

Dr. Jessica Young continues her battle to save Gunnison sage grouse

by Bradley S. Abramson

On July 29, the Audubon Society of Greater Denver was privileged to host Dr. Jessica Young's informative and impassioned presentation on the Gunnison sage-grouse.

As many of you probably know, Dr. Young, a professor at Western State University in Gunnison, Colorado, is widely recognized as one of, if not the, foremost expert on the Gunnison sage-grouse. In fact, Dr. Young was instrumental in determining that the Gunnison sage-grouse constitutes a species separate and distinct from all other grouse.

Dr. Young began her presentation by pointing out the differences between various grouse species - dividing them, essentially, into alpine and arctic monogamous species, the polygynous forest species, and the lekking plains-dwelling grouse. The Gunnison sage-grouse belongs to the plains group of grouse. Dr. Young explained that, although the arctic and forest-dwelling species of grouse appear to be thriving, all of the lekking species are in trouble and, of the lekking species, the Gunnison sage-grouse is, for a variety of reasons, the most endangered.

The Gunnison sage-grouse is distinguishable from its nearest relative, the greater sage-grouse, by certain typological and behavioral characteristics. The Gunnison sage-grouse is somewhat smaller than the greater sage-grouse. In addition, the Gunnison sage-grouse, unlike the Greater sage-grouse, sports a series of horizontal white bands on its tail feathers. Behaviorally, the male Gunnison sage-grouse, unlike its cousin the greater sage-grouse, throws its long head feathers (known as filoplume feathers) over its head during its impressive mating display. During their strutting displays

they produce vocalizations by beating their wings against their neck feathers and by popping or snapping the air-filled

sacs or pouches located in their chests. Male Gunnison sage-grouse perform

See Gunnison sage grouse continued on page 11

Lois Webster Outdoor Classroom dedication held September 30



The Lois Webster Outdoor Classroom opening ceremonies September 30 welcomed more than 130 enthusiastic supporters to the twilight event (photo upper right). ASGD President Doris Cruze and John Wright, Lois Webster Fund volunteer, honored the life of Lois Webster with the formal dedication of the "Lois Webster Outdoor Classroom" (photo lower right). Photos upper and lower left: Jessica Bordeaux Vigil, White Buffalo Calf Woman, and her daughters performed traditional dances from their Lakota/Dakota heritage and answered questions about their traditions. Members of the audience were invited to dance with Jessica during the program.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE-

\$730,000,000,000 Impact

According to the Fall 2006 report from the Outdoor Industry Foundation of Boulder, outdoor recreationists contribute some \$730 billion a year to the United States economy. About \$46 billion goes for clothing, gear, and accessories. Another \$243 billion is spent for trips involving food, lodging, entertainment, and transportation. Annual tax revenues total \$88 billion a year. Birders account for a significant portion of these totals, as birding is one of the fastest growing outdoor activities.

Participants include people viewing birds and other wildlife (66 million), hiking (56 million people), camping (45 million people), paddling (24 million people), and 122 million others active in bicycling, fishing, snow sports, and hunting.

Obviously, outdoor recreation has a huge economic impact. Millions of people are hitting the slopes, enjoying the wildlife, flocking to lakes and rivers, and spending the dollars to do it. Meanwhile, open space, parks, and natural areas are under constant threat. Development threatens to eat up pristine lands. Oil drilling and mining threaten natural areas. Wilderness areas are threatened by proposals to build roads where only trails now exist.

You have probably heard the dare, "Put your money where your mouth is." What if the millions of people spending billions on outdoor recreation put their mouths where their money is - speaking up to force city, state, and national government to hear the strong case for protecting the wilderness and preserving our natural heritage. What if those 66 million wildlife viewers wrote letters, made phone calls, sent e-mails, and voted responsibly. The impact of such an effort could change the world.

It can be done. It must be done. By becoming a member of Audubon, you have taken the first step. The second step is waiting.



Doris Cruze

Gifts to ASGD

Director's Circle (\$500+): Richard & Margaret Ireland

Contributor's Circle (\$250+): John Brooke & Cheryl Teuton, Helen Hale, Joyce Reavis (for the Lois Webster Fund).

Contributions were also received from: Kenneth Bennett, Catherine Campbell, Doris Cruze, Jane Hays, Dave Hill, Michael Huseby, David Jarboe, Mrs. William B. Kinney, Leora Klayder, Raymond & Marianne Kluever, Peggy Lehmann, Dr. Bruce C. Paton, Margaret W. Roberts, Patricia Somerville, Harry Syer, Robert & Grace Weber, John & Kathleen Zaffore.

Gifts were received in memory of Dr. Peter Spatt from: Douglas Carlson, Franklin OB/GYN Department, Jean A. Giordano, Greenwood Terrace Homeowners Association, Yvonne Rooney, Arthur Spatt, Mary Ann Tavary.

Gifts were received in honor of Mel & Elaine Emeigh to purchase a spotting scope for the Audubon Center from: Neil & Jill Bachman, Faye Carey, Dalyce Due, Bill & Kay Frogge, Stuart & Pat Gunckel, Stuart & Kat Haskins, Dave & Jean Ann Siecke, Ann King Shutts, Galen & Carolyn Weaver, Carolyn Wuthrich.

Carol Taylor donated an HP inkjet printer to the office.

Welcome New Friends Members

Mary Bahde, Karen Bellina, Mary Ann Brown, Sue Corbeil & Sharon Minzer, Kitty Fowler, Elissa Gease, Francis Haas, Jane Hays, Debbie Haynes, Sandy Houghton, Michael Huseby, Mr. & Mrs. Michael Kullas, Greg Landmark Family, Cecily H. McEuen, Jane Roach, David Smith, Paul & Phoebe Thayer.



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MISSION

ASGD is a nonprofit group dedicated to maintaining the health of natural ecosystems through education, political action, scientific research and land preservation, with primary focus on birds, other wildlife and ecosystems of the South Platte River watershed.

MEMBERSHIP

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

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

Editor C. Dale Flowers
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Introducing your new ASGD Executive Director

by Donny Roush, ASGD Executive Director

Late in June, I learned of ASGD's opening for an executive director and I started reading Richard Rhodes' *John James Audubon: The Making of an American*. In August, I interviewed for and was offered the ASGD job. Just then, I was learning from this masterful biography where Audubon was my age. His biggest break came at 41; I'm writing this introduction to you on my 41st birthday.

Not to strain a comparison, but in Audubon's fire in the belly, as well as his ups and downs, I see some of my own life. In the end, his achievements inspire me. And, the achievements of the organizations bearing his name do the same. That good work attracted me, and I am thrilled to now be able to apply my skills to Denver Audubon's work.

I also find solace in Audubon's foibles, that he got discouraged and that he wrestled with doubts. Non-profit work carries the same sorts of struggles. My career is as much a calling and avocation as it is a profession. Those who work on nonprofit boards and committees, who volunteer their time, and who speak out as active citizens deserve the service of dedicated professionals. In my chosen vocation, I try to be one of those.

For the past 11 years, I have lived in Idaho, working for the Idaho Museum of Natural History and the Idaho National Laboratory before becoming the first-ever executive director of the Idaho Environmental Education Association in August 2001. For the past five years, I've been chief bottle-washer at this statewide nonprofit—as the only salaried staffer. With a supportive board and a clear organizational vision, we built a

network of schools demonstrating environment-based education in the age of No Child Left Behind. I also organized an annual conference and worked to improve quality assurance of curricular resources. Our accomplishments were recognized in October when we were awarded Affiliate Organization of the Year by the North American Association for Environmental Education.

Before moving West, I lived in Ohio, the state where I was born and raised. My professional experience ranges across magazine publishing, event management, non-profit administration, educational material development, and environmental research, including evaluation. Degree-wise, I hold an MS in human dimensions of natural resources from Ohio State and a BS in magazine journalism from Bowling Green State University.

What made me seek work in Colorado? My wife's new degree, actually. We had agreed several years ago to follow her PhD in microbiology to the best opportunity it created. That turned out to be the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center at Fitzsimons, where she begins as a researcher in January. She'll be studying the structure and action of cholera toxin.

We, along with our 18-month-old daughter Nora, arrive in Greater Denver permanently about the time this newsletter reaches you.

I look forward to working for you and with you on keeping plenty of places for nature throughout the South Platte watershed. Like Audubon wrote in 1831, "I know I am engaged in an arduous undertaking." Nonetheless, we can meet our mission at Denver Audubon, working together.



*Incoming ASGD Executive Director
Donny Roush*

Staff Migrations

In this issue, we introduce our new Executive Director, Donny Roush. The ASGD Board of Directors completed their search for this position in early August. We are greatly pleased to have Donny join our organization. His commitment to environmental stewardship and education, along with his expertise in non-profit management will be an asset to ASGD. He will be in the office beginning in December.

Susan Smith is transitioning back to her original position (and passion!) of Education Director. She will be on maternity leave from January through March. When Susan returns, she will be managing the environmental education programs, Audubon Center facilities and volunteer program.

You will continue to hear Rhonda Shank's (Office Manager) friendly voice on the phone and Nancy Abramson (Bookkeeper) will continue to keep us financially fit.

For those of you that worked with our former Program Instructor, Laura Steigers, we have this to report: Laura and her husband, John, have spent the majority of the year living in their camper in Alaska. John has contracts with electrical utilities there and is working on a fish oil biodiesel project. Living in a camper could not stop Laura from gardening and she found herself planting native gardens at a BLM Science Center as a volunteer.

Audubon Society of Greater Denver 2006 RAFFLE!

Help raise money for ASGD and get a chance to win fabulous prizes to put under your Christmas tree! Tickets are now on sale at the ASGD office. They are \$5 each or six for \$25. You can also get tickets from board members and volunteers. Call the ASGD office to find someone near you.

**Grand Prize: Compaq Presario V6030US Notebook PC
(valued at \$1,125)**

**2nd Prize: 26" Samsung LCD, Multi-use Television
(valued at \$1,100)**

**3rd Prize: 8x30 Safari Full-Size Binoculars by Steiner
(valued at \$250)**

**Plus other prizes, such as, bird feeders, gift certificates,
books and more!**

The raffle drawing will be on Sunday, December 3 at 1 p.m. at the Audubon Center at Chatfield during our Holiday Open House. You do not need to be present to win.



Eagle Eye

Watching Public Policy for the Environment
by Polly Reetz

B E SURE TO VOTE. The most important thing you can do for the environment in the next few weeks is VOTE; choose mail-in ballots, or go to the polls early or on Election Day. This election will determine both Colorado's and the nation's course for the next several years. The contempt for species conservation and general stewardship of natural resources that we've seen at both state and local levels needs to change! Take time to read the newspapers, listen to the radio, contrast and compare the candidates. Who will work the hardest for our wildlife, open space, clean water and clean air? Audubon does not endorse candidates, but we urge our members to make informed decisions that bring a true sense of environmental stewardship to federal, state and local government levels.

Listening Session in Colorado Springs. On September 15, several ASGD members drove down (actually, up, in terms of altitude) to the University of Colorado campus in Colorado Springs to testify at a government hearing. Federal officials, including Asst. Secretary of Agriculture (and former timber industry lobbyist) Mark Rey, asked for suggestions on Cooperative Conservation, a term that in the last 6 years has often been synonymous with lackadaisical enforcement of federal environmental laws. National Audubon saw this event as a set-up, an offer to opponents of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to denounce both the law and its application, with especially nasty words for the Preble's meadow jumping mouse. Yet in Colorado Springs, criticism of the ESA seemed to commute into expressions of the NEED for cooperation among governments and private landowners. The numerous environmental speakers - many individuals, Audubon Colorado, three Audubon chapters, Trout Unlimited, Sierra Club, Pitkin County and Environmental Defense, among others - reiterated that, "The Act needs funding, not fixing."

The Endangered Species Act is one of the landmark environmental laws of our country. Often since its passage, and particularly in the last six years, lack of funds and staff has crippled listing decisions, recovery planning, landowner involvement and many other programs that could move conservation of rare species forward. Under the Bush administration, an absence of a conservation ethic has exacerbated the dollar shortages. Money from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, for example, which should go for habitat acquisition, has basically been cut to zero. Listing species as Threatened or Endangered has ground to a halt, no matter how reduced their numbers or how dire their situation. It's not that the Act doesn't work; its employment has been avoided for six years.

One ironic result of the strong provisions of the existing Act, mentioned by many speakers, is the rush to cooperation among and within states. Efforts to document the range, abundance, and habitat use of mountain plover and black-tailed prairie dog, for example, moved into high gear when those species were proposed for listing (they weren't listed, though). There is now an inter-state compact on management of the

prairie dog, and although Colorado didn't sign it the Division of Wildlife has put staff and resources into a Grassland Species Conservation Plan and works cooperatively with other state agencies. Not much of this would have happened without the backdrop of the Endangered Species Act.

ASGD has engaged in "cooperative conservation" for years, by helping to fund wildlife research in partnership with the Division of Wildlife, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, universities and other entities with monies from the Lois Webster Fund. But we don't believe that this can replace the strong protections of the Endangered Species Act, which brought about the recovery of the American bald eagle, peregrine falcon, and brown pelican and has prevented the extinction of 99% of species listed under the Act. Examination of endangered species data indicates that the longer a species is listed, the more likely it is to be improving. Since most plants and animals have been protected for only about 16 years, it may take another decade or two for their populations to return to health. Critics who say the Act doesn't work are often the same ones who oppose adequate funding for listing and recovering species, thus creating a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Legislative Priorities. Audubon Societies in Colorado support legislative lobbyist, Jen Boulton, whose priorities are guided by the Audubon Public Policy Committee composed of members from several chapters. This committee will be meeting in the fall to look at the 2007 session of the Colorado legislature. If you have any suggestions for bills to protect, preserve and restore native ecosystems in our state, please convey them to Polly Reetz, the Committee chairman, at reetzfam@juno.com or call the ASGD office, 303-973-9530.

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AUDUBON SOCIETY

of GREATER DENVER

Calendar of Events

NOVEMBER 2006

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	6:30pm Fall Members Dinner	8:00am Master Birder Field Trip
9am Walk the Wetlands	7pm Master Birder Class	Election Day				9am Belmar Park Bird Hike
5	6	7	8	9	10	Vetran's Day 11
12	13	7pm ASGD Board Meeting	14	15	16	17
	7pm Master Birder Class	7pm Conservation Committee		ASGD Office Closed	ASGD Office Closed	8am Rocky Mountain Arsenal Bird Hike
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

DECEMBER 2006

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
9am Walk the Wetlands Noon-2pm Holiday Open House & Raffle Drawing	7pm Master Birder Class					8am Master Birder Field Trip
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Idaho Springs/ Evergreen Christmas Bird Count			2pm Field Trip & Travel Committee			Denver Christmas Bird Count
17	18	19	20	21	22	Hanukkah 23
24	ASGD Office Closed Christmas Day	ASGD Office Closed Kwanzaa	ASGD Office Closed	ASGD Office Closed	ASGD Office Closed	Douglas County Christmas Bird Count
	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

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 & TRAVEL –

Walk the Wetlands

DATE: Sunday, November 5 9am

DATE: Sunday, December 3 9am

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

Bob Brown, and Doris Cruze

Pre-Registration NOT required.

Fee: None

Meeting Place: Parking lot at the Audubon Center at Chatfield. The Audubon Center is located on Waterton Road, 4.4 miles south of C470 and Wadsworth.

DESCRIPTION: We will hike along the South Platte River and look for winter birds such as raptors, ducks, and seed-eating perching birds. We always find surprises. Dress in layers for the weather. Bring binoculars, field guide, water, and a snack.

Belmar Park/ Belmar Historical Park

DATE: Saturday, November 11 9 am – noon (lunch optional)

LEADER: Karleen Schofield

Pre-Registration NOT required.

FEE: None

MEETING PLACE: From 800 S Wadsworth, turn west on Ohio Ave, go two blocks straight ahead into Irongate parking lot and lake. Meet in the parking lot at 9 am sharp.

DESCRIPTION: This great outing for beginning birders. The focus will be on migrant waterfowl. We will view year-round resident birds and wintering birds. The Lakewood Heritage Center opens at noon. The park grounds contain historic buildings from Lakewood's past and provide a great place for an additional outing and lunch. Dress for the weather. Bring binoculars, water, and field guide. Snack and lunch are optional.

Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge

DATE: Saturday, November 18 8am - noon

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

Pre-Registration IS required. Group limited to nine.

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

MEETING PLACE: Rocky Mountain Arsenal Visitors Center. Enter through south gate at 56th Ave. and Havana. (Take Havana exit from I-70 and go north to the Arsenal gate.)

DESCRIPTION: The Arsenal can be as good as any nature show on TV. Dave Rhoades, a long-time U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service volunteer at the Arsenal, will drive you in a van as you look for wintering raptors, especially bald eagles in the prairie dog towns. You'll see other wintering birds, as well as lots of mule and white-tailed deer and coyotes. Dress for the weather. Bring binoculars, water, and a snack.

Snowshoe for Ptarmigan on Guanella Pass

If you had signed up last year and are still interested, contact Allison Hilf at ahilf@aol.com or call 303-369-2541. Group size is limited. We will be searching for the beautiful white-tailed ptarmigan in their snowy white winter plumage.

Costa Rica Birding Trip

Date: January 25- February 6, 2007

Leader: Ann Bonnell

Participants will be able to experience the thrill of seeing scarlet macaws soaring to their night roosts in the mangroves, or of viewing a resplendent quetzal, arguably the most spectacular bird in the Americas, eating an aguacatillo fruit. Costa Rica has more bird species (870+) than the entire North American continent north of the Mexican border. Parrots, toucans, hummingbirds, kingfishers, tanagers, manakins, birds of prey — we'll see all of these and more in some of the best birding spots in the country. As we explore this fascinating country, we will visit diverse ecosystems such as the paramo (alpine grasslands similar to those found in the Andes), oak cloud forest, lowland rainforest, and the dry tropical forest of the Northwest.

An expert bilingual Costa Rican bird guide will be with us throughout. Maximum group size will be limited to 14. The cost for ASGD Friends members, based on a minimum group of 10, is \$2,695 (\$2,745 for non-members) which includes meals, accommodations, park admissions and guide costs. \$2695 is the cash discounted price; the credit card price is \$2790. Roundtrip air fare from Denver to San Jose is currently approximately \$700.

Contact ASGD at (303) 973-9530 to register for this trip. For questions about trip details, contact Ann Bonnell at (303) 979-6211 or e-mail: abonnell@juno.com.

TRAVEL, FIELD TRIPS, CLASSES & PROGRAMS

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– CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS –

Anybody, regardless of ability, is welcome to go on the Christmas Bird Counts. Christmas counts provide an on-going record of bird populations in late December and they provide the opportunity for everyone interested in bird-watching to participate, either in the field or at backyard feeders (if they live within the count circle).

Pre-Registration IS required for ALL of the counts.

FEE: \$5/person (This goes directly to National Audubon Society to cover their publication costs.)

Denver Christmas Count

Saturday, December 16, 2006

Contact Dick Schottler, 303-278-8035.

Idaho Springs/ Evergreen Bird Count

Sunday, December 17, 2006

Contact: Tom Van Erp, 303-816-4420

Douglas County Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, December 30, 2006

Everyone is invited. Skill level makes no difference. If you find them, your team leader will help with identification. Come help with our 25th annual count that covers a 15-mile circle from Roxborough State Park to Parry Park north to south, and from Pike National Forest to Castle Rock east to west. We will have from 9 to 13 teams out covering areas from 7:30 am to 3:30 pm. After the count, gather at 4 p.m. at Roxborough State Park Visitor Center for our famous chili get together. Those attending are asked to bring something to go with chili. To sign up and connect with a team, please call Roxborough State Park at 303-973-3959. For more information call Ann Bonnell at 303-979-6211.

Denver Urban Christmas Count

Monday, January 1, 2007

Usher in the New Year with a day (or half-day) of birding, and get your 2007 list off to a grand start! The Denver Urban Christmas Bird count covers: Platte River from North City limits to Mississippi, west to Buckley Field and Rocky Mountain Arsenal.

After the count at 5pm there will be a Pot Luck Dinner at Casey Davenport's, 415 South High (5 blocks west of University, about 2 blocks south of Alameda). Please call Casey so we can count you in on the chili pot, Urling's brownies, and Casey's hospitality.

Count Coordinator, Hugh Kingery 303-814-2723. To join a specific count, contact the area leaders.

Area	Location	Leader's	Leader(s) Telephone	E-Mail
1	South Platte (south)	Doris Cruze	303-798-8072	
2	South Platte (north)	Dick Schottler	303-278-8035	
3	Rocky Mtn. Arsenal	Urling Kingery	303-814-2723	
4	Commerce City/Montbello	Jackie King	303-287-1644	
5	Sand Creek/Tollgate Creek, Bluff Lake, & Aurora,	Randy Lentz	303-680-3381	
7	Cherry Creek Res.	Buzz Schaumberg	303-699-1721	
8	Cherry Creek Res.	Glenn Walbek	720-560-3671	GWalbek@comcast.net
9	Kent School, S/Hampden	Lynn Willcockson	303-757-7000	
9	SE Denver, N/Hampden	Walt Hackney	303-771-8331	gyrfal@juno.com
10	Cherry Creek, dam to Denver Country Club	Paul Slingsby	303-422-3728	paslingsby@comcast.net
11	Fairmont, Lowry Field	Tuesday Birders	303-979-6211	
13	City Park/Park Hill	Kevin Corwin	720-482-8454	
15	Wash Park/ Denver Country Club/Cherry Creek to Confluence/DU/Greater Glendale	Casey Davenport	303-744-0613	



– TRAVEL –

Society Islands and Tuamotus –Tahiti by Gauguin

Small Ship Intimacy, Big Ship Amenities, Aug. 22, 2007 - 10 nights, 11 days, 8 islands

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

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

expeditions supervised by Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) dive instructors. Regent Seven Seas Cruises' informal six-star service offers comfort and luxury with spacious ocean view staterooms (50% with private balconies), a choice of three single seating dining venues and an extensive spa. Every cabin is supplied with a basket of fresh fruit, a refrigerator, an in-suite bar supplied with complimentary liquors and a vase of fresh tropical flowers. Every night, a small gift is placed on your pillow – a Polynesian bedtime story relating one of the romantic legends of the islands – along with a fragrant tiare (white gardenia) blossom to scent the air for pleasant dreams. Touches of French Polynesia are everywhere, from the troupe of Les Gauguines - part cruise staff, part entertainers, part storytellers - to the local children who come aboard to sing to the guests.

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



The ship Paul Gauguin will be your home for this once-in-a-lifetime birding adventure.

Bird Copper Canyon!

March 27-April 4, 2007

Enjoy birding in Mexico from the dry, tropical deciduous forest of the Pacific coast to the pine/oak forests of the Sierra Madre Occidental. Travel on the Chihuahua al Pacifico Railroad on one of the world's great train trips through scenic wilderness along the Copper Canyon. See such birds as the black-throated magpie-jay, thick-billed and lilac-crowned parrots, russet-crowned motmot, rufous-bellied chachalaca, a half dozen species of hummingbirds and many, many more with excellent local bilingual bird guides. Relax in small, remote inns with excellent accommodations and cuisine. Visit the homes of Tarahumara Indians, indigenous people living in their traditional manner in their mountain strongholds. Petroglyphs, spectacular views, native crafts, cozy lodges, and

wonderful wildlife are a few of the features of this adventure to a remote part of Mexico. The tour price of \$1,799 double occupancy (airfare not included) for Friends' members to Los Mochis includes accommodations, all meals, first class express train service, extensive sightseeing in vans and guided walks with resident guides, taxes and pre-departure material. (Non-members add \$100 each.) For a detailed itinerary and more information about the trip, please call Bill Turner 303-795-5128 who will be the ASGD representative accompanying the tour. To register call ASGD at 303-973-9530.

For more Travel Adventures see "Papua New Guinea – The Lost Paradise" on page 11

backyard birds....

by Hugh Kingery



COOPER'S HAWKS have instituted an urban nesting policy. From Englewood in late July, Carol Whitaker sent photos of a family of Cooper's hawks that nested in "one of my 50+ year old blue spruces and have been here since March. When the two first came, I saw them capture a baby rabbit and have seen them take out a small bird. A couple of times now I watched them try to get a ground squirrel. No luck yet, but I wish them success."

A PAIR NESTED near Bob Righter's south Denver home and on the 17th Avenue Parkway at Grape St. One stopped by Flo DeCesar's pond on Aug. 30, though his prospective meals had flown away. A Cooper's has visited her yard for the past two years. Sigrid Ueblacker told us that the Birds of Prey Rehabilitation Center picked up 17 injured Cooper's last year, and 35 so far this year! She says almost all her clients are immature females who crashed into windows in metro Denver.

OUR NEIGHBOR, CHARLEY HOGAN, walked down to his mule pasture on Sept. 21 and discovered a great horned owl that had caught its wing on the upper strand of the barbed-wire fence. He cut off the barb-wire and Jana called Birds of Prey, who recruited someone to ferry it to the center. Sigrid thinks that the owl will survive and come back to address the local mouse population.

DODIE HAMPTON CALLED July 28 to talk about a family of sharp-shinned hawks that spent a couple of days in her Aurora yard. She and Clyde watched them swoop around. One even dove at two squirrels, which ignored the hawk. In Englewood, Cat Anderson's "sharp-shin hunts both feeders, mine and the one at the barn. He sits on the fence and is getting pretty used to us. We see a few dead sparrows."

MARY PATTERSON, through the summer, watched a peregrine falcon "perch on top of the communication tower in Congress Park in the evening. I noticed it here the same time last year. I particularly enjoy watching the bats when they come out at dusk. At the Botanic Gardens one evening, I noticed what I thought for a split second to be a very large bat. I then realized it was the peregrine and it had just caught one of the bats! It took the bat to the top of the towers and ate it. Now I know why it appears in the evening."

ON AUG. 24, DAVID GULBENKIAN ASKED, "What do you say to a juvenile Swainson's hawk landing on the center strap of my backyard tennis court? He remained for 10 minutes, all the while being gawked at by neighbors on both sides. He landed in the grass at the back where there are a few grasshoppers. No doubt it came from the nearby Crown Hill Open Space where Swainson's is a frequent nester and have been performing spectacular aerial displays for the last three weeks preparatory to migration. I was puzzled about whether or not the bird was hunting since it would seem the Open Space would be better. Today I got an answer. The juvenile brought a snake to the top of the telephone pole where he spent 15 minutes

eating it. A garter snake's yellow stripe was clearly visible in my binocs."

KEN GAMMON, driving near Franktown, saw what he thought was an injured hawk diving for cover. He stopped to help it and, "Hawk was not a hawk but a female turkey with four young!"

THREE PEOPLE SAW WESTERN SCRUB-JAYS – rare in urbanized Denver. One visited Joe Roller's feeder in Belcaro on Aug. 23, Karl Stecher saw one in southeast Denver, and on Sept. 17, Karen Ram sent pictures of one in her Centennial yard. And near the foothills on West Jewell, Rosalie Metzger sees them frequently (as we do in the scrub-oak zone).

BLUE JAYS OCCUR as the usual urban jay, although they appear in Franktown in September to spend the winter. Jill Holden, in Roxborough Village, reports, "I have had my feeder out for over five years, and I got my first blue jay Sept. 14. I wondered if it was a sign of the changing area. Blue jays tend to be more common in more developed areas. When we first moved in, there was only a Loaf-n-Jug. Next came Farm Crest, then Safeway with surrounding shops, and just recently a Sonic opened. All the while more houses keep going up. I still get regular visits from scrub-jays, but I wonder if there will be a shift to blue jays and decreasing scrub-jays here."

ANOTHER URBAN EXPANSION: hummingbirds. Tina Jones has had hummingbirds in her BowMar yard for years, four species this year: broad-tailed, rufous, calliope, and black-chinned. Nan had lots of immatures, and figures some were black-chinned. In south Denver, Joy Schieving saw broad-tailed July 21-Aug. 31, and a Calliope on July 13. August and September saw an upsurge of hummingbirds on the urban fringes (e.g., in our yard). Nan Brehmer, on Green Mountain, wore a "Mexican dress with many red embroidered flowers. Two hummingbirds approached the flowers until they were less than a foot away from my face."

CHRIS BLAKESLEE (Centennial) had an "amazing experience in my backyard on Sept. 16. I was watering our new pear tree and a little female hummer flew up, checked me out, and then landed at ground level. She was obviously interested in the water. She fluffed up a bit, even moved from one wet plant to another. I thought she was interested in a drink, but NO. Finally she landed on a wire holding the young tree, between me, the hose, and the tree (about 3 feet away). This placed her *under* the edge of the spray from the hose. (By this time I had such a close look that I identified her as a female calliope.) She sat there, puffed up. I raised the hose to give her a bit more water, and *she took a bath!!!*"

A FEW ODD SPECIES summered in town: Joy hosted a red-breasted nuthatch July 13-Aug. 29 and one to two lesser goldfinches in July and August. Through the summer Cat observed two green herons in a pond by the Highline Canal. A marauding black-crowned night-heron came to Joy's fish pond, but didn't get any fish in two visits (July 19 and 23).

ANOTHER WOMAN CALLED (around 7/10) because the pair of robins she figured were nesting in a 50-foot spruce tree had

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Backyard Birds continued from page 9

disappeared, just after one of those heavy rainstorms. I figured the nest had failed and that the robins had decamped for some place with a good food supply, like those trees with ripe cherries. Dodie says she has seen hardly any robins around for the past 6 months. A few robins liked our cherry trees here in Franktown, but they didn't clean out the supply, and Dodie says that squirrels instead of robins stripped her cherry trees.

PAT BRODBENT emailed from Franktown, Sept. 5, "Every evening for the past month a male downy woodpecker has used one of my bluebird boxes to roost in during the night. For the past week you can set your watch to expect him at the box between 7:00 p.m. - 7:10 p.m., make a few squawks, and climb in for the night. Do you think the squawks are him saying 'good night' to everyone? Around 6:30 a.m. you can see his head sticking out of the box looking around. After about 15 minutes he flies out."

KAREN METZ (also Franktown) responded that she "observed those same vocal behaviors by a female downy for two years, roosting in a bluebird box from late summer through spring. She was usually the last bird to go roost at night and consistently the last to emerge in the mornings. (I once read an account of birds in NYC's Central Park, where downies were known for 'sleeping late.')

A FEW WARBLERS passed through. Joy spotted a Townsend's Aug. 27 and a Wilson's Aug. 25-29. In Castle Rock, Kirk Huffstater, who "normally doesn't get many warblers in my yard, had a few Sept. 23: at least 3 yellow-rumped flitting around my waterfall. It was fun to watch since they chased off a couple of hummingbirds, which also seemed to want to be around the waterfall. Every time a hummer would come close the warbler would dart out and chase it away. There were also two other warblers, probably Wilson's." The Barr Lake banding station bands more Wilson's warblers than all other species put together (550 by Sept. 20).

OTHER MIGRANTS INCLUDED a green-tailed towhee in Nan's yard Sept. 1, a group of blue-gray gnatcatchers that Dan McCamman saw in Denver Aug. 13, 25-30 nighthawks that Fran Shepperdson saw Aug. 14, and Cassin's vireos three times in late August in Glenn Walbek's Castle Rock yard, plus one in Karen's yard in early September. Joy reported August visits from a western wood-pewee, western tanager, and Brewer's and chipping sparrows. Cat saw what she's "sure is an Inca dove. He was under the bird feeder and when all the other doves flew he let me walk right up to him; looked up at me and went back to eating!" In September in Thornton, Kimberly Moore's daughter called her "to see a bird in the birdbath. It stumped me a first but it was a female black-headed grosbeak. A first-fall male was in the tree branches nearby — 'mother and son' as my daughter said. They are much prettier than they are in any field guides (I suppose that is true of most birds)."

MARK HOLDEN works near the Denver Tech Center. In July, he saw a baby kingbird on a "walkway near our employee entrance. The little fellow was intact but seemed maybe a little weak. Anyway I got it to gulp down a bit of wet cracker with a tiny amount of cream cheese on it. I think he got out of the nest; the parents were nowhere to be found. I didn't see any

**Audubon Society of Greater Denver
Holiday Open House
Sunday, December 3 at Noon – 2 p.m.
At the Audubon Center at Chatfield**

Everyone is invited to join us by the fire to celebrate the winter holidays. Start the morning with Walk the Wetlands at 9 a.m. and join us in the heated farmhouse afterwards.

*Chat with fellow volunteers and members.
Enjoy hot apple cider, cookies and other refreshments.
Bring the kids and make edible ornaments for the birds.*

Raffle drawing at 1 p.m.

Save the Date!

**2007 Legislative Workshop
Saturday, February 3
At First Plymouth Church**

A Clean Slate! The elections will give us a new legislature, with new ideas and priorities. Plan to attend our 2007 Legislative Workshop and get up-to-date information on the bills that affect Colorado's wildlife habitat, air, water and open spaces. Hear from the Audubon lobbyist about issues directly affecting our environmental and learn what you can do to make a difference.

This annual event is co-sponsored by the Enos Mills Group of the Sierra Club. For more information contact Polly Reetz at reetzfam@juno.com or call ASGD at 303-973-9530. Watch for more details in the next Warbler.

adults around the small trees where I've seen noisy kingbirds before. I know it's a bug-eater so I'll try to get it some wet mealworm bits." Jill, when she heard from Mark, told him that "we had to get it back to where he found it so that the parents could feed it. We took it back and it hopped off under a bush." No report on its ultimate survival.

NAN NOMINATED AUGUST as "Animal Month" on Green Mountain. She tried talking to a young red fox. "He sat down in the grass and listened to my comments for about 15 minutes." [I wonder what you say to a fox for 15 minutes.] A fawn blundered into a nearby high-fenced backyard; the owner unlocked the gate and the fawn followed in the direction its mother had escaped by jumping the fence. She also saw a baby squirrel, chipmunks, skunks, a raccoon (at 2 a.m. on a bird feeder – we take our feeders in at night because of raids from raccoons and bears), and 3 ½ foot prairie rattlesnake which caught and swallowed a mouse.

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.

their mating displays a bit more slowly than do the greater sage-grouse males and produce a slightly different sequence of sounds.

Dr. Young pointed out several factors that have resulted in the Gunnison sage-grouse's currently tenuous hold on survival, including: (1) small, isolated populations; (2) peculiar breeding habits; and (3) extensive habitat destruction.

There are only eight known surviving populations of Gunnison sage-grouse, all of which appear to be relatively isolated from one another. All the populations are located in a relatively small geographic area confined to western Colorado and eastern Utah. Indeed, it is estimated that there are only about 4,000 total individual Gunnison sage-grouse still in existence, with the largest population, about 2,500 individuals, located in a two-county area of the Gunnison Basin of Colorado. These isolated breeding populations have tended to result in reduced genetic variation and resultant inbreeding.

The reduced genetic variation and resultant inbreeding is extenuated by the fact that, among Gunnison sage-grouse breeding populations, particular males appear to dominate mating. A relatively small number of males actually mate with females. In fact, typically, only 10% to 15% of the males actually mate and, usually, only one or two males in a breeding population account for 80% to 90% of the copulations. As a result, Gunnison sage-grouse exhibit an even lower genetic variation than their isolated populations would otherwise already produce.

Finally, as Dr. Young pointed out, the peculiar habitat requirements of sage-grouse place these already fragile avian populations in grave danger. As their name suggests, Gunnison sage-grouse inhabit high plains sagebrush ecologies. They not only feed on sagebrush leaves, but they also tend to build their ground-nests and raise their young beneath these plants. Males perform their mating rituals on elevated ground relatively clear of vegetation, called leks, located among or between sagebrush growth. Due to agriculture, increased residential and commercial development, and mining activity, the sagebrush habitat required by Gunnison Sage-grouse has been gradually – and in some cases quickly – but in any event relentlessly, invaded or destroyed, resulting in fewer breedings, fewer hatchings, and fewer surviving adults. In addition, Gunnison sage-grouse appear to be relatively sensitive to disturbance. So much so that these birds have had to be protected from even otherwise well-intentioned bird-watchers whose fascination with the spectacular mating rituals of the Gunnison sage-grouse have, in some circumstances, disrupted the birds' mating activities.

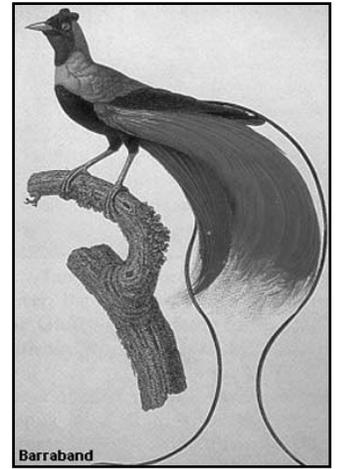
Despite several attempts by those who are concerned about their survival, the Gunnison sage-grouse has yet to be listed as endangered. Attempts to protect their habitat, such as, conservation easements and slowing or directing development away from prime sagebrush habitat, have thus far failed to arrest the birds' decline.

Despite the odds against them, Dr. Young is still hopeful that the Gunnison sage-grouse can be saved. She believes, however, that, if they are to be rescued, efforts to protect these unique and truly wonderful birds must become the focus of an immediate and intense effort. Perhaps the Audubon Society of Greater Denver can be a part of this effort. Certainly, it would be a feather in ASGD's cap if it could someday boast that it was instrumental in drawing the Gunnison sage-grouse back from the edge of extinction.

Papua New Guinea – The Lost Paradise

August 13, 2007 to August 20, 2007 (7 nights, 8 days)
Papua New Guinea is one of those birding destinations that many have heard of but few know anything about.

Join Audubon Society of Greater Denver on a journey of discovery to this distant land in August 2007. 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 Bird of Paradise. New Guinea is home to 38 of the world's 43 species of Bird of Paradise, renowned for their bizarre displays and mating rituals. The forests and lowlands contain many other unique species that will test our birding skills. The local culture is also of great interest to us. Many years ago, this was the land of cannibals and headhunters! Things are much different now, but many of the tribes still go about their lives in traditional ways. Our visit is timed to coincide with the biggest cultural event of the year - The Meeting of the Tribes. On one weekend in August each year, members from various tribes and clans from all over the New Guinea gather in Mount Hagen. This tradition has gone on for centuries. Each group, dressed in their particular tribal attire, engage in dancing and mock combat. In ancient times, tribes would settle disputes in this



*New Guinea's magnificent
bird of paradise*

same manner instead of going to war. Today, however, the competition is intended to show pride in one's heritage and to honor the ancestors who came before them. The competitions and "battles" are taken very seriously. The groups prepare and practice year round as it is a great honor to attend the "Olympics" and represent their people. It is difficult to describe the magnitude as no event in the US truly prepares one for this amazing and memorable spectacle. This is an excellent pre-cruise excursion to Tahiti on the luxurious Paul Gauguin.



Papua New Guinea widows.

is an excellent pre-cruise excursion to Tahiti on the luxurious Paul Gauguin.

Cost per person (based on double occupancy) is \$2,840. Add \$300 for the single supplement. Trip price includes domestic air, meals, birding guide, show entrance fee and transfers. Roundtrip air from Denver into Port Moresby is approximately \$1,200 per person. Contact Becky Beckers, Travel For The Birds, for a complete itinerary. Her email is AgentBecky@aol.com and office phone is 303-766-5266.



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