



# THE Warbler

May/June 2008

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NEWSLETTER OF THE AUDUBON SOCIETY OF GREATER DENVER

## Audubon Society and Toyota launch a bold new venture

The National Audubon Society and Toyota recently announced a 5-year alliance. Together they have launched TogetherGreen, a nationwide program to fund conservation projects, train environmental leaders, and offer volunteer opportunities.

This is not a trickle-down project. Audubon Chapters (480 in the U.S.—of which the Audubon Society of Greater Denver is one) must compete to become involved in the three program areas:

- **Innovation Grants** to fund projects that will achieve measurable land, water and/or energy conservation results as well as engage a broad range of community partners.
- **Conservation Fellowships** to train up to 200 promising environmental leaders.
- **Volunteer Days** at Audubon Centers and throughout the community to engage citizens of in environmental stewardship.

The innovative activities of the initiative will highlight successes on a new website, TogetherGreen.org, (to be launched on Earth Day, April 22) which will also celebrate environmental heroes and projects. The Audubon Society of Greater Denver with its tremendous support base of members, volunteers and donors will be an active participant.

### Global Warming update – hotter and drier

The Rocky Mountain Climate Organization and the Natural Resources Defense Council today released a report showing that the American West has warmed more than the planet as a whole, and more than any other part of the United States outside of Alaska. In the West, the last five years has averaged 1.7 degrees warmer than the region's 20th century average. That's 70 percent more warming than the global average, as planet-wide the last five years were 1.0 degree warmer than the 20th century average. In the West, the greatest warming has been in the Colorado River basin, which has warmed by 2.2 degrees, more than twice the global average. The effects of this warming put at risk the main water supply in the West's arid and semi-arid interior. The report documents other evidence that the West's climate has already changed, including reduced snowpacks, increased wildfires, bark-beetle infestations of mountain forests, melting glaciers, loss of wildlife, farming and ranching losses, and closures of fishing streams.



### Global Warming Forum— MAY 31 "Taking Action in YOUR Community"

Sponsored by  
Audubon Society of Greater Denver  
and Audubon Colorado  
Saturday, May 31, 2008  
American Mountaineering Center –  
710 10th Avenue, Golden, Colorado  
8:30 a.m. registration  
9:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. program

#### Program

- National Audubon Slide Show:  
The Forecast for Birds, Biodiversity,  
and People
- Climate Change Impacts in the West
- State and Federal Legislation
- Local Community Actions
- KEYNOTE: Internationally  
Prominent Climate Change Scientist  
Dr. Roger Pulwarty, NOAA
- Taking Action in YOUR Community:  
How To Toolkit"

#### Registration

Call 303-973-9530, or  
On-line: [www.denveraudubon.org](http://www.denveraudubon.org)  
look for the Global Warming Forum Icon  
Pre-register \$12; at the door \$15  
(includes lunch and materials)  
Please RSVP if you plan to pay at the  
door to insure materials & lunch  
(pre-register before 5:00, Thursday,  
May 29 to receive \$12 rate)

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## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE—**

### **On Planting Trees - And Visions...**

The story is told that an old man was planting carob tree seedlings when a neighbor passed by. The neighbor laughed at the old man and said, "How foolish, my friend. You are working so hard, but you will never live to see these trees grow to the age they can produce fruit for you."

The old man wiped his brow, and he looked out across the field to some mature carob trees. "See those trees?" he asked. "My grandfather planted them, and my father planted the others. I have been blessed with the fruits of the trees they planted. And now, I am planting trees for my grandchildren."

Let's put this story in a meaningful context for us today. While many of us are planting trees and looking to future generations to benefit from them, at ASGD we are also planting visions for the future—a vibrant nature center, busloads of inner city kids discovering a whole new world of nature, enthusiastic volunteers supporting an outstanding staff, and all of them blessed by the fruits of our labors here in 2008.

Who knows which kid arriving on a big yellow school bus will be inspired to go on to become a scientist or the author of a best-selling nature book? Which kids will find nature fascinating enough to become teachers or to someday bring their own children to explore the ponds or catch a glimpse of a red-tailed hawk?

Today we plant trees. We guide kids in nature experiences. We encourage adults to get outside and enjoy. We donate to the cause and we work to make it all happen. We can thank those who came before. We have been blessed by their efforts. Now, together, we are planting for the next generations.

## **Thanks To Our Volunteers!**

**MARCH/APRIL WARBLER MAILING:** Marc Goodbody, Charlotte Gottlieb, Merikay Haggerty, Helen Hale, Caroline Hancock, Vi Nicholson, Barbara & Frank Shissler

**ANNUAL APPEAL MAILING:** JoAnn Bushnell, Ben Cooper, Patty Echelmeyer, Merikay Haggerty, Helen Hale, Vi Nicholson, Bill Turner

**AUCTION MAILING:** Tom Parchman, Carolyn Roark, Lori Sharp, Nancy Stocker

**OFFICE ASSISTANTS:** Phil Reynolds, Carolyn Roark, Grace Weber

**FIELD TRIP LEADERS:** Hugh & Urling Kingery, Harold & Betty Oliver, Karen Von Saltza

**BUILDING BLUEBIRD NEST BOXES:** Tom Bush, Kevin Corwin, Fred Griest, Carolyn Jones, Tom Parchman, Myles Prysby, Rick Tarr, Linda Wiles, Mary Winquest

## **ASGD recognizes our New Friends Members**

Amber Davis, Betty Monahan, Bunny Dines, Carrie & Wayne Olson, Cathy O'Neil, Elaine Huff, Gillian Egan, Helen Ritzler, Jane Blankenbuehler, Judy St. John, Kelley McCready, Larry Seidl, Lu Picher, Margie Jost, Michael Fox, Randal & Norma Heinz, Richard & Joann Emanuel, Ruth Anne Guymon, Sally Isaacson, Shannon K. Jacobs, Teresa Doenges, Tony & Janet Livaudais



9308 S. Wadsworth Boulevard  
Littleton, Colorado 80128  
303-973-9530 • Fax 303-973-1038  
www.denveraudubon.org

### **ASGD OFFICERS & DIRECTORS**

#### **President Doris Cruze**

cruzeduo@aol.com

#### **1st Vice President Allen Stokes**

allenstokes@aol.com

#### **2nd Vice President Ann Bonnell**

abonnell@juno.com

#### **Treasurer Carol DeStefanis**

carmdstf@aol.com

#### **Secretary Polly Reetz**

reetzfam@juno.com

#### **Lavonne Axford**

#### **Tom Easley**

teasley1@comcast.net

#### **Mackenzie Goldthwait**

kezgold@comcast.net

#### **Jo Evans**

jo.evans@comcast.net

#### **Senator Ken Gordon**

ken.gordon.senate@state.co.us

#### **Tina Jones**

tjcalliope@hotmail.com

#### **Arlene Raskin**

raskinarlene@comcast.net

#### **Linda Strand**

LJeanStrand@comcast.net

#### **Kent Wiley**

wileysk1@msn.com

### **ASGD STAFF**

#### **Executive Director**

#### **Carl Norbeck**

cnorbeck@denveraudubon.org

#### **Education Director**

#### **Susan Smith**

ssmith@denveraudubon.org

#### **Office Manager**

#### **Rhonda Shank**

rshank@denveraudubon.org

#### **Bookkeeper**

#### **Maile Jones**

finance@denveraudubon.org

### **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  
Flowers & Associates, Inc.

cdale@cdale.com

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# New oil and gas rules aim to protect wildlife, public health

by Polly Reetz

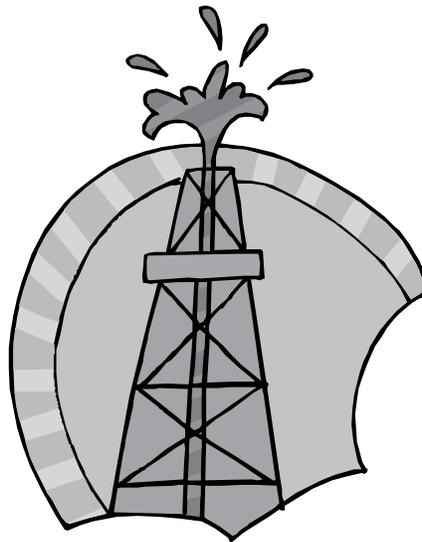
On March 31 the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (known as the OGCC) issued a new set of rules to govern oil and gas development in Colorado. The new rules stem from legislation passed in 2007, which required the OGCC to set standards that would protect public health and wildlife habitat in the face of the massive crunch of development now taking place in our state. In 2007, for example, the OGCC approved 6,368 drilling permit applications (APDs) statewide. The number of active wells in Colorado has risen from 22,000 to 34,000 in the past five years, according to the Denver Post.

Staff from the OGCC, the Dept. of Public Health and Environment, and the Colorado Division of Wildlife worked for months on the preliminary wording of the draft regulations, based on the best available scientific studies. In January a series of "stakeholder groups" met for 8 weeks to analyze what the staff had written. Gary Graham and Ken Strom from National Audubon and Polly Reetz from ASGD attended the wildlife stakeholder meetings and participated in those discussions.

The heart of the new regulations relating to wildlife are a series of "Standard Operating Procedures" or SOPs that would be applied statewide. They include timing limitation areas where industry operators must minimize surface disturbance during key wildlife breeding or wintering periods, and restricted surface occupancy areas where, to the greatest extent possible, no surface occupancy

would be permitted.

For example, the rules restrict development within 4 miles of an active greater sage grouse or Gunnison's sage grouse lek between March 15 and June 15, and within 300 feet of an active mountain plover nest site between May 1 and June 30. Bald eagle nest sites receive similar



protection within 1/2 mile of active nests between March 1 and May 31. No surface occupancy will be allowed within 1/4 mile of an active bald eagle nest, within 0.6 miles of a greater or Gunnison's sage grouse lek, within 1/2 mile of an active ferruginous hawk nest, or in bighorn sheep production areas.

The rules also set up a process for consultation between the oil and gas companies and the Colorado Division of Wildlife when such species are present

and a company feels it needs some leeway on the SOPs to successfully develop its lease.

For years the Bureau of Land Management and the industry have operated under a series of voluntary guidelines, termed Best Management Practices, which were supposed to take wildlife into account in oil and gas fields. However, under these voluntary stipulations populations of greater sage grouse and mule deer, sage sparrows and sage thrashers, have nonetheless declined, in some cases quite precipitously. Voluntary BMPs have simply not protected the wildlife resource – thus the need for mandatory standards.

You can view the draft regulations on the OGCC website at [www.oil-gas.state.co.us](http://www.oil-gas.state.co.us). Those pertaining to wildlife are in Series 1200, at the very end of the 160-page draft. Written comments are welcome and will be accepted through June 27. There will be public hearings in Denver June 23-27, when the OGCC will accept testimony and public comment, admit exhibits and deliberate on the proposed rules.

All over the West, communities and States are coming to grips with the fact that unchecked oil and gas development results in degraded landscapes, depauperated wildlife populations, and social and economic turmoil. In Colorado we now have a chance to set up some regulations to insure that oil and gas development is balanced with environmental protection.

## Looking for Birding Volunteers....May and June 2008

**Pawnee National Grasslands (Designated as an Important Bird Area by the Audubon Society)**

### Who and What:

• **4 Team Leaders Plus 4 (or more) Biologists/Observers for Mountain Plover Surveys (On Designated Routes)**

*–To Be Completed at the End of May and Again at the End of June*

• **4 Team Leaders Plus 4 (or more) Biologists/ Observers To Monitor 80 Known Historic Raptor Nests** *–To Be Completed In June*

• **Several Team Leaders and Multiple Biologists/Observers to Survey Raptor Nesting Structures (determine viability and use)**

• **12 Prairie Dog Towns for Burrowing Owls and Mountain Plovers**

• **Barn Owl Nest Boxes (construction and placement)** *–All To Be Completed In May and June*

**BONUS: Mountain Plover survey training will be provided by Pawnee National Grasslands!**

**Interested? Contact Doug Kibbe 303-796-4746 or [dpkibbe@msn.com](mailto:dpkibbe@msn.com)**



# Eagle Eye

Watching Public Policy for the Environment  
by Polly Reetz

The legislative session is drawing to a close, and we have some real victories to record at this point:

First, the terrible bill introduced by Senator Brophy and Representative Sonnenberg, HB 1137, to keep the Colorado Division of Wildlife from purchasing any more land for wildlife habitat protection, is DEAD and buried. On the other hand, legislation to allow State peace officers, including Division of Wildlife officers, to enforce off-highway vehicle (OHV) regulations on federally-owned public lands, passed both houses and was signed by the Governor. The bill exempts ranchers and other ag producers who may need access to their livestock, water developments, etc., and is a very positive step towards reducing environmental damage to our public lands from illegal OHV use. However, the DOW officers can only impose fines of \$100, less than Forest Service or BLM rangers, so next year we will need a bill to increase fines for OHV violations.

Second, a bill which removes hurdles to long-term leases/loans of water rights to maintain instream flows, HB 1280, passed both houses in late March. As of this writing differences between the two versions were being ironed out, and our Audubon legislative liaison expected the bill to go to the Governor soon. The bill ensures that water rights owners who want to loan their water to the Colorado Water Conservation Board for several years to keep streams healthy and flowing, won't be penalized for it by losing their water rights.

Third, the penalty for illegal take or possession of bald eagles, or their parts, was increased substantially by HB 1304, which passed both Houses in March and was destined for the Governor's signature shortly thereafter. Fines were increased to between \$1,000 and \$100,000 per violation.

Fourth, a particularly egregious bill from Douglas Bruce was killed in Committee. This bill would have, among other things, allowed owners of land parcels 25 acres or larger to petition out of ALL land use regulations, including zoning, if 25% of owners within the affected area agreed. It also made payment of impact fees – to be established by local and state governments – the only prerequisite for approval of development applications. There was more, but you can see where this bill was going.

Fifth, a bill that will help combat global warming, HB 1160, was signed by the Governor in late March. It requires municipally owned utilities and rural electric associations to allow their customers to get credit if they put more energy into the system than they take out, say through use of solar panels or wind turbines.

### Major issues yet to come:

**1) Water and growth:** a bill that requires local governments to determine that there is enough water available to sustain a proposed development BEFORE it can be approved,

HB 1141, was still alive on April 1. The relationship between water and growth is a crucial topic for Colorado and legislators are finally willing to tackle it. Even if it doesn't pass, this bill starts that long-needed public discussion.

**2) Uranium mining:** HB 1161, a very good bill requiring a heightened standard of environmental protection for uranium mines, passed the House and was headed to the Senate at this writing. The bill also requires uranium solution (or in situ) mines – which inject a solution into underground formations, pump it out and extract uranium therefrom – to leave aquifers in the same condition they found them, which would help protect groundwater and drinking water supplies. The bill still has to make it through the Senate.

**3) Pine Beetles/Watershed Protection:** The massive die-off of lodgepole pines caused by pine beetle infestations has created thousands of acres of dead trees, and some say, increased fire danger, though the science on this is not clear. Some legislators want to allot additional money for salvaging the dead trees; Audubon's position is that any bill must also include specific provisions to guarantee long-term forest health, such as reforestation requirements and prohibiting the building of any new roads (which do more damage than fires, in some cases). Early May will be a frantic time, with final disposition of these and other late bills hanging in the balance. To read bills, or see where they are in the process, go to [www.leg.state.co.us](http://www.leg.state.co.us). And always, always, don't forget to call, write, or email your legislators – they appreciate hearing from you! Thank them for their good deeds and urge them to protect the resources that make Colorado such a great place to live.

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# AUDUBON SOCIETY of GREATER DENVER

## Calendar of Events

### MAY 2008

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
7am Dawn Chorus 8am Walk the Wetlands 4	7pm Master Birder Class  Cinco de Mayo 5		7pm Members Meeting  7		Spring Counts  9	Spring Counts  10
Spring Counts  Mother's Day 11		7pm ASGD Board Meeting 13	Alaska Cruise Departs  14			7:30am IMBD Program  17
	7pm Master Birder Class  19	7pm Conservation Committee  20				7am Master Birder FT Alaska Cruise Returns 24
6:30am Breeding Bird Atlas Trip  25					7:30pm Bruce Ducker Book Signing  30	8:30am Global Warming Forum  31
	Memorial Day 26					

### JUNE 2008

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
6:30am Breeding Bird Atlas Trip 8am Walk the Wetlands 1	7pm Master Birder Class  2		7pm Members Meeting  4			9am Native Plant Sale Master Birder FT 7
		7pm ASGD Board Meeting  9	6:30am Breeding Bird Atlas Trip  Thorne Science Camp 11			Master Birder FT  BioBlitz  Flag Day 14
Master Birder Field Trip  Father's Day 15	7pm Master Birder Class  16		2pm Field Trip Committee  Thorne Science Camp 18	6:30am Breeding Bird Atlas Trip  19		9am-2pm Birdseed Pick-Up Day Master Birder FT 21
9am Raptors of the North Front Range  22	7pm Master Birder Class  23		6:30am Breeding Bird Atlas Trip  Thorne Science Camp 25			Master Birder FT  28
	Bird Banding Station Opens  29					



# TRAVEL, FIELD TRIPS, CLASSES & PROGRAMS

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## – FIELD TRIPS –

### Dawn Chorus at the Audubon Center

**DATE:** Sunday, May 4 7 a.m.

**LEADERS:** Harold and Betty Oliver

*Pre-registration is NOT required.*

**FEE:** None

**MEETING PLACE:** Audubon Center at Chatfield. The Audubon Center is located on Waterton Road, 4.4 miles south of C470 and Wadsworth Blvd. (Colo. 121).

–FOLLOWED BY–

### Walk the Wetlands

**DATES:** Sunday, May 4 8 a.m.

Sunday, June 1 8 a.m.

**LEADERS:** Audubon Master Birders.

*Pre-registration is NOT required.*

**FEE:** None

**MEETING PLACE:** Audubon Center at Chatfield.

**DESCRIPTION:** Everyone welcome—Auduboners, members, and visitors. Come at 7 a.m. on May 4 to hear and to see the Dawn Chorus. Then at 8 a.m. we will hike along the South Platte River looking for spring migrants and summer nesting birds. Bring binoculars, field guides, water, and a snack. We can lend you binoculars and field guides if you don't have them.

### Members Meeting –

#### Lois Webster Fund Annual Reception & Program

**DATE:** Wednesday, May 7th

**TIME:** 6:00 p.m. – Wine and Cheese Reception

6:45 p.m. – Program

**PRESENTERS:** 2007 LWF Grantees

**MEETING PLACE:** Audubon Center at Chatfield.

**TRANSPORTATION:** Carpools and transportation can be arranged. Please call Margot Wynkoop, 303-733-2868 if you would like a ride or have any questions.

**DESCRIPTION:** 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 prairie dogs, the burrowing owls on the Pawnee Grasslands, status of an over or underpass for wildlifecrossing on Vail Pass, and mountain plover research. The LWF has received 13 well qualified applications for the 2008 grants. We will also review the selected recipients projects.

### 27th Annual Spring Bird Counts

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

**FRIDAY, MAY 9**

#### Cherry Creek Reservoir

**Leader:** Mary Burger, 303-771-3431

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

**SATURDAY, MAY 10**

#### Barr Lake periphery

**Leader:** Jackie King, 303-287-1644.

Meet at 0730 on access road to entrance  
station at Barr Lake State Park. This trip  
does not involve much walking and will be  
good for people with limited mobility.

#### Chatfield State Park

**Leader:** Joey Kellner, 303-978-1748.

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

#### Waterton, Downstream. 4-5 mile hike. Wear long

pants (not shorts) due to bare-leg-  
unfriendly plants such as poison ivy, thistles,  
and knapweed.

**Leader:** Hugh Kingery, 303-814-2723.

Meet at 0600 at Audubon Center at Chatfield

#### Barr Lake State Park

**Leader:** Dick Schottler, 303-278-8035

Meet at 0630 at Rocky Mountain Bird  
Observatory. Exit I-76 at Bromley Lane;  
go east about 1/4 mile and turn right (south)  
on Lark Bunting Lane, to end of road. This  
is a ten-mile, all-day hike around the lake.  
State Parks pass required.

**SUNDAY, MAY 11**

#### Lower Bear Creek

**Leader:** Mike Henwood 303-716-8551 [hawkhen@aol.com](mailto:hawkhen@aol.com)

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

#### Castlewood Canyon State Park

**Leader:** Randy Lentz, 303-680-3381.

Meet at 0630 at old entrance. From CO 86,  
0.5 miles west of Franktown, turn south on

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## – FIELD TRIPS –

**Castlewood Canyon Road, go two miles to old entrance. State Parks pass required.**

### Rocky Mountain Arsenal

**Leader: Urling Kingery, 303-814-2723.**

**Must register with leader in advance.**

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### Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day at Audubon Bird Banding Station

**DATE: Saturday, May 17, 7:30 a.m.**

**LEADERS: Audubon Master Birders**

**Pre-Registration Not required**

**FEE: None**

**MEETING PLACE: Audubon Center at Chatfield.**

**DESCRIPTION:** Take a short hike to the bird banding station and observe birds up close as they are identified, measured, weighed, given a numbered band attached to one leg, and then released. Visit the nets that licensed bird banders use to capture birds safely. See birds which have recently arrived from the south to nest in the rich habitat in the cottonwood forest along the South Platte River.

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### Breeding Bird Atlas –

#### TRAINING AND SURVEY TRIPS TO ASGD BLOCKS IN CONIFER AND CHERRY VALLEY SCHOOL

**All trips meet at 6:30 am and last until after lunch.**

**Pre-Registration is encouraged**

**You might check with the leaders to confirm the trip.**

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

#### ATLAS TRAINING TRIP – Chatfield State Park

**DATE: Sunday, June 1**

**MEETING PLACE:** Plum Creek Parking Area, Chatfield State Park. From C470, go south on Santa Fe Drive to Titan Road (-- miles); left on Titan 1 mile; right on Roxborough Park Road to the East gate to the park. After you enter the park, continue right to a T; right at the T to the parking lot.

**State Parks Pass required.**

Learn the rudiments of Atlas bird watching – a new and more interesting way to observe bird behavior. You can learn Atlas techniques so as to adopt your own Atlas Block or to help survey the ASGD blocks.

#### ATLAS SURVEY TRIPS

ASGD signed up to work on two Breeding Bird Atlas blocks –one in the foothills southwest of Denver and the other on

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

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

**FEE: None**

#### CONIFER ATLAS BLOCK

**DATES: Thursday, June 19**

**Saturday, July 5**

**MEETING PLACE:** Walmart parking lot (southeast quadrant of intersection of C470 and Bowles); look for the leader on the southwest side past the garden area, but away from the store.

**DESCRIPTION:** This block is about 15 miles into the foothills – a beautiful section that includes Meyer Ranch (Jefferson County park) and James Newton Park (Denver Mountain Park). Atlas blocks have 10 square miles, roughly 3 miles on a side. Different trips will explore different parts of the block in order to sample all habitats and to try and find all the breeding birds in the block.

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

#### CHERRY VALLEY SCHOOL ATLAS BLOCK

**DATES: Sunday, May 25**

**Wednesday, June 11**

**Wednesday, June 25**

**Saturday, July 19**

**MEETING PLACE:** Franktown: 300 yards north of the traffic light in Franktown, in the gravel parking lot next to and just south of the Franktown Animal Clinic. Franktown's traffic light is at the intersection of Colo. 83 (Parker Road) and Colo. 86: If driving down Colo. 83, Franktown is 9 miles south of Parker. From I-25, turn left at Exit 184 on Founders Parkway (Colo.86), continue about 4 miles to traffic light; left, still on Colo. 86, 5 miles to Franktown; left on Colo. 83 300 yards to the meeting place.

**DESCRIPTION:** Here we will explore a private ranch on East Cherry Creek; riparian, grassland, and ponderosa pine habitats.

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

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## – FIELD TRIPS –

### Members Meeting –

#### **NATIVE-SCAPE YOUR YARD & NATIVE PLANT SALE PREVIEW**

**DATE:** Wednesday, June 4th

**TIME:** 7:00 p.m.

**PRESENTER:** Susan Smith

**MEETING PLACE:** Audubon Center at Chatfield.

**DESCRIPTION:** Want plants that will thrive in our Colorado climate and withstand drought years? Want to attract songbirds and other wildlife to your yard year round? Want to find colorful, beautiful flowers that will add interest to your gardens? Native-scaping is the answer. We will explore the importance of native-scaping, provide tips for getting started and dispel some of the myths surrounding native yards. Then we will take a photographic tour of native plants and look at how they will fit into your landscape.

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### Native Plant Sale

**DATE:** Saturday, June 7

**TIME:** 9am – Noon

**MEETING PLACE:** Audubon Center at Chatfield. The Audubon Center is located on Waterton Road, 4.4 miles south of C470 and Wadsworth Blvd. (Colo. 121).

**DESCRIPTION:** Select from wildflowers and shrubs native to the Front Range of Colorado.

Why go native?

Create wildlife habitat, Have beautiful drought-resistant gardens, Use fewer (or no!) pesticides, Maintain less water-thirsty turf

#### **Shop Early & Native-scaping Monthly Meeting:**

**Wed, June 4, 7pm – 8:30pm**

#### **Volunteer Garden Day at the Audubon Center:**

**Wed, June 11 at 8:30am – 11:30am**

For more information, contact Susan Smith at 303-973-9530; [ssmith@denveraudubon.org](mailto:ssmith@denveraudubon.org)

*Proceeds benefit the Audubon Center at Chatfield*

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### Summer Science Camps at the Audubon Center

**CALLING ALL KIDS! TAKE FLIGHT WITH AUDUBON!**

#### **BIRD BRAINS (6-8 YEAR OLDS) - JUNE 9-13**

Experience a different avian adventure each day as we explore the river, ponds, forests, and canyon in search of our feathered friends. Visit a bird banding station, test your skills in an

Avian Olympics, and discover the amazing abilities of birds to survive! Craft your own nest from natural materials and build a bird feeder to take home.

#### **BIODIVERSITY BLITZ! (9-11 YEAR OLDS) - JUNE 16-20**

Calling future biologists! Explore the natural areas around Waterton Canyon while leading scientific surveys of all living things in the area. Your results will be part of the city-wide All Species Count celebration with the Audubon Society of Greater Denver. Live the life of a wildlife and plant biologist and show the world your findings on the event website!

#### **BIKING AND BIRDING (9-11 YEAR OLDS) - JUNE 23-27**

Let's cover some ground on our wheels! As we pedal along the bike paths of Waterton Canyon, we'll stop to identify what is flying overhead, nesting in the trees and shrubs. We will study adaptations unique to birds found in the area and learn how to identify them by their song and flight patterns. Along with keeping a journal of birds identified each day, you will learn how to use field guides and track migration in our area. Students need a tuned bike, helmet, two replacement bicycle tubes filled with tire slime, plenty of water, and a healthy snack. Average distance traveled per day is 6 miles. This class is for all levels of biking and has more breaks, lessons, and explorations off of the bike.

These programs are presented in collaboration with Thorne Ecological Institute's Natural Science School. Classes run from 8:30am to noon each day. Each week-long session is \$180 per child. You can register at [www.thorne-eco.org](http://www.thorne-eco.org) or by calling 303-499-3647.

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### Bio-Blitz Weekend

**Count it All! Discover the Amazing Biodiversity in your own Backyard!**

**DATE:** Friday, June 13th

Saturday, June 14th

**TIME:** Activities will be scheduled from early morning into the evening. See ASGD website [www.denveraudubon.org](http://www.denveraudubon.org) or call 303-973-9530 for details.

**PRESENTERS:** Scientists and volunteers will lead hikes and give presentations to help visitors identify species that are found here.. Exhibits and displays will help everyone learn more about the fascinating plants and animals in this ecosystem

**MEETING PLACE:** Audubon Center at Chatfield.

**DESCRIPTION:** For an up-dated schedule of events, go to [www.denveraudubon.org](http://www.denveraudubon.org) or call 303-973-9530.

# backyard birds....

by Hugh Kingery



**THE SAGA OF MOUNTAIN BIRDS** in the city continued through the winter. Mountain Chickadees and Red-breasted Nuthatches have showed up daily in south Denver (Joy Schieving, Bob Rozinski), Lakewood (Kelley McCready) Arvada (Jan Eckhardt), Centennial (Kate Frost and Flo DeCesare), and our yard in Franktown (not in the city, really). White-breasted Nuthatches came to two yards (Flo and Kelley) and ours (where they nest).

**LAST COLUMN**, Betsy Rush wondered if the beetle-devastation of lodgepole pines in the mountains sent these birds to the plains. At a talk to the Denver Field Ornithologists in March, Dave Leatherman, an entomologist and a bird-watcher, said yes, in two ways. One is loss of habitat, but the other, somewhat unexpected: Mountain Chickadees feed in lodgepoles, and the plethora of insects meant *very* successful breeding for the past several years. So successful that they don't have enough breeding space, especially with all the dead pines. As a result they have spread out across the Colorado plains. I speculate that we should look for them to breed in the metro area this summer!

**CHICKADEES AND NUTHATCHES** are not alone. Kevin Rumery saw a Clark's Nutcracker on the Loretto Heights campus in February. "The bird was in a large spruce tree and calling frequently. In fact we heard it well before spotting it." Flo reports "a beautiful Hairy Woodpecker coming to the feeder daily; he has a large orange spot at the back of his head and white spots along the sides of his wings." If you look in field guides you'll see two versions of Hairy (and Downy) Woodpeckers. The ones with white spots occur in the East, and on the Colorado plains. Our mountain birds have a lot less white in their wings – perhaps they fit into the darker conifer forests less conspicuously.

**CAROL SHOULDICE SAW**, on Feb. 20, a pair of Red Crossbills on her window feeder in Lakewood. "The feeder with sunflower chips mostly brings house finches, chickadees, an occasional nuthatch, and a flicker who wishes he were smaller. How rarely or commonly are they seen in town?" Very rarely, until this winter when we have had one other report, so still not a lot. Bill Eden took pictures of one at his new water feature, on Feb. 17. The Western Scrub-Jay continues to visit Mary and Dave Driscoll.

**BUSHTITS CONTINUE** their Denver invasion, and bring delight to many backyarders. Flo says that on Feb. 7, 9-10 completely covered the suet feeder. On Mar. 5, she says, "what a treat. They still come every day and today they shared their suet with a Downy Woodpecker at the same time."

**ON FEB. 27, BILL HINCKLEY**, in Columbine Valley got within six inches of a Bushtit on a suet cake. Bob Rozinski saw 12 covering the suet, along with one Downy. Bushtits come almost daily to Kevin Corwin (Centennial); Joy Schieving sees them

regularly (she was one of the first to notice them, 3-4 years ago). They have started showing up in our yard after discovering the suet cakes. We notice them only sporadically as they flit in and out quickly. So I thought until yesterday (Mar. 26). Because of the warm weather I left open the doors, and heard them four or five times that afternoon. They must spend more time here than I realized.

**FLOCKS OF TWO INTERLOPING SPECIES** cruised over the metro area. Both Cedar and Bohemian Waxwings roam around looking for berry sources. At first, Cedars seemed more common (a few do nest nearby). Joy saw four on Jan. 15 and 5-6 twice in February. Polly Reetz saw 5-7 at the Botanic Gardens on Mar. 16. Kevin Corwin, who saw Cedars in December, reported a flock of Bohemians on Feb. 7. On Feb. 15, Merikay Haggerty says, "The rising sun glinted off the feathers of hundreds of Bohemian Waxwings in the very tops of the big cottonwoods behind us. I'm sure I lost count and missed some, but one of my counts was 273!" She sent pictures of the cottonwoods with their February ornaments. In Parker, Pat Skinner saw a flock of about 25 on Mar. 4; "they were being buffeted by the wind. Just want everyone to know that this is my first time to see the Bohemians and I am thrilled!"

**EVERY WINTER**, Townsend's Solitaires visit the city. This winter we heard of them from Joy, Kelley ("slowly consuming our pyracantha berries"), Mary and Dave, and Polly. Polly watched the waxwings "eating berries, aided by a group of solitaires, at least one of which was digging down in freshly-turned dirt, just like a robin." That's atypical behavior for a solitaire. Dave Leatherman mentioned how they set up winter territories – that's why you hear them singing in fall and early winter. He says a solitaire consumes 4200-4800 juniper berries in a winter. A roaming flock of waxwings can come through and demolish a solitaire's winter cache – to the utter consternation of the solitaire.

**SEVERAL FOLKS REPORTED** Cooper's Hawks. Suzanne Snider sent 16 photos of one "under our bird feeder" pecking at prey in its talons ("one way to reduce the pigeon population"). Both Joy (Feb. 11) and Jan saw one, and Dodie Hampton in Aurora has had one all winter. Polleke Siraa saw a Sharpshinned Hawk "on our back fence Mar. 3. It first looked like it was sunning itself, but when it moved it was obvious it had been hiding its catch: a starling with a bloody belly and its yellow bill sticking right up!" Barbara Shissler watched an immature sharp-shin "chasing a squirrel across our backyard. The squirrel, of course, ran to the nearest tree and was safe. The young hawk has been around all winter, and I've never seen him catch anything." Pat Brodbent reported on Feb. 29 that "kestrels are already checking out the Wood Duck boxes I have put up in Franktown. Maybe I should rename them kestrel boxes."

**TWO SAW CITY BALD EAGLES**. John Peters, driving on Kipling Parkway in Lakewood Feb. 12, saw a mature one flying east toward the Kindricks Lakes area. On Feb. 14, John Dorris, who lives in Watkins, saw one "alighting on a telephone pole just east of where East Colfax conjoins with I-70. Also, this morning in the half-light of dawn my wife reports the larg-

*Backyard Birds continued on page 10*

# ASGD Recognizes our valued Donors

**DIRECTORS CIRCLE:** Steve & Laurie Bender, Helen Hale

**CONTRIBUTORS CIRCLE:** Front Range Birding Company, Carol DeStefanis, David & Mary Driscoll, Tom Parchman

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**IN-KIND:** Doris Cruze, Merikay Haggerty, Douglas Kibbe, Thomas Parchman, Linda Strand, Karen von Saltza

## MEMORIAL GIFTS:

Elise Brogham in memory of Dennis Meyer  
Sylvia Hill in memory of Thelma Pflaeging  
Myrna Mong in memory of Thelma Pflaeging

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## Backyard Birds continued from page 9

est Great Horned Owl she has ever seen. We've identified five kinds of owls, but the great horned are typically gargantuan. They look like huge alley cats from south Chicago." In summer, he says, Watkins "can be a veritable aviary. We used to watch the nightly ballet of the nighthawks. The meadowlarks are our favorite, a song straight from heaven. I've been hearing them at least for three or more weeks (before Mar. 17)."

**BILL EDEN REPORTED** a "big day" backyard experience on Feb. 17. Sixteen species flocked into my south Denver yard. I added two new yard birds including a single Bohemian Waxwing that was with a flock of 20 Cedars and a pair of Red Crossbills. The rest of the group included Townsend's Solitaire, Dark-eyed Junco, Black-capped and Mountain Chickadee, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Red-breasted Nuthatch, a flock of Bushtits, European Starlings, American Crow, American Robin, House Finch, and House Sparrow. The birds were drinking and bathing in the water feature and/or eating at the feeders. I photographed the Bushtits, crossbills, and both waxwings." Bill spent the last year prepping his yard for birds – he's added cover and water – and look how well it works.

**IN AURORA** near Horseshoe Park, Jim Connell saw on Mar. 16, his "first Eurasian Collared-Dove, feeding with some Mourning Doves. The difference is certainly striking. The EC is much paler and larger with a much bulkier look to it." Look for these, and remember that older field guides show the similar Ringed

# Kayak the Niobrara in Nebraska July 8-11

**SIGN UP NOW**—Only a Few Spots Left for this Unique River Experience!

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. Details of the trip can be found in the March-April Issue of the Warbler. The fee is \$495.00 per person for Friends of ASGD 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. Children over the age of 10 who can handle their own kayak are welcome. We will try to arrange a kayak practice time in Denver before the trip.

To register call ASGD at 303-973-9530 or go online ([www.denveraudubon.org](http://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.

Turtle Dove; collared-doves have moved into the state in force and we don't have the other. And Pat Brodbent put up a bluebird house for someone in Franktown. "She asked how long it might take for bluebirds to find the house. We turned around and there was a male Mountain Bluebird on the house and a female in the house. It took about two minutes for them to find it." Dodie described a Spotted Towhee that called on her in March.

**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.

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

**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 – ouzels8@AOL.com**.

# Audubon Society of Greater Denver 2008 Award Winners

## Environmental Stewardship Award (ASGD Member Award)

**MARGOT WYNKOOP.** Margot is being recognized for her work with the Lois Webster Fund. This endowment fund was created to honor Lois Webster, one of the founders and a life-long supporter of ASGD. Lois was especially interested in education (she was a teacher) and her favorite birds were plovers. Margot and others organized the fund and oversee its operation. Income from the endowment and donations come from friends and members and go towards non-game wildlife research grants for individuals or groups.

## Environmental Stewardship Award (Community Member Award)

**BROOKE FOX.** Brooke is on the board for the Chatfield Basin Conservation Network. She was the first Director of Douglas County's Division of Open Space and Natural Resources. While in that position she coordinated and administered a Great Outdoors' Colorado "GoCo" grant that included the renovation of Audubon Society of Greater Denver's first outdoor classroom, the Outdoor Lab at the Audubon Nature Center. She oversaw the acquisition of over 37,000 acres of open space, and directed the development of management plans on properties owned by the County.

## Special Recognition Award

**HAROLD AND BETTY OLIVER.** Harold and Betty are long-time ASGD members. They are experienced trip leaders, and Harold is a former board member. Both the Olivers are active in Christmas Bird Counts, serving as leaders on several areas, and as spotter/counters on others. Every winter, they lead raptor trips for ASGD, and the trips always fill to capacity. They also work on conservation projects, such as BioBlitz, census of nesting raptors, and they serve as mentors for the Audubon Master Birder program. Their favorite pastime is to locate and monitor nesting raptors, especially owls.

### – For Denver Audubon Book Lovers –

Join award-winning author and long time ASGD member, Bruce Ducker, for an entertaining evening and book signing at the Tattered Cover in Lodo. Help celebrate the publication of his 8th novel *Dizzying Heights*, a "rollicking comedy of manners" set in Aspen. Bruce writes that the only rare birds in the book are bipeds. Get your book at the signing, or call the publisher (800) 992-2908, identify yourself as an ASGD member and get a 10% discount.

*"Bruce Ducker is a hell of a writer."*

—Dave Barry

**Tattered Cover Lodo  
Friday evening, May 30, 7:30-8:30 p.m.**

# Wing into spring with Bird-A-Thon

It's time to grab your binoculars, your bird guide and your Bird-a-thon pledge sheet. May is officially Bird-a-thon month and our goal is to double the number of members participating in Bird-a-thon this year. It is a fun, easy way to get involved in the Audubon Society of Greater Denver while raising funds and friends for the birds.

Pick any 24-hour time period in May for your Bird-a-thon. Make it a social event and invite others to join you for a bird walk. Remember, enthusiasm is contagious. One in four Americans considers themselves bird watchers, so don't be afraid to ask neighbors, family members or friends. You may inspire someone to look beyond their backyard feeders!

Call 303-973-9530 to register and receive your Bird-a-thon pledge sheet. This works similar to walk-a-thons. Collect pledges for each species you see and challenge yourself to find more species than you ever have in one day. Prizes will be awarded to top fundraisers!

## Bio-Blitz is fun for families and it's educational!

BioBlitz is coming to the Audubon Center at Chatfield on Friday, June 13 and Saturday, June 14. BioBlitz is a 24-hour count of everything living, focusing attention on the biological diversity of the area. Scientists, volunteers, and visitors will count everything that grows, creeps, crawls, hops, flies or slithers at the Audubon Center and its surroundings. BioBlitz is fun for the entire family, and helps to raise awareness of the flora and fauna that live here, a first step in protecting these precious resources.

Mention biodiversity and many people think of the rainforest because of the many varieties of plants and animals found there and the potential for discovering new species. The Audubon Center, located on the edge of the plains yet close to the foothills and mountains, is home to an amazing array of birds, butterflies, plants, mammals, and reptiles, not to mention spiders and insects. BioBlitz focuses attention on the diversity of life at Chatfield, and celebrates the beauty and wonder of nature. Every year there are surprise discoveries and an impressive number of species listed.

During BioBlitz, scientists and volunteers will lead hikes and give presentations to help visitors identify species that are found here. Exhibits and displays will help everyone learn more about the fascinating plants and animals in this ecosystem. Come join the fun on a bird spotting hike, a wildflower walk, a butterfly discovery walk, a bat observation late-evening hike, or enjoy games, exhibits, and more. For an up-dated schedule of events go to [www.denveraudubon.org](http://www.denveraudubon.org) or call 303-973-9530.



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of GREATER DENVER

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Littleton, Colorado 80128

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**MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

**Lois Webster Fund Reception**

Wednesday, May 7

See page 6 in Field Trips section for details.

**Audubon's Global Warming Forum**

"Taking Action in YOUR Community"

Saturday, May 31

See page 1 for details



**Become a FRIEND of the Audubon Society of Greater Denver**

Become a Friend of ASGD at the following levels

**INDIVIDUAL \$25**

Benefits:

- Satisfaction that all of your Friends membership dues will stay at the local level.
- The award-winning, bi-monthly newsletter, the *Warbler*, to keep you informed on ASGD projects and activities.
- Invitations to Friends' only events.
- Friends discounts on ASGD field trips, classes and workshops for one person.

**FAMILY \$35**

All the benefits listed above, plus:

- Friends discounts on ASGD field trips, classes and workshops for an additional adult and the member's children or grandchildren under the age of 18.

**YES! I am a FRIEND of the Audubon Society of Greater Denver.**

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Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ **Thank You!**

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

**Springtime To-Do List on the Front Range...**

- ✓ Mother's Day
- ✓ Father's Day
- ✓ Graduation Day
- ✓ Watch Birds

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