to lead nature field trips. On one of those trips Doug said he took the class to a big tree to see a goldfinch. When they finally found it in the tree, they asked him, "How in the world did you see it?" and he replied, "I didn't see it, I heard it."

Not only did Doug have a passion for studying the natural world of plants and animals, he also had a passion for teaching others about it. Through his career, he was major professor to 50 masters-degree and 32 doctoral-degree candidates. Many of them have gone on to teaching positions and others work with environmental organizations as experts and advisors. His students are passionate about and loyal to the man who was passionate about teaching them, and many were in Fayetteville for his retirement festivities.

Being curious, I asked Doug what his favorite bird species was and, surprisingly, he replied, "The starling." He explained that because there are so many of them, he could not only study the population dynamics of a single species but their migratory patterns as well; that's your ultimate investigator.



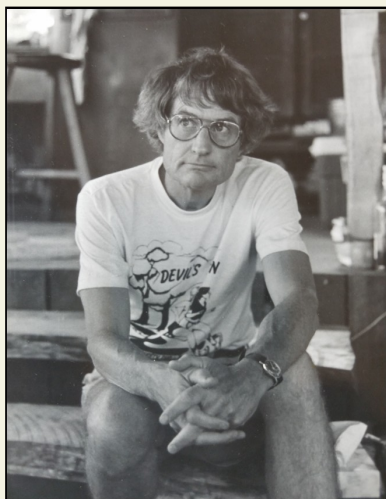
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Reminiscences of Doug James, continued

Doug led hikes into the Woods to show people what was here and explain how important it was to save the places like this right here where we live. He also was one of the experts interviewed in a video presentation produced by FNHA explaining the value that natural areas have to communities and the need to preserve them as Green Infrastructure. You can view the video on the FNHA website, www.fayettevillenatural.org. Click on "Green Infrastructure in our communities."

Doug had an amazing family. He is survived by three daughters: Sigrid, who is a lawyer in Louisiana; Helen, who is the chief curator of one of the largest bird collections in the world at the Smithsonian Institute (the feather doesn't fall far from the nest); and Avis, who teaches biology at New Mexico State University. And Doug had Liz, his wife, his always-steady-and-ready companion. If Yoda from Star Wars were to sum up what Doug meant to all of us, he might say, "Amazing you are. Inspire us you do." At the end of our interview, I wished Doug a happy retirement. I now really know he had one — what an incredible career and legacy he left!

A REMINISCENCE ABOUT DOUG DURING AN EARLIER TIME IN HIS LIFE BY FNHA BOARD MEMBER BARBARA TAYLOR:



I met Doug when I first arrived in Fayetteville, in 1974. In those days, faculty would sit together for lunch in a separate section of the Arkansas Union and really got to know one another. Though we loved Fayetteville, Doug and I were both Yankees who still owned ice skates and hadn't quite adapted to southern cuisine. We were friends for 44 years. Two days before he died, I visited Doug at Willard Walker Hospice. After his death, I wrote this to the FNHA board:

I'm so glad I got to hang out with Doug last Friday morning. I talked to him about all sorts of things: his pioneering work in the field of avian ecology; the vast numbers of graduate students he mentored; what fun it was to walk with him in the woods because he heard and saw birds before anyone else and because he knew about everything else one might see there; the house on Duncan Street that he and Liz left reluctantly just before it was torn down; the time Whitlatches' pond froze over and we went skating on it; the 1980 float trip down the Grand Canyon that Doug, my son Lev and I went on with a group from the University, and the way Jane Steele would say, "That's a two-sip rapid or a three-sip rapid"; the 1981 calendar that Penny Worley drew for each of us on the float; the field of datura on the way to Lake Havasu; the climb out on

horses and mules to an old school bus that took us to a tiny airplane to fly back to Flagstaff; his taking me to meet Jane's parents, Guerdon and Dorothy Nichols, and my amazement at Dorothy's beer refrigerator; Doug's international research and his trips to Ghana, Nepal, Belize, South America and so many other places; the faculty lunches at the student union; his teaching me to cook okra so it wouldn't be slimy, because we were both Yankees and had never eaten okra growing up (his secret was to add tomatoes and onions); his running 1,000 miles a year, and then 1984 miles in 1984, etc.; the Devil's Den Run (see the photo above) when runners could watch buzzards ride the thermals high into the sky; the drawings of birds he made at seven years old; his pun-filled childhood bird cartoons; his Birds of Arkansas book with Joe Neal; what a pleasure it had been to serve with him on the FNHA board; his Golden Acorn award; and so much more.

His breathing was labored, but his eyes were bright and he seemed quite cognizant. There was a bird feeder on the table on the porch outside his room; I wondered if the Caulks had brought it, or perhaps Sigrid or his dear Liz. What a joy and what a privilege it was to have known him!

FHNA Makes Memorial Donation to Arkansas Audubon Trust

At its March 26th board meeting, the Fayetteville Natural Heritage Association board of directors voted to donate \$500 to the Arkansas Audubon Society Trust in memory of Doug James. Doug helped to found the Trust in 1972, with the intention of funding avian research and conservation projects within Arkansas. One Trust award was named the Douglas James Award, given annually to a project involving birds.