

THE  Warbler

NEWSLETTER OF THE AUDUBON SOCIETY OF GREATER DENVER

May/June 2007

ISBN: 1531-2283 Volume 41, No.3

First Wednesdays starting May 2

ASGD Monthly Programs return

by Doris Cruze, ASGD President

Our beautiful center and amphitheater at Chatfield is finally ready for a new kind of event, monthly meetings for members and friends. The Program Committee has planned special presentations to get things started. Meetings will be held the first Wednesday of most months.

On Wednesday, May 2, Margot Wynkoop and the Lois Webster Fund Committee will host a symposium of the Lois Webster Fund, supporting Colorado non-game research and education. Project managers of the 2006 funded projects will present findings

about their research. The evening begins with a reception at 6:30 p.m., followed by presentations on bats, pikas, Burrowing owls, and a new birding project in Aurora.

On June 6, BioBlitz will be the subject of an exciting program of discovery explaining what BioBlitz involves, a brief history, and a look forward to the regional event to be held here at the center later in the month. Susan Smith, Education Director for Audubon Society of Greater Denver, will lead the program which begins at 7 p.m.

No meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 4. On August 1, Mary Ann Bonnell will be leading a presentation on rattlesnakes and a special project she helped work on with other scientists. The fun begins at 7 p.m.

Fall meetings will be announced in the next edition of the *Warbler* newsletter. In October and November, the meetings will move indoors to the REI Flagship store, located just off I-25 near downtown Denver. No meetings are planned for December and January so that members can give time to Christmas bird counts and the holidays.



Photo courtesy of Moe Oro

Thanks to American Furniture Warehouse, we received a truckload of birdseed which we worked through March to distribute. The seed was contributed to Denver Audubon following a rollover on Interstate 76 during one of this winter's blizzards.

Dozens of birders and many partner organizations came to the Audubon Center at Chatfield on March 10 and 24 to pick-up seed. In all we gave away 22 pallets of wild birdseed mix—each holding a ton or more!

Thanks to our birdseed distribution volunteers: Doris Cruze, Ann Bonnell, Fred Griest, Allen Vinklerek, Patti Echelmeyer, Nora Roush Horton, and George Janesen (who hauled the last couple of tons of seed from our parking lot to our storage building in his own vehicle, after all the other volunteers were worn out). A special thanks to the American Furniture Warehouse crew—Wick, Josh, Vince, Jodi, Glen, Crystal, and all the others at the warehouse who we didn't get to meet.

**Join the
Lois Webster Fund Committee
to hear presentations on the
research we supported in 2006**

- Bats in Mesa Verde National Park
- Aurora's Big Year
- 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 Watterton Road. Turn Left into the first parking lot at the Audubon Center sign.

Join the Lois Webster Fund Committee to hear presentations on the research we supported in 2006.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE—

NOXIOUS WEEDS—A THREAT TO COLORADO

If you have bought or sold any property lately, you probably noticed on the checklist describing the condition of the property that several questions deal with weeds and weed infestation. How did questions about weeds come to be included with questions about whether or not the property has a sump-pump? The fact is noxious weed infestations do affect property values. Noxious weeds are changing Colorado's landscape.

Noxious weeds are plants of a foreign origin that aggressively invade without their natural enemies which kept them in check in their native lands. Many invasive weeds crowd out desirable native plants and are not palatable to wildlife. In Montana, spotted knapweed has infested over 3 million acres. As a result, elk and deer herd numbers have fallen off sharply because their food sources have been lost. Tamarisk, an invasive shrub, hogs existing water supplies by consuming 10 to 20 times more water than native species. Bush honeysuckle and common buckthorn threaten song birds, especially American Robins and Wood Thrushes.

The list goes on. Russian knapweed, diffuse knapweed, yellow toadflax, leafy spurge, Canada thistle, and musk thistle are invading Chatfield. But Colorado is fighting back. Weed management groups are actively campaigning to educate the public on how to recognize and control weeds.

You can help. Learn to identify weeds. Read the labels on wildflower mixes and don't buy seed packets if they contain Dalmation toadflax, oxeye daisy or purple loosestrife. Avoid hiking off trail as your boots and your dog's coat can pick up seed to be spread later. To learn more, the Colorado Weed Management Association website is <http://www.cwma.org/> or the Nature Conservancy website is <http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/esadocs.html>. Information is also available at the Colorado Division of Wildlife or your local county extension office listed in the phone book.



Doris Cruze

Thanks To Our Volunteers!

WINTER APPEAL MAILING: Willa Brunkhorst, Jo Ann Bushnell, Lynne Forrester, Allison Hilf, Courtney James, Viola (Vi) Nicholson, Carolyn Roark, Lori Sharp, Bill Turner

ADOPT-A-PLATTE: Peter Mulholland, Joyce Quigley, Tom Reilly, Betsy Weitkamp, Emilie Wiersma, Ralph Wiersma

AUCTION COMMITTEE: Nancy Abramson, Lynne Forrester, Courtney James, Nancy Osborn, Krista Redlinger, Carolyn Roark, Susan Robbins, Mary Ellen Sargent, Lori Sharp

FIELD TRIP LEADERS: Bill Eden, Hugh & Urling Kingery, Harold & Betty Oliver, Karen von Saltza

WINTER BIRDSEED SALE: Tom Bush, Bill Eden, Kelly Forrester, Allen Vinklarek

WARBLER MAILING: Leona Berger, Willa Brunkhorst, Jo Ann Bushnell, Patty Echelmeyer, Lynne Forrester, Marc Goodbody, Helen F. Hale, Jeanne McCune, Vi Nicholson, Ruth Schoening, Barbara F. Shissler, Frank Shissler

OFFICE SUPPORT: Lynne Forrester, Courtney James, Phil Reynolds, Carolyn Roark, Grace Weber



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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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ASGD International trip to the "Rich Coast"

by Ann Bonnell, ASGD Second Vice-President

While Denver lay deep in slumber in snow drifts and frigid temperatures, 12 Friends of Audubon had a great trip to the Rich Coast, otherwise known as Costa Rica. From January 25th through February 6th, we enjoyed finding, with our Costa Rican guide Max Vindas, about 330 different species of birds. Best birds included seeing five different Resplendent Quetzals, a Jabiru Stork standing tall on a nest, a pair of hard-to-find Great Green Macaws perched out in the open, for all to see. A Black and White Owl, a Pacific Screech Owl, and two Ferruginous Pygmy Owls all on close-by day roosts. A Red-headed Barbet and many species of tropical hummingbirds entertained the group at feeders. We enjoyed great weather, friendly hosts and three wonderful meals everyday.

I'll let some of the group members tell you about their favorite parts of the trip.

Mary Bahde: "As I reviewed my post cards and pictures of our trip to Costa Rica, it was easy to see why I placed this trip on the list 'of must dos' for retirement. As an amateurish 'bird-er' what I learned from the other members of the group in spotting and identifying different species of innumerable beautiful birds far exceeded my goals for the trip. My first Audubon-sponsored trip, but hopefully not the last."

Ed and Karli Morton: "Since retiring, we've been traveling backroads America alone. When it was announced in *The Warbler* that Ann Bonnell would be leading a small group in Costa Rica, we decided to give group traveling a try. The trip exceeded all expectations! Ann planned the trip well. Costa Rica was green and beautiful. We visited choice locations. Our group was friendly and helpful even though we were on the novice end of birding. And MAX! – Max made the trip. His genuine interest in us, and his 18 years of birding experience created an up-close encounter with nature and history. Thanks, Ann, for a great trip."

Barbara Morrison: "Being relatively new to bird watching, my husband and I debated about whether or not we were ready to take on the rigors and challenges of an international trip. It's a big jump from viewing Sandhill Cranes over a week-end to spotting and identifying the great variety of birds in

Costa Rica. We were fortunate enough to have a number of experienced birders in our group who modeled good techniques in the field. We observed them and learned, and saw our skill level

grow as well. In the context of our field trips each day, our enthusiastic leader, Max, shared many techniques for bird watching. For example, he commented on how to anticipate where the birds were going to be found. We learned the concept of the 'mixed flock' and how to follow the flock so we could be ready for their movement. We became aware of how the weather—windy, overcast, etc.—could affect what we saw that day. We also learned to be honest about what we actually saw and to keep accurate records of our own observations as well as those of the group. I know my goal for the next

big birding trip will be to increase the percentage of birds observed personally to those sighted by the group. It was a leap of faith that got us to Costa Rica—and we were richly rewarded."

Robin McDougal: "One of the best parts of our trip to Costa Rica was sitting by the Savegre River and watching the water roll over the moss-covered boulders in the middle of the stream. That was as close to an idyllic setting as I can remember. And there was Glenn sitting on one of those huge boulders. I was tired...I really enjoyed that peaceful moment. The other wonderful memory of our Costa Rican adventure is of Max Vindas, our incredible guide. He was so enthusiastic, so brilliant at calling birds and knowing where to find them. He gave us a real education and it was a real privilege to know him. He was also a marvelous storyteller."

Donna Levene: "On our tour of Costa Rica we saw 330 species, but one incident emphasized the value of quality over quantity. As one of the many 'surprises' planned for us, our guide Max led us on a walk through the Carara National Park with the intent of arriving at the 'surprise' around 4:00 pm. The destination was a small stream. We sat and quietly watched and listened as tiny birds arrived to bathe before bed. Max pointed out the Blue-crowned Manakin (male and female, 3.5 in.), the Red-capped Manakin

(4 in.), and the Chestnut-backed Antbird. This moment reflected the intent of the tour, to experience the wonder of the natural world."

Well said, by members of the trip. Come join us on an international trip.



ASGD group enjoying the magnificent sunset in Costa Rica.



The Resplendent Quetzal as seen on the ASGD Costa Rica adventure.



Eagle Eye

Watching Public Policy for the Environment
by Polly Reetz

A lot of Audubon's work at the legislature in the past two months went toward getting the impacts of energy development on wildlife considered in various bills.

Alternative Energy. The Legislature passed and the Governor has signed HB 1281, which doubles the amount of energy suppliers must get from renewable sources in Colorado—solar, wind, biofuels and hydropower, for example. SB 100, a bill to streamline the permitting process for wind energy transmission lines, has also passed and gone to the Governor for signature. The good news: Both bills will help increase Colorado's production of clean energy and generate new jobs. The bad news: neither bill included any provisions to protect migratory birds, or bats, in the siting of the generating facilities or transmission lines. The bills' sponsors and supporters were evidently worried that any amendments would slow passage through the House and Senate.

This development is unfortunate, because the impacts of wind turbines and transmission lines can often be avoided by adequate preliminary surveys and planning. For example, power lines can be structured to prevent raptor electrocutions, and it's much cheaper than returning after the fact to fix the line. The power companies also don't get the black eye generated by the deaths of numerous Golden Eagles and Red-tailed Hawks. If some impacts can't be avoided, like disturbance of vegetation and soils, mitigation measures can be required. However, neither of the above bills addressed these possibilities, and it may be that Audubon and its allies will have to introduce bills in the next legislative session to force mitigation.

The other side of our responsibility is to watch the permitting process very carefully and try to have protections for bird and bat populations included. This may not be easy: wind energy generation is a highly competitive industry, and consortiums that form to build the facilities often don't want their site information publicized until the very last minute. We can't always know in advance what facilities are going in. SB 91, introduced by Sen. Gail Schwartz and Rep. Tom Massey, will create a task force to study and map areas of the State suitable for renewable energy generation. This may help a bit, by allowing us to focus on parts of the state with high renewable energy potential. As with HB 1281 and SB 100, Audubon has been urging that considerations of siting must be included in task force decisions. The bill sponsors have indicated that this is their intent, but we will still need to be watchful.

Oil and Gas Production and Wildlife. Several bills, almost all from Western Slope legislators whose constituents are directly affected by oil and gas development, would require the protection of wildlife habitat and public health during exploration and production of these resources. Rep. Dan Gibbs (D-Summit Co.) and Sen. Lois Tochtrop (D-Adams Co.) brought in a bill that specified a whole list of protective actions

by energy companies. The specific language was removed, but the Colorado Division of Wildlife was charged with creating a new list of to-be-required protections. Since DOW worked on the original list of recommendations, the agency knows what rules would help wildlife, like our two species of sage grouse, to withstand the siege of oil and gas development. Funding for DOW to set up the regulations is questionable, but agency staff say they would make the job a priority even without additional funding.

Rep. Kathleen Curry (D-Gunnison) and Sen. Jim Isgar (D-Durango area) also introduced a bill to broaden membership of the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission. Despite its name, this commission has been mainly a tool of the oil and gas industry—all members came from the industry—so inclusion of a wildlife/environmental expert, a landowner, a local government representative, a health care expert and the directors of the Colorado Departments of Natural Resources and Health would definitely broaden the Commission's perspective. The industry is, of course, opposed. So, as of this writing (late March), it's not clear if the bill will survive intact. Watch the papers, and check the legislature's website www.leg.state.co.us.

People always ask what the best method of contacting legislators is. Telephone is probably tops, as you can leave a message that someone will have to listen to, or you may even talk to a live person. Legislators have told us that they read all their emails, so that's a fairly reliable method, but phone calls can be more personal. All email addresses, phone numbers and mailing addresses are on the website above. Check it out!



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– FIELD TRIPS & TRAVEL –

Pawnee Grasslands Day Trip

DATE: Saturday, June 2 8 am – 4:30 pm

LEADER Bill Turner and Kevin Cook:

Pre-Registration is required. Call ASGD Office 303-973-9530

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.

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 nature-related articles for newspapers in Fort Collins and Loveland and also authors a monthly column for Bird Watcher's Digest. He teaches classes for the Rocky Mountain Nature Association. Last year's trip filled up and created a long waiting list, so register now!

Pawnee Grasslands by Night

DATE Saturday, June 16 3:30 pm – 10:30 pm

LEADER Bill Turner and Kevin Cook:

Pre-Registration is required. Call ASGD Office 303-973-9530

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. The grasslands are about 100 miles from Denver. Our spotlighting will end by 10:30 p.m.

DESCRIPTION: A different cast of birds and mammals become active after dark on the steppes of this noted natural area in northeast Colorado. Join naturalist Kevin Cook on a nocturnal exploration which may open a whole new realm of wildlife watching for you. Kevin will show us kangaroo rats up close by catching them gently in a butterfly net - yes, a butterfly net. Pocket mice which actually howl are another rodent

we're likely to see. Swift foxes are having their pups this time of year and we'll look for them, too, as well as badgers. Mountain plovers, often difficult to see in the daytime, come out on the roads at night. And we may see Burrowing and Great Horned Owls, also. Kevin is thoroughly knowledgeable of the natural history of the grasslands. He is a prolific writer, producing weekly columns for several newspapers and a monthly

Dawn Chorus at the Audubon Center

DATE: Sunday, May 6 7 a.m.

LEADERS: Harold and Betty Oliver

Followed by:

Walk the Wetlands

DATES: Sunday, May 6 8 a.m.

Sunday, June 3 8 a.m.

LEADERS: Hugh and Urling Kingery (303-814-2723), Doris Cruze, and other Master Birders.

Pre-registration is NOT required.

FEE: None

MEETING PLACE: Audubon Center at Chatfield. The Audubon center is located on Waterton Road, 4.4 miles south of C470 and Wadsworth.

DESCRIPTION: Everyone welcome – Auduboners, members, and visitors. Come at 7 a.m. on May 6 to hear and to see the Dawn Chorus. Then at 8 a.m. we will hike along the South Platter River looking for spring migrants and summer nesting birds. Bring binoculars, field guides, water, and a snack. We can lend you binoculars and field guides if you don't have them.

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.



TRAVEL, FIELD TRIPS, CLASSES & PROGRAMS

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– FIELD TRIPS & TRAVEL –

27th Annual Spring Bird Counts

Everyone welcome – just show up. More eyes spot more birds. No fee, no pre-registration.

FRIDAY, MAY 11

Lower Bear Creek

Leader: Patty Echelmeyer, 303-233-4947

Meet at 0730 in front of Albertson's, northwest quadrant, South Sheridan Blvd. and Hampden.

SATURDAY, MAY 12

Barr Lake periphery

Leader: Jackie King, 303-287-1644.

Meet at 0700 on access road to entrance station at Barr Lake State Park. This trip does not involve much walking and will be good for people with limited mobility or stamina.

Chatfield State Park

Leader: Joey Kellner, 303-978-1748.

Meet at 0600 at West (Deer Creek) entrance to park. State Parks Pass required.

Waterton, downstream. 4-5 mile hike. Wear long pants (not shorts) due to bare-leg-unfriendly plants such as poison ivy, thistles, and knapweed.

Leader: Hugh Kingery, 303-814-2723.

Meet at 0600 at Audubon Center/Discovery Pavilion (left turn immediately after turning from Wadsworth [Colo. 121] onto Waterton/Roxborough road [4.4 miles south of C-470] and before the DOW parking lot for Waterton Canyon)

Cherry Creek Reservoir

Leader: Bob Brown, 303-791-6204

Meet at 0700 at Marina on west side (near Cherry Creek High School) of Cherry Creek State Park.

Barr Lake State Park

Leader: Dick Schottler, 303-278-8035

Meet at 0630 at Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory. Exit I-76 at Bromley Lane; go east about ¼ mile and turn right (south) on Lark Bunting Lane, to end of road. This is a ten-mile, all-day hike around the lake. State Parks pass required.

SUNDAY, MAY 13

Castlewood Canyon State Park

Leader: Randy Lentz, 303-680-3381.

Meet at 0630 at old entrance. From CO 86, 0.5 miles west of Franktown, turn south on Castlewood Canyon Road, go two miles to old entrance. State Parks pass required.

Rocky Mountain Arsenal

Leader: Urling Kingery, 303-814-2723.

Must register with leader in advance.

Breeding Bird Atlas –

ASGD's block in Conifer

DATES All trips meet at 6:30 am, last until after lunch

Saturday	May 19	Wednesday	May 30
Saturday	June 9	Thursday	June 21
Saturday	July 7	Monday	July 16

LEADERS: Hugh and Urling Kingery (303-814-2723), Master Birders, and other volunteers.

Pre-Registration is NOT required but encouraged

You might check with the leaders to confirm the trip.

FEE: None

MEETING PLACE: Walmart parking lot (southeast quadrant of intersection of C-470 and Bowles); look for the leader on the south side near the garden area, but away from the store.

DESCRIPTION: ASGD signed up to work on a Breeding Bird Atlas block about 15 miles into the foothills—a beautiful section that includes Meyer Ranch (Jefferson County park) and James Newton Park (Denver Mountain Park). Atlas blocks have 10 square miles, roughly 3 miles on a side. Different trips will explore different parts of the block in order to sample all habitats and to try and find all the breeding birds in the block. Likely species include Blue Grouse, Pygmy Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Savannah Sparrow, and Red Crossbill.

We will hold trips every other week, May through July. Pick a convenient date to help with this stimulating kind of bird-watching project. You can learn about bird behaviors that confirm breeding, field observation skills, and bird songs.

Bring binoculars, water, snack, lunch, sunscreen, hiking boots, layers of clothing for temperature changes.

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– FIELD TRIPS & TRAVEL –

Sage-Grouse

Monitoring Rendezvous Also Audubon Colorado's Annual State Rendezvous

June 21-25, 2007

Join Audubon leaders from around the state for the Gunnison Sage-Grouse (GUSG) Monitoring Rendezvous. All Denver Audubon members are invited. The event runs from Thursday, June 21 through Monday, June 25, though individuals may attend for any combination of days. Audubon volunteers will gather in Gunnison to work with federal biologists and faculty from Western State College to help monitor the condition of BLM riparian habitats that are used by GUSG.

BLM staff needs assistance in monitoring public lands in the Gunnison Basin, which is a Globally Important Bird Area as home to the largest population of GUSG. Each morning, 2- or 3-person teams will be assembled to work for about four hours. Participants will be provided with maps and data sheets and will be trained to use a GPS unit and to take basic vegetation measurements of habitat quality. BLM is especially interested in observations of birds and other wildlife and in comments—as birders—on the condition of the land as habitat.

Since this is the period of brood-rearing for GUSG, there's the possibility you may see a grouse hen and her chicks. This will be a truly rewarding wildlife experience.

On Friday evening, Audubon Colorado will also kick off its 4th annual State Rendezvous in Gunnison, with a reception and speakers on the Western State campus. During the day on Saturday, monitoring activities will continue. Later Saturday, presentations and group discussions will round out the State Rendezvous.

Keep in mind, the amount of field study you do is completely optional. Just one day in the field will bring enormous benefits.

Call 303-415-0130 or check the Audubon Colorado website www.auduboncolorado.org for more details.



INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

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. 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 to Port Moresby is approximately \$1,200 per person. Contact Becky Beckers, at AgentBecky@aol.com or 303-766-5266.

Tahiti and the Society Islands on the Gauguin— Small Ship Intimacy, Big Ship Amenities

August 22-September 1

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. The Paul Gauguin was designed specifically for sailing French Polynesia year-round. 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 are included. For complete prices and cruise itinerary, go to www.travelforthebirds.com. Contact Becky Beckers, at AgentBecky@aol.com or 303-766-5266.



BioBlitz Festival— All Species Count!

Audubon Center at Chatfield
June 15 & 16, 2007

BioBlitz is a celebration of biodiversity and a 24-hour count of everything that grows, creeps, crawls, hops, flies or slithers! Friday evening programs include “Bats of Colorado” and wildlife night hikes. Saturday will feature counts for birds, butterflies, herptiles and more. The BioBlitz is a family event that involves kids of all ages in discovering and exploring the biodiversity of Colorado.

For an updated schedule of events go to www.denveraudubon.org or call 303-973-9530.



Summer Science Camps at the Audubon Center

Calling all kids! Take flight with Audubon!

BIRD BRAINS

June 25 – 29 for ages 6 – 8

Experience a different avian adventure each day as we explore the river, ponds, forests and canyon in search of our feathered friends. Test your skills in an Avian Olympics and discover the amazing abilities of birds to survive. Craft your own nest from natural materials and a bird feeder to take home.

FEATHERS & FLIGHT

July 16 – 20 for ages 9 – 11

Create your own bird guide of birds found along the river, ponds, forests and canyons. Learn the art and science of flying as you design your own bird planes. Discover the “silverware” that birds use and how they adapt to Colorado’s habitats. Craft your own bird feeder to take home and continue studying birds on your own!

These programs are presented in collaboration with Thorne Ecological Institute’s Natural Science School. Classes run from 8:15 a.m. to noon each day. Each week-long session is \$140 per child. You can register at www.thorne-eco.org or by calling 720-565-3873.

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. Travel expenses covered. Please call me to discuss specifics—303-794-2647.

Front Range Birding Company Open House

The Front Range Birding Company (FRBC) celebrates International Migratory Bird Day, with an Open House, Saturday, May 5, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Features include a craft fair and educational/informational displays from Denver Audubon, Denver Botanic Gardens, Chatfield State Park, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Hawk Quest will display live raptors from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m. Scheduled to appear are a Golden Eagle, Harris’ Hawk, American Kestrel, and Great Horned Owl.

The day’s finale will be the 2nd Annual Dove Race for Youth. White Birds Unlimited, an Arvada company, will release 200 white homing pigeons at 2 p.m. Doves will be released at FRBC and “home” directly back to their lofts in Arvada. For a donation, people can sponsor a dove and earn a chance to win race prizes.

Proceeds support the Greater Littleton Youth Initiative and the Jason Dahl Scholarship Foundation. These two charities were birthed from the far-reaching tragic events with deep local effects on Littleton area residents—the Columbine High School shootings in 1999 and the terrorist attacks of 9/11/2001.

FRBC is located at 9956 West Remington Place, on the northeast corner of C-470 and Kipling.

Bird & Wildlife Photos Wanted

We are currently trying to build our photo library of bird, wildlife and nature images for use in our educational programs and handouts. If you are interested in donating slides or digital files, please let us know. We have a small collection right now. (We are always happy to acknowledge the photographer whenever the image is used. But, we prefer to accept photos that are given without copyright restrictions.) Priority items would be:

- photos of Denver-area backyard birds, both on feeders and in natural settings
- Colorado birds
- Colorado wildlife, especially urban species

backyard birds....

by Hugh Kingery



THE POSTAL SERVICE will issue two nifty sets of wildlife stamps this spring. The most spectacular: the ninth in their Nature Series will feature the alpine tundra of Rocky Mountain National Park. It includes Brown-capped Rosy-Finch, ptarmigan, bighorn sheep, Golden Eagle, pika and marmot, and alpine flowers. The other they call "Pollination": four stamps show flowers with their pollinators: bat, bee, butterfly, and bird (humming).

If you never communicate except by email, these spectacular stamps may cause you to mend your ways. If your local post office doesn't handle them, you can order by telephone from 800-782-6724. Both will come out at the new 41-cent rate: the pollination stamps on June 25, the tundra stamps in September.

BUSHTITS! NESTING! On March 21, Mike Henwood saw a pair building a nest in Bear Creek Park, and, on March 23, "the nest seemed almost complete although the birds were seen entering and exiting the nest (maybe they were still lining the inside)." Tina Jones, on March 23, "watched a pair getting nesting material in my yard. Naturally they did not go for the nesting material I put out in my yard. They knew what they wanted. They spent quite a bit of time on top of some bark mulch. It seemed a bit weird to see them on the ground for 20 minutes instead of flitting around. One continued pecking on the edge of an individual piece of bark until the bird stripped a fiber off. The bird sat (yes sat) on the mulch shaking the bark fiber back and forth. After this the two birds took off." Steve Stochowiak saw a flock "three times in three weeks in pine trees around the 12th green of Inverness Golf Course. They are fast moving and never there for more than a few minutes."

TWO REPORTS OF EVENING GROSBEAKS this winter from Douglas County; we've heard little about them lately. Glenn and Barbara Spagnuolo saw a few at their home west of Sedalia, and Carolyn Zwahlen saw one in December at her Perry Park feeder. Juncos also attend her feeder with the grosbeak, and Urling saw juncos, especially one white-winged (a form of dark-eyed) that on Jan. 27 fed from a basket of suet.

BACKYARD REPORTS SEEMED SLIM for February and March. On Jan. 28, Patty Perron in Parker counted an astounding 22 Northern Flickers. Glenn Walbek recorded a first for his Castle Rock yard—a small flock of Cedar Waxwings on Jan. 28. Patty saw one waxwing Jan. 27. In south Denver, Joy Schieving had waxwings at her pond on Feb. 5, along with bushtits, "a herd of robins," and a Red-breasted Nuthatch. Elevation makes a difference. Urling and I heard a Spotted Towhee singing at the Audubon Center on Mar. 16, but we heard none singing at Franktown—1,000 feet higher—until Mar. 26. Kathy Brunner reports a pair of Ruby-crowned Kinglets came to her feeder all winter and Kevin Corwin (Centennial) saw his first one for 2007 on Feb. 13.

A SAY'S PHOEBE RETURNED to Jill Holden's Roxborough Village place on Mar. 17. She also enjoyed the return of American

Goldfinches, and a Black-capped Chickadee that came three times in a short period Feb. 9. (She last saw on Feb. 10, 2006.)

THE BLUEBIRDS RETURNED to our Franktown neighborhood Feb. 27, when we counted 36 Mountain Bluebirds in three flocks. By March, we had Western Bluebirds displaying an interest in two boxes, mountains in one. Also in Franktown, Bud Gammon saw his first Mountain Bluebirds Mar. 9. Bud watched Mar. 15 as a Western Scrub-jay "filled his crop with sunflower seeds. He flies over behind my house, and starts to bury seeds in the ground. He must have made 50 trips."

OVER HALF this season's reports involved raptors. Cooper's Hawks scored a couple of hits: Patty watched one take two starlings in four days. Kevin Corwin saw a juvenile Cooper's "one day stuck a foot thru the wire guard on a feeder to grab a sparrow. They've really hammered the House Sparrows and Finches, and the adult female Cooper's grabbed a flicker right by the front window." Joy says, "Right outside the window a Cooper's hawk took one of the 'yard' flickers, killed it, and flew off with it. I know they have to eat too, but why not the squirrels?" Kevin also enjoyed regular visits from a Sharp-shinned Hawk.

SUSAN ANDERSON CALLED on Jan. 30 to share a bizarre observation: perched in a shade tree at Iliff and Emerson, a Bald Eagle! Our guess: frozen reservoirs, snow-covered landscape forced some birds to move around to look for food in unexpected places—it was 7 degrees that morning. On Jan. 27, driving by the central Denver Public Library (14th and Broadway), Polly Reetz saw "a Red-tailed Hawk circling overhead. As it circled crows dive-bombed it and flew up again. I wonder if this hawk has been roosting downtown and eating starlings or pigeons." Out at her Perry Park mailbox, Carolyn says, "we were taken aback to look no more than 10 feet from us at a shrike attacking a male House Finch. It had it down on the snow and then grabbed it and flew into a pine tree."

HAROLD AND BETTY OLIVER take Audubon groups raptor-watching twice each winter. Urling and I went with them on Feb. 11 and still talk about the amazing tally of 116: 53 red-tails, 27 kestrels, 5 ferruginous, 4 harriers, one each Prairie Falcon and Great Horned Owl – AND – 25 Bald Eagles including four on nests!

THE OLIVERS AND BOB ROZINSKI both mentioned the Ring-necked Pheasants at Cherry Creek Reservoir, one of the few Denver-area places that pheasants remain. These birds spent a chunk of the winter in a grove of 100 Russian olives and, as Bob says, at least 12 got up on the trees to eat the berries. Another manifestation of the January snow-cover. Near the park, Lynn Owen saw a white pelican fly over her car on Feb. 1 – an inconvenient date for a waterbird to inspect a frozen reservoir.

ON GREEN MOUNTAIN, Nan Brehmer didn't see many birds. She does report for February, "The mule deer have eaten almost every bit of greenery on our various varieties of pines that was within reach. Don't ever remember them doing that before. Guess that big snow really buried their usual food."

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.

– BLUEBIRD NEWS –

Box builders needed

The Colorado Bluebird Project seeks your help in building nest boxes for our little blue friends. We have scheduled several work sessions at the Audubon Center at Chatfield and need your help to make this effort a success. Please contact Fred Griest by phone at 303-759-2194, if you're interested. No prior experience is needed. We have two types of work sessions: one focuses on cutting boards and drilling the entrance and ventilation holes; the other focuses on assembling boxes.

Listed below is the schedule for April and May. We're planning to have sessions on the following days:

Saturday, April 14	Tuesday, April 17
Thursday, April 19	Tuesday, April 24
Friday, April 27	

...and the following Tuesdays and Thursdays in May: 1, 3, 8, 10, 15, 17, 22, 24, 29 & 31.

All sessions run from 9 a.m. to noon. You can sign up by calling Fred at 303-759-2194.

Fred has a long-standing prior commitment for Saturdays throughout the spring and summer, which is why you don't see any Saturdays on the schedule after mid-April. He can lead sessions on Sundays if there is enough interest, and he can vary the session time if necessary to accommodate volunteers' preferences. Please let Fred know and he will adapt the schedule accordingly.

Fred suggests you wear warm shoes or boots and a jacket, gloves and a hat (it gets cold in that old stone building). Also bring water and a snack if you wish.

Pawnee Grassland enthusiasts needed

ASGD, Fort Collins Audubon, and Greeley Auduboners have teamed up to support management at the Pawnee National Grasslands. The Pawnee has been designated an Important Bird Area by National Audubon Society, and the idea is to work with the land manager there—the U.S. Forest Service—to further bird protection and management. This could involve a couple of trips a year to the Pawnee, to help monitor nesting raptors, check prairie dog towns for nesting mountain plovers, survey wildlife habitat improvements, or help clean up degraded sites. If this is something that interests you, please notify our office by email or call 303-973-9530.

Welcome to Our New Friends Members

Allen Hagood, Anne Phelps, Bill Hamilton, Bill Stahm, Bonnie Bailey, Chuck & Linda Vidal, Connie Kanter, Dalrie Berg, Dennis Wojcicki, Diane Luck, Ellie Jones, Frances Sperl, Gregg & Meredith Lusby, Gretchen Moritz-Hale, Jessie Shafer, Jim Duggan, Katie Morrison & Eric Bryant, Keith Wood, Lisa Edwards, Mary Ann Bonnell, Nina Ogilvie, Paul Differding, Paula Hoffman, Sherry Osborn, Susan Anderson, Tore & Sandy Arnesen, William & Jane Ensor

Looking for box sales program volunteer

The Colorado Bluebird Project needs a volunteer to manage our nest box sales program. Responsibilities include answering inquiries about price and availability, fulfilling orders, and ensuring we have adequate inventory. The primary task is packing and mailing boxes. This should be done weekly, whenever there are orders to be filled. Other duties include coordinating with the folks who'll be building boxes to ensure we have adequate inventory, reporting sales to the project chair, coordinating with Audubon staff for orders to be picked up at the Audubon offices and for orders submitted to them directly, and transporting inventory from the shop at our nature center to the Audubon office. Obtaining shipping materials, and answering emails, phone calls & mail inquiries round out the tasks of this important volunteer position.

If you're interested or want more information please contact us at bluebirdproject@denveraudubon.org. Don't hesitate to ask questions if you need more information!



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Notes from the Conservation Committee

Local land use issues dominate the Conservation Committee's work this year, from Barr Lake State Park to South Platte Park in Littleton, from the Conservation Area at the old Lowry Bombing Range to Chatfield to the Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Refuge. Probably the most immediate issue, and the longest-running, is the proposal to "reallocate" storage in Chatfield Reservoir from flood control to municipal water supply. The 16 water districts and cities that would like to try this are currently working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Colorado Water Conservation Board on an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate impacts, including those on recreation and wildlife habitat. The water rights that these 16 entities hold total about 20,000 acre-feet of water, and if all that were stored in Chatfield at once the water level would rise 12 feet. The current marinas, swim beach, park road, and wetlands would all be flooded and we would lose about 200 acres of riparian forest along the South Platte River. But, these water rights are also very junior (recent in time), so in three out of four years they probably couldn't be used. This means that most years we would see hundreds of acres of bare mud flats, which would form a fertile ground for noxious weed invasions.

ASGD has been granted "technical specialist" status in this matter, which means we get to review the EIS chapters as they are written. So far nothing has been stated or said about mitigating the wildlife habitat losses this proposal could cause, nor has a price been set for that mitigation. We don't oppose this proposal at this time—after all it makes more sense to store more water in existing reservoirs than to build new ones—but, if mitigation isn't forthcoming, we may well do so. ASGD Board members Ann Bonnell and Kent Wiley have followed this issue and

attended innumerable meetings. Funding for the EIS has been suspended recently due to federal budget problems, but the CWCB is currently footing at least some of the bill, so the project is moving ahead.

At Barr Lake, a major retail/residential development, the Prairie Center, is slowly going up across I-76 from the State Park. It has already resulted in the elimination of prairie dog towns where the Barr Lake bald eagles used to hunt. Since the land is in Brighton, that City Council has had the responsibility of handling the development. Council members waited two years to get a Bald Eagle Habitat Conservation Plan in place before granting a final permit, which is encouraging, but they heard plenty from local residents and from ASGD about both on-site and off-site mitigation of the loss of the eagle's hunting grounds. We are still working on this.

We made recommendations for the Conservation Area of 23,000 acres on State Land Board land at Lowry, and commented on the return of the American bison to the Arsenal Refuge. We've also written and spoken in public to the Commerce City Council about impacts on both the Arsenal and Barr Lake of a possible NASCAR speedway proposed for an area just northeast of the Arsenal and south of the State Park. As development continues in the Denver metro area, more and more of these special areas will be surrounded, and affected, by development. Just recently we wrote to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service about their proposal to take the Gray Wolf off the Endangered Species list.

This is just a snapshot of what our Committee does. If it appeals to you, join us! We meet the third Tuesday of odd-numbered months (Jan., March, May, July, Sept., Nov.) from 7-9 p.m. Locations vary, so check with the Chair (contact info is on the ASGD website). Even if you can't come you can be in touch by email. We'd love to have you.

ASGD recognizes our valued Donors

BENEFACTOR: The Front Range Birding Company, Thomas Parchman

DIRECTOR: Laurie Bender, Helen Hale

CONTRIBUTOR: Jan Richardson, Dalrie Berg, Mary & Dave Driscoll, Helen Hale, Sue Schulman

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Do the Bird-a-thon!

May is again Bird-a-thon month. Grab your binoculars, your bird guide, and a Bird-a-thon pledge sheet. Then, pick any 24-hour time period during the month and see how many species you can spot.

As a fundraising event, the Bird-a-thon works similar to a walk-a-thon. Collect pledges for each species from family, friend, neighbors, and colleagues. Help ASGD, while doing what you love to do—watch birds!

Call the ASGD office at 303-973-9530 to register and receive your Bird-a-thon pledge sheet. We'll award prizes to the top fundraisers.



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- Invitations to Friends' only events.
- Friends discounts on ASGD field trips, classes and workshops for one person.

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

Open House Sat, May 5th

... Fun filled day for the whole family

OPEN HOUSE MAY 5

10am - 5pm Art & Craft Fair
Jefferson Village Shopping Center

11am - 1pm Hawkquest with
Live Golden Eagle, Harris's Hawk,
American Kestrel & Great Horned Owl

Noon Free Flight Demo of
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10am - 2pm Silent Auction for
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