



THE Warbler

MARCH/APRIL 2003

ISBN: 1531-2283 Volume 37, No. 2

NEWSLETTER OF THE AUDUBON SOCIETY OF GREATER DENVER

Bird-a-thon 2003

by Susan Smith, ASGD Administrative Director

May is a month of migration madness and Bird-a-thon fun! It is one of the best times of the year to get out-of-doors, enjoy the spring and see how many feathered friends you can spot. Plus, you can make a difference for the environment by participating in Bird-a-thon and collecting pledges for Audubon Society of Greater Denver.

Just like a walk-a-thon, participants tweet and twitter until friends, family or businesses agree to sponsor them. Sponsors are asked to pledge an amount (say, \$1.00) for every bird species that you see on Bird-a-thon Day. All the pledges you collect will stay in Denver to support ASGD and the Audubon Center.

When is Bird-a-thon Day? Any day (any 24-hour period, to be specific) in May. You can go Bird-a-thon-ing as an individual or with a flock of friends.

If you go as a flock, we encourage you to make up a bird-brained team name, just for the fun of it!

After you've spent the day chasing

tics Raven Spotting Scope with a 20-60x zoom eyepiece valued at \$399! Many, many chirps of praise go to Scott and David Menough at Wild Birds Unlimited

for donating this eye-grabbing prize. Please visit their stores at 2720 S. Wadsworth, 7400 E. Hampden Ave and 7677 W. 88th Ave. and thank them for so generously supporting ASGD!

Have we got your feathers ruffled with excitement yet? **Call the ASGD office at 303-973-9530 to register for Bird-a-thon and get your pledge sheet.** And, if you really don't want to be a Bird-a-thon-er (even though we can't imagine why you wouldn't!)

you can still get involved by being a sponsor. Just give us a call, we

would love to hear from you!

If you're not ready to fly solo or want to make some new friends, sign-up for one of our flocks (Bird-a-thon teams) by calling 303-973-9530. *There is no fee to join a flock, however, we do ask that each participant collect at least \$25 in Bird-a-thon pledges to donate to ASGD.*



You're never too young to join the 2003 Bird-a-thon.

your feathered friends, call, write or send a homing pigeon to each of your sponsors. Share your adventures and bird lists with them. Collect your pledges and return them to ASGD by June 16, 2003.

The Bird-a-thon participant that raises the most money from sponsors (drumroll, please) will win an Eagle Op-

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2003 BIRD-A-THON-FLOCKS (TEAMS)

Kingery's Kingfishers at Bonny State Park

Leaders of the Flock: Urling and Hugh Kingery

Starting location: Foster Grove campground in Bonny State Park

Date & Time: Tues.-Thurs., May 13, 14 & 15 (Bird-a-thon Day will be Wednesday)

***For this flock only, please call the Kingerys at 303-814-2723 to register.**

What could be better than three days of bird watching? Camp out or stay in a motel. You'll see an amazing variety of birds as east meets west. Look for migrating warblers, orioles, and flycatchers, red-headed and red-bellied woodpeckers, eastern bluebirds, thrashers, and in the shelter belts, owls. In this wonderful park we'll walk in many different habitats, from wetlands to prairie We'll have a pot luck Wednesday evening.

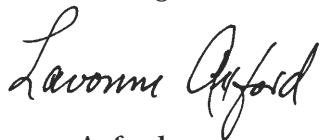
2003 Bird-a-thon Flocks continued on page 4

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It is exciting to watch the renovation process at the Audubon Center at Chatfield State Park. The former garage building has been transformed into a bright, open classroom space for learners of all ages. Improvements include a new concrete floor, reinforced rafters, gable windows, a sink, lights, cabinets, overhead doors and security features. Finishing touches will be applied over the next couple months. We are tentatively planning a grand opening ceremony for early May and will include details in the next Warbler.

Another exciting development is the response we've received to the new Friends of ASGD membership program. If you haven't joined yet, please consider doing so. An application form is located on page 5. The Friends program provides vital financial support to ASGD.

We are very fortunate that Jerry Raskin will now be serving as our chapter delegate to the Audubon Colorado board of directors. The new year has also brought changes to the staff at Audubon Colorado. Gary Graham started as their new executive director in January. He previously served as director of the Wildlife Division of Texas Parks & Wildlife. Gary has also worked for Bird Conservation International as associate science director and for the Texas Wildlife Project. He holds a doctorate in biology from the University of New Mexico and has authored two wildlife books, "Texas Wildlife Viewing Guide" and "Golden Guide, Bats of the World." The Audubon Colorado search committee was impressed with his passion for conservation values and enthusiasm for working with Audubon volunteers.



Lavonne Axford

Thank You!

WITH GRATITUDE—THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING ASGD

- George and Judy Writer generously gave \$1000 donation towards the purchase of a pellet stove for the Audubon Center. This gift will help students and adults stay warm for many winters to come.
- Jeff Pothast honored the memory of his father, Harold Sunderhuse, with a \$100 gift to ASGD.
- Jerry and Arlene Raskin donated \$25 to express their appreciation for Harold and Betty Oliver, who led the Hawks and Eagles field trip in January. The Raskins reported that it was an absolutely wonderful day of raptor viewing.
- Janet Decker donated books for our library and bird prints for our collection.
- Allison Hilf donated a toaster oven for the ASGD office kitchen.

APPLAUSE FOR OUR VOLUNTEERS!

- The Warbler Mailing Crew, dependable as always: Mary Ann Brown, Willa Brunkhorst, Kevin Corwin, Marc Goodbody, Ailene Herranen, Jan and Doug Hodous, Jeanne McCune and Barbara and Frank Shissler.
- Allison Hilf and Mindy Tshudy for their help with office and clerical tasks in the ASGD office.
- AND, a big thank you to Lynne Forrester for developing our membership database.

New E-mail addresses for ASGD

The Audubon Society of Greater Denver has new e-mail addresses. They are:

For general inquiries—info@denveraudubon.org

For inquiries regarding school & youth group programs—education@denveraudubon.org

STAFF EMAILS:

Susan Smith, Administrative Director—ssmith@denveraudubon.org

Rhonda Shank, Office Manager—rshank@denveraudubon.org

Laura Steigers, Program Instructor—lsteigers@denveraudubon.org



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For information about special projects, committees, general functions, events, fund raisers and partnerships, please phone, E-mail or write the ASGD office.

ASGD OFFICERS & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President Lavonne Axford
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abonnell@juno.com

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MISSION

ASGD is a nonprofit group, with over 3000 members, dedicated to maintaining the health of natural ecosystems through education, political action, scientific research and land preservation, with primary focus on birds, other wildlife and ecosystems of the South Platte River watershed.

MEMBERSHIP

National Audubon Society members in the Denver Metro Area are automatically members of the ASGD and receive *The Warbler*.

The Warbler is published bimonthly by the Audubon Society of Greater Denver (ASGD).

Editor C. Dale Flowers
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TRAVEL, FIELD TRIPS, CLASSES & PROGRAMS

To Register for Trips & Classes Call the ASGD Office at 303.973.9530

Join FRIENDS of ASGD and Receive Discounts on Field Trips and Classes



FIELD TRIPS

Walk the Wetlands

Sunday, March 2 9am
Sunday, April 6 9am
Sunday, May 4 8am (Dawn Chorus at 7am)
Leaders: Hugh and Urling Kingery
Registration is NOT required.
Fee: None
Meeting Place: The Audubon Center at Chatfield State Park (contact ASGD for directions).

We will hike along the South Platte River looking for nesting dippers, ducks, raptors (maybe a bald eagle), and other spring residents—migrants in May. Bring binoculars, field guides, water, snack, and lunch if you'd like to stay.

Barr Lake Bald Eagles

Saturday, March 8 9am - Noon
Leader: David Rhoades
***Registration IS required.**
Fees: \$7/Friends member, \$9/non-member
Meeting Place: Barr Lake Nature Center, State Parks pass or daily fee required.
Description: Walk along a dirt road at the edge of the lake looking at water birds—ducks and grebes. As well as seeing eagles on the nest, you may see nesting great horned owls and harriers coursing over the fields. Get familiar with this state park, known for its variety of water and land birds. Bring binoculars, a field guide, snack and water.

Sandhill Cranes—Kearney, Nebraska

Monday-Wednesday March 17-19
Leaders: Hugh & Urling Kingery
***Registration IS required.**
Fees: \$200/Friends member; \$250/non-members (double occupancy) Price includes two nights lodging, two breakfasts, two lunches, entrance fees and guide services. Price does not include dinners. (Add \$70/person for single occupancy.)
Meeting Place: At 3pm at the Country Inn & Suites at Kearney, just northeast of I 80, exit 272. (According to AAA, it is 360 miles & a 5.5 hour drive from Denver.)

Description: Join us at one of the heartland's most awe-inspiring migratory bird flyways. In mid-March tens of thousands of sandhill cranes visit Kearny. At 5pm on Monday, we will go into the Rowe Sanctuary bird blind on the Platte River to witness the cranes flying into the river bottom to roost for the night. At 5am on Tuesday, we will return to the blind for the cranes' awakening and departure to feed in the fields. Rowe's superb habitat attracts more cranes than any other spot on the river. During the day we will visit Funk Wildlife Area where thousands of snow geese and other waterfowl stop over.

Please note: Very warm clothes are a must for the 2-2 ½ hours we will spend in the blind.

Raptor Nest Tour of Boulder County

Sunday, April 27 9am
Leaders: Dianna and Wayne Johnston
***Registration IS required.**
Fees: \$7/Friends member, \$9/non-member
Meeting Place: Park & Ride at Highway 287 and Niwot Road. From I-25, take Exit 235 (Colo. Highway 52, Dacono & Ft. Lupton to the east). Go WEST on Highway 52 6.8 miles. Turn right (north) on U.S. 287 and go 0.7 miles. Turn left on Niwot Road.
Description: View nests of prairie falcon, golden eagle, red-tailed hawks, osprey, and great horned owls. This will be a ¾ day trip. Bring binoculars, field guides, water, snacks, and lunch.

Pawnee Grasslands with Kevin Cook

Sunday, May 18 8am-4:30pm
Leader: Kevin Cook
***Registration IS required.**
Fees: \$20/Friends member; \$25/non-member
Meeting Place: Crow Valley Campground near Briggsdale. (Over-night camping is available for those wishing to drive out on Friday.) Car pools from Denver will be arranged if requested.

Description: Enjoy a springtime visit to this fascinating habitat with noted naturalist Kevin Cook and awaken to the wonders of this little understood region. Did you know that shrimp live in this arid area? We'll look for these creatures and seek out the Earth wolf spider, the largest spider in Colorado, in its burrow. Waterferns, kangaroo rats, short-horned lizards, and wildflowers in bloom may all be part of our day's experience. And we'll be looking for mountain plovers, chestnut-collared longspurs, migrating warblers and other bird specialties, too. This trip is great for children as well as adults. Our leader, Kevin Cook, writes for nature-related articles for newspapers in Fort Collins and Loveland and also authors a monthly column in Bird Watcher's Digest. He teaches classes for the Rocky Mountain Nature Association.

CLASSES

Beginning Bird-Watching Class

Thursday, April 3, 7-9pm. ASGD Office
Saturdays, April 5, 12, 19 and 26, May 3 and 31 Field Sessions around the Denver Metro area
Leaders: Hugh and Urling Kingery
***Registration IS required.**
Fee: \$120/Friends member, \$150/non-member

Voted Best of Denver! 20 years ago and still going strong. Colorado's premier (and most entertaining) birding couple teaches the art and science of birding as no one else can. Learn bird identification, how to choose binoculars and field guides, and much more. Visit a variety of habitats and some of the best birding spots in the Denver metro area. Become observant and develop a practiced eye and ear. Make new friends and change the focus of your outdoor trips. You can make up any field trips that you miss during future fall or spring class sessions.

If you are a graduate of Kingery's Beginning Bird Watching Class, you can join any of the field trips for a \$10 donation and further hone your birding skills. Contact the ASGD Office for an itinerary.

Annual Auction April 11th

by Carol DeStefanis

The ASGD Annual Auction begins at 6:30pm on Friday April 11, 2003 at the Pinehurst Country Club. Please set this date aside, and take some time to complete the insert and return it to the ASGD office.

This year's event will offer you the opportunity to bid on both silent and live auction items. Sheldon Good and Company have graciously donated their time again this year, and will perform the live auction. In previous years, we have had a sit down dinner and speaker. This year we are making it more interactive and less formal. We will have music, and food served throughout the evening, which will give you time to bid on items, talk with friends and learn more about Audubon Society of Greater Denver.

Bidding was brisk last year, and we hope this year's items—such as a weekend in Steamboat Springs, or 3-day canoe trip

with Centennial outfitters will generate as much enthusiasm. To make this one of our most successful fundraisers, we need everyone's help!

We are looking for your assistance in soliciting donations from local merchants and others. Gift certificates from restaurants, and merchants, as well as arts, crafts, plants, theme baskets, and services are always popular. Be creative—offer your skills on a field trip, make repairs, or to weed a garden. Large items such as Hot Air Balloon rides, a mountain bike, or signed items by celebrities are still needed.

You can obtain letters from the ASGD office that introduces ASGD and explain the auction, and serve as a receipt for those who donate items. Once you have gathered all your items just give us a call, and we can give you the specifics on drop off locations, etc. If you have any questions call Carol DeStefanis 303-779-0882.

Denver Post column features bird watching in the Mountain West

by Linda Castrone, Features Editor, The Denver Post

The Denver Post inaugurated a new column on bird watching in the Mountain West on Sunday, December 8, 2002. Written by Warbler columnist Hugh Kingery and illustrated by Radeaux, it appears in the Sunday Lifestyles section of the Sunday paper.

Aimed at the general public, the column will report on the natural history of birds that occur in the mountains and plains of Colorado and adjacent states. It will also cover bird watching activities such as Christmas counts, banding, and breeding bird surveys, where to see birds, habitat requirements, identification, and other related topics. Watch for it every Sunday.

2003 BIRD-A-THON-FLOCKS (TEAMS) Continued from page 1

Grown-ups & Goslings

Leader of the Flock: Susan Smith

Date & Time: Saturday, May 17, 9am–11am

Starting location: Audubon Center at Chatfield State Park

Kids, grab your favorite grown-up and head out the door. (Warning: adults will not be allowed without child supervision!) We'll take an easy hike to the ponds and look for quackers and other feathered friends. Babies, toddlers and little ones welcome!

Sue's Swifts

Leader of the Flock: Sue Schulman

Date & Time: Sunday, May 18, 8am

Starting location: Cherry Creek State Park, west entrance opposite Cherry Creek HS.

Beginners, intermediates, advanced birders are all very welcome. Bring lunch, binoculars and the usual birders' optimism for a great day or morning of birding. We will try for at least 30 species.

Travel Adventures

Birds of Panama— Still on Parade

April 16-25, 2003

If you've been thinking about that Panama trip, but just haven't made the decision to join up there's still time, but space is limited! A small group of fun and friendly birders is looking forward to scouting out the countryside with local guide, Guido Berguido. All you need are your binoculars, a lightly packed suitcase and the excitement of finding as many of the 950+ species of birds that are indigenous to that part of the world. For more information, call Mary Marx 303-771-2441

Friend's cost: \$2750 double occupancy, \$3125 single occupancy. Non-members add: \$30

Includes all transportation (including airfare), meals, lodging, and entrance fees.

A 3-day extension is still available for \$395 p/p and includes transit through the Panama Canal.

Birds of Paradise An Hawaiian EDventure

CHOOSE FROM THESE DEPARTURE DATES

August 2-9, 2003

September 6-13, 2003

November 1-8, 2003

Are you passionate about adding "lif-ers" to your list? Sightings of Hawaii's "winged-jewels" abound on this University of Hawaii's 2-island journey to Kauai and the Big Island of Hawaii. Join expert birding guides, field interpreters, naturalists and photographers as you discover Hawaii's anchialine ponds, and shoreline habitats that offer awesome encounters. Our price of \$1,325 (double occupancy) and \$1425 (double) for Friend's members, includes 7 nights, 8 days (starting from Lihue, Kauai), inter-island air travel from Kauai to Hilo, oceanfront hotels, all ground transportation, park entrance fees and meals. (Non-members add \$100 each.) Pre- and post-trip extensions are available. Space is limited to 12 per group. For more information, contact Becky Beckers, Travel For the Birds at 303-766-5266 or email at AgentBecky@aol.com.

Welcome to our new FRIENDS of ASGD

Tom & Isabel Abbott, Nancy Abramson, Lavonne Axford, George & Geraldine Biram, Michael Boggess, Ann Bonnell, Coralie Brown, Mary Burger, Mary Burns, Ed & Judy Butterfield,, Irv & Adelaide Cohen, John Connor Loretta Davis, Doris & Jimmy Cruze, Jayleen Drissell, Patty Echelmeyer, Leonora Embich, John Edwards, Clinton & Carol Flynn, Quin Ford, Lynne Forrester, Mike Foster, Marilyn Fowler, Billy Funk, Jay & Jean Garrett, Viola Geslin, Larry Gitlin, Mary J.W. Green, Peter & Yvonne Griffiths, Robert Hart, Karin Heine, Allison Hilf, Susan Hill, Eric & Kathryn Holtz, Jerry Jargon, Mary Jennings, Hugh & Urling Kingery, Rose Kish, Jill Knaak, Debra Larsen, Randy Lentz, Hiro Lysk,o Greg Marquez, Steve & Mary Marx, Jon & Elissa McAlear, Patricia McClearn, Betty McGinnis, Joyce Parsons-Herrick, Bruce Paton, Jerry & Arlene Raskin, Gene & Polly Reetz, Herbert Samenfeld, Kate Sandersen, Ruth Schoening, Sue Schulman, Frances Shepperdson, Barbara Shissler, Paul Slingsby, Mark & Susan Smith Donna Stanley, John & Laura Steigers, Anne Sweeney, David Swerer, Kellun Turner, Maxine Vestal, Mary Washburn, George & Judy Writer.

Thank you for choosing to support Audubon Society of Greater Denver!

Calling all Volunteers

We need to know what you've been up to and how many hours you've donated to ASGD!

Volunteers are the lifeblood of ASGD and it is critical that we document your contribution to the organization. This information is compelling data to include in our grant applications and fundraising activities. Plus, we want to be able to recognize and properly thank you for your efforts.

Please send your volunteer hours, along with the date & brief description of what you did, to the ASGD office. You can report your volunteer hours by calling 303-973-9530, e-mailing info@denveraudubon.org, or sending them by mail to ASGD, 9308 S. Wadsworth Blvd., Littleton, CO 80128. We don't even care if they arrive by carrier pigeon, just so that they arrive!



AUDUBON SOCIETY
of GREATER DENVER

Become a FRIEND of the Audubon Society of Greater Denver

Everyone needs FRIENDS! Friends of the Audubon Society of Greater Denver (ASGD) strengthen the organization through their financial support. As a Friend of ASGD you also receive special benefits for one year from the month that you join.

Why create a Friends of ASGD membership program?

ASGD's greatest assets are the grassroots projects that bring our mission to life. These projects—Conservation Issues, the Colorado Bluebird Project, environmental education programs and the Audubon Center—are the framework of our organization. ASGD is dependent on gifts from individuals, grants, fundraising events and *membership dues* for its financial survival. Recent changes in National Audubon Society's chapter policy have challenged us to find new ways to sustain our organization.*

For every member in the Denver-metro area who joins National Audubon Society, ASGD now receives less than \$3. Over the next three years, our dues share will be further reduced to only \$1.79 per member. ASGD receives no other financial support from National Audubon Society. The Friends of ASGD program gives you the opportunity to insure that your contributions support the grass roots projects that have made ASGD strong.

*Members of the National Audubon Society will continue to receive the *Warbler*. Friends of ASGD will receive special benefits such as, discounts on field trips.

Become a Friend of ASGD at the following levels

INDIVIDUAL \$25

Benefits:

- ♦ Satisfaction that all of your Friends membership dues will stay at the local level.
- ♦ The award-winning, bi-monthly newsletter, the *Warbler*, to keep you informed on ASGD projects and activities.
- ♦ Invitations to Friends' only events.
- ♦ Friends discounts on ASGD field trips, classes and workshops for one person.

FAMILY \$35

All the benefits listed above, plus:

- ♦ Friends discounts on ASGD field trips, classes and workshops for an additional adult and the member's children or grandchildren under the age of 18.

YES! I am a FRIEND of the Audubon Society of Greater Denver.

Individual (\$25) Family (\$35) I have included an additional donation of _____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Enclosed is my check payable to **Audubon Society of Greater Denver**
9308 S.Wadsworth Boulevard
Littleton, CO 80128

Please charge my: ___ Visa ___ Mastercard

Name on card: _____

Account # _____ Exp. _____

Signature: _____ **Thank You!**

Please do not share my name with affiliated organizations or other groups.



Eagle Eye

Watching Public Policy for the Environment

by Polly Reetz

By the time you read this, the Colorado General Assembly, otherwise known as the Legislature, will have been in session for almost two months. Its Members have to deal with a number of BIG issues this year, but probably the most important one for conservationists is drought—that is, water conservation, water management, and assorted variations on that theme. The recent lack of rain and snowfall may force us to some real progress, or we could remain stuck in the rut of overuse, acrimonious debate, and environmental destruction.

Some of the water policy ideas that will be floating around the Legislature, in various bills, would:

- allow people to plant drought-tolerant species instead of thirsty bluegrass in neighborhoods where residents MUST now plant bluegrass;
- allow farmers to temporarily loan water to other users, for example to maintain stream flows, without losing their water rights;
- help set up water price structures whereby the more water you use, the more you pay;
- require each water basin in the State to create a basin-wide water plan;
- require State lands to be managed to increase water yields (“logging for water”);
- fund a study of the “Big Straw”, a proposal to take water out of the Colorado River at the Utah border and pump it over the Divide to the Front Range;
- and much, much more

If you want our State to meet the challenge of the drought by conserving, trading water, or rehabilitating existing reservoirs rather than pursuing environmentally damaging and economically wasteful water projects, your legislator will need to hear from you!

To get action take these two steps. First, it’s easy to find out your legislator’s name and address on the Internet. Go to www.capitolconnect.com/audubon/addressform.asp Enter your name, address, and zip code, and you will get the names of your federal and state representatives. If you don’t have Internet service, you can call your county election commission and get the information. Second, join our email tree to get alerts on

Call for ASGD board nominations

The ASGD Board of Directors is accepting nominations for board members with terms beginning July 1, 2003. (Terms are for three years.) Board members are expected to participate in monthly board meetings, as well as, serve on at least one ASGD committee. If you are interested, please contact LavonneAxford, President at 303-770-2428 or Ann Bonnell, 2nd Vice President at 303-979-6211.

important bills. Just phone, mail, or email the ASGD office with your email address, tell us that you want to be on the email tree, and give us the names of your Colorado Senator and Representative (the list is not used for any other purpose). If you don’t have email, we can put you on a telephone list, and our volunteer coordinator will make sure you get the alerts sent out by our lobbyist. You will probably be contacted only three or four times during the legislative session. Besides participating in the democratic process, communication with your legislator lets you meet these often fascinating people who determine the future of our state. It’s really worth it!

People on our side of the issues often wonder why legislators vote for bills that will harm the environment, and the answer is: because they hear from the proponents of such activities and they don’t hear much from their constituents. If we want to preserve stream flows, riparian areas, wildlife habitat, open space, and road less areas, we have to let them hear our voices.

Meanwhile, back in D.C., the Bush administration continues on an unprecedented course of weakening environmental laws and regulations. One of the latest jewels to emerge is a proposal that may leave millions of acres of small, isolated wetlands and intermittent streams without any protection under the Clean Water Act from pollution or destruction. Since many of these are “prairie potholes” that produce most of the waterfowl hatched in North America each year, their disappearance could have significant impacts on birdwatchers and hunters. Meanwhile the administration promises “no net loss” of wetlands, but if it redefines wetlands so that many are excluded from consideration, we won’t have lost them – they just didn’t exist in the first place to be lost. The new proposal has been formed in response to a Supreme Court decision in 2000, which contrary to all precedent, declared that the use of a wetland by migratory birds that cross state lines did not by itself grant it protection under the Clean Water Act. To get a copy, call the EPA Wetlands Hot line at 800-832-7828.

Another Bush administration initiative proposes to change the requirements for National Forests’ Land Use Plans, to give less consideration to wildlife and other ecological factors. This came out right after Thanksgiving, timed just when most people would be giving their attention to the holidays.

We live in interesting times!

Backyard Birds continued from page 7

B.I.R.D. staff on a merry chase through the rehabilitation center. I retrieved the young magpie and released it in my backyard where it lost no time in reuniting with its family. Wild B.I.R.D. would benefit from your support. Please send contributions to P. O. Box 37, Arvada, 80001-0037. Volunteers are needed, please contact Jerry Nelson at 303-870-0780.” Robin feels so strongly about the worth of rehabbing birds that she joined the Wild B.I.R.D. board.

I WELCOME your contributions to this column. Drop me a note or post card at PO Box 584, Franktown 80116, or Email me, ouzels@juno.com.

Hugh Kingery has written Backyard Birds for the Warbler for 15 years. During that time he also directed the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas Project and edited the Atlas publication. He currently writes a column on Colorado birds that appears weekly in the Lifestyles section of the Sunday Denver Post.

backyard birds....

by Hugh Kingery



A NEW BIRD has come to town—and been reported from opposite sides of the city. Ed and Roxanne Marker, southeast of Aurora, attracted 12-15 Eurasian collared-doves to feed on corn and seed that the Markers put out. The doves seem to have settled in for the winter. The same week that I heard from Ed, Chris Sedlmayr called for help on an ID—and she too has these collared-doves. Her bird book doesn't show them, but she found a site on the internet that helped her to identify them. Over the last 5-10 years collared-doves have spread explosively. First reported in Colorado from Rocky Ford, these doves now have investigated almost every city on the Eastern Slope. Look closely at any doves you see, especially in winter; you could help to document the spread of this exotic species. We always wonder about the impacts of foreigners on native species; look at starlings, house sparrows, and rock doves that now live all over North America, and some of which (starlings for sure) have negative effects on hole-nesting birds. Of course, natives can also create wildlife problems—look at Canada geese, crows, and beaver.

MEANWHILE Tamie Bulow says, "All winter (in Lakewood) I have had 25-30 mourning doves at my feeder. Today beats all previous records: 61, mostly eating safflower and cracked corn. I toss on the ground. In all those doves, not one White-winged or collared-dove. . . yet!" But Buzz Schaumberg did have a relative visit his Aurora yard—last summer during the Hayman fire a band-tailed pigeon stayed for six days. So did a gray jay—probably the most remarkable bird reported in this column.

SOME PEOPLE complained about fewer birds this month. Our urban Denver Christmas bird count (held New Year's day) agreed: land birds about 80% of the 14-year average (10,587 compared with 13,295) although about the same number as last year. We found 933 house finches – only half the average number. Magpies and house sparrows also dropped, though not so drastically. On the other hand, we counted 1,571 crows, over twice the average; if you exclude crows, land birds dropped to 70% of average.

OTHER DATA from the count: fleeing their scrub-oak groves for the cities and towns of the plains, we found nine western scrub-jays – seen on only four previous counts, and then only 1-2. The Denver (southwest) Christmas count had whopping 219 scrub-jays, a huge increase over the previous high. Plains counts from Rocky Ford to Greeley and high mountain counts in Gunnison and Rocky Mountain National Park recorded scrub-jays as well. Douglas County's 354 topped the Colorado counts.

THE URBAN count also had 11 sharp-shinned hawks—our backyards must provide them with a good food source. Polly Reetz in Congress Park saw her first sharp-shin on Nov. 18 and she also saw it on the day of the urban count; five other feeder counters observed them that day. Polly described the first day the hawk showed up. "I noticed a tremendous commotion among the sparrows at the feeder and birdbath, also noticed that they were ALL in the bushes, not at the feeder. The sharpie (a female judging by size) had just made an unsuccessful strike. She hunted along the privet hedge for 5 minutes or so, trying to scare the small birds out of the bushes, but they sat tight. The chickadees were hopping around in the bushes, scolding like crazy, while the sparrows and house finches chirped loudly. This is why I put out birdseed."

SUZANNE Snider, near Regis in Aurora, had a visit from "either an 'urban' Cooper's hawk or sharp-shinned hawk. It took its snack of one of the bird bath guests up into my pine tree and let me watch it tear it to shreds and consume it before flying away."

ELAINE Hanak-Hall, in Aurora, reported an Oct. 24 surprise. "It was a very cold night. Tom saw something flying and looked up to see a large owl perched on the neighbor's roof. He was huge, 1 ½ to 2 feet. He also had ears. We looked in the bird guide, and the only thing it could be because of the ears and size was a great horned owl. We think he was on our roof waiting for a mouse to come eat the birdseed that has fallen on the ground."

LUDVIK and Katherine Svoboda on Dec. 29 saw two birds, new to them, drinking from their heated birdbath. The two arrived with "a gaggle of robins that had been around the house for almost a week. They were gorging themselves on juniper berries." After running down field marks – slim birds, the "heads with a short feather 'stub' sticking back, black masks with a tiny bit of white, greenish-yellowish gray breasts and bodies but wings darker with a little 'mottling' towards their ends, last ¼ inch of tail yellow" the Svobodas figured out they had two cedar waxwings. Joy Schieving also spotted one in southeast Denver on Dec. 22, but we didn't find any on the Christmas count.

JOY has a selection of mountain birds—besides scrub-jays she noted a daily mountain chickadee and red-breasted nuthatch. Ann Lamb lives in Elizabeth, and she also had wandering mountain birds (as well as daily scrub-jays): "On Oct. 26 a flock of pinyon jays arrived in the yard. I know they roam around Douglas County but I never expected to see them here." Karen Metz and I went to see them and saw a flock of 45! "I've seen Steller's, scrub, pinyon, and blue jays all in the backyard at the same time. Just when I thought I'd seen it all, on Nov. 14 there were 3 Clark's nutcrackers and a few Steller's jays feeding together under a huge pine."

NAN Brehmer sent some Green Mountain musings: "Wonder what flickers are eating on the barest earth. In summer I assumed they were picking off ants—no ants now. . . Is it flirtation or sibling playfulness in December? A female house sparrow sat unmoving in a mountain mahogany bush. All at the same time four males flew in small circles (about a 9-inch radius) around the female. . . The tiny chickadee with its skinny bill prefers the large sunflower seeds while the mini-gross-beaked finches, juncos, sparrows prefer the smaller."

ED AND JUDY Butterfield reported a hairy woodpecker at their suet on Nov. 23-24, and they have seen a bald eagle along Parker Road (17-mile house) at the Douglas/Arapahoe county line Dec. 16-28. We see bald eagles regularly at the local reservoirs (Chatfield, Barr, Cherry Creek) and the two Denver Christmas counts found 11 and 28 (urban; the roost at Rocky Mountain Arsenal wildlife refuge doesn't have many this year—only 15 on Jan. 1). Colorado's high count came from John Martin Reservoir—84!

ROBIN Post sent this note. "In July on the ground in my backyard, I found a fledgling magpie, injured and dazed. I brought it to Debbie Strimple of Wild B.I.R.D. for rehabilitation. Debbie examined the magpie and told me that she feared the bird would not survive because it had suffered internal bleeding. I visited the bird once (it still looked shell-shocked) and then left on a weekend trip. On Tuesday Debbie called, telling me in no uncertain terms 'to come and get my bird!' The magpie was not only fully rehabilitated but had escaped from its cage and led the Wild

Hugh Kingery's Backyard Birds column is continued on page 6

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