



THE Warbler

March/April 2007

ISBN: 1531-2283 Volume 41, No.2

NEWSLETTER OF THE AUDUBON SOCIETY OF GREATER DENVER

Spring Benefit Auction & Awards Ceremony Saturday, April 14th at Riverfront Event Center in Littleton

by Lynne Forrester, Event Chair

ASGD's 2007 Spring Benefit and Auction will be a little different this year – with a new location and new activities! You could win some great prizes and add to your collection of stuffed Audubon singing birds. You can also mingle with old friends and meet new ones. You can even build an ASGD school bus and classroom that will take our environmental education programs into the future. This year we will be having a featured selection. You will be able to bid on as well as buy a sumptuous selection of specialty and homemade delights. So come prepared to splurge on your favorites and support a really great organization.

For directions and to register,



The Riverfront Event Center, 2582 W. Bowles Ave., Littleton

please see the colored insert within this Warbler or signup online at www.denveraudubon.org. For additional information please call 303-973-9530.

We need your creativity and your help! We are actively looking for all types of unique auction items. If you

have something special that you can donate yourself, such as a personal service (how about a few hours of weeding) or a handcrafted item, these are always very popular and often generate fierce bidding wars. We also need your help in soliciting and retrieving donations from local merchants. Large items such as mountain bikes, binoculars, airline tickets, cameras, and vacation homes are especially needed. To volunteer (help in the days before in getting items and materials ready, set-up on the day of the event, or assistance during the event), please call Lynne Forrester at 303-904-3664 or email forrester@denveraudubon.org

Auction Special Feature *Specialty & Homemade Food & Services Donations needed*

We need donations for our special feature of specialty foods and services. Do you have a favorite recipe you'd like to share (maybe an old family recipe)? You could make your famous apple pie or offer to make someone their custom flavor of cheesecake. Do you know of a merchant with great food items or services? Why not ask them to donate a selection of items or a gift certificate for a class? We will have room for some of their brochures, and can even make arrangements for someone to pick up items. Please call Rhonda at 303-973-9530 (days) or Lynne at 303-904-3664 (evenings).

Environmental Stewardship Awards 2007

The Board of Directors of the Audubon Society of Greater Denver will honor two individuals for their tireless commitment to conservation and exemplification of Denver Audubon's mission of protecting the South Platte watershed through education, advocacy and research.

- George Larsen, Project Manager, Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company
- Polly Reetz, Conservation Committee Chair and Board Member, Audubon Society of Greater Denver

George and Polly will receive their awards during our program on April 14. More information about their accomplishments will be published in the next *Warbler*.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE-

OUR STRENGTH, OUR VOLUNTEERS

In 2006, your Audubon Society of Greater Denver reached more than 9,000 people and provided more than 135,000 hours of meaningful connections to our environment. We served almost 2,000 students with programs at the Audubon Center at Chatfield, and another 1,400 through outreach programs presented in schools.

Wait a minute...how can all this be possible when for most of the year we had one full-time employee, one office manager, and one part-time bookkeeper? The answer is, of course, our strength, our volunteers who make everything possible.

Some volunteers come regularly, like the crew helping mail this newsletter or the craftsmen building bluebird boxes. Others volunteer for special projects such as bird seed sales pickup or BioBlitz. Still others take training and then volunteer to be Board members or crew leaders for trail work or naturalist guides for school groups. Volunteers for the Lois Webster Fund not only do fundraising but also process grant applications for research projects. Some volunteers, unable to give time, help by giving donations because they believe in the Audubon mission.

Volunteers make it all work, whether it is weeding the gardens, giving out name tags at meetings, representing Audubon in the community, or leading birding trips. Groups of people from Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado, Colorado Mountain Club and other organizations come for work days and take on large projects. Some volunteers lend special expertise, such as the mentors working with the Audubon Master Birders class or the attorneys helping with legal questions.

Volunteers working "behind the scenes" provide a variety of capabilities from working to insure inclusivity and diversity in our organization to cleaning the nature center before important events. We even have volunteers working on study skins, valuable educational aids made from dead birds.

Every volunteer is important. When we apply for grants, foundations want to know how many volunteers are involved because they recognize that successful non-profit organizations need broad support. Our volunteers are our strength and they proudly support Audubon. Their satisfaction comes from doing. Often, their only reward is the knowledge of a job well-done.

This April, we will be honoring two volunteers at our annual dinner and auction. Polly Reetz is a long time member/volunteer who serves as chairperson of the Conservation Committee and secretary of the Board. George Larsen of Lockheed Martin is a real friend of Audubon. These two will be representing all volunteers. They are our strength. Volunteers make us proud.



Doris Cruze

Thanks To Our Volunteers!

JANUARY/FEBRUARY WARBLER MAILING: Jo Ann Bushnell, Marc Goodbody, Vi Nicholson, Frank Shissler

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MISSION

ASGD is a nonprofit group 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

FRIENDS OF ASGD receive the Warbler and additional membership benefits. Members of the National Audubon Society in the Denver Metro Area receive complimentary copies of the *The Warbler*.

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

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Dale & Karen Flowers (HP LaserJet 5000N), Wild Birds Unlimited (Birding software for Master Birder class), Mary Ellen Peckham (Collection of bird books from around the world), Jerry & Arlene Raskin (Paper cutter)

**Please Join Us for
A Symposium of the
Lois Webster Fund,
Supporting Colorado Non-game Research and Education**

Presentations on the findings of our 2006 projects

- Bats in Mesa Verde National Park
 - Aurora's Big Day
 - Pika Populations Study
- Burrowing Owls on the Pawnee National Grasslands
 - Bat Species in Boulder County

Wednesday, May 2, 2007

**6:30 p.m. Wine and Cheese Reception
7:00 p.m. Program**

Audubon Center at Chatfield

**From C-470 and Wadsworth, travel south 4.4 miles
(past the entrance for Chatfield State Park)
Turn Left on Waterton Road. Turn Left into the
first parking lot at the Audubon Center sign.**

Please join friends of the Lois Webster Fund of the Audubon Society of Greater Denver to hear presentations from the project managers of our 2006 funded projects about their research and findings. With five diverse projects located throughout the state, it is bound to be a fascinating program!



Eagle Eye

Watching Public Policy for the Environment
by Polly Reetz

Alternative energy bills abound in the 2007 Colorado legislature! Lawmakers have introduced measures to encourage development of renewable energy on State school lands, to require buildings to be more energy-efficient, and to encourage efficiency for natural gas providers. Other bills will establish grants to schools for participation in wind energy programs and create a task force to map areas of the State suitable for renewable energy generation. Our state seems to be teetering on the verge of a sea change in the way we generate and use energy.

One thing we haven't seen yet is a systematic rating of the costs and benefits of different sources of alternative energy in Colorado. Take wind energy, for example. Environmentalists support it because it doesn't pump carbon into the atmosphere and contribute to global climate change. But no technology other than conservation is impact-free, and Audubon is concerned about the siting of wind energy production facilities.

Several species of grouse call Colorado's prairies and sagebrush steppe home: Lesser and Greater Prairie Chicken, Greater Sage Grouse, Gunnison Sage Grouse, and Sharp-tailed Grouse. All of these birds share an aversion to vertical structure—which makes sense, since many species of raptors, grouse gourmets all, will use them for hunting perches. These grouse species also have an interesting and unique mating system, wherein the males gather each spring on specific sites known as "leks" or "booming grounds" to perform their mating displays. The activity attracts females to the leks to choose a copulation partner, and they subsequently nest in the vicinity. Placing wind turbines on or too close to known leks—US Fish and Wildlife Service guidelines recommend a 5-mile buffer—means major disturbance during construction and avoidance by the females later. Although males show extreme fidelity to their lek, loss of the females will make it reproductively inactive and lead to declines in local populations.

Location of turbines on major bird migration pathways can result in thousands of bird deaths, as at Altamont Pass, California, some years ago. Placing turbines in or near key habitat features can also result in bird—and bat—mortality and habitat destruction. Insufficient surveys before construction may fail to document bird use of the proposed sites, and new transmission lines may cause bird electrocutions.

In Weld County, Greenlight Energy is building a network of up to 300 turbines along the Chalk Bluffs, a uniquely vegetated escarpment that provides nesting, foraging and cover habitat for Golden Eagles, Ferruginous Hawks, Prairie Falcons, Red-tailed Hawks and other birds. Nearly 60 raptor nests have been counted along the cliffs. The company

collected only one year of survey data, instead of the industry standard of two (or five in Europe). To protect the birds and the rare vegetative communities there, the Colorado Division of Wildlife recommended the turbines be moved away from the edge of the bluffs. In most cases the company is complying, but several trouble spots remain. Unfortunately, under Colorado law the Division's recommendations are not legally binding—all authority lies with the Weld County Commissioners, who approved the Greenlight project.

Such siting problems can be addressed by stipulating wind energy facilities (and any energy facilities) be located at adequate distances from leks, away from key nesting, feeding and roosting areas, and outside of migration pathways. Timing stipulations can be used to ensure construction occurs outside the breeding season as much as possible.

A major renewable energy bill will be introduced in the legislature this year (probably by the time you read this) and Audubon will be working to ensure that these protections for wildlife, especially migrating and nesting birds and bats, are included. Making the State's stipulations legally binding instead of advisory will be among our priorities.

You can read the wording of specific bills, follow their legislative history, check on hearing schedules and find out who sponsored them on the website of the Colorado General Assembly at www.leg.co.state.us It makes for fascinating reading!

Spring Is In The Air... Here come the birds!



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AUDUBON SOCIETY of GREATER DENVER

Calendar of Events MARCH 2007

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
9am Walk the Wetlands 4	7pm Master Birder Class 5	6	7	8	9	8:30am Birdwalk at Morrison Nature Center 10
11	12	7pm ASGD Board Meeting 13	14	15	16	Audubon Colorado Board Meeting 17
9am Nesting Bald Eagles & Other Raptors 18	7pm Master Birder Class Lois Webster Fund App Deadline 19	20	21	22	Sandhill Cranes at Kearney, NE 23	10am Bluebird Open House Sandhill Cranes at Kearney, NE 24
Sandhill Cranes at Kearney, NE 25	26	7pm Courtship Intrica- cies of Colorado Birds Class 27	8:30am ASGD Executive Committee Meeting 28	7pm Beginning Bird Watching Class 29	30	8am Beginning Bird Watching Field Trip RM Arsenal 31

APRIL 2007

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
8am Walk the Wetlands 1	2	7pm Courtship Intrica- cies of Colorado Birds Class Passover 3	4	5	6	Beginning Bird Watching Field Trip RM Arsenal Tour 7
Easter 8	7pm Master Birder Class 9	7pm ASGD Board Meeting 10	11	12	13	Beg. Bird Watching FT Cherokee Ranch Tour Quincy Reservoir BW Auction & Awards 14
9am Master Birder Field Test 15	16	School Naturalist Training 17	18	School Naturalist Training 19	20	Beginning Bird Watching Field Trip 21
Earth Day 22	23	School Naturalist Training 24	2pm ASGD Executive Committee Meeting 25	26	27	Beginning Bird Watching Field Trip 28
29	School Naturalist Training Bird Banding Station Opens 30					

TRAVEL, FIELD TRIPS, CLASSES & PROGRAMS

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

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View Photos and Read Reviews from Trip Participants in Our Trip Scrapbook Online at www.denveraudubon.org/scrapbook.htm



– FIELD TRIPS & TRAVEL –

Walk the Wetlands

DATES: Sunday, March 4 9 a.m.
Sunday, April 1 8 a.m. (earlier for spring migration—no foolin')

LEADERS: Hugh & Urling Kingery (303-814-2723) & others

Pre-registration is NOT required.

FEE: None

MEETING PLACE: Audubon Center at Chatfield State.

Bird Walk in Aurora's Parks – Morrison Nature Center & Sand Creek Greenway

DATE: Saturday, March 10 8:30 a.m.-10:30 a.m.

LEADER: Mary Ann Bonnell (303-739-2428)

Pre-registration IS required, through Aurora Parks at the Morrison Center (303-739-2428). If no one answers, register by leaving your name, date of hike and your phone number.

FEE: None.

MEETING PLACE: From Chambers Road take Smith Road east to Laredo St. (look for Morrison Nature Center sign) turn south to them building with the green tile roof.

Nesting Bald Eagles & Other Raptors of the Northern Front Range

DATE: Sunday, March 18 9 a.m.

LEADERS: Harold & Betty Oliver (303-936-6902)

Pre-registration IS required. Call ASGD at 303-973-9530.

FEE: \$8/Friends members, \$10/non-members

MEETING PLACE: I-25 to exit 229(CO Hwy 7), look for new Lark Ridge Shopping Center. Go to Home Depot parking lot at the west end near the contractors' entrance. Bring your lunch.

Sandhill Cranes at Kearney, NE

DATE: Friday, March 23-Sunday, March 25

LEADERS: Hugh & Urling Kingery (303-814-2723) and Allison Hilf

Pre-registration IS required, transportation by comfortable motor coach.

FEE: \$499 (non-members, add \$30; single supplement, add \$100—this is the cash discount price; credit card price is \$514). Includes two nights lodging, two dinners, two breakfasts, three box lunches, and fees for bird blinds.

Courtship Intricacies of Colorado Birds Class

DATE: Tues., March 27 & TueS., April 3 7-9 p.m.
(Attending both sessions recommended; OK to attend one session or the other, though full fee required.)

LEADER: Tina Jones (303-794-2647)

Pre-registration IS required.

FEE: \$20/Friends members, \$25/non-member

MEETING PLACE: The Audubon Center at Chatfield.

Beginning Bird Watching Class

DATES: Thursday, March 29 7 p.m. Classroom Session, at Audubon Center at Chatfield.

Saturdays, Mar. 31, Apr. 7, 14, 21, 28 & May 5—field trips (Field trips go to bird-watching sites around Denver: Chatfield, Barr Lake and Castlewood Canyon state parks, Wheat Ridge greenbelt, and Genesee Mountain.)

LEADERS: Hugh and Urling Kingery (303-814-2723)

Pre-registration IS required. Call ASGD at 303-973-9530.

FEE: \$125/Friends members, \$150 non-member

Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge

DATE: Saturday, March 31 8 a.m.-1 p.m.

LEADER: David Rhodes (303-424-8633)

Pre-registration IS required; trip limited to nine participants. Call ASGD at 303-973-9530.

FEE: \$8/Friends members, \$10/non-members

MEETING PLACE: Enter via south gate to the Arsenal at 56th and Havana. Proceed north to the Visitor Center.

Bird Watching at Cherokee Ranch near Sedalia

DATE: Saturday, April 14 8:30 a.m.-noon

LEADER: Lynn Willcockson (303-757-7000)

Pre-registration IS required; deadline is Apr. 5. Call ASGD at 303-973-9530.

FEE: \$8/Friends members, \$10/non-members

MEETING PLACE: South on Santa Fe past C-470 to Sedalia. Turn right (west) onto CO Hwy 67 at the Sedalia light. Go about ¼-mile to the U.S. Post Office on the right side of the road.

TRAVEL, FIELD TRIPS, CLASSES & PROGRAMS

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– FIELD TRIPS & TRAVEL –

Bird Walk at Quincy Reservoir, Aurora Parks

DATE: Saturday, April 14 8:30-10:30 a.m.

LEADER: Mary Ann Bonnell (303-739-2428)

Pre-registration IS required, through Aurora Parks (303-739-2428). If no one answers, register by leaving your name, date of the hike and your phone number.

FEE: \$5/person entrance fee-pay at the self-serve station at the Quincy Reservoir parking lot.

MEETING PLACE: Drive east on Quincy from Parker Road. Continue east past Buckley, look on south side of Quincy for sign and entrance to parking for Quincy Reservoir.

Pawnee Grasslands Daytrip

DATES: Saturday, June 2 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

LEADERS: Bill Turner (303-795-5128) and Kevin Cook

Pre-registration IS required.

FEE: \$40/Friends members, \$45/non-members

MEETING PLACE: Crow Valley Campground near Briggsdale. (Overnight camping may be available for those wishing to drive out on Friday.) Car pools from Denver will be arranged if requested.

Pawnee Grasslands by Night

DATES: Saturday, June 16 3:30pm - 10:30pm

LEADERS: Bill Turner (303-795-5128) and Kevin Cook

Pre-registration IS required; trip is limited to 15 people.

FEE: \$40/Friends members, \$45/non-members

MEETING PLACE: Meet at Crow Valley Campground near Briggsdale at 3:30 p.m. Our spotlighting will end by 10:30 p.m. The Grasslands are about 100 miles from Denver; carpools will be facilitated.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The ASGD Board of Directors needs dedicated, enthusiastic volunteers to serve for three-year terms. If you are interested, or would like to nominate someone, please contact Doris Cruze at 303-798-8072 or cruzeduo@aol.com.

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Birding in the Czech Republic

May 7-16 – FOUR SPACES LEFT

Join us for a fabulous birding adventure to the Czech Republic, with a possible pre- or post-trip in Prague. Trip includes eight full days of birding and nine nights of accommodation, with food, lodging, professional birding guide, transportation, and sightseeing for \$1895/person double-occupancy (\$80 additional charge for single-occupancy). Our tour of the countryside will take us through North and South Moravia and South Bohemia. During our 2005 trip, we saw over 112 different species, including White and Black Storks, Imperial Eagle, Corncrake, Black Woodpecker, a variety of tits, warblers and more. In between birding destinations, we will visit historic sites and experience Czech culture and food. Our native Czech guide, Otto Zavalsky, is currently working on a birding project funded by the Denver Field Ornithologists to re-introduce Golden Eagles into the Czech Republic. This is your chance to meet this dedicated and fascinating birder and learn more about his Czech birding tours. (Costs for pre-trip and airfare Denver/Prague to be determined.) To register call ASGD (303-973-9530).

The Lost Paradise – Papua New Guinea

August 13-20

Papua New Guinea is one of those birding destinations that many have heard of, but few know anything about. Join ASGD on a journey of discovery to this distant land. The flora and fauna here is so alien to most that it will seem as if we have traveled back in time. Star attractions are the cassowary (one of the world's four large flightless birds) and the resilient birds of paradise. New Guinea is home to 38 of the world's 43 species of birds of paradise, renowned for their bizarre displays and mating rituals. The forests and lowlands contain many other spectacular species that will test our birding skills. The local culture is also of great interest to us. Many years ago, this was the land of cannibals and headhunters! Things are much different now, but many of the tribes still go about their lives in traditional ways. Our visit is timed to coincide with the biggest cultural event of the year—The Meeting of the Tribes. On one weekend in August each year, members from various tribes and clans from all over the New Guinea gather in Mount

Lost Paradise continues next page

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– INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL –

Lost Paradise continued from previous page

Hagen. This tradition has gone on for centuries. Each group, dressed in their particular tribal attire, engage in dancing and mock combat. In ancient times, tribes would settle disputes in this same manner instead of going to war. Today, the competition is intended to show pride in one's heritage and to honor ancestors. The competitions and "battles" are taken very seriously. The groups prepare and practice year-round as it is a great honor to attend their "Olympics" and represent their people. It is difficult to describe the magnitude as no event in the U.S. truly prepares one for this amazing and memorable spectacle. This trip could also be an excellent pre-Tahiti cruise excursion (see next international trip).

Cost per person (based on double-occupancy) is \$2,840. Add \$300 for single supplement. Trip price includes in-country air, meals, birding guide, show entrance fee and transfers. Roundtrip air from Denver into Port Moresby is approximately \$1,200 per person. Contact Becky Beckers, Travel For The Birds, for a complete itinerary. Her email is AgentBecky@aol.com

Tahiti and the Society Islands on the Gauguin

**Small Ship Intimacy, Big Ship Amenities
August 22 - September 1**

Is there any group of islands in the world as beautiful or whose history is as eventful as the Society Islands? Probably not. These tropical splendors inspired a mutiny on the infamous Bounty. They captured the imagination of Paul Gauguin. They've been immortalized by some of the world's great writers, from Herman Melville, Robert Louis Stevenson and James Michener to Somerset Maugham. These sirens of the South Pacific evoke balmy days, sultry nights and panoramas that could only have been created by Nature in her finest hour. Here giant curls of turquoise break onto reefs that protect blue lagoons and white beaches. Jagged peaks crown emerald rain forests, while some islands appear barely to float above the breaking waves.

The Paul Gauguin was designed specifically for sailing French Polynesia year-round. Thanks to her shallow draft and intimate size (only 160 cabins), she can navigate through the narrow passes of the barrier reefs and around sandbars in the silken lagoons of Bora Bora, Moorea, Raiatea and Tahaa. Here you are immersed in a timeless world of islands and sea, one that quite literally allows you to step off onto a kayak to explore an inviting lagoon. A retractable water sports marina allows guests to kayak, windsurf, snorkel or water-ski right

off the ship (all offered on a complimentary basis), or to set off on optional SCUBA dive expeditions supervised by Professional Association of Diving Instructors guides. Regent Seven Seas Cruises' informal six-star service offers comfort and luxury with spacious ocean-view staterooms (half with private balconies), a choice of three single-seating dining venues, and an extensive spa. Every cabin is supplied with a basket of fresh fruit, a refrigerator, an in-suite bar supplied with complimentary liquors, and a vase of fresh tropical flowers. Every night, a small gift is placed on your pillow—a Polynesian bedtime story relating one of the romantic legends of the islands—along with a fragrant tiare (white gardenia) blossom to scent the air for pleasant dreams. Touches of French Polynesia are everywhere, from the troupe of Les Gauguines—part cruise staff, part entertainers, part storytellers—to the local children who come aboard to sing to the guests.

What's included? All shipboard gratuities, meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner, late-night snacks and 24-hour room service), select fine wines, both alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, comprehensive guest lecturer programs and island birding excursions. For complete prices and cruise itinerary, go to www.travelforthebirds.com or call Becky Beckers, Travel for the Birds, 303-766-5266. You can also send an email request to AgentBecky@aol.com for additional info.

Master Birder Seeks Assistance

Tina Jones, of the ASGD Master Birder Committee writes: I am looking for a travel partner to assist me with some physical challenges. Possible destinations are Dutch Harbor (Aleutians), Nome, and Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, and Canada's High Arctic—places such as Baffin and Ellesmere Islands, in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, Newfoundland and Labrador. Either male or female is acceptable. A sense of humor and adventure is imperative. Please call me to discuss specifics—303-794-2647.

Welcome to Our New Friends Members

Dave & Nan Anderson, Kathy Barnum, Nadine & Bob Dean, Joyce Herrick, Tom Johnson, Carolyn Jones, James Kapinos, Angela Koehler, Kenneth Kulas, Holly Leyendecker, Lyric Mastenbrook, Mark Miller, Susan Reid, Gayle Salazar, Alice Sharp, Wendy & Kevin Terrien, Bill Turner, Jean Widman, Janette Wesley

backyard birds....



FEEDER OBSERVERS on the Denver Urban Christmas Bird Count reported 901 birds of 28 species. House Sparrows (233) and House Finches (207) outnumbered all the rest. Next came 63 starlings, 44 rock pigeons, 38 flickers, and 37 Black-capped Chickadees. Cat Anderson and Candy Gray saw the count's only Eastern Screech-owl, and they and Mary Washburne saw four Spotted Towhees, not a usual urban winter bird.

SEVERAL "HALF-HARDY" BIRDS—species occasionally but not often seen in winter—reports came in. This tough winter has produced some surprising members in that group. Two Say's Phoebes, first spotted by Tina Jones and Karl Stecher, have hung around Marston Lake all winter. Jean Widman saw one during a January snow on Lookout Mountain "as I sat in my car listening to the end of a favorite classical piece before going down the snow tunnel to the house." In Centennial, Kevin Corwin says a Ruby-crowned Kinglet stopped by during one of the December storms and another visited Barb Masoner's suet feeders Jan. 13-14.

SUSAN ROBBINS saw 50 robins "waiting turns to drink from my heated birdbath." Urban feeders reported 15; the count as a whole had 158. They form winter flocks that cruise around looking for edible fruits, often to the dismay of a Townsend's Solitaire that has staked out a winter supply only to see it gobbled up by roaming robins. Anne Southcott, of southwest Denver, put out bird seed on Dec. 29 and almost instantly drew in American Goldfinches and a Mourning Dove. CBC feeders counted 11 doves, part of the count's total of 27.

RAPTORS ABOUNDED—and backyarders watched them reap the bounty our feeders present. Jill Holden reported the smallest one on New Year's Day—"a Northern Shrike holding a bird. Our feeders were cleared out except for one lone junco. The shrike stashed the bird in a fork of the tree. It would watch me watching it, and then go back to plucking the feathers off its catch." Jean sent pictures of the next-smallest predator—she captioned it "Whoooo's in my ponderosa." She saw a Northern Saw-whet Owl Oct. 15 when filling her feeders. (But saw-whets don't say 'whoo"—they have a repetitive clear whistle. Usually by now we hear them in Franktown, but none yet this snowy year.)

BARB MASONER ID'd a Merlin along the South Platte near Pasquinelle Park. In Elizabeth, Lucy Hoffhines was "excited to see a Merlin on a pine bough right outside our window. He or she obliged us by staying on the branch for several minutes while pulling something apart and devouring it. Probably a small bird because the branch was right above our feeders."

FROM CONGRESS PARK, Polly Reetz reports, "It finally happened! After years of feeding birds in our back yard we finally witnessed a catch! A young Sharp-shinned Hawk caught a House Sparrow right in our back yard. Feathers flew everywhere. This was during the afternoon of Dec. 21, when

the snow had tapered off and tons of sparrows were visiting our feeder. The sharpshin, with the sparrow in its talons, first sat on top of the drifted snow—about three feet deep—to pluck the bird, then flew to a perch on top of a lattice for roses. Later we went out to view the remains—lots of feathers on top of the snow. It made a day devoted mostly to shoveling snow much more exciting." Kevin sees a sharp-shin regularly, and says "an adult Cooper's Hawk nailed a flicker in our front yard. The day of the big December storm a juvenile Cooper's spent the entire day patrolling our yard. It caught a couple of sparrows, tail-chased a finch but didn't catch it, and generally terrorized the regular yard birds all day long." Urban backyarders saw three sharp-shins, and Kirk Huffstater has a Cooper's that visits his Castle Rock yard.

ANNE SOUTHCOTT called Nov. 28 (the day after the last *Warbler* deadline) from Governors Ranch to marvel at the first Cooper's Hawk she's seen in her yard, a juvenile that she watched eating some unknown, gray furry critter. She noticed the bird from seeing the up-and-down motion of the head. We looked at references and decided that probably the hawk had caught a cottontail—they have 3-8 litters per year so that the hawk could find one of manageable size.

IN AURORA JAN. 20, Penni Sorger spotted a "Great Horned Owl in our large pine tree. There was such a commotion from the jays and crows that I knew something was there. He spent the day in the tree, but he is not here today." Mike Zapparo says that for a week in December "Sonia and I were serenaded at night by a Great Horned Owl. One day I went out to get a look at him, and saw him perched atop our chimney. Someone in my neighborhood told me that the owl nested somewhere around the 15-acre open space that borders me on two sides. It goes to show how important open space is!" During January, our neighbors Bob and Betsy Panky heard a pair of owls calling to each other. Also, a mystery bird spent January in their horse barn. After I misidentified it as an exotic dove, Bob correctly fingered it as a bobwhite. (A neighbor bought a bunch to train his dogs but they escaped and apparently at least one has survived for nine months.)

THE BUSHTIT SAGA continues. Susan Robbins saw a small flock in junipers at Robinson Park on Jan. 12. Joy Schieving saw her south Denver troop (25-30 of them) on Nov. 17, Fran Shepperdson saw two in Kiowa, and Veronica Holt counted 17 on a suet cake in her Elizabeth yard. "I had to rub my eyes as it appeared that the surface of the cake was moving." Dale Brinker sees 10-12 daily in Parker. He had calls from two Parker people with Bushtit nests; he inspected both and one had housed Bushtits but the other turned out to be an oriole nest. "In clematis vine tangle, used last summer, it is 11" long, 4" wide at the base, and 3" wide at the top. There is also a flag-like structure at the top which could protect the opening." He—and I—"would like to know if others are seeing the nests, a sac 8-10 inches long, usually not too high, made of lichens feathers, and grass."

KIMBERLY MOORE on Jan. 11 in Brighton saw "a small flock of finch-like birds, 20 or so, in a tree getting seeds. They seemed too small for House Finches and some of them had rosy accents

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BLUEBIRD NEWS

Colorado Bluebird Project Open House March 24

The Bluebirds are returning for another season and so are we! Come join us for the Colorado Bluebird Project's third annual Bluebird Open House on Saturday, March 24th, from 10 a.m. to noon at the Audubon Center at Chatfield (directions below).

We'll have presentations and workshops on:

- The Project, our goals and progress over the past year
- The natural history of bluebirds
- Building and mounting nest boxes (and we'll have boxes for sale, both pre-built and in kit form)
- Why it's so important to provide nesting habitat
- How to monitor boxes during the nesting season
- Safeguarding your nest boxes from parasites and predators
- Keeping good field notes and reporting your results
- Updates on Cornell's new database and the North American Bluebird Society's plans for their 2007 convention in Georgia.

We'll also be showing a 15-minute video that illustrates what really happens inside a nest box during the nesting season. Even some of our more seasoned nest box monitors were surprised by what they saw!

The party is free and open to the public. We ask that you RSVP to 303-973-9530, so we'll know how many snacks to bring.

Driving directions to the Audubon Center at Chatfield: From C-470 & Wadsworth Blvd, drive south on Wadsworth about 4.4 miles and turn left onto Waterton Road. The entrance

Backyard Birds continued from page 9

on their heads and breasts." She, and I, think she had a rare flock of Common Redpolls.

THE EXOTICS: Kirk Huffstater and Tom Halvorson report "a group of five Eurasian Collared-Doves that appear to be permanent, year-round residents in the small hamlet of Louviers (on U.S. 85 south of Highlands Ranch). They sound quite different from the average mourning dove, and are therefore quite easily ID'd by ear." The Pied Crow showed up for the Urban Christmas count, and Angie Koehler, who first reported it from Wash Park, emailed on Jan. 18 that she is "elated to see her! I put out a meatball and cooked up a hotdog for her, also gave her more peanuts. She has been hanging around with other crows in the area."

AND THE NOT-SO-EXOTIC. I lost the name, but a new Audubon member who lives in Watkins commented on geese: on Dec. 15 he/she saw "endless skeins of geese flying northbound smack over DIA. I think approximately 100 feet of skein equals 50 geese; I'd say the group was probably made up of 2,000 birds, possibly more." An hour later, "I entered Windsor just as a group of geese started flying overhead." Maybe they were the same birds, but I doubt it. The whole

to the Audubon Center is about 100 yards on the left, look for the big stone sign "Audubon Society of Greater Denver".

Box Builders Needed

The Colorado Bluebird Project has started building nest boxes at the new Audubon Center at Chatfield and we need your help to make it a success. If you want to help build nest boxes for our little blue friends please contact us at our email address: bluebirdproject@denveraudubon.org. No prior experience is needed. We will have two types of work sessions: one will focus on cutting the boards and drilling the entrance and ventilation holes; the other will focus on assembling the boxes.

We set our schedule to accommodate the most volunteers possible, so when you send your email to us please let us know the following:

- Do you prefer daytime or after-dinner sessions?
- Do you prefer weekend sessions, or during the week?
- Do you prefer a specific day of the week?
- Do you prefer one type of work session over the other (cutting vs assembly)?
- How many sessions per month do you think you'd like to attend? Sessions will probably run from 1 to 3 hours, and you're obviously not required to stay the whole time.

Don't hesitate to ask questions via the email address listed above if you need more information! Thanks!

—Kevin Corwin, Chair, Colorado Bluebird Project

Front Range has an astonishing population of these former symbols of wild America. The Urban count tallied 9,989 of them.

DEC. 9 GENE ELLIS drove to the Fawn Brook Inn in Allenspark to see rosy-finches. "Arriving at 9:15 am, I didn't see any rosy-finches, but I did see several other bird species eating breakfast at the feeders, including Dark-eyed Juncos, Mountain Chickadees, Black-capped Chickadees, House Finches, and a Steller's Jay. Two red squirrels were also eating from the feeders. Unbeknownst to one red squirrel, its leisurely breakfast was about to take a decidedly unpleasant turn. While it was munching on sunflower seeds, a bobcat suddenly launched, itself from the adjacent shrubbery, cleaned the squirrel neatly off the platform feeder, and then trotted into the nearby woods carrying the squirrel in its mouth, with the squirrel's fluffy red tail swinging in the breeze. The bobcat settled down amidst some aspen trees about 100 feet away from the inn and proceeded to indulge in a leisurely breakfast of its own."

I WELCOME YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS to this column. Drop me a note or post card at P.O. Box 584, Franktown 80116, or email me, ouzels@juno.com.

Inspire the Next Generation of Conservationists— Volunteer as a School Naturalist

"If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in."
—Rachel Carson

Every year, over 1,000 young children visit the Audubon Center as part of a school field trip. For most, this is an elevating opportunity to connect with nature. Direct experiences in nature are an endangered species compared to just a generation ago. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, the average American child now spends more than 44 hours per week consuming media (i.e. TV, Internet, computer software, radio, video games, etc.) outside of school. This leaves precious little time to explore and discover the wonders of nature.

To help facilitate the Audubon Center experiences, we rely on volunteer naturalists to lead small groups of students through guided field studies, hikes and activities. If you love nature and children, it is a rewarding and gratifying experience. Imagine watching the faces of a second graders light up when a live songbird is pulled out of a net to be measured and weighed



Volunteer school naturalists help facilitate the Audubon Center experience. Sign up TODAY!

at the banding station. Or imagine listening to squeals of excitement as fourth graders catch a crayfish and tadpoles as they learn first-hand what lives in a pond ecosystem.

The demand for Audubon Center programs is growing each spring and we need your help to fulfill all of the requests. The majority of our programs occur from late April through early June on weekdays. Volunteer naturalist training is planned for April 17, 19, 24 and 26 from 9a.m. to 3 p.m. An additional training session at the banding station is scheduled for April 30 from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. You will learn how to lead our most popular field trips:

- Migration Madness—an exploration of how birds survive seasonal change with a visit to the bird banding station.
- Pond Study—a hands-on investigation of the animals and plants that make up a pond ecosystem.
- Mini-Beast Safari—a search for the most abundant and diverse

group of creatures on Earth. We will discover invertebrates in the water and on land.

To volunteer, contact Susan at 303-973-9530 or ssmith@denveraudubon.org.

Judy Ward Remembered

Long-time Denver Field Ornithologists and Denver Audubon Society member Judy Ward died in December in Sheridan, Wyoming. Judy edited the DFO newsletter for several years and led many field trips. We remember, on a Christmas count, seeing Judy, son Doug, and a friend jumping up and down in the middle of Titan Road (gravel in those days) because they'd just found a flock of birds that included Lapland Longspurs and Snow Buntings.

She ran breeding bird survey routes while living near Craig, Colorado. There she plunged enthusiastically into the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas: she served on the steering committee and as a regional coordinator. She surveyed 15 Atlas blocks around Craig. She was especially proud of one triumph: Bald Eagles she found nesting at the Craig Golf Course, one of the first modern Western Slope breeding records. She liked to discover new habitats in the rugged country south of Craig; the serviceberry/

shrub habitat captured her interest.

As vice president of Denver Audubon Society and as a board member of the Colorado Open Space Council (now Colorado Environmental Coalition), she advocated pragmatic conservation of nature. Of all of her contributions, however, she gained the most satisfaction in taking kids to the field to show them the wonders of nature through the study of birds. This love of nature, and desire to conserve it, are manifested in her children, grandchildren, and the countless others she touched.

Her husband, John, survives her and lives in Sheridan, Wyoming (1096 Park Street, 82801). Son Doug and his wife, Karen live in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, and daughter Marcy lives in Colby, Kansas.

—Doug Ward & Hugh Kingery



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