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Don't Miss Out!

Beginning with this January/February 2011 issue we will no longer send a hard copy of *The Warbler*, unless requested. We are making the switch to an electronic newsletter to cut down on costs and put your membership dollars to better use.

If you would still like to receive a hardcopy of the newsletter, please call us at 303-973-9530.

If we do not have your current email address, please call us at 303-973-9530. Once we have it you will then receive notices when each issue is available online.

Thank you for supporting this conservation effort!

**Celebrating
42 Years of service
to the Greater
Denver Community**

ASGD welcomes new Education Director

by Karl Brummert, Executive Director

ASGD Welcomes Suzy Hiskey, our new Education Programs Director.

With Suzy's lifelong passion for nature, she is in good company with you, our members and volunteers. Suzy is thrilled to join the staff as the Education Programs Director. She looks forward to meeting each of you and sharing the joy of discovering a new bird, experiencing changing seasons, and working to protect the habitats that support Denver's wildlife.

Suzy enjoys applying her skills and knowledge to educate children and adults about animals and the environment, sharing a sense of responsibility, compassion, and empowerment regarding wildlife and natural resources. At ASGD, she plans to draw on her past experience as an elementary school teacher and naturalist educator to expand the natural science education

program, reaching out to new schools with both existing and new learning experiences at schools and at the Audubon Nature Center. As a previous volunteer for ASGD, she looks forward to recruiting new Volunteer Naturalists and providing rewarding volunteer experiences throughout the organization.

In the recent past, Suzy was a party host for South Platte Park — where she hosted nature-themed birthday parties — and a Summer Programs and elementary school teacher at Colorado Academy. She holds a Masters degree in Library Information Science and has volunteered with and served on boards for various nonprofit organizations.

In her spare time, you will find Suzy horseback riding through Chatfield State Park, volunteering at the Denver Zoo, and teaching dog training to children and families.

Suzy says, "I am thrilled to be a part of the ASGD 'family'. I have great plans for the education program and the Audubon Nature Center!"



Education Naturalist Volunteers Needed

Want to be get involved? We are looking for volunteers to help with spring education programs. Training will be provided. Volunteers lead hikes, staff the nature center, run or assist with weekend programs, lead activities for field trips, attend occasional meetings, and socialize with other bird and nature lovers!

Contact Suzy Hiskey at 303-973-9530 or shiskey@denveraudubon.org for more information.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE ~

This is a season of transition for ASGD. Thank you to Tom Parchman as he leaves his post as President of the Board of Directors. We were well-served by his efficient direction and willingness to take a long view of our organization.

Many thanks to Carl Norbeck who has retired as Executive Director. Under his leadership we have opened our Nature Center to the public on weekends and we have expanded our membership base. We are fortunate to keep his energy and experience as he will transition to a seat on our Board of Directors.

A big congratulatory cheer to Karl Brummert, our new Executive Director. He transitions seamlessly from his prior Nature Center Directorship with his qualifications and experience.

Welcome to our new Education Programs Director, Suzy Hiskey. Many of you already know the energy and charisma Suzy brings to this position.

Another ovation for Rhonda Shank, Office Manager, recognized for outstanding service at the Members Dinner. The 'attitude of gratitude' theme was complete that night as a large well-fed crowd appreciated conservation pioneer Rosalie Edge through the eyes of Dyana Furmansky.

As you read this, our new website should be up and running, creating stronger, clearer communication with those who we know well and with those new conservationists looking for a home. We look forward to expanded nature education programs for children and adults. New nature trips mark every month. Mark your calendar - April 16, 2011 for the Spring Auction, ASGD's major FUNdraising event, and don't forget to begin forming your Birdathon team for May.

Recently, our Board of Directors restated our mission:

Audubon Society of Greater Denver advocates for the environment, connecting people with nature through conservation, education and research.

It is our sincere hope that this season of change produces a harvest of growth, connecting people with nature through conservation, education, and research.



Arlene Raskin, President

ASGD Wish List

- 2 Flat Screen computer monitors 16" or larger
- Electric pencil sharpener
- Wood pellet stove-Travis Industries Model Yankee PS or similar
- 2-drawer file cabinet less than 28 inches high to fit under table
- Gift certificates to Murdochs, Home Depot, Lowes, or Office Depot
- Micro-fiber furniture cleaning cloths
- 12" Hot Laminator for 3 and 5 mil film



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MISSION

Audubon Society of Greater Denver advocates for the environment, connecting people with nature through conservation, education and research.

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Legislative Preview

by Polly Reetz, ASGD Conservation Committee Chair

ASGD members can work at many levels to save and protect wildlife and bird habitats. Sometimes this multiplicity can be frustrating – ever try to attend two meetings in one night? – but you can also look on it as a challenge. Here for your delectation is a description of a few of these levels, and the issues as we see them:

State: The Legislature convenes in early January with Republicans now in control of the House, while Democrats still hold the Senate and the Governorship. There will be a lot of freshmen legislators with no sense of past struggles, discussions, issues or compromises. We have lost some solid environmental votes and will be looking for people with whom we can work on things like the budget, water conservation, Great Outdoors Colorado funding, or maintaining the new oil and gas permitting regulations.

Last year legislators tried several times to “raid” Great Outdoors Colorado’s parks, wildlife, trails and open space funds. It will take a constitutional amendment to do so, and the Legislature, looking at that nice pot of money (from lottery proceeds) may try again to refer one to the voters. However, current law states that fiscal amendments to the constitution can only be on the ballot in even-numbered years, thus GOCO may be safe this year – but look out in 2012!

Balancing the state budget – a constitutional requirement – will require cuts to any number of programs, and State Parks, which has suffered major losses in past years, may again show up on the chopping block. The Denver Post reported that the State Parks Board may lease some parks for oil and gas drilling and close others; another increase in entrance fees may be on the table as well. Many of our Parks, like Chatfield, Cherry Creek, Roxborough and Castlewood Canyon, are not only important birding sites but also provide the closest outdoor experience for many Denver metro area residents. ASGD wants to ensure that their natural, recreational and ecological values are protected and maintained, even if some

cutbacks are necessary.

County: Douglas County Commissioners will be considering whether or not to rezone a portion of the land between Chatfield and Roxborough State Parks from agricultural to Planned Development, to accommodate a major development proposal, Sterling Ranch (SR). At build-out, SR would plop 30,000+ people down on 3,400 acres of open grasslands between the two parks, with major impacts on both. High density residential development, a sports complex, and a town center on Titan Road comprise parts of the proposal. Water is a major issue – the developers have not shown that they have guaranteed rights to or infrastructure for surface water supplies in perpetuity. Not to worry, they have asked to be excused from those County requirements. This means they will have to use well water, like everyone else in Douglas County. And water levels in the aquifers are dropping rapidly, putting future supplies in jeopardy.

While SR has a well-thought-out water conservation plan and, on the maps, 37% of the area in open space and trails, the problems it will bring for the two parks, the lack of firm water supply commitments, problems with open space designations

and other issues have kept ASGD from supporting this project. Hearings will be held before the Douglas County Commission sometime this winter.

Federal. Many issues here, but our priority is the proposal to store more water in Chatfield, which is a US Army Corps of Engineers project. The fact that the extra water will only be available, on average, one year in four means the Park will have extensive mudflats and a “bathtub ring” a good part of the time. We’ll lose free-flowing stream miles, riparian cottonwood forest, and wetlands. Although mitigation will be proposed, ASGD has doubts that some losses can be mitigated at all

New Members of the US Congress will be pushing for national measures which don’t seem to include any kind of conservation. The Clean Water Restoration Act, to finally give full protection to all our waters; the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, which funds projects to restore migratory bird habitat; legislation to encourage clean energy sources and discourage dirty ones; funding to restore the Gulf of Mexico habitats damaged by the BP oil spill – you can bet we’ll be getting action alerts on these and more. Your calls and letters will be crucial.

Audubon/Sierra Club 2011 Legislative Forum Decisions are made by those who show up!

Saturday, February 12, 2011
8:30am to 1:30pm

First Plymouth Church, 3501 S. Colorado Boulevard, Denver
(SW corner of Colorado and Hampden)

The Audubon Society of Greater Denver and the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Sierra Club invite you to attend the 2011 Legislative Forum to learn about the hot environmental topics of the 2011 legislative session. This is always an entertaining and educational event! After the continental breakfast at 8:30am, Audubon Colorado Lobbyist Jen Boulton and the Sierra Club’s legislative liaison will review the session’s environmental bills and we’ll discuss several of the key issues with invited experts. Invited Colorado legislators will talk about the effort to balance the State budget, its impacts on our State’s environmental programs, what’s happening with State Parks, and possible threats to GOCO. We’ll provide a pot-luck lunch. A final agenda will be available in early February.

\$12 if you register by Feb.10 and \$15 at the door. To register, call 303-973-9530

If you are interested in volunteering at the Forum, call 303-973-9530 or send an

email to: info@denveraudubon.org.

See you there!

2011 Lois Webster Fund Grants available

The Audubon Society of Greater Denver's Lois Webster Fund is again offering grants for research and education projects on Colorado non-game wildlife. The LWF was established in 1995 to honor ASGD founder, environmentalist and educator Lois Webster, and in its years of existence has distributed approximately \$40,000 worth of research grants. In 2010 the Fund supported studies of the ecology of free-ranging domestic cats, hybridization affecting two native fish species, and digitalization of 50 years of bird survey data from a Boulder County riparian area. Funds have also assisted flammulated owl research, an investigation of Boulder

County bat species, a study of burrowing owl population dynamics, research on possible impacts of climate change on pikas, a study of the pre-adult life stages of an endangered butterfly, and compilation of 14 years of mountain plover survey data.

The LWF was set up to fund research and education projects "designed to lead to the conservation of non-game species in Colorado that are declining or under stress or suffering loss or degradation of habitat," according to the LWF Funding Guidelines. The LWF focuses on partnering with other organizations and expects the grantee to provide the leadership and coordination

to obtain additional funding and to involve others. ***The Guidelines and Application for LWF grants can be found on the ASGD website www.denveraudubon.org under the Research Fund or Lois Webster Grant Applications link.***

The Committee will be accepting grant proposals through January 28, 2011 for approximately \$5,800 worth of funds for research in the coming year. In addition, the LWF has two spotting scopes available to loan to projects requiring such equipment, described in the Guidelines. Grantees will be notified by March 4, 2011 and the funds dispersed in time for the spring field season.

OPEN HOUSE

Audubon Nature Center

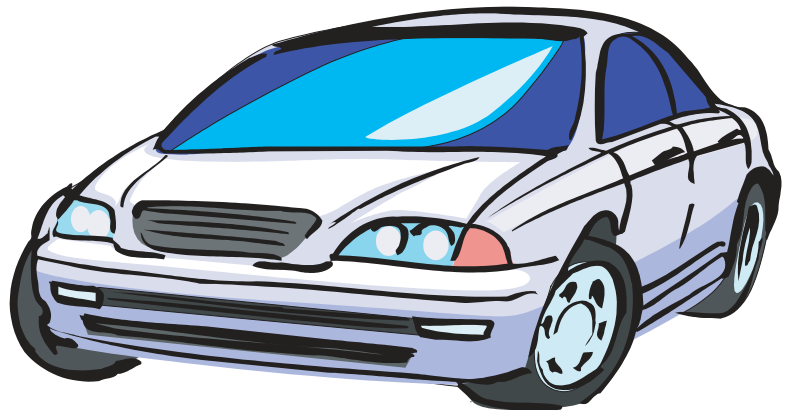
Jan. 29, 2011

10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

- Classes
- Crafts
- Story time
- Refreshments
- Guided Hikes

All are welcome
FREE for residents of
TrailMark and
Roxborough
neighborhoods

Donate a Vehicle



The Audubon Society of Greater Denver (ASGD) and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colorado (BBBSC) have joined forces. When you donate a vehicle to ASGD, you also benefit BBBSC. Here's how it works: ASGD handles the initial calls; BBBSC handles the details.

To donate a vehicle:

Call ASGD at 303-973-9530 or send an e-mail to info@denveraudubon.org.

Walk the Wetlands

Sunday, January 2, 9am

Sunday, February 6, 9am

Walk along the South Platte River exploring ponds and habitats for winter residents. Dress for the weather. BFGWS (and a scope if you have one); some loaner equipment is available.

Leaders: Audubon Master Birders

Pre-registration not required

Donations to ASGD appreciated

Meeting Place: Audubon Center at Chatfield

**Little Fledglings Preschool Nature Hour
For children ages 3-6**

(and parents/guardians, too!)

Wednesdays, January 5, 19, 10-11am

February 2, 16, 10-11am

Saturday, January 29, 10-10:30am

Enjoy themed nature stories, songs, crafts, and activities exploring wildlife and the natural world around you. This program introduces science skills and encourages active outdoor play. Supports your child's sense of wonder and developing social and academic skills.

Friends members: \$5 per child and their adult; \$2 each additional child

Non-members: \$8 per child and their adult; \$4 each additional child

Sat. Half-hour session: \$3/Friends member; \$5/nonmember per child

Pre-registration required

Meeting Place: Audubon Center at Chatfield

Ducks in Winter

Saturday, January 15, 9am-12pm

Walk along the South Platte enjoying close-up views of winter ducks in their bright, breeding plumage. We may see: American Wigeon; Northern Shoveler; Green-winged Teal; Ring-necked Duck; Lesser Scaup; Bufflehead; Hooded and Common Mergansers; and Common Goldeneye. In past years, we have seen Red-breasted Mergansers and Barrow's Goldeneye. Dress for cold weather. BFGWS.

Leaders: Cindy Valentine and Barbara Shissler

\$10/Friends member; \$12/nonmember

Pre-registration required

Meeting Place: Grant Frontier Park, southeast corner of Evans & South Platte River

Beginning Bird Watching Class

Thursday, March 31, 7-9 pm

Classroom session.

Saturdays, Apr. 2, 16, 23, May 7, 21, and June 4. 8am-2pm

Field Trips to bird-watching sites around Denver including:

Chatfield, Barr Lake, and Castlewood Canyon State Parks, Wheat Ridge Greenbelt, and Genesee Mountain Park

Date TBA: Zoology Dept., Denver Museum of Nature & Science

Fee: \$150/members, \$175/non-members (includes membership)

Graduates of the class may drop in at \$20 a field trip.

Pre-Registration required. Class Size Limited. Register Early.

Call 303-973-9530 or e-mail info@denveraudubon.org

Leaders: Urling & Hugh Kingery

New to birding in Colorado? Wonder where to begin? Join Colorado's foremost — and most entertaining couple — as they introduce the art and science of birdwatching as no one else can. Learn bird identification, choosing and using binoculars and field guides, and much more. Instruction takes place, not in a classroom but rather on field trips to the best birding spots in the Denver metro area. Learn to develop a practiced eye and ear. Meet new friends and change the way you spend time outdoors. Make up any field trips that you miss during future class sessions. Be forewarned: this class has hooked hundreds on the lifelong adventure of birdwatching!

How to Identify Colorado's Hawks and Raptors and their Natural History
Tuesday, January 18, 6:30-9pm

This is a classroom warm up and preview to Raptors of the Northern Front Range field trip. Learn physical markings which help in the field when viewing hawks and raptors. Hone in on key identification points and discover the natural history and characteristics of Colorado's falcons, buteos, osprey, eagles, and the stealthy accipiters. Be prepared next time you go out in the field. Includes a slide presentation with helpful handouts. Bring your bird field guide to the class to use as a reference. Instructor : Tina Jones, long time Colorado wildlife teacher and Audubon Master Birder \$10 /Friends member; \$12/nonmember Pre-registration required Meeting Place: ASGD office, meet upstairs in the classroom. Call for directions.

Raptors of the Northern Front Range
Sunday, January 23, 9am-3pm
Saturday, January 29, 9am-3pm

Travel with the Oliver's to spot surprising numbers of raptors along the northern Front Range. See Bald Eagles, Great-horned Owls, Red-tailed Hawks and other high flyers while caravanning along Weld County roads. Quickly paced - the trip is not suitable for extended photographic studies. This is a car trip that stops along public roads and watches birds on private property. Very little walking required. Harold and Betty Oliver, with years of experience watching raptors are generous teachers and expert spotters. BFGWS and scope if you have one. We plan to eat lunch together at a Safeway deli for discussion of raptor behavior and summary of the trip. Bring or buy lunch. Limit: 10 participants.

Contd. on next page

303-973-9530 or info@denveraudubon.org *** BFGWS = Bring binoculars, field guides, water, and a snack. ***

Programs

Raptors Contd. from previous page

Leaders: Harold and Betty Oliver (303-936-6902); Assisted by Kris Koff
\$10/Friends member; \$12/non-member
Pre-registration required
Meeting Place: Exit I-25 at Exit #225 at 136th Avenue. Meet at WalMart parking lot on west side of I-25.

Neighborhood Open House

Saturday, January 29, 10am-2pm

Residents of Roxborough, TrailMark, and Chatfield Farms are invited to attend classes, guided hikes, and preschool story time provided on this day for FREE. Join us for crafts, snacks, and beverages while you enjoy the beautiful scenery, have fun with nature, and learn more about this wonderful resource right in your "backyard".
Meeting Place: Audubon Center at Chatfield

Living With Wildlife in Your Backyard

Saturday, January 29, 11am-12pm

Raccoons in your trash? Geese on your lawn? Skunks under your porch? Learn how to enjoy the beauty and wonder of Colorado critters while minimizing the conflicts that might develop. Learn practical ways to live with the animals that visit your backyard.

\$5/Friends member; \$8/nonmember
Pre-registration preferred
Meeting Place: Audubon Center at Chatfield

Geocaching and GPS for Fun

Saturday, January 29, 1-2pm

Any time of year, a geocache hunt is fun for the whole family. A geocache is a hidden object you find with your GPS unit using a stated set of coordinates. Learn to use a GPS unit to locate a hidden treasure. Units are provided, or bring your own.

\$5/Friends member; \$8/nonmember
Pre-registration preferred
Meeting Place: Audubon Center at Chatfield

That Old Snow Moon

Friday, February 18, 6:30pm

There's nothing quite like moonlight on fresh snow. Walk (snowshoe or ski if it snows!) the Audubon grounds to discover what hoots, cries, or caws in the moonlight.

A campfire welcomes us back from our trek with hot cider and treats perfect for the telling of Moon tales or owl stories.
\$10/Friends member; \$12/nonmember
Preregistration preferred; admission available at the event.
Meeting Place: Audubon Center at Chatfield

Great Backyard Bird Count

Saturday, February 19, 10am-2pm

Join the celebration with crafts, hiking, short workshops, and informational booths on backyard birding. Classes will be held throughout the day on watching, feeding, and landscaping for birds. Learn how to be a citizen scientist and participate in the national Great Backyard Bird Count.

Pre-registration not required
Classes free to Friends members; \$5/nonmembers
Donations to ASGD appreciated
Meeting Place: Audubon Center at Chatfield

THE PERFECT GIFT

Do you struggle trying to find the perfect gift for that hard-to-buy-for person?

The gift of a Friends Membership in ASGD is a great way to give a valuable gift and support ASGD at the same time!

Buy a gift membership and get a fold-out Denver Bird Guide FREE. Order today!

Call 303-973-9530.

Hey Kids!

Do you love nature and the outdoors? Join our Kid's Nature Club meeting to be held at the end of January for pizza, a small construction project, and planning of future club activities.

The Nature Club is a gathering of children ages 7-12 interested in birds, other wildlife, and nature. Last year, the club took local hikes, attended ASGD programs, and volunteered on projects such as hanging bluebird houses.

Parents may volunteer by attending meetings on a rotating basis.

Contact Suzy Hiskey at 303-973-9530 or shiskey@denveraudubon.org for the date and time.



303-973-9530 or info@denveraudubon.org *** BFGWS = Bring binoculars, field guides, water, and a snack. ***

Salt Air, Ocean Birds, Pacific Northwest,

February 5-10, 2011

Mild winter weather brings Arctic-breeding birds to the bays and beaches of Oregon and Washington. Harry Fuller, long time trip leader for Golden Gate Audubon, leads the trip organized by Colorado-based Partnership for International Birding. From



the Portland airport we'll bird Sauvie's Island (Tundra Swans, Pacific and Red-throated Loon); Astoria and the mouth of the Columbia River (various gulls, Snow Buntings, Lapland Longspurs, Brandt's and Pelagic Cormorant, Northern Fulmars, Cassin's Auklet) and the Olympic Peninsula (Harlequin Duck, Trumpeter Swans, Ancient and Marbled Murrelet). We'll visit Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge (Varied Thrush, Chestnut-backed Chickadee) and ferry across Puget Sound which provides a relatively calm pelagic trip with great looks at sea species.

\$1,149 double occupancy; single \$1,449. Includes 5 nights lodging with continental breakfasts, 5 days birding, group transportation. Participant's responsibility: lunch and dinner, airfare to Portland. Trip details: <http://pibird.com/PacNorthwest-2011-1.html>. Register: Charles or Alison, 888-203-7464; Charles, 720-320-1974, info@PIBird.com.

San Diego Bird Festival

March 2-7, 2011

Harriet Stratton pilots a group to the San Diego Bird Festival, March 2-7, 2011, Marina Village Conference Center, Mission Bay, San Diego, CA. Fly in Wednesday March 2, airport shuttle to the Dana on Mission Bay. www.thedana.com Guided festival trips include: Thursday-pelagic trip with Debi Shearwater; Friday- Scripps' Aquarium and La Jolla rocky coast (Harbor seals); Saturday-the Anza-Borrego desert (Chrissal's Thrasher); Sunday-Coastal Wildlife Refuges (Black Rail) www.sandiegoaudubon.org/birdfest.htm, Fly back Monday after free day in San Diego.

\$935 double, \$1,175 single. Includes 5 nights at The Dana, festival registration and tour fees, breakfasts, and dinners. Participant's responsibility: lunches (available through the festival), airfare (approx. \$230 rt) and airport shuttle to Dana (\$9 each way). Questions: Harriet Stratton, hs10@comcast.net. Register through ASGD 303-973-9530, info@denveraudubon.org with a \$200 deposit, final payment and registration deadline: January 15, 2011.

Greater Prairie Chickens and Sandhill Cranes

Spring Magic in Nebraska

March 31-April 3, 2011

Each spring, more than 80 percent of the world's population of sandhill cranes converges on Nebraska's Platte River Valley. Along with them come millions of migrating ducks and geese in the neighboring Rainwater Basin—covering the vast expanse of open sky with millions of flapping wings and a chorus of calls. At the same time, in the grasslands of

Nebraska, male sharp-tailed grouse and greater prairie chickens are vying for the attention of hens. Their raucous lek displays include clucks, whoops, gobbles, exposed tail coverts and balloon-like air sacs flashing orange and yellow. Join Hugh and Urling Kingery on a 25 passenger bus bound for the magic of spring in Nebraska. Overnight at the Switzer Ranch Prairie Reserve (near Bursell, Nebraska) to bird the leks then on to Kearney for the Sandhill Crane fly-ins and blind viewing at the Rowe Sanctuary.

\$880/Friends member (double occupancy); non-members \$940. Single supplement available upon request. Price includes round-trip motor coach transportation, guide services, three nights of accommodations, lek viewing at Switzer Ranch, two blind sessions at Rowe Sanctuary, and most meals. Deposit of \$200 due at registration with the balance due March 4, 2011. Limited to 22 participants.

For a detailed itinerary visit <http://reefstorockies.com/destinations/special-trips/> or contact Sheridan Samano Sheridan@ReefsToRockies.com or 303-860-6045.

Leaders: Hugh and Urling Kingery

Mountain Plover Festival Karval, CO

April 29, 30, May 1

Experience the prairie. From the Friday night ice cream social to the home grown beef BBQ, you are made to feel like a local as you explore private ranchland where the elusive Mountain Plover nests. We'll stay at a ranch, all meals will be provided, as well as school buses and wagons or tours. Guides will be bird experts. We'll carpool to Karval. Visit the web site: www.karval.org. \$475/Friends member; \$500/nonmember; Single supplement available upon request.

Pre-registration required; Deadline: March 18, 2011.

Leaders: Hugh and Urling Kingery.

Post your latest
bird sightings
and
questions
on our
FaceBook Page



Bird & Brew Trivia

Wednesday, January 19, 7-9pm

Breckenridge Brewery Ballpark Pub
2220 Blake Street • Denver 80205
www.breckbrew.com

Join us for an exciting night of nature and outdoor trivia!
Form a team of up to six or join a team that night.
Even if you're not trivia buff,
it's really all about friends, fun, and food.

\$5 entry fee per person – proceeds support ASGD programs
303-973-9530 or info@denveraudubon.org

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Littleton, Colorado 80121

(303) 789-1089

(West side of Broadway - approx.
1 1/2 blocks North of Arapahoe Road)





by Hugh Kingery

DENVER AUDUBON'S PHONE MENU,

when you press "0" for answers to wildlife questions, rings our home phone. When we're on trips we tell Rhonda to switch the calls to somebody else, usually Harold & Betty Oliver. In late October, we went to Florida to watch our daughter play in the national Ultimate Frisbee championships, but forgot to tell Rhonda. After the Frisbee, we spent four days birdwatching.

In National Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp sanctuary, our cell phone rang. Somebody had a bird question about her Aurora backyard – while I sat on a bench in the middle of Florida and watched an 8-foot alligator basking in the swamp.



American Alligators
Photo courtesy of Wikipedia

JAY BREESE TOOK ADVANTAGE of another ASGD service, and emailed us to identify a mystery bird he saw in downtown Denver with these field marks:

- ginger-colored to buff brown;
- size of a robin or a tad smaller – not a junco or sparrow;
- straight, rather long bill like a robin's – not a junco or sparrow;
- three to four black stripes on its head, not visible from a side view – not a female Red-winged Blackbird, a mockingbird, shrike, or thrasher;
- "it kept thrusting out its tail and spreading it sharply and snapping it back together; each time it flicked its tail I could see a few narrow, bright white tail feathers on each outside edge."

Urling ID'd it from this last characteristic.

Answer at the end of the column.

JOY SCHIEVING SENT her regular south Denver yard lists. They included her regular

Bushtits (twice in October) and these migrants: Calliope Hummingbird (last one Oct. 15), Wilson's Warbler, Spotted Towhee, and White-crowned Sparrow.

ROY HOHN (CENTENNIAL) tallied 18 species on Oct. 27. When "water in the bird bath froze solid," he added hot water, and the visitors included 6-10 Lesser Goldfinches still visiting his thistle feeder (late for them), a Hairy Woodpecker, a Red-breasted Nuthatch, and a "Cedar Waxwing squeezed between some robins at the bird bath." A Western Scrub-Jay quit his yard Oct. 26, and he regularly sees 8-10 Bushtits.

On Oct. 30 he saw a single Red-winged Blackbird and wondered why, as "not even a tiny wetland exists within a mile radius." In a visit to Acadia National Park last summer, the leader of a bird walk remarked on "the lack of red-wings from park locales where they had been abundant, which he ascribed, without certainty, to West Nile disease." Roy wondered about their status here, which made me look at Walk the Wetlands records. In 2009, we counted 142; in 2010 we've counted only 63. Although I doubt that West Nile is involved, I wonder if this drop in numbers extends more widely. And if so, why?

DENVER YARDS SEEM to have grown enough conifers to support regularly-breeding Red-breasted Nuthatches: Barb Shissler, Mary & Dave Driscoll, Dick



Mountain Chickadee
Photo courtesy of Wikipedia

Anderson, and Bill Eden all report them as regulars. Mountain Chickadees join them, but usually only for the winter: Dick Anderson saw them arrive in mid-September; Joy and the Driscolls saw them in October.



Cedar Waxwing
Photo courtesy of Dick Vogel

LOIS LEVINSON REPORTS from southwest of Cherry Creek State Park, "Fall migration has arrived in my backyard! Today (Oct. 4) I had a White-throated Sparrow (tan morph), a White-crowned Sparrow, over 20 Chipping Sparrows, and one Pink-sided Junco, all seeming to enjoy my rather weedy garden. I feel vindicated for not weeding." Harriet Stratton's chokecherry bushes drew a Cedar Waxwing, also Oct. 4.



White-crowned Sparrow
Photo courtesy of Dick Vogel

SANDY ELLIOTT, IN LATE SEPTEMBER, working in her front yard with her 10-year old grandson, saw a "group of 3-4 LARGE red-headed Turkey Vultures flapping



Turkey Vulture
Photo courtesy of Wikipedia

overhead. They alighted in the tree across the street, much to the chagrin of some blackbirds who were enjoying themselves in the same tree. The vultures flapped about in and out of the tree for about ten minutes until they took off toward the southwest." East of Franktown on Oct. 4, Fran Shepperdson, while "painting the house, eight buzzards sailed overhead looking for a thermal. They found one east of me and sailed off to the southeast."

FALL'S BEST OVERHEAD BIRDS, Sandhill Cranes, flew mostly east of the metro area. Robert Doriss, Oct. 12 out in Watkins, "just heard our first confirmed cranes! They were flying south on the east side of DIA and flew right over our house. It was a V-configured skein numbering easily over 50 birds. I estimate they were between 2,000 and 2,500 feet up." Ginny and Davis Ammons saw 1,500 or so Oct. 18-19, 20 miles south of Franktown. The only metro report: an ASGD caller who counted 20 in Lakewood, very late on Nov. 15.

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Backyard Birds

Backyard Birds contd. from page 9

HUMMINGBIRDS CONTINUE to invade Denver metro. In August Joy saw Broad-tails eight times, Rufous and Black-chinned twice. Sept. 13, Angie Koehler, near Washington Park, "had one stop by for a late lunch and some relaxation. I happened to be



Broad-tailed Hummingbird
Photo courtesy of Dick Vogel

filling up feeders when all of a sudden a hummingbird flew off my cable wire right in front of me. It flew off into my lilac bush. I ran for my camera and got one photo. Of course he perched on the opposite side of the feeder so I couldn't get a full view. 'Littleone' looked at me as if to say, 'I'm not worthy of a full body shot.' Such a treat to see hummingbirds stopping by. A second one, a male Broad-tailed, camped out in my aspen trees. The next day I got up before dawn and heard him pass. Looked at my feeder and there he was, filling up once again for his far journey! It's now close to 1 p.m. and haven't seen either one."

KAREN METZ, IN FRANKTOWN often has hummingbirds into mid-October. "A female Broad-tailed traveler showed up Oct. 6; she bathed no fewer than six times that morning, scratched and preened often – she needed the spa. By Oct. 8 she had company – a young female Rufous – and they have found my salvias and agastache satisfactory. Once we get a clear night, perhaps they'll move on, but for now (Oct. 12) they are still settled in."

TRACEY ROBINSON, "driving down Castle Pines Pkwy. Nov. 12, saw what I first thought was geese. I thought, look how big they are and such long legs. I got closer and realized they were Wild Turkeys. Three of them. I was so close to them!"



Wild Turkey
Photo courtesy of Wikipedia

JANE ISAACS POSTED on Cobirds that "Bushtits are regular visitors at our house in Littleton on Jackass Hill. They seem to enjoy aspens and hawthorn trees, both of which have some shiny, sticky, saplike substance on their leaves." Dave Leatherman, Colorado's eminent entomologist/field ornithologist in Fort Collins, replied, "My strong suspicion is that the attraction for the Bushtits (and the source of the substance on the leaves) is the Hawthorn Mealybug. Individual mealybugs (mostly nymphs that look like tiny, pinkish-with-white-trim, 'turtles') should be slowly moving from the leaves to cracks in the twigs, branches, and main stem at this time of year. They produce copious amounts of sugary honeydew excrement. While this insect isn't exactly great for the plant, it's very attractive, along with the crabapple-like fruits, for many species of birds. You are getting free biocontrol along with your entertainment. In short, hawthorn, aesthetic flaws and all, can be a great tree if you want to landscape with birds in mind."



Bushtit
Photo courtesy of Wikipedia

AMY ZIEGLER NEAR WASHINGTON PARK, says, "We had another Mourning Dove



Cooper's Hawk
Photo courtesy of Buzz Bowers

to know if they are from the same family, and this is a learned hunting style."

DENNIS MORALES EMAILED a photo that his daughter, Miriam Cavendar, took of their Montclair neighborhood Cooper's Hawk, one that has stayed in the area for at least two years.

JACK CHISHOLM WATCHED an albino House Sparrow August-October. It comes in with other sparrows, and it tends to be aggressive towards them – maybe self-protection.

SUSAN SMITH FORWARDED an article by David Malakoff reporting on ecotourism research: the effect of chatting birders on the birds. An early book on Bird Watching that Urling and I read, by Roger Pasquier, says that birds can't hear our voices. Two researchers disagree. "They tested tapes of people talking in a room by playing them back on a frequently visited trail and a rarely visited one. They surveyed all the birds they could see or hear after a moment of silence, and then after playing a "snippet" of the recording at 50 (typical level for talking birders) and then 60 decibels (excited child). Turns out the birds in both forests just didn't want to hear it. After playing the recordings, the number of individual birds detected declined by 35-39%. Some of them stopped singing, others fled out of sight. Insect-eating birds seemed most sensitive, perhaps because they have particularly acute hearing [so much for the Pasquier statement]."

"The researchers worry that 'increasing secretive behavior may have negative consequences for birds. They may stop singing during the dawn chorus, for instance, perhaps reducing their ability to attract mates and drive away rivals.'"

This happened in Peru, but if universally accurate, reverberates wherever we birders ply our passion. Maybe we should move our social conversation to the lunch table and the car. A second reason for cutting the chatter: you can hear birds' songs and calls better. "Silence would probably result in [birders] encountering more wildlife."

Jay Breese's bird:

Western Meadowlark, which typically flashes its tail feather exactly the way Jay described his downtown bird.



Western Meadowlark
Photo courtesy of Dick Vogel

I WELCOME YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS to this column. Send a note or post card to P.O. Box 584, Franktown 80116, or Email me ouzels8@aol.com.

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In-Kind Donations

Bridget Milnes donated an office chair
Arlene Raskin & Kate Frost donated supplies to the Fall Members Dinner

Correction

We inadvertently missed a donation to Bird-a-thon by Mary O'Connor.

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