

The National Audubon Chapters Convention, July 12-15, 2013  
Report by Karen LaFrance, SAS member and consultant

The SAS Board of Directors provided a partial scholarship for me to attend the National Audubon Chapters Convention at Skamania Lodge in Washington state. This gathering of chapter representatives was the first national meeting in over ten years. About 600 persons attended, with four/fifths of the attendees from Audubon Chapters and the remainder National Audubon staff and Board members.

The Convention took place on July 12, 13 and 14, 2013. On July 12th and July 15, NAS and host Audubon Chapter in Portland hosted Volunteer Projects and Day-long Bird Finding trips around Washington/Oregon. Skamania Lodge is in the Columbia River Gorge about 60 miles east of Portland. The rugged mountain scenery on either side of the river was very picturesque. Go to <http://www.audubonconvention.org> for some great photos of the setting. Paging into the "Photos" section will yield one or two photos of me with Ann Durning and Dusty Lovelace (SAS members) who also attended the Convention.

On behalf of the Chapter, I attended a Workshop on Building Your Bird Friendly Community "in the Field", meaning through the Field Trips Program, several mini-workshops on fund-raising, a very interesting workshop on board and chapter development, a report on the Central Flyway projects (Arizona is "in" National Audubon's Central Flyway for purposes of working with migrant birds) and several plenary sessions with NAS President David Yarnold and panels of experts. I had the opportunity to have breakfast with our representative on the NAS Board--Joy Hester from Houston Audubon--some may remember her because she attended Audubon Round Up in 2011--and to meet and greet the other attendees from Arizona (six of our nine chapters were represented).

Of note is Mr. Yarnold's and National Audubon's perspective about the importance of chapters. National recognizes that the chapters and their members are its "grass roots"--its people--and therefore the source of NAS' influence as a national conservation organization of consequence. Thus National wants to encourage, support and augment chapters where it can. At the Convention, chapters and chapter leaders who had accomplished noteworthy conservation efforts received awards and accolades.

Attendees urged that there be follow up regional meetings and every so often again a national get-together. It was truly an important step in bringing all of us Auduboners along together in support of birds, bird habitat and conservation generally. I am very glad to have attended.