



September/October 2005

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BioBlitz 2005 a big success despite 100° temperatures

by Sandy Elliott, ASGD Development & Community Relations Director

The BioBlitz celebration was held on July 15 and 16 at the Audubon Center at Chatfield. Despite record-breaking 100 degree plus weather, over 200 children and adults attended a variety of workshops and presentations including Bats of Colorado, A Visit to a Bird Banding Station, Herp Hunt and family bird walks. Check www.denveraudubon.org for species list and additional photos.



Photos left to right. Top: BioBlitz participants on a family bird walk through the Chatfield wetlands. A boy examines a painted turtle that he discovered in the pond. A mother helps her daughter with the BioBlitz Badge checklist. Bottom: A turkey vulture from the Birds of Prey Foundation spreads its wing to the delight of the crowd. Ornithologist Meredith McBurney from Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory shows a group of children a bird that she weighed, measured, banded and released. Ann Bonnell checks on the progress of the number of species counted.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE-

In his book *Last Child in the Woods* (Algonquin Books, 2005), author Richard Louv traces the radical change of the way children of today experience nature as compared to the way Americans around his age, baby boomers or older, enjoyed a kind of free, natural out-of-doors play. As a boy, Louv explored the woods, fields and creeks near his home. He writes that children today are restricted from that kind of learning experience out of fear, overly scheduled days or by using unstructured time in front of a computer or television. Urban sprawl has taken away wild places where children could play freely. Families rarely use weekends for recreation, but for doing chores, errands and organized activities such as soccer games.

Louv says today's kids can identify cartoon characters but not the plants and animals in their own communities. He cites cutting edge research which concludes that direct exposure to nature is essential for healthy childhood development. Exposure to nature is important therapy for depression, obesity, attention deficit disorders and can dramatically improve such necessary life-long skills such as problem solving, critical thinking and decision making.

All this makes what we are doing at the Audubon Center at Chatfield even more critical. Those inner city kids who come for a day doing activities designed to help them learn about their world often express their appreciation by saying that "this is the best day" of school all year. Affluent suburban kids are fascinated when taught to observe a leech instead of screaming at the sight of such a creature.

We have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of thousands of children. The Audubon Center at Chatfield owes its existence to all those volunteers and organizations who gave time, effort, and dollars to build it. Now we owe it to all children to give our time, effort and dollars to make sure our kids are not the "last child in the woods."



Thank You!

APPLAUSE FOR OUR VOLUNTEERS

JUL/AUG WARBLER MAILING: Willa Brunkhorst, Marcus L. Goodbody, Doug Hodous, Harry Hubbard, Betty L. McGinnis, Viola (Vi) Nicholson, Ruth Schoening,


SPRING APPEAL MAILING: Willa Brunkhorst, Marcus L. Goodbody, Courtney James, Betty L. McGinnis, Viola (Vi) Nicholson, Arlene Raskin, Ann Stark, Bill Turner

ADOPT-A-PLATTE BIRD SURVEY: Peter Mulholland, Joyce Quigley, Peggy Roberts, Ruth Schoening, Betsy Weitkamp, Ralph & Emilie Wiersma

Vlynn Forrester, Krista Redlinger, Grace Weber

AUDUBON CENTER: Coleman Eich, Fred Griest

AUDUBON AMBASSADOR: Barb Shissler at The Front Range Birding Company's open house



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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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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



– FIELD TRIPS –

Walk the Wetlands

DATE: Sunday, Sept. 4 8 a.m.

Sunday, Oct. 2. 9 a.m. (new winter meeting time)

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 and 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 will hike along the South Platte River and look for fall migrants and winter arrivals. We always have a surprise. Dress in layers for the weather. Bring binoculars, field guide, water and a snack. Wear long pants because the poison ivy is lush and the knapweed is prickly.

South Platte Park

DATE: Sunday, Sept. 25 8 a.m. (Half day)

LEADER: Doris Cruze 303-798-8072

Pre-registration: Required

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

MEETING PLACE: Carson Nature Center, South Platte Park (west on Mineral from Santa Fe; right at first traffic light; between two RTD parking lots. Meet in parking lots north of two-story log building.

DESCRIPTION: Join ASGD president Doris Cruze to explore this amazingly rich habitat along the South Platte River. This will be an easy hike and is wheelchair accessible. You'll see water birds as well as a variety of land birds in the cottonwood groves. Bring binoculars and water.

The Big Sit!

DATE: Sunday, Oct. 9

Dawn to dusk – come any time!

LEADER: Joey Kellner 303-978-1748

Pre-registration: Not necessary

FEE: None

MEETING PLACE: Heron Overlook, Chatfield State Park. From the Deer Creek entrance, go right at the T and continue around the reservoir, and a half mile after you cross the South Platte River, make a hard left into the large parking lot. At the far right corner, a trail leads to the Heron Overlook.

DESCRIPTION: The Big Sit!, an international birding event,

has exacting, loose and frivolous standards. Big Sitters! count all the birds they see or hear from within a circle with a 17-foot diameter. Counting Sitters! may send out scouts and beaters to find other birds and identify them, as long as a Sitter! sees the bird from within the circle. All around the world, on this date, people will Big Sit!

Join Joey Kellner, Chatfield's leading field ornithologist, and other recruits for an hour, a morning or all day. Drop by whenever you like or volunteer to substitute for the leaders for an hour or two. Joey maintains an hourly chart of the birds that Sitters! see from the circle. In the past two years he has tallied 55-65 species. Bring chairs, breakfast, lunch, dinner, picnics, coffees, etc. Don't forget binoculars, scopes, field guides and other essential birding equipment.

Roxborough State Park

DATE: Sunday, Oct. 16 8 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

LEADER: Doris Cruze, 303-798-8072

Pre-registration: Required

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

MEETING PLACE: Visitor's Center, Roxborough State Park.

DESCRIPTION: Hike spectacular trails through the red rock formations for two miles. Look for golden eagles as well as local foothills and scrub oak birds such as scrub-jays, towhees and chickadees. If you like, bring lunch to eat on the patio, as well as binoculars and water.

Beginning Bird Watching Class

DATE: Thursday, Sept. 22 7-9

p.m.

Classroom session at the Audubon Center at Chatfield

Saturdays, Sept. 24, Oct 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29: 8 a.m.-2 p.m.

Field trips to birdwatching sites around Denver—Chatfield, Barr Lake and Castlewood Canyon state parks, Wheat Ridge Greenbelt and Genesee Mountain Park.

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

FEE: \$120/members,

\$140/non-members

DESCRIPTION: Voted "Best of Denver!" 20 years ago and still going strong. Colorado's premier (and most entertaining) birding couple teach the art and science of birding as no one else can. 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

TRAVEL, FIELD TRIPS, CLASSES & PROGRAMS CONTD.

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



Teacher Workshops Offered

DATES: **Saturday, October 8**
WOW! Wonders of Wetlands
Sunday, October 9
POW! Planning of Wetlands

WHERE: **Audubon Center at Chatfield**

DESCRIPTION: ASGD is teaming up with Environmental Concern, Inc., to provide these two hands-on trainings at the Audubon Center. They are perfect for teachers, youth group leaders and volunteer naturalists who want to incorporate wetland ecology activities into their programs.

WOW! brings the wetlands into the classroom through science, reading, math, art and social studies. The curriculum guide has over 50 hands-on activities that are correlated to the National Science Education Standards.

POW! helps you involve your students in projects to create wildlife habitat and improve environmental quality. Lessons in the educators' guide involve science, math, engineering and social studies. Incorporating POW! activities into your classroom is a wonderful way to empower students to make a difference in their communities.

The fee for WOW! is \$45 and POW! is \$50. (Or sign up for both classes at \$80.) Participants will receive the educator's guide book) as part of the training. Continuing education credit from the Colorado School of Mines is available for teachers. Register

Volunteer Opportunities

To sign up contact Susan at 303-973-9530 or ssmith@denveraudubon.org.

VOLUNTEER NATURALIST TRAINING

Wednesdays, September 14 and 21, 8:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Help lead groups of elementary grade children on field trips at the Audubon Center. These two days of training will prepare you for the Pond Ecology and Home, Sweet Nest programs. Additional "on the job" training is provided throughout the school year.

BARR LAKE BIRDING FESTIVAL

Saturday, September 17, 8 a.m. – Noon
Be an ambassador for Denver Audubon and staff an informational table at the festival. As part of our booth, we will have simple bird crafts for kids.

WETLANDS TRAIL PROJECT

Saturday, September 24, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.
We are teaming up with Volunteers of Outdoors Colorado to create a new interpretive trail at the Chatfield Wetlands. We need volunteers to assist with hospitality (preparing and serving snacks and lunch) and to be roving naturalists.

COMCAST CARES DAY

Crew Leader Orientation – Sept. 29, 7 p.m. – 8 p.m.
Project Day – October 1, 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Help lead crews on habitat restoration, garden maintenance and trail projects. Comcast typically brings over 150 employees to volunteer for a day of service at the Audubon Center.

Fall Bird Counts

Denver has conducted Fall Bird Counts for over 20 years. Denver Field Ornithologists and ASGD co-sponsor this tradition. There are no fees, but some sites require pre-registration. Bring binoculars, scopes for the reservoir counts, a field guide and your lunch.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 8

CHERRY CREEK RESERVOIR

LEADER: J. B. Hayes, 303-798-9683
MEETING PLACE: 7 a.m. at the marina, inside west gate near Cherry Creek High School.
State Parks Pass required.

SATURDAY, SEPT. 10

WATERTON (DOWNSTREAM. 4-5 MILE HIKE)

LEADER: Bob Brown, 303-791-6204
MEETING PLACE: 6:30 a.m. at the Audubon Center at Chatfield (left turn immediately after turning onto Waterton/Roxborough road and before the DOW parking lot for Waterton Canyon). Wear long pants (not shorts) due to bare-leg-unfriendly plants such as poison ivy, thistles and knapweed.

BARR LAKE STATE PARK

LEADER: Dick Schottler, 303-278-8035.
MEETING PLACE: 6:30 a.m. at Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, 14500 Lark Bunting Lane. South off Bromley Lane; from I-76, first road east of railroad track. This is a 10-mile, all-day hike around the lake (or equivalent).

BARR LAKE PERIPHERY

LEADER: Jackie King, 303-287-1644.
MEETING PLACE: 7 a.m. at entrance gate to 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.
MEETING PLACE: 6 a.m. at West (Deer Creek) entrance to park.
State Parks Pass required.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN ARSENAL

Leader: Lynn Willcockson, 303-757-7000.
Call leader to sign up, either before Aug. 28 or after Sept. 8.

SUNDAY SEPT. 11

CASTLEWOOD CANYON STATE PARK

LEADER: Randy Lentz, 303-680-3381.
MEETING PLACE: 6:30 a.m. at the Homestead. From CO 86, 0.5 miles west of Franktown, turn south on Castlewood Canyon Road, go two miles to old entrance. Homestead is the first parking lot on the left. State Parks pass required.

MONDAY, SEPT. 12

LOWER BEAR CREEK AND MARSTON LAKE

LEADER: Tamie Bulow, 303-462-1238.
MEETING PLACE: 7 a.m. at northwest corner of Hampden (US 285) and South Sheridan Boulevard., in front of Albertson's. Please call leader if you plan to go.



Eagle Eye

Watching Public Policy for the Environment
by Polly Reetz

This fall we Audubon members will vote – along with all Colorado voters – on Referenda C and D. This duo of fiscal measures passed the legislature last spring and will now appear on the fall ballot. Senator Ken Gordon lays out the case for these Referenda elsewhere in this newsletter, but here I want to draw your attention to a couple of things that will impact **you** if these don't pass.

First, think about the long lines at the Motor Vehicle offices last time you had to renew your driver's license (a State-issued document). When our son went down to replace his learner's permit with an actual license, it took hours – time enough to read a good book. If State finances aren't repaired (Referendum C) we can expect ever-fewer staff and even-longer waits. This affects **everyone** who drives, which is most of the voters. Send a thank-you note to Doug Bruce and Jon Caldara (director of the Independence Institute) next time this happens to you.

Second, check out the recent article in the Rocky Mountain News (July 18) about Colorado's drinking water program. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency issued a review of Colorado's Water Quality Control Division and found that the agency is substantially undermanned and overworked. The division itself reported last year that it is staffed 40 percent below other states of comparable size and responsibilities and could be subject to takeover by the federal government. It doesn't take genius to figure out that cuts in the State budget have caused the understaffing. This is an example of our State's fiscal policy in action – it starves environmental regulators to the detriment of public health and welfare.

Third, you might ask about the money in the Species Conservation Trust Fund, money set aside so that the State could meet its obligations in managing and recovering endangered and threatened species in Colorado. Quite simply, **there isn't any**. Legislators have systematically raided such trust funds in an effort to balance the budget (a balanced budget is required by law). Unless we restore fiscal sanity and responsibility by passing Referenda C and D, those trust funds and perhaps those species will be history in Colorado.

A Busy Summer. While the legislature is not in session, Audubon lobbyist Jen Boulton stays busy tracking interim legislative committees, especially the Interim Water Committee. One issue she fully expects to see rise again next session is the question of recreation in-channel diversions or RICDs. These are water rights claimed by municipalities, typically, to keep water in a river or stream for a recreational use like a whitewater park (in Vail, Fort Collins, Golden, Gunnison and Pueblo). You would think no one could object to a water right for keeping the water in the stream—it helps preserve riparian areas, fish and wildlife—but water developers see such rights as a barrier to future upstream development. That is, if you have to guarantee that someone downstream from you gets his water,

you may not be able to take any water out higher up. So that's a battle that will probably come up again next spring.

A second issue that's liable to return is the "Superslab," a proposed highway/railroad right-of-way that would be built by a private company on the plains east of I-25. Supposedly the highway would take only trucks (for a toll), and the railroad lines would get freight rail traffic out of the metro areas. **But** the proponent wants to use an old law dating from the mining era that gives private entities the right to condemn private property for their right-of-way. Property owners in the path of this 12-mile-wide swath swarmed into Denver last year and defeated a bill to unify tolls in all the different counties this tollway would cross. However, the Governor vetoed a bill that would have ended the right of eminent domain for private entities, so the threat still stands. Incidentally, the Governor also vetoed both the bills that addressed water conservation, so we are back to square one on that too.

We have received a request from the Douglas County Citizens for Wildlife for help with prairie dog management issues in Highlands Ranch. The HR Metro District follows a policy of "thinning" prairie dog colonies every year, thereby diminishing habitat for a whole range of species; and Shea Homes is planning to poison or capture a whole colony to remove it permanently, rather than relocate the animals to available, suitable habitat elsewhere in HR.

By computer, contact them at save.douglasco.wildlife@gmail.com. You can sign their petition online at www.theetitionsite.com.takeaction/5899867250.

NEW

LEICA - "TEST DRIVE PROGRAM"

We now have the following Leica products available to sign out for an in the field weekend "Test Drive":

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in the Brookridge Shopping Center)

The art and craft of winter feeding

By Michael Lazare

What could be more cheerful on a cold, drab winter's morning than to observe a multitude of birds chirping at a full bird feeder? Fortunately this is one of the most accessible and least expensive joys of the winter months. All that's required is a sheltered spot, a well-designed bird feeder and a plentiful supply of food.

A personal note: I have been trying for years to keep squirrels from raiding my bird feeders. I have tried several types of "squirrel-proof" feeders, all without success. Finally I have given in to the balance of nature. I accept the fact that I will be feeding squirrels as well as birds, and I have come to enjoy the interplay among them. That having been said, there is a large variety of feeders on the market. They may be in the shape of houses; they may be tubular, circular or spherical. They can be mounted on poles, hung from tree or shrub branches, brackets or porch overhangs. Whatever type you chose, bear in mind the real-estate maxim – location, location, location. Feeders must be mounted in a place where birds can readily find them, but where they are protected from predators. Most people place their feeders close to the house, where they can easily be reached for refilling, and where the birds will provide maximum enjoyment. Be careful, however, to put them far enough away so that birds will not crash into windows.

It may take a while for birds to find newly installed feeders, particularly if they are put up in the fall, when food is still readily available. But don't be impatient. Put it up and they will come.

Should you be so inclined, you could open a full-service restaurant, with separate stations and kinds of food for various species. Chickadees and finches are partial to sunflower seeds. Jays love peanuts. Juncos, mourning doves and sparrows like millet. Pine siskins and finches prefer niger seed. Other varieties like corn. Feeders can be dedicated to a specific type of bird, but a good compromise is a blend of various foods, allowing various species to feed at the same time. Another solution is to use only black oil sunflower seeds, which is high in oil content (and therefore fat, which birds must have in large quantities during the winter).

Fall Members Dinner features Wendy Shattil and Bob Rozinski

Long-time ASGD supporters Wendy Shattil and Bob Rozinski are the featured speakers at the Fall Members dinner, Saturday, Oct 8, 6 p.m., at Calvary Baptist Church. They will exhibit and discuss their new book of photographs, *Valley of the Dunes*, recently released by Fulcrum Publishing. It provides an intimate look at one of Colorado's most spectacular and fascinating regions—the San Luis Valley and the Great Sand Dunes. The book contains 150 dramatic photos including the largest dune field in North America. Many images have not been shown before. *Valley of the Dunes* will be for sale at the dinner with proceeds benefiting ASGD. Members will receive dinner invitations in the mail.

Many varieties which feed on seeds also love suet – woodpeckers, flickers, chickadees and nuthatches. Suet cakes, and holders made to contain them, can be hung away from seed feeders. Large pine cones dipped in melted fat or stuffed with peanut butter are ideal.

Why is fat so necessary? Consider the black-capped chickadee. Scientists have found that on a winter morning fat accounts for three percent of a chickadee's weight, but by twilight the percentage has risen to seven. Why? Simply because fat has twice the caloric content of carbohydrates; the bird fattens up during the day, while it can eat, in order to survive the night, when it can't. Percentages of fat increase may not be as dramatic in other birds, but fat is a basic requirement for birds.

Don't forget that they need to drink and bathe in addition to eating. Birdbaths also come in different varieties, but they, too, must be placed properly, away from possible predators, or at least in the open where birds can have warning before the cat pounces. Obviously ice is useless to birds, so you need to remove ice regularly in sub-freezing temperatures.

It doesn't take much money or skill to install bird feeders and baths, but it's an investment that will pay rich dividends, in enjoyment and in ecological balance.

Wild Bird Landing



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303.400.1977

Hummingbird yard open for viewing

Tina Jones, an ASGD member, has opened her Bow Mar yard for birdwatchers from now until the end of September. Tina has spent years transforming her yard into the ideal native habitat to attract hummingbirds. It is a great opportunity to hone your identification skills on all ages of calliope hummers, since they are the most common species at her property.

If you plan to visit, please follow these Tina's request to:

- 1) Call ahead of time with a rough estimate of what day and time of day you will be coming. 303-794-2647.
- 2) When you get to the house, please sign the register, located at the entrance to the patio.
- 3) Please write what you saw next to your name, so that others may benefit from your sightings.
- 4) Please make a special note if you saw a black-chinned, or a ruby-throated Hummingbird. I will be in and out of town in August, and will not be able to update the yard list as often as in the past. If you see a ruby-throated, it is best to ask someone over to the yard for confirmation, and then call it into the rare bird alert. In this case, leave a message on my phone machine, please! Immature black-



Humming bird photo courtesy of Mel Emeigh

taken in Tina Jones yard summer of 2004.

chinned hummers are fairly common in my yard in August.

5) Please do not walk around the yard because it is still suffering from the drought. (My yard help has my permission to walk around the yard.)

6.) This year you can sit in lawn chairs in the backyard and view hummers. To get to this location walk east through the stone patio, from the south end. There should be 2-3 feeders in the backyard.

Another place to look for hummers is on the patio. Stand towards the west side of patio for this, and look at containers. To view in the front driveway, stand either at the north or south end of the driveway. Do not stand in the middle of the gravel drive because this blocks the view for other people. There are many container plants in this area which should be checked. There should be 2-3 feeders in front of the house. Many of the birds only go for

plants in my yard and not the feeders, so keep your eyes open. There can be a few mosquitoes in the evening, so have some spray on hand.

Directions and parking: The address is 4400 Bow Mar Dr., Littleton, CO, 80123. The number 4400 is on a post. Park your car across from the house near the large cottonwoods, and park your car so that it is off of Bow Mar Drive a bit.

Vote yes on ballot measures C and D

By Senate Majority Leader Ken Gordon

In Colorado, because of the TABOR amendment, which passed as an initiative in 1992, we have a spending and revenue limit that causes refunds after we get to that limit. This creates anomalies. Let's say that you go camping at a state park and buy a permit for ten dollars. You have probably just cut higher education funding in Colorado by ten dollars because when we are in a TABOR surplus any additional revenue does not allow the state to spend more, it just increases the refund. Increased use of state parks by tourists results in greater TABOR refunds and cuts in General Fund spending. Most of these cuts have come from higher education although some will come from Medicaid or other services as well.

State spending can increase each year by inflation and population growth over the previous year's spending. If the previous year was a recession we are stuck at the previous year's spending limit with the inflation and population growth adjustment.

What this means is that state services cannot recover from a recession even after the economy has recovered. We may have the revenue to fund services but we have to refund the money and cut services. If you are concerned about protecting the environment then you would be concerned about cuts that the Department of Natural Resources has had—over \$6,000,000—since 2001. You would also be concerned about cuts in the number of people responsible for monitoring water quality.

Higher education will be one of the hardest hit areas of funding. You have heard of in-state tuition. That is something they will have in other states. Our best professors will move to other schools where they will have a chance to get better salaries. Our best students will follow them because they will not want to pay higher tuition for an inferior product. Businesses will choose other places to operate because we will not be able to provide them with an educated work force.

Ballot measures C and D create a five year time-out from TABOR. During this five years the state will be able to use the money that comes in from our current tax rates to provide services for the people of Colorado. Taxes will not be raised and Colorado has low tax rates. There will be no TABOR rebate though. The money that would have been sent back to the taxpayers will be able to be used for education, health care and transportation.

Colorado is better than this. People here should realize that we need infrastructure and education to have a great state. Please help pass ballot measures C and D. If you have any questions or if you want to help you can email me at ken@kengordon.com I am helping to organize a walk across the breadth of Colorado to support C and D. If you are interested in walking all or part of the state we would be glad to have your support. You can sign up for the walk at TheColoradoWalk.org.

If you would like to receive updates visit www.kengordon.com

Czech Republic Trip full of wonders

by Bill Turner

Fascinating birding, lovely castles, picturesque villages founded in the twelfth century, walks through shady woods, friendly folk and great beer sum up the wonderful experience six of us enjoyed on the ASGD trip to the Czech Republic for 10 days in May. Our guide throughout was Otto Zavalisky - ardent conservationist and birder extraordinaire. Wending our way through field and forest to off-the-beaten-track spots. Otto took us to his favorite birding areas where he has been tending nest boxes and banding birds for many years. Otto's birding expertise, desire to show us everything, and indefatigable energy made for many treasured memories.

The birding highlights were numerous with perhaps the most memorable being our visit to the nest of an eagle owl (the largest owl in the world) with three 25 day old chicks in it. Otto had banded the chicks two weeks before our encounter. After we photographed the chicks in their nest in a hollow on a gentle slope in a wooded area, Otto passed around a chick for close-up views. A great tit nest contained four babies and Otto told us they can have two or three broods each season.

White storks nesting on roofs, flocks of black-headed gulls in the fields, and the great crested grebe with its "wild hairdo" were common sights. A lovely wooded glen with a rushing mountain stream yielded good looks at the European dipper.

Although this bird was of a similar size and shape to the species we know in Colorado, the European species has a white breast and throat which causes it to stand out among the streamside rocks. The wryneck, an aberrant woodpecker, which holds its



An eagle owlette. The eagle owl is the largest species of owl found in the Czech Republic.

neck in a peculiar twisted fashion, fascinated us. We saw and heard the legendary nightingale. And yes, a cuckoo clock sounds just like the cuckoo's call! We viewed the majestic white-tailed eagle soaring among lakeshore trees as well as in the rehabilitation centers we visited. Grey herons, black storks, greylag geese, Montagu's harriers, tawny owls, black and grey-headed woodpeckers, redstarts, black redstarts, collared flycatchers - all of these and many, many more delighted us

Other animals we observed included the huge (i.e. the size of a small dog) European hare, frequently seen in small groups in open fields, and roe deer which were very common on the edges of woodlands. Amphibians were in evidence, too, such as the crested newt and the yellow-bellied toad which had a startlingly bright yellow stomach.

If you would be interested in participating in the next Czech trip with Otto, please call the ASGD office and indicate you'd like to be notified. Keep in mind that this trip can accommodate only a small number of participants, but what an outstanding trip it is!

Thank you to our donors and new Friends

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IN-KIND DONATIONS

Carolyn Roark: computer desk & chair

Charlotte Van Brunt: collection of framed & unframed bird prints

NEW FRIENDS MEMBERS

Sue Barnhart, Michelle Cederborg, Malea Delano, Carolyn DiGuseppi, Mary and Gifford Ewing, Steve Foute, Jason and Delta Harmon, Tim & Candice Johnson, Robert Potter, Cade Spearman, Pat Zeller

backyard birds....

by Hugh Kingery



A FLOCK OF 30 CEDAR WAXWINGS flew into Elaine Cherkezov's yard on May 25; she lives on a small lot in Englewood, but has a large and deep pond. She described how the waxwings vied with each other for the best place along the edge to bathe, after which all flew off for parts unknown. A day or two before, four waxwings had checked out the facilities before they brought their flock in to clean up. In the pond, to her dismay, Koi fish attract Great Blue Herons. The neighbors have a local Heron Alert, and Elaine installed motion-detecting sprinklers to dissuade the herons from consuming the fish. Raccoons also discovered the pond, but the fish flee to the deeper part to escape their predation. For a while last summer a small raccoon took to sleeping in her grape vine that produces food for small birds—and squirrels and raccoons. Another time a flammulated owl flew *into* her house through an open door and tried to exit through a picture window on the other side. She caught it in a blanket and released it outside!

TINA JONES REPORTS something similar from her computer room in BowMar. "A towhee seems to be singing really loud. The song keeps getting louder, and louder, to the point that it was almost hurting my ears. My computer is next to a sliding glass door, which looks out onto an enclosed patio. Well, the towhee turns out to be two feet away from this sliding door, singing away while he is standing on the floor. I hope the whole family doesn't come in."

SUZANNE ALEXANDER SAYS that two great horned owls have taken up residence at the airport, right off of Concourse A. They are living in the crow's nest underneath the canopy right by the walkway to Concourse A. "It is incredible to be able to watch these birds on a daily basis, yet they are extremely smart to have found a really good area. They are protected from the weather under the canopy and the other day as I was watching, apparently they have built a nest in the crow's nest because the second owl just popped up. Plenty of food available."

"ON MY DAILY WALKS along Harvard Gulch from University Boulevard to Colorado Boulevard," writes Ursula Barsch, "I often carry my binoculars. Not only do I spot the birds but people walking the trail report to me their bird sightings. Two ibises were spotted near University. One person took a photo and gave me the picture. But the Cooper's hawk topped it all. It has its nest in a tall old cottonwood tree just half a block north of my house. You can't spot the hawk or its nest without binoculars. The Cooper's is usually perched right next to its nest. On June 24 I spotted a fuzzy wooly head poking out of the nest and another one right next to it. I understand that the Cooper's diet consists of birds. Hopefully it will not catch too many happy little finches but rather house sparrows and starlings instead; better yet some squirrels. But maybe that's asking too much of a Cooper's."

FLO DECESARE WATCHED A HAWK in her yard in Centennial. "I heard a lot of screeching. I looked up and I saw a hawk

chasing a starling. The hawk caught the startling in mid air and landed on the back fence, 20 feet from where I was sitting. It stayed on the fence for 15 minutes until it was all quiet and then flew to the ground beneath the two large spruce trees. He then had lunch. After lunch he sat in the spruce tree. Very shortly two blackbirds landed on my feeder and the hawk came swooping out of the tree attacking the blackbirds. They got so frightened they flew off the feeder and one flew into my kitchen window—bang! As far as I can tell, this time the hawk was not successful in a catch."

"I AM AN EARLY BIRD," claims Nan Brehmer from Green Mountain, and love to sit on the front deck and watch the sun appear. Often I have various bird species watching with me from the tip of the neighbor's roof and the top of the light pole and the loftiest branches of the trees. But June 2 was special. Two robins joined me, sitting on the deck rail. Then a dove sat just above on the roof. A wren started searching the deck floor for insects and even hopped over my foot — only it was too big for a house wren and too white-breasted. A rock wren. Bobs as it walked, the clinching characteristic." Nan's June and July lists had 26 and 32 species respectively, including a yellow-breasted chat that flew outside her window on June 13 and sang "squawky grunts for about five minutes." Six days later she heard it chatter for about six minutes (why he is called a chat, no doubt.)" Also, on June 14, "an itsy-bitsy bird sat on the high wire where the wren never sits – brilliant yellow breast, but otherwise black: black-backed lesser goldfinch." These foothill birds throng our Franktown feeders and mystify by imitating the songs of other birds, the way a mockingbird does. Most recently ours have inserted into their song the raspy call of a western wood-pewee.

OUR FRANKTOWN NEIGHBORS, Buzz and Shirley Bowers, have seen at least five pairs of these goldfinches, along with a few American goldfinches mixed in. They have enjoyed the bonanza of red crossbills that come to their feeders (and several others on the east side of Franktown) every day during May. We noticed a good crop of cones on some ponderosas near there; the crossbills will probably nest over the summer. They time their nesting to cone crops. We've found nests on two different Christmas bird counts.

MERIKAY HAGGERTY, LATE OF OUR BIRD CLASS, emailed me with a description of a flock of 10-15 birds that passed through her Littleton yard June 26. Bushtits, a species we've chronicled in this column as a new interloper into the metro area. Joy had a rather late sharp-shinned hawk June 11-12, and Tina, with some apprehension, watched three turkey vultures on her driveway. After they left she found their goal was a foul-smelling, very dead, raccoon.

LATE REPORTS OF MAY'S WESTERN TANAGERS came from Louise Hector, Joy Scheiving, and Nan. In fact Nan listed six "orange birds" she saw in June: the tanager, robin, spotted towhee, black-headed grosbeak, lazuli bunting (well, barely orange), and Bullock's oriole. Kevin Corwin, in Centennial, hosted a female yellow-shafted flicker for most of July. Nan saw a, surprising for June, bald eagle fly over Green Mountain on June 20 and on July 13 spotted a Cassin's kingbird, ID'd by its "dark area between white throat and yellow breast."

Backyard Birds continued on page 10

BioBlitz 2005 thank yous

Thank you to our volunteers who braved the heat to put on a great festival!

Sally Blanchard	Ann Bonnell
Tom and Diane Bush	Kevin Corwin
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Caroline Roark	MaryEllen Sargent
Joyce Schmidt	Barbara and Frank Shissler
Bill Turner	Mary Taylor Young
Jessica Walters	Dede Williams

Thank you to our partners that offered fun and educational activities at BioBlitz:

Birds of Prey Foundation	Butterfly Pavilion
Colorado Division of Wildlife	Colorado Spider Survey
Denver Museum of Nature & Science	Colorado State Parks
Front Range Birding Company	Kline Microscopes
National Wildlife Federation	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
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Meet people who share your values, who enjoy the outdoors and who like to read. Join us for food, fellowship and

Backyard Birds contd. from page 9

LYNN AND LIZ WILLCOCKSON in southeast Denver had three days (May 28-30) of a rose-breasted grosbeak. "The bird stayed around the yard all day, singing in various trees and then at the feeder. It must have made 10 plus trips to the feeder where it seemed to prefer safflower seeds. Each time it would spend 10-15 minutes feeding and then back in the tree to sing. It really brightens up the yard on a cloudy, dreary day."

FINALLY, BOB SPENCER SAYS, "As it got hot in the afternoon (July 1 in Golden) our neighbor's swamp cooler was going full blast. I noticed two house sparrows clinging to the grill like brown creepers. They found a way to beat the heat. Cool!"

I WELCOME YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS to this column. Audubon has set a deadline of the 25th of alternate months (September, November, etc.), so try to get your reports to me by the 20th. Drop me a note or post card at P.O. Box 584, Franktown 80116, or Email me, ouzels@juno.com.

Lottery pays off for ASGD

Audubon Society of Greater Denver received a \$150,000 grant from Great Outdoors Colorado on June 16, 2005. The money will partially fund several projects on the grounds of the Audubon Center at Chatfield, including an outdoor classroom, a native habitat garden and renovation of the historic farmhouse. The Colorado Lottery funds the GOCO grant program.

Completion of these projects will double the capacity of ASGD to serve local school children and families with quality hands-on outdoor programs that teach the importance of conserving the South Platte River watershed.

Jefferson County represented Denver Audubon during the application process, representing a unique partnership between a county and a non-profit that made possible GOCO funding for the Audubon Nature Center.

"We greatly appreciate the support provided by the Jefferson County commissioners and Open Space staff that saw the value the Audubon Center brings to their residents," says ASGD Executive Director Susan Smith. "We also want to thank our partners at Colorado State Parks and the Army Corps of Engineers who were instrumental in supporting the Audubon Center project."

The ASGD grant is part of \$8.2 million awarded by GOCO this year. Created in 1992 GOCO funds projects that preserve, protect, and enhance Colorado's wildlife, parks, rivers, trails and open spaces. Since it began awarding grants in 1994, GOCO has awarded almost \$489 million for 2,100 projects throughout the state.

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– ASGD TRAVEL –

Spectacular South Africa

by Becky Beckers

March 1 to 13, March 1 to 16 or March 1 to 19, 2006

Africa! The very mention of the word evokes a primordial response in all of us. For the birder, Africa offers many unique species as well as unparalleled adventure. Our trip to Eastern South Africa will include the world famous Kruger National Park as well as the Kingdom of Swaziland and more. Birding is always exciting in Africa! One must always be on the lookout for such potential dangers as lion and elephant but the rewards are well worth it.

Our expert birding guides know how to handle any situation that may come along and still lead us to good birding spots. The guides are all enthusiastic birders themselves and love to show others the treasures of their country. The variety of species is unbelievable. Unlike rainforest birding many of them can be easily observed from the comfort of open sided safari vehicle.



A wide variety of colorful birds will be seen on the Africa trip.

Most of the trip will be spent in the “veldt” which is a combination of bush scrub, small forest and open areas. There are many different niches that nature has filled with a wonderful variety of birds. Also, let us not forget the great numbers of game that inhabit these places. Elephant, rhino, lion, leopard, buffalo, and antelopes of all kinds will be all around us as we bird.

Clear sunny days and subjects that have little fear of man make this trip both a birders and a photographers dream. Our extension to Victoria Falls in Zambia opens up a whole new area with new birds as well as the mighty falls themselves. Join us this March on a true African adventure! March 1 to 13, 2006. The cost is \$3595 double occupancy (add \$500 single). Optional 4 or 7 day extensions available.

For more information and a detailed itinerary, please contact Becky Beckers at www.travelforthebirds.com, 303-766-5266 or AgentBecky@aol.com.

Wish List for the Audubon Center farmhouse renovation

- 12 Lifetime (or aluminum) Tables
- 72 Lifetime (or aluminum) Chairs
- 2 Pellet Stoves
- 2 Cordless Drills
- 9" Band Saw
- 7 1/4" Hand Circular Saw
- Lumber 2x4x8 (quantity = 260)
- 2x4x16 (quantity = 50)
- 4x8x3/4" plywood (quantity = 10)
- 2 Drawer Locking Metal File Cabinets

Please call Sandy at 303-973-9530 if you can donate or sponsor any of these items! Thanks.

Paonia Fall Colors and Wine tasting Weekend

DISCOVER AN UNKNOWN PART OF COLORADO

Friday September 30 - October 3, 2005.

The cool climate found in the valley of the North Fork of the Gunnison River, the West Elks American Viticulture area, fosters the growth of grapes that produces excellent Riesling, Gewürztraminer, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Merlot wines. The Bross Hotel and the Audubon Society of



The Bross Hotel in Paonia

Greater Denver invite you to spend a weekend enjoying the beautiful fall colors and sampling the harvests of the vineyards and many organic farms in the area. Arrive Friday evening and relax at the historic Bross B&B.

Then, after a delicious breakfast, check out the offerings at local fruit and vegetable stands. As we tour the wineries of this, the state's newest and fastest growing viticulture area, we'll pause for a relaxing picnic lunch by the river. You can sample wines from S. Rhodes Vineyards, Albert Eames, Stone Cottage Cellars and Black Bridge Winery. Saturday evening we'll dine under the stars at the Flying Fork Cafe, which is recommended by Gourmet Magazine. After the gastronomic indulgences of the day, you'll be ready to sit on a porch, enjoy the evening breeze, which is credited with making the fruit of the valley so sweet, and plan the purchases you will take home to enjoy.

On our way home, we will stop at the Penny Hot Springs outside of Redstone to enjoy a rejuvenating soak in the therapeutic waters. This expanded weekend includes three nights at the charming Bross B&B (circa 1906), three buffet breakfasts, two box lunches, and guided nature walks along the Gunnison and Grand Mesa rivers. The deadline for registration and payment is September 7. The cost is \$550 per person, double occupancy (Add \$150 for a single. Add \$100 for Non-Member).

If you would like to carpool, ASGD will give you contacts. Call Ann Bonnell at 303-979-6211 for more information. Call 303-979-9530 to register.



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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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