

# Spring Benefit Auction & Awards Ceremony

## Saturday, April 8 at Phipps Mansion & Tennis Pavilion

by Lynne Forrester, Chairperson



*The Tennis Pavilion at the Phipps Mansion, site of the 2006 ASGD Spring Benefit and Auction.*

ASGD's annual 2006 Spring Benefit and Auction has a new night at a new venue. The date is Saturday April 8th, at the Phipps Mansion and Tennis Pavilion. The Tennis Pavilion, where the Benefit will be held, has a 55 foot high glass ceiling, huge ficus trees growing inside, and elegant architecture throughout.

This will be an exciting event this year with several special items available for auction, an excellent buffet, and special entertainment.

We also need lots of volunteers to help before and during the benefit. If you would like to help in any way or have any questions please call Lynne Forrester, at 303-904-3664. You can also send an email at lforrester@denveraudubon.org.

### Why you should attend the Spring Benefit Auction?

- **FRIENDS** – Mingle with old friends, meet new friends, become a **FRIEND OF ASGD**;
- Binocular bidding wars (friendly of course);
- Donate your services, unique items, and tasty treats;
- Support a really great organization;
- Marvel at the giant ficus trees growing inside the Phipps Tennis Pavilion;
- Congratulate the award winners – Bob Rozinski, Wendy Shattil and Lynne Forrester;
- Raise lots of money so we can continue to offer our education, conservation, and research programs;
- Enjoy a glass of wine and great conversation;
- Invite your friends, introduce someone new to ASGD;
- Locate your next vacation destination (it could be a safari to Africa!);
- Add to your collection of stuffed Audubon singing birds!

### *We need volunteers to make the event a success.*

#### **Just think, you can:**

- See the auction items before anyone else and plan your bidding strategy early!
- Satisfy your artistic side while you prepare baskets of items for display.
- Marvel at all the things that need to be done (and actually get done) before, during and afterwards.
- Enjoy a free lunch.
- Help make the auction the most successful yet!

# Lois Webster Fund Grants Announced

## (No Bias for Birds!)

by Polly Reetz

A study of basic pika ecology in four areas of Colorado, a "Big Day" bird count in Aurora's Open Space parks to create checklist of Aurora birds, an examination of burrowing owl population dynamics on the Pawnee

National Grasslands, and two studies of bat populations in Boulder County and Mesa Verde, respectively, won grants from ASGD's Lois Webster Fund this year. Fifteen proposals came in between November 20, 2005 and January 20, 2006, asking for approximately \$57,000 in all. While there was not enough money to

fund every one, the LWF advisory board was pleased by the quality and quantity of the requests. "Word (of the LWF grant program) is starting to get out," said Karen Hollweg, a long-time member of the board.

The Boulder County study,

*Continued on page 11*

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE—**

### The Squirrel Proof Feeder and Other Urban Myths

We have all heard them, those urban myths repeated by people who believe the stories are true. For instance, "A squirrel proof bird feeder is now on the market." Squirrels love a challenge. They enjoy eating from any feeder, and those baffles and cages, well, they may slow the squirrels down, but those plucky rodents will find a way to feast on your bird seed. Ask anyone who feeds birds, and they will have a good squirrel story.

Fill in the blanks on this one. "Put out—(safflower, thistle, etc.) and the—(squirrels, grackles, starlings, etc.) won't eat it." Sounds like good advice, but those uninvited backyard visitors will eat just about anything. Most of us have eaten foods we don't especially like on the day before grocery day because that was what was available. (Who bought that can of hominy anyway?) Squirrels, birds, and other wildlife will eat what is available, too.

"The Audubon name is protected by copyright." Not true. John James Audubon was an artist who won international acclaim for his paintings of North American birds. In the late 1800's, some Massachusetts women, disgusted with the slaughter of birds for their feathers to be used for hats, formed a group to help protect birds. They named it "The Audubon Society" after the late, famous artist. Since then, the name "Audubon" has been used by many businesses and other organizations.

"The National Audubon Society controls all chapters and gives them financial support." This one is not completely true. At one time, local Audubon societies were closely aligned with the national organization. Today, the Audubon Society of Greater Denver is an independent non-profit organization, dedicated to protecting the South Platte watershed. Our financial support comes mainly from members, donors, grants, and our own fundraising efforts. Your generous support keeps your local organization operating and growing.

*Doris Cruze*

***Thank You!***

## **APPLAUSE FOR OUR VOLUNTEERS**

**JAN / FEB WARBLER EDITING** – Michael Lazare

**WINTER APPEAL MAILING** - Willa Brunkhorst, Lynne Forrester, Vi Nicholson, Arlene Raskin, Carolyn Roark, Sue Schulman, Ann Stark, Bill Turner and the ladies at The Gardens at Columbine: Carmen Ferris, Mary Hamlin, Quinten Parks, Jane Poor, Helen Standish, Rose Stohr.

**WINTER APPEAL FOLLOW-UP MAILING** - Lynne Forrester, Fred Griest, Terri Gurth, Courtney James, Phil Reynolds, Sue Schulman, Bill Turner.

**JAN/FEB WARBLER MAILING** - Benjamin Cooper, Marcus L. Goodbody, Charlotte Gottlieb, Harry Hubbard, Ruth Schoening, Barbara F. Shissler, Frank Shissler.

**OFFICE SUPPORT** - Lynne Forrester, Phil Reynolds, Carolyn Roark, Grace Weber.

**BIRD SKIN PREPARATION** - Jill Boice, Jeanette & Rebecca Duerksen.



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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).

Editor C. Dale Flowers  
Flowers & Associates, Inc.  
cdale@cdale.com

# Join a Flock or start your own!

by Susan Smith, ASGD Executive Director

In the last Warbler, we introduced the idea of starting community flocks or groups in different areas of the Denver-metro area. Since our organization serves six counties, we want to find ways to help members connect with each other near where they live.

Here's how it works: Any ASGD member can start a flock in their neighborhood—Lakewood, Centennial, Arvada, Castle Rock, central Denver, etc. (You can think of flocks as sub-chapters or discussion groups.) Just contact the office at 303-973-9530 to register your flock. We have been getting calls from many interested members but have a real need for people willing to be flock leaders! All it takes is willingness to coordinate the flock meetings or bird hikes and contact other interested members so that they know when to come. For instance, we have many folks in the Littleton and Centennial area interested in forming a flock but we need a leader to make it happen!

Each flock can decide what they would like to do – plan a monthly or quarterly bird hike together, host a local speaker,

start a nature book club, meet socially every other month and swap bird stories, etc. Each flock can post reports on their activities in the Warbler and the website. The sky is the limit!

Below are the flocks that are currently starting. If you want to join one, just contact the flock leader.

Lakewood Flock

Contact: Midge Ball

303-985-8912

midg664@comcast.net

Arvada Flock

Contact: Memory Lamfers

303-420-2060

SE Denver/

Windsor Gardens Area

Contact: Ginger Grano

303-344-8211

Castle Rock

Contact: Gail

303-995-3190

Douglas County—This area already has an email listserv for bird watchers in Douglas County. You can join online at: [http://denveraudubon.org/mailman/listinfo/douglbirds\\_denveraudubon.org](http://denveraudubon.org/mailman/listinfo/douglbirds_denveraudubon.org). Or contact Hugh Kingery at [ouzels@juno.com](mailto:ouzels@juno.com)

## Bluebird Workshop Saturday, April 1 10am - Noon

The Bluebirds are back and so are we! Come join us for the Colorado Bluebird Project's second annual Bluebird Party on Saturday, April 1st, from 10am to noon at the Audubon Center at Chatfield. We will meet in the newly renovated farmhouse (directions in last paragraph).

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 nestboxes (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 nestboxes from parasites and predators
- Keeping good field notes and reporting your results.

We will also be showing a 15-minute video that illustrates what really happens inside a nestbox during the nesting season. Even some of our more seasoned nestbox monitors

were surprised by what they saw!

The workshop 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.

The Colorado Bluebird Project operates under the auspices of the Audubon Society of Greater Denver. We are a volunteer-run project and we're always in need of more volunteer help, especially folks who are willing to install a nestbox trail and monitors for existing nestboxes. If this sounds like something you'd like to get involved in, don't hesitate to talk to us at the party, or send us an email anytime at [bluebirdproject@denveraudubon.org](mailto:bluebirdproject@denveraudubon.org).

Driving directions to the Audubon Center at Chatfield: From C470 & Wadsworth Blvd, drive south on Wadsworth about 4.4 miles and turn left onto Waterton Road. The entrance to the Audubon Center is about 100 yards on the left.

## Annual Lois Webster Fund (LWF) Program "Survey of Mountain Plovers in the San Luis Valley"

*Give by Terri-Hicks Anderson of the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory*

**WHEN:** Wednesday, May 3, 7:30 p.m.

**WHERE:** At the Monthly Meeting of the Denver Field Ornithologists, Denver Museum of Nature and Science; Room 301, 3rd Floor Classroom

*(Park on the North side of the Building and enter through the volunteer/security door on the north side of the building)*

Please join friends of the Lois Webster Fund of the Audubon Society of Greater Denver and the Denver Field Ornithologists to learn about the survey conducted by the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory in the San Luis Valley last spring. Working with ranchers, farmers and government agency representatives, Terri Hicks-Anderson and her team spent two months surveying key habitat for mountain plover. In the past, the LWF projects studying the Mountain Plover have focused on the grasslands in northeastern Colorado. Come and find out what new information on the mountain plover has been discovered in southeastern Colorado!



# Eagle Eye

Watching Public Policy for the Environment  
by Polly Reetz

**D**on't Ever Think Your Efforts Don't Matter. This week saw the hard work of several individuals and organizations – including Audubon and former ASGD Board member Scott Menough – pay off in getting a poorly-written bill modified by its sponsor. Sen. Deanna Hanna introduced a bill intended to discourage residents in urban areas from feeding certain wildlife species, like foxes, coyotes, skunks, squirrels and raccoons. Trouble was that the bill was written so broadly that someone setting out seed for songbirds could have been fined – if the spilled seed attracted squirrels, for example. Wildlife rehabilitators might be feeding some of these species as part of their work – and thus be in violation of this bill.

The bill allowed for feeding songbirds. A songbird was defined as “any small, arboreal bird that utters a melodious song or call or whose presence is commonly welcomed in residential areas.” Some people don't like flickers and might not consider them “welcome” or a songbird. Some people don't like the hawks that chase small birds at their feeder. Thus you might be fined for “luring” these birds into your yard. The bill also made it mandatory for people to remove nests or dens of the offending wildlife species from their property. Removing a male squirrel's nest can be hazardous to your health or pocketbook; removing a hawk or flicker nest is a violation of the US Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Fortunately the folks who met with Senator Hanna this week cogently outlined the problems with the bill and persuaded her to change it. Scott made a strong economic argument in favor of bird and squirrel feeding (some of his clients buy special squirrel feeders). Sen. Hanna decided to limit the bill's scope specifically to the feeding of coyotes, foxes, skunks and raccoons. It's a laudable goal, since putting out food for these species habituates them to humans and can create dangers for both humans and animals.

**Permanent Peregrine Regulations.** The Colorado Wildlife Commission is going ahead with permanent regulations for taking young peregrine falcons from the wild. ASGD and Audubon Colorado both pointed out at the January Commission meeting that for all raptors EXCEPT peregrines, a falconer must leave two “live young birds” in the nest. For peregrines, it's only one. Therefore we asked the Commission to give peregrines the same protection that all other raptors receive. (The reason for leaving two birds is to try to ensure that at least one survives the dangerous first months of a raptor's life. If the adult pair consistently fails to raise young for several years they will often abandon the nest site. Because peregrine nest sites [cliffs, vertical rock faces] are limited, this could be a problem for the population). One difference from last year is that, due to Audubon's work in the Legislature, a permit to take a peregrine now costs \$200.

Troubling stories about the take program in '05 have surfaced in the last few weeks. Two falconers chose to attempt to take a young peregrine from public lands aeries that had been closed by agency field staff – the US Forest Service in one case, Staunton State Park in the other. The two evidently didn't

check first to see whether the aeries were available and only discovered the closures after their permits had been issued. It seems clear that they then went over the heads of the field staff to get the agency to allow them access. Though they didn't get a peregrine, the supposedly impartial process was perverted by influence peddling, party politics, or both. The aerie in Staunton is the only peregrine aerie in the state park system. This is not how this is supposed to happen.

**Oil and Gas Mitigation.** The Legislature has started work on a bill by Kathleen Currey (D-Gunnison) to help landowners who don't own the minerals under their land (referred to as “split estate”). It encourages extraction companies to work out an agreement with landowners but, if that fails, they will be required to compensate the landowners for damage done to the land. This after-the-fact approach does little for damage prevention, but we'll hope the bill can be improved.

**Air Quality.** Rep. Ann McGihon (D-Denver) has introduced a bill that allows state air quality regulations to be more stringent than the federal ones. Colorado could set its own standards and regulate substances that the federal government doesn't. This sounds very promising. Stay tuned.

**Habitat Stamp.** A lot of people who have tried to buy the new wildlife habitat stamp had a hard time purchasing the stamp alone, due to glitches in the system. Turns out the price in the computer was set at \$5, rather than \$10, if you buy it without a hunting/fishing license. The stamp was included in the Division of Wildlife's fee bill that passed last year, and the money raised is to go to wildlife habitat acquisition and management. If you have trouble, call the Division at 303-297-1192.

## New from CANON 10 X 42 L Series I.S.



Canon's first WaterProof IMAGE STABILIZED Binocular.  
High performance L Lens with 2 Ultra-low Dispersion (UD) elements on each side.  
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### ATTENTION BIRDERS!...

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# AUDUBON SOCIETY

of GREATER DENVER

## Calendar of Events

### MARCH 2006

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			10am Education Committee South Africa Trip Departs			
			1	2	3	4
9am Walk the Wetlands						
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
		7pm ASGD Board Meeting				
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
8:30am Nesting Raptor Field Trip		7pm Conservation Committee		7pm Beginning Bird Watching (BBW) Class		8am BBW Field Trip 8am Two Ponds Field Trip
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
8:30am Nesting Raptor Field Trip	Warbler Deadline for May/June Issue					
26	27	28	29	30	31	

### APRIL 2006

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						8am BBW Field Trip 10am Blue Bird Workshop
						1
8am Walk the Wetlands	7pm Master Birder Class					8am BBW Field Trip 5pm Spring Benefit
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
		7pm ASGD Board Meeting				8am BBW Field Trip
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	7pm Master Birder Class		2pm Field Trip Committee			8am BBW Field Trip 9am Cherokee Ranch Field Trip
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
	Banding Station Opens					8am BBW Field Trip
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

# 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

View Photos and Read Reviews from Trip Participants in Our Trip Scrapbook Online at [www.denveraudubon.org/scrapbook.htm](http://www.denveraudubon.org/scrapbook.htm)



## – FIELD TRIPS –

### Walk the Wetlands

**DATE:** Sunday, March 5 9 a.m.  
Sunday, April 2 8 a.m.  
(Daylight Savings Time may begin this day)  
**LEADERS:** Hugh and Urling Kingery (303-814-2723),  
Bob Brown, and Doris Cruze

**Pre-registration: Not necessary**

**FEE:** None

**MEETING PLACE:** Parking lot beside Audubon Center at Chatfield. From C470 & Wadsworth, go south on Wadsworth 4.4 miles. Turn left onto Waterton Road. Turn left immediately into the first parking lot, at the Audubon Center sign.

**DESCRIPTION:** We'll search for river dippers and ducks while looking up for circling raptors including bald eagles. Dress in layers for the weather. Bring binoculars, field guides, water, and a snack.

### Nesting Bald Eagles & other Raptors of the Northern Front Range

**DATE:** Sunday, March 19 8:30 a.m. or  
Sunday, March 26 8:30 a.m.

**LEADERS:** Harold and Betty Oliver

**Pre-registration: Yes; each trip limited to 10 people**

**FEE:** \$8/Friends member, \$10/non-member

**MEETING PLACE:** To be announced; car-pooling with four people/car

**DESCRIPTION:** Join the Olivers on one of these two full-day trips – choose either one. Nesting bald eagles should have young in the nest and you may see them being fed by the adults (6-8 possible nests). You'll also see nests of red-tailed (and maybe ferruginous) hawks, and great horned owls. If you're lucky, you'll see harriers pairs in their courtship flight – the male passing prey to the female, in flight. Bring field guides, binoculars, water, snacks, and lunch, or buy lunch at a fast-food restaurant the Olivers will find.

### Two Ponds, Majestic View, & Standley Lake

**DATE:** Saturday March 25 8 a.m. - noon

**LEADER:** Dave Rhoades (303-424-8633)

**Pre-registration: Required**

**FEE:** \$8/Friend member, \$10 non-member

**MEETING PLACE:** Two Ponds National Wildlife Refuge parking lot (south side of 80th Ave. between Club Crest and Kipling, less than a mile east of Kipling.)

**DESCRIPTOIN:** Visit a different part of the metro area at three parks. Two Ponds is a recent addition to the national refuge system, Majestic View is Arvada's nature center, and Standley Lake has a pair of nesting bald eagles, as well as red-tailed hawks. This will be a time to look for early migrants, as well as, lingering winter residents. Bring binoculars, field guides, water, a snack, and wear layers of clothing.

### Cherokee Ranch, Sedalia Area

**DATE:** Saturday, April 22 9am – 2pm

**LEADER:** Lynn Willcockson (303-798-7000)

**Pre-registration: Required**

**FEE:** \$15/Friends member, \$20/non-member

**MEETING PLACE:** Sedalia Post Office. From intersection of US Highway 85 and Colorado 105 at Sedalia, take 105 south; post office is on right side of the street.

**DESCRIPTOIN:** Lynn volunteers at the Ranch and has led trips for Audubon and DFO for many years, so he's a knowledgeable guide. Be prepared to walk 2-3 miles through scrub oak, ponderosa pines, and open meadows. Bluebirds should have arrived, and hawks will be soaring. Bring binoculars, field guides, water, and lunch.

### Beginning Bird Watching Class

**DATES:** Thursday, March 23: 7-9pm – Classroom session at the Audubon Center at Chatfield

Saturdays, March 25, April 1, 8, 15, 22,

and 29: 8am-2pm – Field trips to birdwatching

sites around Denver: Chatfield, Barr Lake, and Castlewood Canyon state parks, Wheat Ridge greenbelt, and Genesee Mountain.

**LEADERS:** Urling & Hugh Kingery

**FEE:** \$125/members, \$150/non-members

**DESCRIPTON:** 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 like no one else. Learn bird identification, choosing 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 time outdoors. You can make up any field trips that you miss during future fall or spring class sessions.

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## Southeast Arizona: Bird with the Pros and bring the kids along

July 29 to August 4, 2006

This trip is designed for families with children from first to sixth grade (older siblings are encouraged to come along) and will provide all family members numerous opportunities to enjoy the outdoors and birding. Unlike other birding trips, we have added all kinds of child-oriented activities. Our Outdoor Instructors (including Bill Schmoker) will insure the children enjoy themselves and learn something about birds, other wildlife and the outdoors.



A young birder watches whiskered screech owls in Ramsey Canyon.

While the children will have a great time, parents will have great opportunities for birding. Our bird guide for this trip is Norm Lewis, who is the President of the Colorado Field Ornithologists and who has guided numerous trips to Southeast Arizona. Opportunities will exist for parents to bird in the early morning by themselves and during times when the children are engaged in outdoor education and recreation. We will also have many opportunities to share birds, wildlife and the outdoors with our children.

Adults and children will be thrilled to see elf owls, elegant trogon, spotted owl, and flame-colored tanager. We have timed this trip (July 29 to August 4, 2006) to maximize our opportunities to see hummingbirds, including magnificent, violet-crowned, and blue-throated. A few rarities are also bound to show up. Norm Lewis, our birding guide, will help us find over 10 species of hummingbirds and many other Arizona specialties. The great thing about all of these birds is that we will have a chance to share our

appreciation (and views) of them with our children's.

Please check out [www.nestlingtours.com](http://www.nestlingtours.com) for more information on the birding opportunities, other children activities, and a full itinerary or call Charles Thornton-Kolbe at 720-320-1974.

Prices range depending on family size, local travel plans, and a two day extension is offered. A family of four can enjoy seven days of this trip (including the 2 day extension) for \$831 per family member. A parent and child can enjoy the full seven day trip for \$1,211 per family member. These prices include a 10% discount for ASGD members (the prices on the website do not include this discount).

## Summer Science Camps at the Audubon Center

Calling all kids! Take flight with Audubon!

Ages 6 – 8

July 10 – 14

Ages 9 – 11

July 24 – 28

Explore a different avian adventure each day as we explore the river, ponds, wetlands, forest and grasslands in search of our feathered friends. Learn what it takes to fly in flight school. Discover the tools birds use for survival. Create your own little nest and protect it from predators. Craft your own bird feeder to take home.

These programs are presented in collaboration with Thorne Ecological Institute's Natural Science School. Classes run from 8:30am to noon each day. Each week-long session is \$120 per child if you register before April 16 and \$130 after that. You can register at [www.thorne-eco.org](http://www.thorne-eco.org) or by calling 720-565-3873.



Summer Science Camp participants enjoy an outing at the Audubon Center at Chatfield State Park.

# TRAVEL, FIELD TRIPS, CLASSES & PROGRAMS CONTD.

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



## Kayak the Niobrara in Nebraska

August 24 – 27, 2006

The Niobrara River flows through a unique ecosystem in the sandhill area of the northwest part of Nebraska. The river canyon, with many lovely waterfalls, contains remnants of the eastern deciduous forest and the northern boreal forest. This part of the Niobrara is an easy float in single person recreational kayaks (more stable and comfortable than canoes) moving with the current at about seven miles per hour. Most of the river waters are about hip deep. You will hear ovenbirds and see many other species such as lazuli buntings along the way.

We will stay in two cabins at the Niobrara River Ranch located just north of Smith Falls State Park. The trip is scheduled for Thursday, August 24 through Sunday, August 27, 2006. Thursday is a travel day in personal cars from Denver to the Niobrara River Ranch, stopping at Buffalo Bill Cody Park in North Platte on the way for lunch and in Valentine for dinner. Friday is a river day of about 12.5 miles from Cornell Bridge put in to the Smith Falls State Park take out. Saturday we will visit The Nature Conservancy Niobrara River Preserve, Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge and Smith Falls. Sunday morning we will float the other 12.5 miles of river taking out at Sunny Brook Camp. By mid afternoon Sunday, folks will head back to Denver. The trip is limited to 13 participants.



*Audubon members enjoy a hike to view Smith Falls during the Niobrara River trip in August 2004.*

The trip fee includes all meals from Saturday morning through Sunday lunch, park fees, river fees, Nature Conservancy donation, and single recreational kayak rentals for two days on the river. You pay for your breakfast in Hudson on Thursday, bring your lunch for that day, and pay for your dinner in Valentine. Children over the age of 10 who can handle their own kayak are welcome. Kayak rentals, transfers, and people shuttles for the river will be handled by Sunny Brook Camp Outfitters. Each participant is expected to participate in group plans and help our super chef prepare at least one meal and

help clean up after one meal. We will try to arrange a kayak practice time in Denver before the trip. If you want to car pool we will give you a list of contacts.

The fee is \$495.00 per person for Friends of Audubon Society of Greater Denver, or \$530.00 for non Friends members. (You may join the Friends for only \$25.00!) A \$250.00

nonrefundable deposit is due May 10 with the balance due by June 29. After June 29, trip fees are nonrefundable. If you find a replacement for yourself the full fee can be refunded. To register call ASGD at 303-973-9530. For other information about the trip please call volunteer trip coordinator Ann Bonnell at 303-979-6211.



*Bill Bevington and Urling Kingery enjoy a snack break on the Niobrara River (August 2004).*

## Open House April 29th

10:00am - 5:00pm

### Open House Events...

- Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day
- See HawkQuest and their live eagle, owl and hawks
- Browse the arts and crafts fair
- Second Annual "Dove Race for Youth"
- Book signings and more



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# backyard birds....

by Hugh Kingery



**IN JANUARY SEVERAL PEOPLE CALLED TO LAMENT**, “Where are all the birds?” To see if others shared this lament, I looked at the feeder reports from the Denver Urban Christmas Bird Count, held on New Year’s Day. In fact, urban count feeders reported more birds this year than last year—1270 this year (omitting geese and gulls). In 2003, though, they tallied a lot more—1807. This year’s total showed drops for several common birds: 315 house sparrows down 100 from last year and way down from the 746 two years ago. House finches (183) were down 40 from both years. Another species that caught my eye: they counted 65 flickers in 2004, but only 45 this year. Starlings did manage to increase—to 261 from 124 and 230 the last two years.

**THE GREAT THING THAT FEEDERS CONTRIBUTE** to the count, besides giving us some idea of the status of common city birds, is a few species we don’t see in the field. Cat Anderson, in Englewood, reported two species that field parties didn’t find: her annual eastern screech-owl, and a flock of fast-moving bushtits. Yesterday I picked up a bushtit nest from Cat. It had blown out of a tree in her yard. As far as I know, it’s the first Denver metro nest. Cat didn’t see the birds using it although bushtits have hung out in her yard for a number of years. The nest now resides in the collection of the Denver Museum of Nature and Science.

**BACKYARDERS ALSO REPORTED** five red-breasted (and only one white-breasted) nuthatches, 6 cedar waxwings, and 4 spotted towhees—all birds that are hard to find on this count.

**ANN MOORE SAW ALMOST NO BIRDS** on count day, but two juncos and maybe a wren the next day – too bad that they didn’t show up a day earlier. Carol Bright in Golden called on Jan. 4 to say that at the end of December she had lots of house finches and American goldfinches. But the next week, there were no goldfinches and only a few house finches. Ed and Mary Beth Twining likewise have fewer birds, but they know why: “With the cutting down of our diseased backyard cottonwood some years ago and then more recently a large linden next door to make way for a McMansion, two of their favorite haunts are gone.”

**NAN BREHMER’S COMMENTS** from Green Mountain may explain this in part. She didn’t see as many species in November-December as some years: “then it snowed and my list immediately grew longer, including a downy woodpecker climbing up the thin metal pole of my bird feeder.”

**SHE CONTINUED**, “Dark-eyed juncos are like the Shades of Night. They are the first birds to creep out at dawn from wherever it is birds go at night. They are the last birds hunting for seeds at the feeder at night. And they were the first birds darting around after the first snow subsided on Nov. 14.”

**CAT DOESN’T HAVE A MONOPOLY** on bushtits: Joy Schieving (south Denver) had her flock twice in November, but not on urban count day, Kevin Corwin in Centennial had 20 on Dec. 1, and Dale Brinker saw one (where were the rest?) in Parker Jan. 13. In five minutes Dale had seven species including a Townsend’s solitaire and a Eurasian collared dove. (The urban count had its first collared-dove, but not at a feeder.)

**JUDY AND ED BUTTERFIELD**, in south Aurora, saw on Jan. 13 a “majestic” bald eagle surveying their yard, perched in the top of a spruce. It took a neighbor’s phone call to tell them or they might have missed it. And of course, feeder birds attracted feeder hawks. Polly Reetz saw an immature sharp-shinned five times in December, “twice at close range. . . We haven’t yet seen it catch a house sparrow or house finch, but one afternoon it sat, jumped, and flew around the yard for an hour, trying to scare them out of the bushes. Nothing seemed to work that day, but since it keeps coming back I assume it must be finding food somewhere.” This bird may be one of three that fledged from a nest over in the Country Club residential area. I went over to see them last August, and they were ridiculously easy to watch, sitting on telephone poles, wires, and people’s roofs. One seemed bent on catching a squirrel by chasing it up a tree trunk. (no kidding: the birds were on the ground when I spotted it). Guess they have a large learning curve at first.

**“TWICE IN THE SPACE OF TWO WEEKS** in December,” writes Mary Emlen, “we had the honor of a visit from a beautiful eastern screech-owl. One morning we looked out our bedroom window and noticed an animal peering out of the squirrel house which my husband had built in our huge cottonwood tree. We had hopes of having a squirrel nest in the house so that we could observe the baby squirrels. Our resident squirrels have played in, on and around the house but never nested in it.

**“AT FIRST WE THOUGHT THE ‘ANIMAL’** in our squirrel box might be a cat because of its large yellow eyes and prominent pointy ears. But a look through the binoculars proved that it was a screech-owl. It was perched facing out of the hole of the box and filled the entrance entirely. It was attempting to sleep, but the squirrels had other ideas. They played on top of the squirrel house. Each time they made noises above the owl, the owl would turn its head 180 degrees to view the commotion. But his view was of the inside of the box and he didn’t actually see the squirrels so he would turn back, close his eyes and try to sleep. Sometime in the mid-afternoon he disappeared. We felt so privileged to have such an intimate and close-up opportunity to observe and enjoy such a spectacular and unusual bird. Throughout every day we look out our window many times in hopes of another glimpse of our owl.”

**NAN SINGS (FAINT) PRAISES** of the common birds: “It is always exciting when some rare bird traveling from hither to yon stops at one’s feeders. Yet those everyday ordinary house sparrows constantly flitting about are quite a source of entertainment. True, those ‘flighty’ house sparrows do put juncos and finches off their feeding when they fly to the bushes at the slightest scare; the juncos and finches don’t react to such minor disturbances—but when the sparrows fly off, they think they had better head for the bushes too.”

*Continued on page 10*

**AND BACKYARDERS HAD A FEW UNUSUAL SURPRISES.**

In Wheat Ridge, Ellie Walker saw a catbird eating pyracantha berries twice in December. Bill and Suzanne Wuerthele in Park Hill saw a hermit thrush on Jan. 15, with juncos, though it stayed only a short time. Denver and Boulder Christmas counts saw hermit thrushes, but they don't ordinarily hang out here in winter. Kevin Corwin saw a ruby-crowned kinglet Dec. 16 and song sparrows Dec. 22. And Gordon James emailed from University Hills about a male flicker "visiting my suet feeder for several years and he has a red chevron on the back of his neck." He probably has a hybrid between the western red-shafted and eastern yellow-shafted flickers. When you see birds like this, check their mustache marks and the gray cheek/brown crown vs. brown cheek/gray crown, plus the color of the wing and tail feathers. You'll detect interesting variations.

**BACKYARDERS OFFER HABITAT FOR COMMON BIRDS**

(mostly); it's the marshes, forests, and grasslands that harbor many species that need conservation help. Recent articles have emphasized the importance of Canada's boreal forests to the breeding birds of North America. Something like a quarter of the continent's breeding songbirds go there to nest.

**AN EMAIL FROM JOY KORONES**

(with a U.S. Fish and Wildlife address) talks about how backyarders in Denver can help protect boreal forests in Canada. "Speaking of the Boreal, it's become obvious that paper consumption, especially in the form of junk mail and catalogs, is one of the big threats to the Boreal (as well as other forests). Did you know that every American household receives an average of 200 catalogs per year? Less than 5% of these contain post-consumer recycled content. During the holiday season, did you notice that the number of catalogs you get increases. Less than 3% of those catalogs will result in a sale, which means that 97% of them will go straight into the trash!"

**URLING WENT ON A CONCENTRATED CAMPAIGN**

to rid our house of catalogs. It's taken a couple of years, but we now received only a couple, from companies we want to hear from. It takes determination: call their customer service and ask to get off their mailing list. You can also write Direct Mail Preference Service, c/o Direct Marketing Association, P.O. Box 9008, Farmingdale NY 11735 and request that they list you on their "no catalog, no junk mail" list. The 800 telephone directory gave me a telephone of 866-856-4362, but they don't answer the phone at 4 p.m. our time and, wonder of wonders, don't have a menu of options to listen to. Persistence pays off though.

**AND FOR THOSE CATALOGS YOU RECEIVE,**

recycle them. There is a recycling dumpster at the Audubon office, that also raises money for ASGD. If that's not convenient, look around your neighborhood for these fund-raising bins that are everywhere. At our house we have boxes, upstairs and down, collecting newspapers, junk mail and every other kind of paper, cardboard, cans, plastics and glass. At these recycling bins, you can toss them all in together.

**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.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF ASGD**

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## Call for nominations

The ASGD Board of Directors is actively seeking dedicated, enthusiastic volunteers to serve on the board for three-year terms. If you are interested, or would like to nominate someone, please contact Ann Bonnell, 303-303-979-6211, [abonnell@juno.com](mailto:abonnell@juno.com).

*Lois Webster continued from page 1*

also funded by the County Parks and Open Space and the University of Northern Colorado, is part of a 10-year ongoing project to understand the ecology of the county's bats in relation to roost site ecology and conservation. The bats will be monitored at water holes, which has never been done before with the type of technology being used. Emphasis will be on imperiled species such as Townsend's big-eared bat and the fringed myotis. The Mesa Verde study will last three years and focus on the ecology and status of bat species in the park, over half of which has been burned by catastrophic wildfires in the past six years. The LWF is helping by funding part of the cost of radio transmitters to track bats to their roosting sites. The study will focus on the Western long-eared bat and the fringed myotis as well.

The purpose of the burrowing owl study is to understand the population dynamics of the species in the face of plague, recreational shooting, and potential management actions (relocation, thinning, localized extermination). LWF money will be used to purchase spotting scopes for the field study, which is also receiving help from the Division of Wildlife, US Geological Survey, US Forest Service and CSU.

The pika project comes from the University of Northern Colorado, with help from the National Science Foundation and Mesa State College. Pikas in Rocky Mountain NP, Routt Mountain range, Niwot Ridge and the Grand Mesa near Grand Junction will have the temperature of their burrows checked and will be tagged for recapture to estimate population size.

Lois herself lived in Aurora, and the Open Space program's plan to create a bird check list for the city would have been close to her heart. Aurora staff plan to work with local birding groups and birding community leaders to find volunteers to do the count, in the hope of fostering closer links with the local bird clubs. Both birds and the Open Space areas should benefit from the increased awareness generated by the counts.

The awarding of the grants will also be announced at the LWF annual program, this time on May 3 at 7:30p.m. in conjunction with a Denver Field Ornithologists' meeting at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. The meeting will feature a presentation from last year's grant recipient, Terri Hicks-Anderson of the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, on the RMBO survey for mountain plovers in the San Luis Valley.

## Recycle & Shop for the birds!



*Kevin Corwin contributes to ASGD's recycling program*

Our blue recycling dumpster looks the same but is better than ever before! If you hate to sort recyclables, this is news you will want to hear. You can now throw everything in the dumpster – no need to sort! By everything, we mean:

- Magazines, newspapers, phone books, office paper & junk mail
- Glass, aluminum, plastic, steel cans & empty aerosol cans
- Cardboard & paperboard
- The no-no's are: plastic bags, plastic tubs and garbage.

The dumpster is located at the ASGD office near C470 and Wadsworth. (Call 303-973-9530 if you need directions.) Or call the office to have a recycling dumpster placed near your home. ASGD earns \$5 for every ton recycled.

The gift certificates are back! We have gift certificates for King Soopers, Tony's Meats & Specialty Foods and Tagawa Garden Center. They sell for face value (\$25 each for King Soopers and Tagawas; \$10 each for Tony's) and you spend them just like cash. The "catch" is that you earn money for ASGD by using them! King Soopers donates 5% of the sales to ASGD, Tony's donates 7% and Tagawas donates 15%. Certificates are available at the office and at ASGD events.

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