



THE Warbler

March/April 2008

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NEWSLETTER OF THE AUDUBON SOCIETY OF GREATER DENVER

Where have all the birds gone?

Denver Audubon and Audubon Colorado will host a "Birds, Wildlife and Global Warming" forum this summer. As details about time, place, program, and registration information become available, updates will be posted on Denver Audubon's website at www.denveraudubon.org and announced through fliers mailed to members.

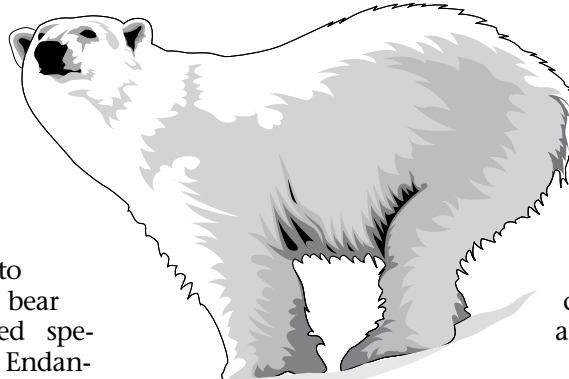
Birds are excellent indicators of environmental change because they have adapted to specific vegetation and habitat types. Timing of migration, reproduction, breeding, nesting, and hatching match specific local conditions. As climate changes, birds' behavior may no longer be in sync with their food sources and habitat needs. And birds move as habitat conditions change. Species with limited habitats or small gene pools may not be able to adapt quickly enough to avoid extinction.

For example, Colorado's white-

tailed ptarmigan is being pushed higher and higher up their alpine tundra habitat so they may eventually run out of mountain. The same is true for the American pika.

In the arctic, birds are not the only endangered creatures. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is considering whether to list the polar bear as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. If it does, the polar bear would be the first such listing ever caused by global warming.

There are other issues as well. Just to mention one, climate change



has contributed to the "perfect storm" of conditions for wildfire in Colorado: longer summers and warmer winters, more lightning strikes, the infestation of pine bark beetles, and drought. A Hayman-type fire in a Front Range watershed such as Clear Creek would have a devastating impact on forests, habitat, birds, other wildlife, fisheries, water quality and supply, and communities.

The conference will discuss the impacts of global warming on birds and other wildlife, current impacts in the West, pending federal and state legislation, and individual and community actions. Please plan to attend.

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Make a positive difference! Sponsor a bus!

Help us make Denver Audubon's Natural Science Programs available to several Title One Inner City Schools (i.e., students living below the poverty line). Over the past two years the cost of bus transportation has shot up from \$200 to almost \$600 per trip. This has restricted our ability to serve these schools. To address this issue, one of our board members has offered a challenge grant to raise funds for bus transportation and will match dollar-for-dollar the first \$500 donated by other members. Your support can make it possible. Go to the ASGD website at www.denveraudubon.org and click on the School Bus Logo to make a contribution.

Fine Feathered FUNdraiser

Two Exciting Activities

First, the On-line Auction. It is Underway NOW. Go to the ASGD website at www.denveraudubon.org to "BID NOW!" to see the items available and to place your bid.

Second, the Silent Auction (of several select items) and Comedy Night with Friends on April 12. Go to the ASGD website to "TICKETS" to purchase tickets for this fun event.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE—

THE FIRST OF THE MONTH

As you get ready to tear last month's page from the calendar, don't shudder at the tasks that lie ahead. Instead, just consider what opportunities the first of the new month brings. How will you fill the new days before you this new month? Sure, there are work and family obligations, medical appointments, trips, religious observations, and meetings or classes to attend, to the point that there are days when we need to be two places at once and we have to make some tough choices.

But to me, what really counts is if you can look back at the end of the month and say, "I got some important things done. I took care of the things that mean the most to me and I am feeling good about it."

Will this be the month you change out those old light bulbs for new energy-saving ones? Will you turn off the television and attend an ASGD meeting, volunteer for a committee, or join a field trip? Maybe you can make a donation, either with a check or by contacting a business willing to donate something wonderful for the ASGD silent auction in April. Or maybe you can donate the most valuable gift of all, your time – time to help in the office or work in the Nature Center Gardens or learn more about bluebirds.

And if the first of the month somehow slips by, well, just jump in any time this month. You will be glad you did.



Thanks To Our Volunteers!

ANNUAL APPEAL MAILING - Midge Ball, Leona Berger, Jo Ann Bushnell, Benjamin Cooper, Patti Echelmeyer, Marc Goodbody, Caroline Hancock, Vi Nicholson, Krista Redlinger, Carolyn Roark, Bill Turner

JANUARY/FEBRUARY WARBLER MAILING - Midge Ball, Jo Ann Bushnell, Patti Echelmeyer, Marc Goodbody, Caroline Hancock, Doug Hodous, Vi Nicholson, Lori Sharp, Barbara & Frank Shissler

OFFICE ANGELS - Midge Ball, Merikay Haggerty, Phil Reynolds, Carolyn Roark, Barbara F. Shissler, Grace Weber

PRAIRIE DOG DAY FESTIVAL AT DENVER ZOO – Polly Reetz, Linda Strand

ASGD recognizes our New Friends Members

A. Sylvia Lewis, Alice Stokes, Alyson & Jerry Hyatt-Johnson, Amber Davis, Barbara Provancal, Betty Jane Walker, Bonnie Mulvany, Carl Norbeck & Diane Matt, Carley Warren, Catherine Corsello, David & Carol Shouldice, David Johnston, Donald Estey, Donald Tautz, Douglas Sikes, Edward Calvin, Felicity Hannay, Frances DeLeon, Gretchen Platt, Hilde Olsen, Irene Neff, Jackie Sanderson, Jean Ann Hollowell, Jean Tarbel, Jeff Shoemaker, Jennifer & Paul Trantow, John & Lorna Fox, John D. Bert, Joyce & Francis Commercon, Joyce Treffinger, Judy & Kevin Morris, Kate Horan, Kathleen Elsey, Keith Ketner, Kenneth R. Hougland, Kris Koff, Kristin Berg & Peg Snyder, Larry & Joan Brennan, Lisa Reynolds, Marian Thornton, Mary Bradford, Mary Taylor Young, Maurice & Judith Mitchell, Michael Kiessig, Nelson Ford, Patricia Moore, Paula Barnak, Richard Ahrenkiel, Richard L. Creasey, Robert Collins, Robert McLaughlin, Robert Righter, Roberta N. Quiat, Rogene Buchholz, Romney & Ruth Philpott, Sandra Snyder, Stephen & Rhonda Broich, Sue Goodrich, Susan Pyne, Wild Bird Landing LLC.



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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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The right tree in the right place

by Doris Cruze, ASGD President

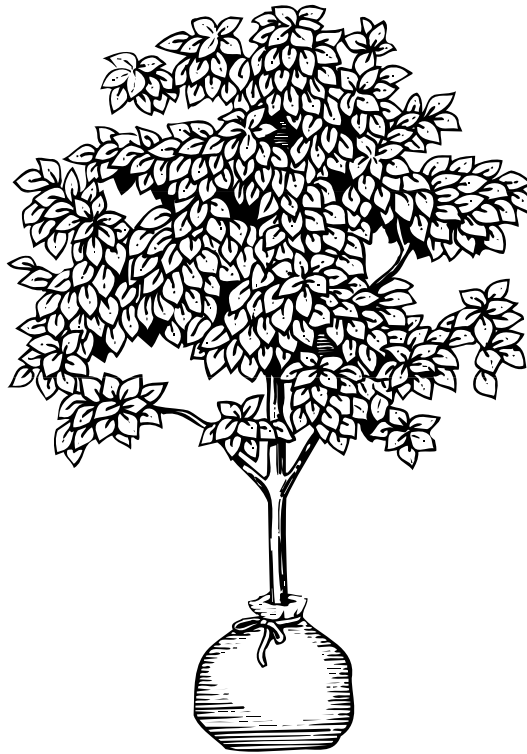
The threat of global warming has motivated many people to plant trees. The reasons are sound: Trees have the ability to impact air quality, offset storm water runoff, form sound barriers, provide shade and energy savings, produce food, and provide aesthetic value. They are a relatively inexpensive, low-tech way to reduce gases closely associated with global warming.

Trees can increase property values, attract birds and other wildlife, improve neighborhoods, and help calm traffic by their presence. Green settings have been proven to reduce the symptoms of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder in children, and trees play an important part in connecting young children with nature.

Tree-lined streets and parks, businesses with trees on the property, and public places with trees are all linked to safer traffic flows, less crime, better mental health, and many other benefits.

All that from a tree? All that and more. Over 3,000 communities earned the Tree City USA award during the past year, meaning they have met four requirements: They have a tree board or department, a tree care ordinance, a community forestry program with an annual budget of at least \$2 per capita and hold an Arbor Day observance and

proclamation (see www.arborday.org for a list of all the communities on the



list and for more information on trees. When you're ready to plant some trees, here are some tips:

Contact your city arborist, county extension agent, or local nursery for recommendations about which trees

will best fit your needs, whether you are looking for street trees, landscaping, ornamental trees, or trees to attract birds.

Watch for tree giveaways and special promotions in your community. Denver's 10,000 Trees program is on-going, as well as tree sales at special prices by other communities. As tree planting time approaches, many nurseries will hold special promotions.

Do your homework. Consider how big your trees will grow. Avoid planting near utility lines or other hazards. The right tree in the right place, means the tree can grow to become healthy and vigorous, able to live to the limits of its natural life.

Expect to do maintenance. After your trees are planted, they will need pruning, mulch, water, feeding, and regular care.

Protect your trees. Mulch can insulate the soil, retain moisture, keep weeds away, and prevent lawn mower damage. Some trees will need support until they are well established. Others will need protection from insects and cold weather.

Involve the whole family. Planting and caring for trees is something each of us can do to improve our community and the environment. Trees are an investment which will pay dividends for many years to come.

Bluebird Project open house

Saturday, March 22 at 10 a.m. - Noon

Just in time to greet returning bluebirds, the Colorado Bluebird Project's fourth annual Bluebird Open House will be held on Saturday, March 22, from 10 a.m. to noon at the Audubon Center at Chatfield.

Come learn about:

- The Project's goals and progress over the past year
- The natural history of bluebirds
- Building and mounting nest boxes (boxes, both pre-built and in kit form, will be on sale)
- Monitoring boxes during the nesting season

- Safeguarding nest boxes from parasites and predators
- Keeping good field notes and reporting results
- Updates on Cornell's new Nest-Watch database, and possibly some news from the North American Bluebird Society's 2008 convention, which will have been held in early March in Kearney, Nebraska.

There will also be a 15-minute video that illustrates what really happens inside a nest box during the nesting season. Even some of our more seasoned nest box monitors have learned a few things from this video.

In addition to everything else, this will be a good opportunity to mix and mingle with like-minded bluebird enthusiasts.

The event is free and open to the public. We ask that you RSVP to 303-973-9530 so we'll know how many snacks to bring. For more information on the Colorado Bluebird Project or to volunteer, contact Kevin Corwin, Chair at bluebirdproject@denveraudubon.org.





Eagle Eye

Watching Public Policy for the Environment
by Polly Reetz

Following the legislature requires flexibility, to say the least. A good sense of humor helps too. Sometimes bills that you thought were bad enough have been relegated to the back of the bus by even worse ones. Or, more happily, some really good bills have passed and we can now turn to others. So some of the bills mentioned in the last issue of the Warbler are missing from this month's report. But there are some new ones, too, and the news is not all good.

ALERT—Bill Targets DOW Land Acquisition Ability. In mid January Rep. Sonnenburg and Sen. Brophy introduced a real howler, HB 08-1137, which would severely cripple the Division of Wildlife's (DOW) ability to protect wildlife habitat. It says, basically, that whenever the Division acquires land or water, even if donated, it must sell land or water of equal or greater value within a year of the acquisition. It also requires the DOW to pay local governments in lieu of the taxes they might have collected if the land/ water were owned by an individual or corporation ("payment in lieu of taxes" or PILT). But since the Division already pays when requested, that part of the bill is unnecessary. If passed, it would deal a killing blow to wildlife by freezing the amount of land/water owned by the DOW at current levels. No additional fishing access sites, no more sage grouse habitat, no more riparian flood plain can be protected without losing something else. This egregious attack on the Division and our wildlife resources will hopefully have died in committee by the time you read this, but if not Audubon will make a concerted effort to defeat it, including asking our members who have joined the list-serve to contact their legislators.

Off Highway Vehicle Bill Gives Division of Wildlife Role. If you've ever been out birding or hiking and fumed at the damage done to vegetation and soils by Off Highway Vehicles (OHVs), here is a bill for you. HB 08-1069 will give the Division of Wildlife (DOW) officers the ability to ticket OHV users for driving where they're not supposed to, on Federal as well as State property. Although Federal policy states that public lands are closed to off-road use unless they are signed "open," the federal agencies have never had the manpower to enforce these designations. The DOW, however, has officers on the ground, checking for poachers, greeting hunters, or monitoring wildlife. They're not obligated to search for OHV violators, but if they see them they could now issue tickets under this bill. There has been a lot of anecdotal evidence about illegal OHV use, but not much data. This bill will enable the DOW to collect it. Even OHV groups should support this bill, as their claim that just a few "renegades" cause all the damage could now be confirmed with firm data.

Uranium Mining Controls. Legislators continue to be concerned about uranium mining. HB 08-1161 tackles several issues by making uranium mining a "designated mining

operation" and thus subject to stronger State regulation. It also stipulates that *in situ* leach operations for uranium (also called "solution mining") will only be permitted if the operator can restore groundwater to pre-mining conditions. In this process, a chemical solution is injected into the ore-bearing formation, dissolves the uranium and is then pumped back up for processing. The concern is that the uranium mining might end up polluting groundwater that is used for agriculture or municipal water supply. The bill also gives the Mined Land Reclamation Board additional authority over uranium mining, such as being able to require larger bonds. HB 08-1165 gives local governments the authority to set their own conditions for mines within their jurisdictions and requires public notice when mining will commence. Both of these are good bills that Audubon will support.

Noteworthy Bills on the Horizon. Also on Audubon's priority list will be upcoming bills to require developers to demonstrate that they have sufficient water supplies for new development, to direct State transportation funding to cities with smart growth plans, to require Rural Electric Associations and municipal utilities to give customers credit for energy they put back into the system (from their own solar panels, for example), and to increase fines for illegal take of bald eagles.

Bonny Reservoir Water Rights. Finally, those ASGD members who have enjoyed birding at Bonny Reservoir should note that a bill (HB 28) has been introduced to transfer the water rights for the reservoir "pool" from State Parks and the DOW to the Colorado Water Conservation Board, which could then release the water down the Republican River to help meet Colorado's water compact obligations to Nebraska. This would also reduce the water loss due to evaporation from the reservoir surface – because there would be no more reservoir. However some water would always remain behind the dam, perhaps akin to a prairie pothole, and thus the site would retain some attraction for migratory birds. One complication is that the reservoir waters were purchased in part with federal Land and Water Conservation Fund funds. If the use of the water changes the Federal government can demand its money back. Could Colorado repay it? This bill isn't on our priority list but forms a footnote to the demise of a once-delightful state park.

Call for Nominations

The ASGD Board of Directors needs dedicated, enthusiastic volunteers to serve for three-year terms. If you are interested, or would like to nominate someone, please contact Doris Cruze at 303-798-8072.



AUDUBON SOCIETY

of GREATER DENVER

Calendar of Events

MARCH 2008

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
Wetlands	7pm Master Birder Class		7pm Members Meeting		Costa Rica Trip Departs	Master Birder Field Trip
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Daylight Savings		7pm ASGD Board Meeting				1pm Book Signing "Gas Trees & Car Turds"
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Costa Rica Trip Arrives	7pm Master Birder Class	7pm Conservation Committee				10am Bluebird Open House Master Birder Field Trip
Palm Sunday 16	St. Patrick's Day 17	18	19	20	Good Friday 21	22
				7pm Beginning Bird Watching Class		8am Beginning Bird Watching Field Trip
Easter 23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Lake Bird Walk						
30	31					

APRIL 2008

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			7pm Members Meeting			8am Beginning Bird Watching Field Trip
		1	2	3	4	5
Wetlands	7pm Master Birder Class	7pm ASGD Board Meeting				8am Beginning Bird Watching Field trip 5pm FUNdraiser
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Master Birder Trip			2pm Field Trip Committee			8am Beginning Bird Watching Field Trip
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Wetlands of the Front Range	7pm Master Birder Class					8am Beginning Bird Watching Field Trip Master Birder FT
20	21	Earth Day 22	23	24	Arbor Day 25	26
	Bird Banding Station Opens					
27	28	29	30			



TRAVEL, FIELD TRIPS, CLASSES & PROGRAMS

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

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– FIELD TRIPS –

Walk the Wetlands

DATES: Sunday, March 2 9 a.m.
Sunday, April 6 9 a.m.

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

Pre-registration is 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 C-470 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 guides, water and a snack.

Members Meeting

Sage-Grouse & Other Survivors—

Hot Topics in Bird Conservation

PRESENTER: Ken Strom, Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon Colorado

DATE: Wednesday, March 5 7 p.m.

MEETING PLACE: Daniel's Fund (101 Monroe Street, Denver 80206). The Parking Lot is located at 1st Avenue and Madison in Cherry Creek, immediately west of the Daniels Fund building. The parking lot is free and no code is needed to enter. The gate will raise as you drive up. 1st Avenue Parking: Visitors may park anywhere along 1st Avenue, except in areas indicated or limited by city signage.

Please do not park on residential side streets.

DESCRIPTION: Will the Gunnison sage-grouse be listed as an endangered species? How will grassland birds be impacted by new wind farms? Is there anything I can do about it? These are some of the questions that will be addressed in this presentation on critical bird conservation issues confronting Colorado today. Conflicts between human development and bird survival aren't new, but the rapid expansion of energy development into sensitive habitats is creating new and greater challenges for the birds that depend on those habitats. Even some of our common songbirds are facing new risks. At the same time, the wealth of data that Audubon volunteers and other birders have been gathering over the past century are giving us a better picture of the overall health of our bird populations and their habitats, as revealed in Audubon's recently released WatchList and its report on Common Birds in Decline. And there are plenty of positive developments for bird conservation, too—from the expanding Colorado Birding Trail to the new Greater sage-grouse

Conservation Plan and ever-increasing conservation opportunities at Important Bird Areas. The program will be illustrated with color slides and graphics.

Aurora Bird Walk - Coal Creek Arena

DATE: Saturday, March 8th 8:30 a.m.

LEADER: Joy Thompson, Naturalist

Pre-registration required. Call 303-739-2428 or nature@auroragov.org

FEE: None

MEETING PLACE: Information will be provided when you register.

Beginning Bird Watching Class

DATE: Thursday, March 27th 7 p.m.

(Classroom Session)

Saturdays, March 29, April 5, 12, 19, 26 and May 3 (Field Trips)

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

Pre-registration IS required.

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

MEETING PLACE: Classroom session at the Audubon Center at Chatfield; field trips to birdwatching sites around Denver: Chatfield, Barr Lake and Castlewood Canyon State Parks, Wheat Ridge greenbelt, and Genesee Mountain Park.

DESCRIPTION: Voted "Best of Denver!" two decades ago and still going strong. Colorado's premier (and most entertaining) birding couple teaches the art and science of birding like no one else. Learn bird identification, choosing binoculars and field guides, and much more. Visit a variety of habitats and some of the best birding spots in the Denver metro area. Become observant and develop a practiced eye and ear. Make new friends and change the focus of your time outdoors. You can make up any field trips that you miss during future fall or spring class sessions—you'll meet people from more than one previous class repeating the fun!

Meet the Authors:

"Gas Trees and Car Turds - A Kids' Guide to the Roots of Global Warming"

by Kirk Johnson and Mary Ann Bonnell

DATE: Saturday, March 15th 1:00 p.m.

MEETING PLACE: Audubon Center at Chatfield

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– FIELD TRIPS & TRAVEL –

Kirk Johnson and Mary Ann Bonnell will join us to sign books and read excerpts from their new books. It will be a great event for your kids, grandkids and neighbors. Mary Ann is an Audubon Master Birder and Lead Naturalist for the City of Aurora. Kirk Johnson is Vice President of Research and Collections and Chief Curator with the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. We will also have copies of Kirk's book *Crusin' the Fossil Freeway* (co-written with Ray Troll) available.

Event is free and pre-registration is not required. However, you are encouraged to pre-order your books from Denver Audubon: (303) 973-9530 or info@denveraudubon.org. Proceeds from book sales will benefit ASGD.

Barr Lake Bird Walk

DATE: Sunday, March 30th 8:00 a.m.

LEADERS: Karen von Saltza 303-368-9961 (home) & Bill Eden 303-692-0255

Pre-registration IS required. Call ASGD at 303-973-9530

FEE: \$8 / Friends member; \$10 / non-member

MEETING PLACE: Barr Lake Nature Center parking at 8:00 a.m. Carpooling encouraged. Please call leaders if you want to carpool.

DESCRIPTION: Look for wintering waterfowl and other birds along the trail that heads west from the Nature Center. Group will probably walk to Gazebo and back, about 3 miles round trip. Dress warmly with wind protection and layers. Half day, bring your lunch. Valid State Parks annual pass or daily fee of \$6.00 to enter the park. Directions to Barr Lake State Park: I-70 east to I-76 exit. Stay on I-76 to exit # 23, Bromley Lane. Go east 1 mile to Picadilly Rd and drive south approximately 2 miles to the park entrance.

Members Meeting – "Harrowing & Humorous"

Adventures of a Wildlife Conservation Officer

PRESENTER: Terry Grosz

DATE: Wednesday, April 2 7 p.m.

MEETING PLACE: Daniel's Fund (101 Monroe Street, Denver 80206). The Parking Lot is located at 1st Avenue and Madison in Cherry Creek, immediately west of the Daniels Fund building. The parking lot is free and no code is needed to enter. The gate will raise as you drive up. 1st Avenue Parking: Visitors may park anywhere along 1st Avenue, except in areas

indicated or limited by city signage.

Please do not park on residential side streets.

DESCRIPTION: Terry Grosz retired from an award-winning, distinguished career as a Wildlife Conservation Officer for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service focusing on law enforcement issues related to illegal, commercial market hunting and taking of wildlife and plants across the U.S. and in Asia. He has written numerous award-winning books including a six part series describing the harrowing and humorous exploits of a conservation law officer, and three novels (awaiting publication). Portions of his books were used to produce a two-hour movie entitled *Wildlife Wars*. Terry is a terrifically entertaining speaker.

Aurora Bird Walk - Ponderosa Preserve

DATE: Saturday, April 12th 8:30 a.m.

LEADER: Mary Ann Bonnell, Lead Naturalist

Pre-registration required. Call 303-739-2428 or nature@auroragov.org

FEE: None

MEETING PLACE: Information will be provided when you register.

Raptors of the Northern Front Range

DATE: Sunday, April 20th 9:00 a.m.

LEADERS: Harold and Betty Oliver (303-936-6902)

Pre-registration is required. Call ASGD at 303-973-9530

FEE: \$8 / Friends member; \$10 / non-member

MEETING PLACE: I-25 to exit 229 (CO Hwy 7), look for new Lark Ridge Shopping Center. Meet at Home Depot contractors' entrance parking. Bring your lunch. Limit 10. (This is mostly a car trip with very little walking).

DESCRIPTION: The Olivers are offering this popular field trip once more in 2008. Reserve your spot now as this trip will fill up fast. We will be looking for nesting bald eagles, great-horned owls, red-tailed hawks and other raptors. Bring binoculars and field guides.



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— TRAVEL —

Kayak the Niobrara in Nebraska July 8 – 11, 2008

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

The trip is limited to 17 participants. We will stay in two cabins at the Niobrara River Ranch, located just north of Smith Falls State Park. The cabins have an expansive view of the river valley. The trip is scheduled for Tuesday, July 8 through Friday, July 11, 2008. Tuesday is a travel day in personal cars from Denver to the Niobrara River Ranch, stopping in Hudson for breakfast, at Buffalo Bill Cody Park in North Platte for lunch, and in Valentine for dinner.

Wednesday is a river day of about 12.5 miles from the Cornell Bridge put in to the Smith Falls State Park take out. Thursday we will visit The Nature Conservancy Niobrara Preserve, Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge and Smith Falls. Friday morning we will float the other 12.5 miles of river taking out at Sunny Brook Camp. By mid-afternoon Friday, folks will head back to Denver.

The fee is \$495.00 per person for Friends members, or \$530.00 for non-members. The trip fee includes all meals from Wednesday morning through Friday lunch, park fees, river fees, a donation to The Nature Conservancy, and single recreational kayak rentals for two days on the river. You pay for your breakfast in Hudson on Tuesday, bring your lunch for that day, and pay for your dinner in Valentine. Children over the age of 10 who can handle their own kayak are welcome. Kayak rentals, transfers, and people shuttles for the river will be handled by Sunny Brook Camp Outfitters. Each participant is expected to participate in group plans and help our super



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

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

To register call ASGD at 303-973-9530 or go online (www.denveraudubon.org). A \$250 nonrefundable deposit is due May 12, with the balance due by June 9. After June 9th, the trip fees are nonrefundable. For other information about the trip, please call volunteer trip coordinator Ann Bonnell at 303-979-6211.

Alaska's Gold Rush Inside Passage on Cruise West – Seattle to Juneau

May 14 - 24, 2008

(10 nights/11 days aboard the 138-guest *Spirit of Yorktown*)

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backyard birds....

by Hugh Kingery



THE MAIL MUST GO THROUGH, and while most of us clustered around the tree on Christmas Day, Dennis Morales delivered Express Mail for the Post Office. "While driving east on 38th Ave. in the vicinity of St. Paul Street about 2 p.m., I noticed a flock of about 30 birds, in a tree and on the ground below. Pulling over close enough to the tree in my postal van, I studied the flock of doves for five or so minutes, observing closely their color, markings, and behavior.

"**I RESEARCHED THE BIRDS** on the internet and in my bird identification books, eliminating all the usual suspects (rock doves, mourning doves, etc.) and have positively identified the birds as Eurasian collared-doves!"

DENNIS'S CHRISTMAS PRESENT reflected the burgeoning population of collared-doves, in Denver, in Colorado, on the whole continent. Jackie King sees them regularly in her yard in Commerce City. Jo Ann Bushnell reported 2-3 on Dec. 4 from her Lakewood yard. "I scattered some safflower seeds and bread today and will see if they are interested. Color is sandy, with darker folded wings and the black ring on the hind neck. Call sounds like "coo roo-hroo." Some older field guides don't even acknowledge the collared-dove, and list only ringed turtle dove. The latter has died out in North America as the former has spread like starlings.

LAST COLUMN I REPORTED on mountain birds in the metro area, and asked for more. They came in, city-wide. Sue Schulman says that in her "skimpy habitat (in Centennial) I had two mountain chickadees and two red-breasted nuthatches from October into January." Joy Schieving's mountain chickadees and red-breasted nuthatches show up almost daily, from November to January, and she has an occasional white-breasted nuthatch. Flo DeCesare (Greenwood Village) has daily visits from both red and white-breasted nuthatches, as does Gordon James in University Hills.

LU PICHER, NEAR CHEESMAN PARK, reported that two mountain chickadees and a "new kind of woodpecker" showed up in January – and the next day, with the help of a field guide, persuaded his wife Joanna that her woodpecker had a different identity: white-breasted nuthatch. Shirley Wendell, south of Cherry Creek Reservoir, has had mountain chickadees and a spotted towhee, Oct-Jan.

"**I HAVE HAD 8-10 BUSHTITS** on my suet feeder here," says Shirley. "The mountain chickadee chases them away. I guess he has finally found somebody smaller to pick on." Bushtits no longer qualify as mountain (or foothills or pinyon/juniper) birds in the city: over the past few years they have become regular. They continue to visit Joy regularly, Betsy Rush sees them in Centennial, and we gloried when they discovered our suet feeder in mid-January. Veronica Holt, in Elizabeth, says her suet feeder looks alive and moving when the innumerable bushtits swarm over it.

FROM AURORA, STEVE KENNEDY posted this note on Co-birds Jan. 24: "It's day three of Barnum and Bailey's bushtits.

A perfect flying circus! A gray parade of cartwheels and somersaults. Five strong on suet feeders, they fend off flickers and downys. Under the seed feeders they shoulder up with burly juncos. They've temporarily taken the tiny place of a quintet of mountain chickadees, which had ruled the small spaces of the yard for nearly a month. I feel a bit guilty about getting into this show for free!"

OTHER MOUNTAIN BIRDS in the city included a golden-crowned kinglet that showed up in January in Betsy's yard, a white-winged (dark-eyed) Junco at Patty Echelmeyer's in Wheat Ridge, a Clark's nutcracker that arrives daily to gobble suet at Carolyn Zwahlen's in Perry Park, Townsend's solitaires in Joy's yard November and December, and the western scrub-jay that has continued to visit Mary and Dave Driscoll's since October. Jill Holden's pictures show the beauty of the male of the pair of Cassin's finches that made December visits to her feeder in Roxborough Park.

THE DENVER URBAN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT reflects this mountainous invasion. The counts of 34 red-breasted and 21 white-breasted set new highs, and the 40 mountain chickadees came close.

FROM THE NORTH CAME BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS – Jim Nelson saw 35 at his mother's front yard in Cherry Hills Village on Dec. 21; a nearby flock of 12 cedar waxwings provided nice comparisons of the two species. A flock of 200 Bohemians swirled through our yard in Franktown on Jan. 17, lit and unlit in two junipers, swirled some more, and finally disappeared over the cliff to the west. Kevin Corwin saw 20-30 cedars in his yard December 6. From the south, or rather not yet gone south, the hermit thrush Joy saw twice in November.

THE ONLY HAWK SIGHTINGS WERE BY JOY – a sharp-shinned hawk three times and a Cooper's once, and Mary and Dave, a kestrel in January that "perched on our window ledge near the tree with the feeders. He stayed for quite a while and left without a snack." An almost-raptor, a northern shrike, visited Brenda Beatty west of Castle Rock on Jan. 18. "Unfortunately he got the little mouse that I watch every day out my office window (I feel bad for the mouse, but the shrike has to eat too). I just wish he'd gotten a mouse that I didn't know!"

INEXPLICABLY, white-crowned and tree sparrows waited until Jan. 23 to show up at Bill Hinckley's feeders in Columbine Valley. White-crowns have appeared irregularly at our feeders, but tree sparrows didn't become regular until Jan. 8 – we see anywhere from one to six per day. A Harris's sparrow also snuck in with the juncos, twice, on Jan. 22 and 24, a striking immature that Urling spotted first.

BETSY SPECULATED that the devastation of the lodgepole pines in the mountains might have pushed the mountain birds down to the city and elsewhere on the plains. I suppose this widespread plague could cause some of it; I had attributed the influx to a lack of cone crop, but the lack of pines may amount to the same thing. Does anyone else have insights about this phenomenon?

ANOTHER FACTOR that people bring up: global warming. Some of our casual observations can help analyze events related to this – arrival and departure dates of migrant birds, compared with previous years. The longer you keep records –

Backyard Birds continued on page 10

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IN-KIND GIFTS:

Lavonne Axford—spotting scope

Gordon James—a five-point elk antler for our education programs.

Ellie Jones – “Bird Songs” book by Les Beletsky

Michael Kalbach—2008 Bird Photo Calendar

Jerry & Arlene Raskin—Birds of North America software & Rubbermaid tub

Karen von Saltza – two DVD’s—Pale Male and Crane Song

Backyard Birds continued from page 9

good records – the better your data. Birdscope, the newsletter of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, had two relevant snippets of information in its Summer 2007 issue.

“**TREE SWALLOWS HAVE ADVANCED** their laying date by up to nine days between 1959 and 1991. This advance was closely related to rising spring temperatures, and is thus clearly related to climate change.”

A SECOND ARTICLE SAYS, “Climate models predict that with a doubling of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, the prairie pothole region of central North America, where 50-80 percent of the continent’s ducks breed, will have lower soil moisture and thus fewer wetlands. Such changes would reduce the number of wetland birds and ducks that are currently nesting in this area.” Birdscope also reports on reduced reproduction by tufted puffins in Washington, earlier nesting by Mexican jays in Arizona, and in the Netherlands, early emergence of caterpillars, too early to feed pied flycatcher nestlings and thus

causing a 90-percent drop in flycatcher population.

CITIZEN SCIENCE—our participation in Christmas counts, breeding bird atlases, FeederWatch, bluebird monitoring, and spring and fall counts – help scientists to monitor events that they could not otherwise study. So sign up for FeederWatch, go on the Christmas counts, turn out for the counts, adopt a bluebird trail, undertake an Atlas block. You’ll add to the knowledge base that tells us about our natural world – and by extension, the world that affects all humans.

IF YOU LIVE IN DOUGLAS OR ELBERT COUNTY, you might enjoy subscribing to Douglbirds, an email chat group that exchanges observations of birds in those two counties. To subscribe, go to the ASGD webpage and click up at the top on ‘listserv’ – then scroll down to Douglbirds.

I WELCOME YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS to this column. Drop me a note or post card at P.O. Box 584, Franktown 80116, or Email me—**NEW—ouzel8@AOL.com**.

Lois Webster Fund Annual Reception and Program

Mark your calendars now and plan to join Friends of ASGD
and the Lois Webster Fund at their annual reception and program on:

WEDNESDAY, MAY 7TH
6:00 P.M. - WINE AND CHEESE RECEPTION
6:45 P.M. - PROGRAM

AUDUBON CENTER AT CHATFIELD STATE PARK

Come catch up with friends—and meet some new ones—and see presentations from the project managers of the Lois Webster Fund's 2007 projects about their research and findings. We'll have an update on the burrowing owls on the Pawnee Grasslands and learn about current scientific research to monitor wildlife presence in the Vail Pass area. The LWF has received 13 well qualified applications for the 2008 grants. We will also review the selected recipients projects!

Carpools and transportation will be arranged! Please call Margot Wynkoop, 303-733-2868 if you would like a ride or have any questions. We look forward to seeing many of you on May 7th!

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For the past eighteen years the SCFD has provided funding for an astounding array of over 500 scientific and cultural organizations throughout the metro area's seven county region. So apparently, we're not just opening minds, we're blowing the doors off. For more information about SCFD, visit our website at www.scfd.org.



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