



City of Aurora
Parks and Open Space Department
Division of Open Space and Natural
Resources

Lois Webster Fund Final Report 2006

Name of Project: Aurora's Big Year

Project Time Frame: May 13th, 2006 – May 12th, 2007

Amount Granted from LWF: \$500

Project Report

The following is a list of stated project goals (from grant request) and a progress report pertinent to each.

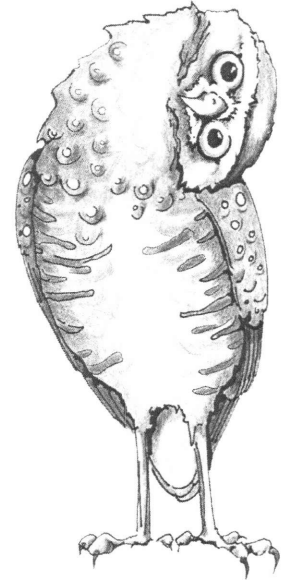
1. *To create an observation-based bird list for the City of Aurora.*

Progress: To date, 185 species have been recorded in the City's parks, open spaces, natural areas, golf courses, backyards, and even parking lots. As stated in the grant application, we plan to compile and create the final Aurora bird checklist following the end of the Big Year (May 12th, 2007). The new checklist will premier at our Big Year Birding Celebration, which is planned for December of 2007.

2. *Introduce new audiences to birding.*

Progress: Since February 10th, 2006 (the date of the LWF Grant award) Aurora has offered the following bird-related programming designed to introduce new audiences to birding, specifically Aurora birding:

- 12 guided bird walks in seven different locations for a total of 79 participants (including two DFO walks).
- 1 birding program for Juliet Lowe Day (Girl Scouts) for a total of 185 participants.
- 1 birding program for Colorado Retired Veterans Home for 18 participants.
- 2 library/Barnes and Noble programs on birds/owls for 31 participants.
- 3 live bird programs for a total of 122 participants.
- Aurora Law Enforcement Ranger staff bird ID training is scheduled for June 6th, 2007.



3. *Increase awareness of bird diversity in the City of Aurora.*

Progress: This goal is tough to measure, but the following has been accomplished toward this goal:

- Created an Aurora Birding Hot Spots poster to advertise Big Year and great birding locations. Posters are located at the Aurora Municipal Building, Plains Conservation Center, Aurora Reservoir, Quincy Reservoir, all City-owned golf courses, and the Aurora Wild Birds Unlimited store.
- Channel 8 feature on guided bird walks and birding in Aurora (May 06)
- Rocky Mountain News article on Big Year project (June 06)
- Weekly updates to our Big Year Website (ongoing 06)
- Big Year and birding exhibit at Morrison Nature Center (ongoing 06)
- Big Year article in the Warbler (July/Aug 06)

4. *Encourage local avid birders to share sightings with us on a regular basis.*

Progress: One avid birder shares his eBird lists from Aurora properties on at least a bi-weekly basis. We now receive raptor surveys from MC Burger each month. The list has seen not only local contributions, but also national participation as one California birder saw our poster and sent her sightings from a trip to Aurora!

Fiscal Report: \$500 was deposited into a City Gifts and Grants account in March of 2006. The funds are slated to be used for printing the bird list once the Big Year is complete and design of the checklist is complete (May 06 and November 06, respectively)

Summary: The Lois Webster Fund Grant support of our Big Year project has brought Aurora birding and bird diversity awareness to many new people through guided walks, special programs, and media coverage. With six months still to go, I think we will continue to create a buzz about birds and bird habitat in the City of Aurora.

Thanks very much to the Lois Webster Fund committee and to Audubon Society of Greater Denver for your support of this important effort!

Submitted by:

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"WE HAVE BOTH mourning doves and Eurasian collared-doves frequently eating the cracked corn we put on the ground." Bruce McLain, in northwest Denver, says that the collared-doves drove out the mourning doves. And I've lost the note from someone who saw collared-doves gathering nest material in west Centennial about a month ago. Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory wants records of nesting activity of this invading species. If you see any definite nesting activity, let me know and I'll pass it on to Rich Levad.

SPEAKING OF NESTING SPECIES, Ann Bonnell called on May 29 because a hiker in Roxborough State Park had reported a bushtit nest. We followed Ann's directions and found the nest on May 30: about 18 feet up in a giant Douglas-fir. It looked as if the bushtits had young in the nest: the adults would fly in every 2-5 minutes. They moved so fast, and the nest hangs in total shade, that we couldn't really see the birds. Considering its dimensions – a hanging pouch 10-15 inches long – a bushtit nest should stick out conspicuously, but we spent 10 minutes looking before we found the thing.

METRO DENVER HAS only two other confirmed bushtit nests that I know of: Cat Anderson had one in her horse pasture, and Tina Jones had one in her BowMar yard. Bushtits usually build their nests in conifers – they commonly use pinyon pines, so this one in a Douglas-fir fits the pattern.

JERRY WAGNER CALLED to ask about flickers. It seems that he works in the Galleria, a high-rise office building on Colorado Blvd. A flicker excavated a hole in the side of the building, and got into the insulation part. (Don Wedow, who did some carpentry for us, says that flickers can't penetrate ordinary stucco, but that they can dig holes in a substitute material that looks like stucco.) The building management plugged the hole but the flickers dug it out again, and the building didn't pursue it. Unfortunately for the flickers, starlings did pursue them, because by Apr. 28, starlings used the hole and the flickers disappeared.

JOY ASKED ABOUT bird flu: "will 'someone' decide we can no longer feed wild birds because it's not safe?" If science and reason prevail, No. So far, at least, no credible evidence exists of transmittal from wild birds to humans, or from humans to humans. Almost all incidences arose from contact with poultry kept for commercial or personal use. A column in Audubon magazine said that if you want to catch bird flu, take a week's vacation at a poultry farm. That is: chances of transmittal are remote at best.

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.

Aurora's Big Year!

by MaryAnn Bonnell

Birding in Aurora is about to get a lot better thanks to local birders, the Lois Webster Fund of the Audubon Society of Greater Denver, Aurora Wild Birds Unlimited, the Open Space and Natural Resources Division, and (hopefully) you!

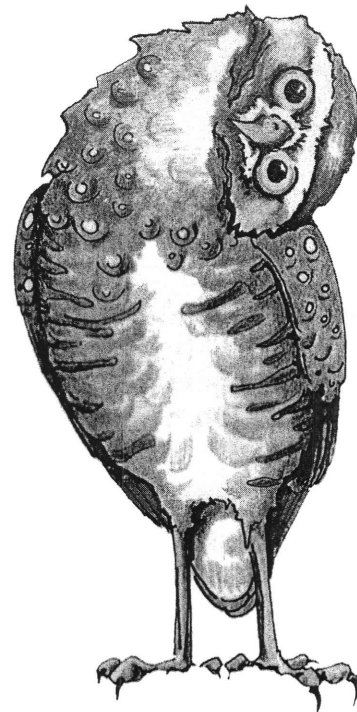
With everything from prairie to ponderosa pine forest to offer our avian friends, it is no surprise that bird watching has always been a great way to get to know Aurora's Natural Areas and to treat yourself to an inexpensive and rewarding treasure hunt just about any day of the year.

Since the Big Year's official start on Saturday, May 13th, we have compiled a list of 86 species of birds spotted in 13 different locations, including Aurora's natural areas, reservoirs, backyards, and even parking lots. Highlights include western tanagers in the Dam West Neighborhood, a veery at Saddle Rock Golf Course, nesting western bluebirds at Ponderosa Preserve, cinnamon teals at Quincy Reservoir, and a black-chinned hummingbird at Cherry Creek Reservoir!

While this amazing and international show of avian diversity has played out for years in Aurora, no one has ever compiled a bird list for public use that is specific to our City. Starting on Saturday, May 13th, 2006 and ending on Saturday, May 12th, 2007, we invite you to share your Aurora bird sightings with us to help us build an observation-based bird list for the City.

Many birders of all ability levels have already contributed lists, data sheets, and sightings records for this project. Please consider sharing what you see and know with us as well.

To participate in Aurora's Big Year, please submit sightings and lists electronically to nature@auroragov.org or stop by the Aurora Wild Birds Unlimited (located at Iliff and Peoria) to drop off sightings and other bird intelligence. Not a birder? Get a taste of what you are missing by joining us for a guided bird walk (offered the second Saturday of each month. Location varies—please see our calendar for specifics). The goal of Aurora's Big Year is not only to create a great Aurora bird list, but also to increase awareness and appreciation for the creatures that connect us to our local natural resources as well as natural places thousands of miles away.



The burrowing owl is the official logo of Aurora's Big Year project

Aurora's Big Year May 12th, 2006 – May 13th, 2007 Sightings Records

Species	Date	Location
Greater White-fronted Goose	11/05/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Snow Goose	10/31/06	Aurora Reservoir
Tundra Swan	11/02/06	Cherry Creek State Park
American White Pelican	05/15/06	Quincy Reservoir
Double-crested Cormorant	05/15/06	Quincy Reservoir
Great Blue Heron	05/13/06	Aurora Reservoir
Canada Goose	05/13/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Wood Duck	05/13/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Gadwall	05/13/06	Cherry Creek State Park
American Wigeon	09/29/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Mallard	05/13/06	Sand Creek Greenway
Blue-winged Teal	05/13/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Cinnamon Teal	05/13/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Northern Shoveler	05/15/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Northern Pintail	10/31/06	Aurora Reservoir
Green-winged Teal	05/13/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Canvasback	10/11/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Redhead	10/25/06	Aurora Reservoir
Ring-necked Duck	10/19/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Lesser Scaup	05/14/06	Murphy Creek Golf Course
Surf Scoter	10/23/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Black Scoter	11/11/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Long-tailed Duck	12/06/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Bufflehead	10/25/06	Aurora Reservoir
Common Goldeneye	10/25/06	Aurora Reservoir
Hooded Merganser	10/18/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Common Merganser	05/15/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Red-breasted Merganser	08/19/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Ruddy Duck	09/14/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Chukar	07/23/06	Meadow Hills
Ring-necked Pheasant	05/13/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Red-throated Loon	10/23/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Common Loon	10/16/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Pied-billed Grebe	06/02/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Horned Grebe	10/16/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Red-necked Grebe	11/11/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Eared Grebe	05/21/06	Aurora Reservoir
Western Grebe	05/16/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Clark's Grebe	05/15/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Great Blue Heron	05/15/06	Quincy Reservoir
Great Egret	08/14/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Snowy Egret	06/2/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Green Heron	06/21/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Black-crowned Night-heron	05/13/06	Cherry Creek State Park
White-faced Ibis	05/13/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Turkey Vulture	06/21/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Osprey	05/21/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Bald Eagle	05/18/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Northern Harrier	06/03/06	Plains Conservation Center
Cooper's Hawk	05/13/06	Star K Ranch
Swainson's Hawk	05/13/06	Star K Ranch
Red-tailed Hawk	05/13/06	Star K Ranch
Ferruginous Hawk	09/23/06	Plains Conservation Center

American Kestrel	05/13/06	Ponderosa Preserve
Merlin	12/06/06	Plains Conservation Center
Peregrine Falcon	08/25/06	Pronghorn Prairie Preserve
Prairie Falcon	08/25/06	Pronghorn Prairie Preserve
Virginia Rail	05/16/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Sora	07/31/06	Cherry Creek State Park
American Coot	05/14/06	Murphy Creek Golf Course
Sandhill Crane	09/29/06	Aurora Reservoir
Killdeer	05/13/06	Cherry Creek State Park
American Avocet	05/13/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Greater Yellowlegs	10/10/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Lesser Yellowlegs	05/13/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Solitary Sandpiper	07/21/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Willet	05/15/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Spotted Sandpiper	05/15/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Upland Sandpiper	07/08/06	1-70 and Tower Rd
Marbled Godwit	07/08/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Sanderling	09/11/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Semipalmated Sandpiper	8/30/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Western Sandpiper	07/18/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Least Sandpiper	10/16/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Baird's Sandpiper	08/30/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Pectoral Sandpiper	11/11/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Long-billed Dowitcher	10/10/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Wilson's Snipe	05/13/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Wilson's Phalarope	05/13/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Jaeger (unk. species)	08/05/06	Aurora Reservoir
Pomarine Jaeger	09/24/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Franklin's Gull	09/14/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Bonaparte's Gull	09/25/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Ring-billed Gull	05/13/06	Aurora Reservoir
California Gull	08/13/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Herring Gull	10/11/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Thayer's Gull	12/01/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Lesser Black-backed Gull	10/04/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Sabine's Gull	09/18/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Black-legged Kittiwake	11/03/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Common Tern	09/29/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Forster's Tern	08/04/06	Cherry creek State Park
Black Tern	05/18/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Rock Pigeon	05/13/06	Star K Ranch
Eurasian Collared-dove	05/13/06	Murphy Creek Neighborhood
Mourning Dove	05/13/06	Star K Ranch
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	07/14/06	Aurora Sports Park
Great Horned Owl	05/13/06	Ponderosa Preserve
Burrowing Owl	05/13/06	Plains Conservation Center
Common Nighthawk	05/17/06	Aurora Reservoir
Black-chinned Hummingbird	05/15/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Broad-tailed Hummingbird	05/26/06	Meadow Hills
Belted Kingfisher	05/13/06	Sand Creek Greenway
Northern Flicker	05/13/06	Star K Ranch
Northern Flicker, yellow-shafted	10/14/06	Sand Creek Park
Olive-sided Flycatcher	09/02/06	Plains Conservation Center
Western Wood-Pee-wee	05/16/06	Saddle Rock Golf Course
Gray Flycatcher	09/02/06	Plains Conservation Center
Western Kingbird	05/13/06	Star K Ranch
Eastern Kingbird	05/13/06	Star K Ranch

Loggerhead Shrike	08/22/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Northern Shrike	11/02/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Plumbeous Vireo	09/02/06	Ponderosa Preserve
Warbling Vireo	07/10/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Blue Jay	05/13/06	Sand Creek Greenway
Black-billed Magpie	05/13/06	Star K Ranch
American Crow	05/13/06	Ponderosa Preserve
Common Raven	06/03/06	Plains Conservation Center
Horned Lark	05/13/06	Plains Conservation Center
Tree Swallow	05/14/06	Murphy Creek Golf Course
Violet-green Swallow	06/02/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	05/16/06	Saddle Rock Golf Course
Cliff Swallow	05/18/06	Delaney Farm
Barn Swallow	05/13/06	Meadow Hills
Red-breasted Nuthatch	05/16/06	Saddle Rock Golf Course
White-breasted Nuthatch	05/13/06	Star K Ranch
Pygmy Nuthatch	05/13/06	Ponderosa Preserve
Rock Wren	05/13/06	Plains Conservation Center
Bewick's Wren	08/05/06	Plains Conservation Center
House Wren	05/13/06	Star K Ranch
Marsh Wren	05/16/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	05/13/06	Ponderosa Preserve
Eastern Bluebird	10/27/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Western Bluebird	05/13/06	Ponderosa Preserve
Mountain Bluebird	06/03/06	Plains Conservation Center
Townsend's Solitaire	09/19/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Veery	05/16/06	Saddle Rock Golf Course
Swainson's Thrush	05/16/06	Cherry Creek State Park
American Robin	05/13/06	Sand Creek Greenway
Gray Catbird	05/16/06	Saddle Rock Golf Course
Northern Mockingbird	05/27/06	Beck Center
Brown Thrasher	07/21/06	1st Village East (backyard)
European Starling	05/13/06	Star K Ranch
Cedar Waxwing	06/28/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Orange-crowned Warbler	09/02/06	Plains Conservation Center
Yellow Warbler	05/13/06	Sand Creek Greenway
Yellow-rumped Warbler	05/13/06	Sand Creek Greenway
Townsend's Warbler	8/25/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Black-and-white Warbler	8/28/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Common Yellowthroat	05/13/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Wilson's Warbler	08/16/06	Jewell Wetland
Yellow-breasted Chat	05/25/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Western Tanager	05/16/06	Dam East Neighborhood
American Tree Sparrow	10/30/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Chipping Sparrow	05/13/06	Ponderosa Preserve
Brewer's Sparrow	05/13/06	Ponderosa Preserve
Vesper Sparrow	06/03/06	Plains Conservation Center
Lark Sparrow	05/13/06	Ponderosa Preserve
Lark Bunting	07/06/06	Pronghorn Natural Area
Song Sparrow	05/13/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Lincoln's Sparrow	11/03/06	Cherry Creek State Park
White-crowned Sparrow	10/06/06	Star K Ranch
Dark-eyed Junco	10/28/06	Star K Ranch
Northern Cardinal	05/29/06	Murphy Creek Neighborhood
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	06/03/06	Backyard near Fitzsimmons
Black-headed Grosbeak	05/18/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Blue Grosbeak	06/22/06	Spillway Open Space

Red-winged Blackbird	05/13/06	Sand Creek Greenway
Western Meadowlark	05/13/06	Star K Ranch
Yellow-headed Blackbird	05/13/06	Murphy Creek Neighborhood
Brewer's Blackbird	05/13/06	Star K Ranch
Common Grackle	05/13/06	Sand Creek Greenway
Great-tailed Grackle	05/16/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Brown-headed Cowbird	05/13/06	Sand Creek Greenway
Orchard Oriole	06/22/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Baltimore Oriole	06/26/06	Cherry Creek State Park
Bullock's Oriole	05/13/06	Star K Ranch
House Finch	05/13/06	Sand Creek Greenway
Lesser Goldfinch	05/29/06	Murphy Creek Neighborhood
American Goldfinch	05/13/06	Sand Creek Greenway
House Sparrow	05/13/06	Sand Creek Greenway