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Bird Banding is Not For the Birds

by Cristin Tarr

After living in Colorado for 16 years, I pretty much thought I had seen "everything" when it came to nature and the outdoors, until we went to see bird banding.

On a cool crisp May morning, I brought my reluctant family down to the Audubon Society of Greater Denver's nature center located across from Waterton Canyon. I heard someone mention bird banding and thought it sounded interesting. Before going, I did a little research online and found bird banding (bird-ringing) is a method of marking wild birds to study their biology and migration patterns. A lightweight ring with a number is attached to the foot of a captured bird. Before freeing them, a scientist records the time and place of banding, the bird's weight and wing measurements, and the sex of the bird. This information is entered into an international database and shared with other banding centers around the world. Since 2001, the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO) has operated the banding station at the Audubon Center at Chatfield every May.

As we approached the bird banding station, we saw nets weaved between trees at several different locations. Each net had between 2 and 8 birds caught in the soft, tightly strung net. Some of the birds looked frustrated, and attempted to get out, while others calmly hung there - but at no time were they unsafe. Then, volunteers assisting the researchers carefully extracted the birds from the net with



Bird banding photos by Marilyn Rhodes.

gloved hands and delicately placed the bird, head first, in a cloth bag. The volunteers then collected two or three bags with live birds and walked to the recording station. My three boys and I were wide-eyed and full of questions while quietly helping carry the bags back to the station. We then stood with the researcher as she removed each bird, one at a time, from the cloth bag. We saw up close one species after another, many of which we had never seen in the wild. As the researcher held the bird, by its feet, only inches away, she described their features, habitat and migration pattern. Science in action, my kids were hooked. We had only planned to stay for an hour, but ended up staying for several. The researcher said it was one of the best days yet for banding the birds.

As my family left that day, I was thinking, *this was one of the highlights of my year!* This coming May, the Audubon Center will again be hosting the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory's banding station. Bird banding is not just for the birds, it's an opportunity to truly appreciate and understand our feathered friends. Don't miss it!

Come join us and watch researchers in action at the Audubon Center at Chatfield Located at the intersection of S. Wadsworth Blvd and Waterton Rd

April 30 – May 29, 8am-12pm (weather permitting) No banding on Saturday, May 21

For more information visit:

www.denveraudubon.org

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twitter 

 Find us on: facebook.

Celebrating
42 Years of service
to the Greater
Denver Community

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK ~

Luckily for many of our outdoor-active members, birding is a year round activity, whether you embark on a expedition to find an elusive life lister, or you just like to relax in the comfort of your kitchen, watching the activity at your bird feeder while sipping your morning coffee.

Soon, May will be upon us, the best month for birding and one of the most exciting times of the year: the bird banding station at the Audubon Center opens on April 30! Of course, we offer many opportunities to explore nature throughout the year. But, we have discovered that one of the greatest hooks for those who might have an "eh" attitude toward nature is the experience of watching research in action and seeing birds up close, in hand.

Many friends and family of birders don't understand their obsession. I strongly encourage you to bring people you know, birder and non-birder alike, to the banding station on a Saturday or Sunday morning, and I almost guaranteed they will be riveted with fascination and leave in awe – and hopefully be hooked for life. Many families make frequent outings to the banding station during the season. I am thrilled to see children spending their time outdoors interacting with a real scientist, rather than staying home watching one on television.

I also want to put a plug in for our annual Birdathon, an important fundraiser for ASGD that supports our many programs. We hope to make this our best Birdathon ever, and you can participate in several ways. You can form a team and collect pledges based on the number of bird species you see. You can join one of the teams that will be searching for birds throughout Denver. Or, you can support one of our teams with a pledge. Novices and experts are welcome! See page 4 for more details.

Enjoy your spring, whether you're watching birds, wildflowers, butterflies, or other wildlife, and we'll see you at the Audubon Center or on one of our many local, national, or international trips.



Karl Brummert
Executive Director



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MISSION

Audubon Society of Greater Denver advocates for the environment, connecting people with nature through education, conservation and research.

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MOTHER'S DAY BIRD BANDING BREAKFAST

SUNDAY, MAY 8 FROM 9-11AM

AUDUBON CENTER AT CHATFIELD

MOTHERS FREE!

\$12/ADDITIONAL ADULT, \$6/CHILD

REGISTRATION REQUIRED – 303-973-9530

Treat your mother to a one-of-a-kind experience! After a light continental-style breakfast, enjoy a leisurely spring hike and a visit to our popular bird banding station. It is the perfect gift and a wonderful opportunity to see songbirds up close.

Conservation Report

by Polly Reetz, ASGD Conservation Committee Chair

As of mid-March, the status of Colorado legislative bills Audubon has been tracking was as follows:

HR 1150, which would have transferred \$5 million per year for ten years from the Division of Wildlife's Game Cash Fund to the Colorado Water Conservation Board's low-interest loan fund, died when the House sponsor pulled it off the table. He had received calls from many sportsmen and other conservationists opposing this bill and decided discretion was the better part of valor, evidently (game cash comes from hunting and fishing license fees).

HB 1223 proposes to reduce the size of the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) from 9 to 7, with 5 members representing the industry.

- Background: In 2007 the Legislature passed a bill to change the make-up of this Commission, enlarging it to 9 members and balancing representation among industry, local government, agriculture and conservation interests. The directors of the Dept. of Natural Resources and the Health Department are also members. This change in the COGCC was followed by bills to require wildlife and public health to be considered in oil and gas development. COGCC spent 18 months, with lots of public input, on revising their regulations. While not perfect, these regs give public health considerations and wildlife habitat a place at the table FOR THE FIRST TIME. Thus, HB 1223 is the first stage in an attack on the new regulations and on wildlife habitat in our state.
- The oil and gas industry, represented by the Colorado Oil and Gas Association, has been vocally neutral on this bill - they are more interested in consistency and stability at this point than in changing things once again.

BEARS: No bill yet, but Rep. J. Paul Brown (R-59) intends to introduce legislation to repeal the citizen-initiated ban on spring bear hunting. He originally included language to repeal the ban on the use of dogs and bait as well, but this may be dropped by the time the bill hits the House floor.

- The bear hunt ban, known as Amendment 10, passed in 1992 with better than a 2-1 margin in the popular vote. This bill would have the legislature repeal that highly popular initiative, which is a slap in the face to the voters. Jen reports that while it is unlikely that the current Wildlife Commission would rush to reinstate spring bear hunting (when cubs are still dependent on their mothers), it was the Commission's refusal to address the hunting of sows with cubs that spurred the initiative in the first place.

GOCO: Audubon has been on the lookout during this session for an attempt to raid Great Outdoors Colorado funding, and unfortunately it appears that this might happen. Rep. Tom Massey (R-60) now intends to introduce a proposed constitutional change for the 2012 ballot. Evidently the measure would transfer ALL lottery proceeds - GOCO, Conservation Trust Fund, State Parks - to K-12 education for 3 years. After three years, lottery would revert back to its current distribution. Here are some problems with this bill:

- K-12 funding is 46% or \$3.2 billion of the state annual budget - GOCO would do hardly anything to fix school budget problems, as it's a maximum of about \$115 million a year.
- It's a bad idea to fund education with lottery money, which is unpredictable and fluctuating. Do we value our educational system so little as to play around with a relatively unstable funding source? Then legislators will want to

apportion less General Fund money to education since "they get all that lottery money."

- Taking lottery funds away from State Parks will leave them with almost no funding, since they are being cut out of the General Fund (income and sales taxes) this year.
- The lottery system that funds GOCO was voted on three times by the public - we have said emphatically that these monies are for parks, open space, trails and wildlife.

BILLS WE LIKE:

HB 1146 limits agricultural classification of lands held for future residential or commercial development; and an as-yet unnumbered bill encourages farmers and ranchers who don't want to farm/ranch their land any longer to manage for wildlife, plant resources or water resources under an agreement with an agency such as the Division of Wildlife, Colorado Forest Service, BLM, US Forest Service, etc.

LAST-MINUTE NOTE: The governor has proposed merging the Divisions of State Parks and Wildlife for efficiency purposes. Our concerns are:

- DOW is legally an "enterprise" - thanks to Audubon - and so not subject to limits under the Taxpayers Bill of Rights (TABOR). State Parks isn't.
- DOW gets a lot of money - about \$20 million annually - from the federal excise taxes on guns, ammunition and angling gear, which may be jeopardized if funds are "diverted" from DOW control.
- How much money does this arrangement save?
- On the other hand, a merged agency might listen a bit more to the needs of non-consumptive users, like birdwatchers. Maybe. This merger would have to be done like a porcupine birth: VERY CAREFULLY. A bill to authorize it will be in the legislature soon, perhaps as you read this.

ASGD Birdathon May 2011

What is Birdathon?

Birdathon is an important annual fundraising event that involves all ASGD supporters in one of America's most popular hobbies: bird watching! And the great part is you don't have to be an expert birder to participate.



3 Ways YOU Can Participate

Form a Team

Count birds and collect pledges from sponsors –friends, family, coworkers, or businesses. You don't have to travel far and wide, and you don't have to spend 24hours on your Birdathon. You can count birds at your feeders over the course of a day, or you can go all out and visit all the parks in Denver. You choose whether you want to do a marathon Birdathon or just a sprint.



Join a Team

There will be several teams heading out to various

locations throughout the Denver area. Just give us a call to register. Here are some possible options: Chatfield, Cherry Creek, Bear Creek/Red Rocks/Lair o' the Bear, Urban Denver Parks, Marston Lake Area, Barr Lake

Support a Team

Pledge your support to one of the many teams that will be out in the field counting birds. Pledges can be based on the number of species you see, or you can pledge a flat amount. To find out more information about our teams and to receive a pledge form, call 303-973-9530.

All contributions to the Birdathon are tax deductible and support the Audubon Society of Greater Denver.

Pledges can be based on the number of species you see, or they can be a flat amount. Call 303-973-9530 to receive guidelines and a brochure.

We look forward to seeing you out there!

TAGAWA GIVE BACK PROGRAM



Support the Audubon Society of Greater Denver with purchases from Tagawa Gardens located at 7711 South Parker Road, Centennial, CO 80016

Valid April 15 through June 12, 2011

1. *This is NOT a Discount Card*
2. *Purchases made by presenting this card will be totaled at the end of the program.*
3. *Percentage of the total sales will be donated to Audubon Society of Greater Denver*



GBP 100008

To ensure give back to ASGD present this card at checkout at 7711 South Parker Road, Centennial, CO 80016

303-690-4722 ext 112 • www.TagawaGardens.com

Shop at Tagawa Gardens AND support the Audubon Society of Greater Denver!

Spring has arrived and your green thumb has probably been itching to start your yard projects.

Simply print the card on the left (or remove it from The Warbler if you receive a print edition) and bring it to Tagawa Gardens from April 15 - June 12. Present the card to the cashier when you are at the checkout and ASGD will receive a percentage of the sales.

Use the card as many times as you want, and feel free to share it with as many people as possible. Make a copy for friends, family, co-workers, and others who may be planning a large yard overhaul, or maybe they are just looking for a new hose attachment - every purchase counts (the more the better, of course)!

Print the card today and put it on your fridge as a reminder. Thank you for your support!

Need directions to Tagawa Gardens?
Visit <http://www.tagawagardens.com/tgmaphrs.htm>

Why Cats Belong Indoors

by Stella Miller, President, Huntington Oyster Bay Audubon Society (NY)

It's 10am. Do you know where Fluffy is? If you allow your cat to roam outdoors, there is a possibility that at this moment, Fluffy is stalking a bird, ready to pounce with deadly accuracy. "But Fluffy is well fed", you say. Cats do not always hunt because they are hungry. They hunt because of an innate instinct for hunting. "Well, Fluffy wears a bell and that will serve as a warning", you say. A bell is useless. Wildlife does not recognize the sound of a bell as a danger signal and even if they did, most cats learn to stalk and seize their prey silently, despite the presence of a bell on their collar.

Cats as Our Companions

Cats are companion animals, just as are dogs. Cats evolved from wild species but are now considered their own separate species, *Felis catus*. Although they retain many of their wild characteristics, such as the urge to hunt, they are now as domesticated as dogs. Would you allow your dog to roam freely in the neighborhood?

Cats Impact on Birds and Other Wildlife

Many native bird populations are in a serious and steep decline due to three major causes: habitat destruction, window collisions, and cat predation. When you add up these losses, the math is chilling. Hundreds of millions of birds are killed by cats each year, and between 100 million and a billion die from window collisions. Factor in habitat loss and you are looking at an unsustainable loss.

Cats also kill prey animals such as mice, chipmunks, squirrels, and other small mammals, competing with native species such as hawks, owls, foxes and other predators that depend on these animals. Statistics show that the combined numbers of birds and

small mammals killed each year by cats is close to one billion. Allowing a well fed house cat to compete for wild food sources places native predators at a disadvantage. Bottom line, cats are an invasive and alien species that do not belong in our ecosystem.

The Dangers Cats Themselves Face

You may be wondering if it is cruel to deprive your cat of an outdoor life. Absolutely not! Cats allowed outside are more likely to lead shorter lives. Exposure to transmittable and deadly diseases (such as rabies, feline leukemia, distemper and FIV), the constant threat of being hit by a car, as well as being attacked by a dog or a larger predator such as a fox or raptor are very real and likely possibilities. In addition, there have been many publicized cases of cats found stabbed, burned and shot by humans. Letting your cat outside can also be a risk for you: cats can contract diseases such as rabies and toxoplasmosis, both of which can be transmitted to humans. Furthermore, an outdoor cat may carry parasites such as ticks, fleas and worms into your home. Why expose your cat and yourself to these risks? Keep Fluffy inside and allow her to live a spoiled, pampered life!

For more information on how to keep your cat a happy indoor cat, visit: <http://www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/cats/materials/outin.pdf>.

One Final Note

If you are no longer able to care for your cat for any reason, we ask that you not release it outdoors, thinking it will fend for itself, or that someone will find it and take care of it. Chances are it will end up dead. Please take your unwanted cat to a local shelter or rescue organization. Think of your cat's quality of life as well as the lives of our native species. Birds

and other wildlife are already struggling to survive in a world filled with human caused obstacles. For the health and happiness of your cat, for the benefit of wild animals, and for your peace of mind, please, keep your cat indoors.



Post your latest
bird sightings
and
questions
on our
FaceBook Page



Find us on:
facebook.

Walk the Wetlands

Sunday, May 1, 8 a.m.

Sunday, June 5, 8 a.m.

Everyone welcome, members and non-members alike! Hike along the South Platte River looking for early spring migrants (May) and breeding birds (June). This is a wonderful adventure for all ages. **BBFGWS**. We can lend you binoculars and field guides if you don't have them.

Meeting Place: Audubon Center parking lot

Leaders: Karen von Saltza and

Master Birders

Registration NOT required: No Fee

Little Fledglings Preschool

Nature Hour

Wednesdays, May 4, 18,

June 1, 15, 10-11a.m.

Saturdays, May 14, June 4, 10-11 a.m.

Explore a different theme each month with stories, songs, crafts, and activities exploring wildlife and the natural world. This program introduces science skills and encourages active outdoor play. In May, children learn about the special functions of bird beaks in "Bird Beak Buffet." During the month of June, children explore parts of a habitat in "Oh, Deer!"

Registration required:

\$5/Friends member child and their adult;

\$2 each additional child

\$8/non-member child and their adult; \$4

each additional child

Lois Webster Fund Annual Reception and Program

Thursday, May 5, at 6:00 p.m.

Join old and new friends for a wine and light supper reception. We then have a program featuring presentations from the LWF's three grantees from last year. Learn about Avian Communities' Changes in a Riparian Habitat, Ecological Role of Free-ranging Domestic Cats, and Hybridization Threats on Two Colorado Native Catostomids (suckers). It is always

an informative and fun evening. The LWF Committee looks forward to thanking our long time supporters and welcoming new friends.

Meeting Place: Room 200 at St. John's Cathedral on 14th and Washington St. in Denver. Use the Washington St. entrance and follow the signs to Room 200. Parking is available in the lot on Washington St., or in the lot just north of the Cathedral between Washington and Clarkson St.

Chico Basin Ranch

Friday, May 6, 7am to 4 p.m.

Visit this migrant trap and bird-banding hot spot 35 minutes SE of Colorado Springs. Unusual species throng with usual migrant warblers, vireos, sparrows, waders, and waterfowl. A conservation easement covers the riparian ponds and woods at this 87,000 acres working cattle ranch. **BBFGWS & Lunch. Limit 10.**

Meeting Place: King Soopers parking lot on SE side of I-25/Founders Parkway, Castle Rock (Exit 184).

Leaders: Laurie Duke 303-204-1963;

lcd317@earthlink.net)

and John Drummond.

Registration required: \$25/Friends member, \$27/non-member.

Bird Banding Station Open



April 25-May 30

(station closed May 20-21)

Audubon Center Open Saturdays & Sundays, 8 a.m.-12 p.m.

Visitors are treated to the unique experience of watching research in action and seeing warblers, sparrows, woodpeckers, thrushes, and other songbirds up close. We encourage you to visit the station as often as possible to see resident and migrant birds – each day brings a different mix of species! The Audubon Center opens weekend mornings during the operation of Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory's

bird banding research station. Easy to moderate walking required on flat trails to reach the station.

Registration NOT required. However, if the station is busy, there may be timed sessions.

Plants of the Platte

Saturday, May 21, 10-11:30 a.m.

Learn how to identify common native and non-native plants of the prairie, wetland, and forest habitats along the Platte. Discover native plants that liven up and invite nature to your landscaping.

Registration required: Free/Friends member; \$5/non-member

Mucking in Wild Water Habitats

May 21, 12-1:30 p.m.

Discover the wildlife of the wetlands, rivers, and ponds at Chatfield during this family program. Explore the water using binoculars, nets, and buckets, and learn how to make underwater viewing scopes. Wear wading shoes or sandals – no flip-flops.

Registration required: Free/Friends member; \$5/non-member

Birding & Banding

Sunday, May 22, 7:30 -11:30 a.m.

Birding trip focused on breeding species as well as spring migrants. At the Chatfield banding station, learn how and why we band birds. Participants see wild birds up-close as researchers collect data. Appropriate for all ages and birding ability levels. **BBFGWS.**

Meeting Place: Audubon Nature Center
Leader: Nicole Buyck, ASGD Master Birder
Fee: \$10/Friends member; \$12/non-members. Kids free.

Pre-registration required

LEGEND:  Photography  Audubon Center at Chatfield  Audubon Office  Field Trip

 Easy to No Walking  Moderate Walking/Hiking  Extensive Hiking

***** BBFGWS = Bring binoculars, field guides, water, and a snack. *****

Spring Bird Photography Trip



Sunday, May 22, 2011, 8 a.m. - Noon

Join us for photography and birding at the Audubon Center. The trip includes a visit to the Rocky Mountain Observatory's bird banding station to give participants the opportunity for close up photographs of birds. **BBFGWS**, sunscreen, and insect repellent. You may borrow binoculars from the Audubon Center.

Leaders: Barbara Shissler, Mary Driscoll, and Cindy Valentine

Registration required. \$10/Friends member; \$12/non-member

Birding and Wildflower Walk at Roxborough State Park



Saturday, May 28, 9a.m. - Noon

Enjoy a morning hike in beautiful Roxborough State Park, looking for both birds and spring wildflowers. A Colorado native plant specialist will story-line each wildflower and its importance to the ecosystem. Expect a songbird symphony as each species announces itself and proclaims its territory. Children age 12 or older welcome. **BBFGWS**. Space limited.

Meeting Place: Roxborough State Park visitor Center

Leaders: Tom Bush of The Front Range Birding Company and Roxborough Wildflower Naturalist Betty Timson.

Registration required: 303-973-3959: No fee, State Parks Pass required (\$7 per day per vehicle.)

National Trails Day

Saturday, June 4, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Celebrate American Hiking Society's National Trails Day – "Made With All Natural Ingredients." Join us for classes, hikes, crafts, and service work to connect with, appreciate and celebrate the natural places where we find a spread of scenery, a plateful

of peace, and a heap of happiness and health. Classes are part of our Certificate in Outdoor Adventure series— see inset and class descriptions for more information.

Registration NOT required: No Fee for the event: Class and Craft fees may apply

Be Prepared for Your Adventures

June 4, 9-10:30 a.m.

What are the ten essentials that you need to bring on a long day hike? Where can you find water? Where is the best place to camp if you get lost? Learn about the basics before going on your outdoor adventure.

Registration required: Free/Friends member; \$5/non-member

GPS for Beginners

June 4, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Learn to use a GPS unit to track trails you hike, set markers for cool locations, and locate a hidden treasure along the way. Units are provided, or bring your own.

Registration required: Free/Friends member; \$5/non-member

Grassland and Wetland Birds of Northern Colorado

Saturday, June 4, 7:15 a.m. – 4:15 p.m.

Bird from Nunn to Pawnee Grasslands and the Greeley area to find hawks, owls, longspurs, plovers, sparrows, warblers, shorebirds, egrets, and herons. Lots of driving, but some walking. Northern CO specialist Gary Lefko, who reports almost daily on the CObirds website, leads us over his familiar territory. **BBFGWS** and Lunch.

Meeting Place: NE section of parking lot, Brighton Walmart, 152nd Ave (Bromley Lane) and US Highway 85.

Leader: Gary Lefko (the Nunn guy) and Mary Keithler (303-771-1421).

Registration required: \$10/Friends members, \$12/non-members

Flocks at the Rocks - Birds of Red Rocks Park

Saturday, June 11, 7- 11 a.m.

Explore all park habitats. Look for Yellow-breasted Chat, Lazuli Bunting, Canyon Wren, White-throated Swift, breeding Peregrine and Prairie Falcons and other raptors, Spotted Towhee, Western Scrub Jay, Black-headed Grosbeak, hummingbirds, flycatchers, warblers, rare sparrows (White-throated, Harris's and Golden-crowned) and Curve-billed Thrasher. Mule deer and coyote frequently seen. **BBFGWS** (Optional brunch at the TNT Country Kitchen in Morrison after the field trip.)

Meeting place: Trading Post parking lot, Red Rocks Park

Leaders: Marilyn Rhodes (303-674-9895) and Bob Santangelo (720-641-3899)

Leaders can be reached before and during the field trip on their cell phones: Bob, 720-641-3899; Marilyn, 720-333-2551.

Registration required: \$10/Friends members, \$12/non-members.

Birding and Geology Walk at Roxborough State Park

Saturday, June 25, 9 a.m. - Noon

Hike Roxborough's flatiron country and learn about its geology from Precambrian to Late Mesozoic. Learn why many rocks sport their signature red color and more about our ancestral Rocky Mountains. We'll also look for nesting Golden Eagles, Peregrine Falcons, and the reclusive Canyon Wren. Children 12 or older welcome.

BBFGWS. Space limited.

Meeting Place: Roxborough State Park visitor Center.

Leaders: Tom Bush of The Front Range Birding Company and Roxborough Naturalist and Geology expert Peter Laux.

Registration required: (303) 973-3959: No fee, State Parks Pass is required (\$7 per day per vehicle.)

LEGEND: Photography Audubon Center at Chatfield Audubon Office Field Trip
 Easy to No Walking Moderate Walking/Hiking Extensive Hiking

***** BBFGWS = Bring binoculars, field guides, water, and a snack. *****

Pine Breeding Bird Atlas Block



Sunday, June 26, 6am – 3pm
Walk foothills trails near Buffalo Creek to look for breeding confirmations in Audubon's Atlas block. We've found 69 species, but need to confirm breeding of Spotted Sandpiper, Mourning Dove, Black-capped Chickadee, Warbling Vireo, both bluebirds, Western Tanager, and meadowlark. So far we've missed Tree Swallow, Lazuli Bunting, and Starling!
BBFGWS and Lunch.

Meeting Place: Walmart, SE sector of C470 and Bowles Avenue, on the far south side, next to plant sales.

Leaders: Urling & Hugh Kingery

Registration required: 303-814-2423

Bird Walk and Book Signing with Author Mike Foster



Saturday, July 2, 8 a.m.

Field trip and book signing with local author Mike Foster, whose most recent book (The Ties That Bind: Birds, Nature and Us) uses his personal experiences with birds to highlight problems that threaten birds and the environment. He also suggests how you can make a difference for our avian friends. After looking for birds in various habitats around the Audubon Center, enjoy lunch in the Amphitheater, where Mike will read brief excerpts from his book and offer signed copies for \$12. **BBFGWS** and Lunch

Meeting Place: Audubon Center at Chatfield parking lot

Registration required; No fee

Buzz Bombers of the Sky

Tuesday, July 26, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

in classroom at the Audubon Center

Saturday, July 30, 6:00-8:30 p.m.

(fieldtrip)

Have you ever wondered how hummingbirds maneuver when they fly

ASGD Certificate in Outdoor Adventure

This series introduces you to outdoor adventure basics in a fun, relaxed way. Great for children, parents and other adults to explore together. Go at your own pace—sessions are offered throughout the year at the Audubon Nature Center. Complete all ten sessions and receive an **official ASGD Certificate in Outdoor Adventure!**

Your adventure includes:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Be Prepared for Your Adventures ✓ Map & Compass Basics ✓ Mucking in Wild Water Habitats ✓ Habitats of Denver ✓ Insects & Other Spineless Critters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ GPS for Beginners ✓ Birding 101 ✓ Plants of the Platte ✓ Mammals ✓ Reptiles & Amphibians
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Upcoming Sessions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ May 21, 10-11:30 P.M. ✓ May 21, 12-1:30 p.m. ✓ June 4, 9-10:30 a.m. ✓ June 4, 11a.m.-12:30 p.m. ✓ July 2, 9-10:30 a.m. ✓ July 2, 11a.m.-12:30 p.m. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plants of the Platte Mucking in Wild Water Habitats Be Prepared for Your Adventures GPS for Beginners Reptiles & Amphibians Map & Compass Basics –
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FREE to ASGD Friends members and \$5 for nonmembers to participate.
To register, call 303-973-9530.

ASGD Certificate in Outdoor Adventure sponsored by TogetherGreen, an alliance between Audubon and Toyota.

backwards? In addition to this unique characteristic, these birds have survival skills that enable them to endure freezing temperatures. Learn the natural history & identification of Colorado's hummingbirds. This class also covers gardening for hummingbirds and how to attract them to your yard. Field trip is to a very large private hummingbird garden. Limit: 15

Instructor: Tina Jones, Audubon Master Birder and long time wildlife teacher
Registration required: \$15/Friends member; \$17/non-member.

LEGEND: Photography Audubon Center at Chatfield Audubon Office Field Trip
Easy to No Walking Moderate Walking/Hiking Extensive Hiking

***** BBFGWS = Bring binoculars, field guides, water, and a snack. *****

Annual Spring Bird Count

May 10, 13, 14, and 15.

FREE! Choose your favorite metro Denver birding spot! All abilities needed – members & non-members. Everyone welcome – just show up. More eyes spot more birds. A citizen science project in its 30th year!

Registration NOT required: No Fee.

Thursday, May 12

Castlewood Canyon State Park

Meeting Place: 6:30am at old entrance. From Colo. 86, 0.5 miles west of Franktown, turn south on Castlewood Canyon Road, go two miles to old entrance. State Parks pass required.

Leaders: Kirk & Kyle Huffstater (303-660-9298).

Friday, May 13

Cherry Creek Reservoir

Meeting Place: 6:30am at the Marina on west side (near Cherry Creek High School) in Cherry Creek State Park. State Parks pass required.

Leader: Bob Brown (303-791-6204).

Saturday, May 14

Waterton, downstream.

4-5 mile hike. Wear long pants (not shorts) due to bare-leg-unfriendly plants such as poison ivy, thistles, and knapweed.

Meeting Place: 6:00am at Audubon Center/Discovery Pavilion

Leader: Hugh Kingery, 303-814-2723.

Barr Lake Periphery

Meeting Place: 7:30am on access road to entrance station at Barr Lake State Park. This trip does not involve much walking -- good for people with limited mobility or stamina.

Leader: Jackie King, 303-287-1644.

Chatfield State Park

Meeting Place: 6:00am at West (Deer Creek) entrance to park. State Parks Pass required.

Leader, Joey Kellner, 303-978-1748.

Lower Bear Creek

Meeting Place: 6:00am at parking lot on Morrison Road at C470, northwest corner, next to the Conoco station.

Leader: Mike Henwood (303-716-8551, cell 720-840-5070) hawkhen@aol.com

Sunday, May 15

Barr Lake State Park

This is a ten-mile, all-day hike around the lake. State Parks pass required

Meeting Place: 6:00am at Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory. Exit I-76 at Bromley Lane; go east about ¼ mile and turn right (south) on Lark Bunting Lane, to end of road.

Leader: Dick Schottler, 303-278-8035. Call leader if you plan to go.

Brazil Birding Adventure

July 31-August 15, 2011

Leader: Bill Turner

Travel to the Amazon Basin, the Pantanal (the world's largest freshwater wetlands), and the scenic mesas and cerrado of Chapada dos Guimaraes. Cruise up a jungle river looking for the Amazonian umbrellabird, razor-billed curassow, sunbittern, king vulture, giant otter, Brazilian tapir, and anaconda. Our accommodations in the Amazon are at the comfortable Cristalino Lodge where we may see five species of macaw in one day. The lodge's 150 foot tower gives us a bird's eye view of rainforest canopy life such as red-fan parrots and white-whiskered spider monkeys.

The Pantanal is a wildlife paradise offering sightings of numerous herons and egrets, the southern screamer, the spectacular hyacinth macaw, nesting jabiru, toco toucan, all five species of South American kingfishers, sungrebe, wattled jacana, red-legged seriema, and many species of woodpeckers and antbirds, to mention only a few of the birds we're likely to see. Among the mammal possibilities are capybaras, agoutis, giant anteater, crab-eating foxes and raccoons, ocelot, neotropical and giant otters, brocket deer, black-tailed marmosets - and jaguar. On our 2010 tour, we saw a mother puma and her two half-grown kittens. We'll be visiting a site where there is a good chance for a harpy eagle.

Paulo Boute, an outstanding English-speaking birder/naturalist, will be our guide throughout the trip. Paulo has guided Roger Tory Peterson and American Birding Association notables among his clients.

\$4995/person double occupancy based on a maximum group size of nine. The single supplement is \$750. Travel in the Pantanal and Chapada will be in a 21 passenger coach with large viewing windows. Roundtrip air fare from Denver, including several internal Brazilian flights, is approximately \$1600. For further information and a detailed itinerary, please contact Bill Turner at (303) 795-5128 or e-mail: toursbyturner@aol.com

Ecuador Hummingbirds and More

September 9 – 16, 2011

This trip is designed to reach some of the most fantastic hummingbird locations in Ecuador over a nine-day trip. Besides finding 50 to 60 hummingbird species, the trip bird list should be 350 to 400 species (including 60 plus tanager species, Andean Cock-of-the-Rock, and maybe both Umbrellaba birds). Our trip will be guided by one of South America's top guides, Lelis Navarrete and sponsored by the Audubon Society of Greater Denver. Harriet Stratton will be the trip host to assure good company and good fun. Excellent lodges (such as Sacha Tamia, Bellavista, San Isidro and Wild Sumaco) sets the stage for a great trip.

\$2,290/person; a great value for hummingbird enthusiasts and all bird watchers! \$500 deposit holds one of 8 spots on the trip. Contact Charles Thornton-Kolbe at the Partnership for International Birding at 720-320-1974 or ASGD at 303-973-9530. Charles would be glad to answer any questions you have about the trip, as he and Lelis designed this trip especially for ASGD. Learn more from our "Ecuador Hummingbirds and More" website at <http://www.pibird.com/EcuadorHummdetails-1.html>

North Dakota Grasslands and Minnesota's Boreal Forest

Leader: Bill Schmoker
June 4 - 11 or July 11 - 18

This trip covers the prairie potholes habitat in North Dakota and the boreal forest in Minnesota. Numerous other habitats are visited, resulting in a productive birding trip. Bill Schmoker leads with Michael Francis (who has lead numerous trips for local Texas Audubon groups) and John Drummond (one of Colorado's top world birders). Some of the species you should see include Yellow Rail,

Piping Plover, Sedge Wren, Sprague's Pipit, Baird's Sparrow, LeConte's Sparrow, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Black-backed Woodpecker, Ruffed Grouse, Northern Hawk Owl, Red-necked Grebe, Boreal Chickadee, Great Gray Owl, Spruce Grouse. We should also see as many as 20 species of nesting warblers, including Connecticut Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Canada Warbler and more.

\$1,390, including a \$300 deposit (which holds one of 10 spots on the trip). Contact Charles Thornton-Kolbe at the Partnership for International Birding at 720-320-1974 or ASGD at 303-973-9530. Charles would be glad to answer any questions you have about the trip. Learn more from our North Dakota and Minnesota website at <http://www.pibird.com/NorthDakota-2011-1.html>

Grebes with Chicks on Walden Area Lakes

Saturday, August 6 and Sunday, August 7, 2011

Join Master Birder Tom Bush and his friends to scout colony nesting birds and fledglings at Arapahoe National Wildlife Refuge, Walden Reservoir, and Lake John. Hope to see Western and Eared Grebes with chicks on and off their backs. Bring your camera gear as leaders have tips for photography and digiscoping. After lunch on Sunday, caravan east on Hwy 14 over Cameron Pass birding along the way. Return to Denver via Ft. Collins and I25. Bring binoculars, scopes, field guides and available 2-way radios.

Meeting Place: Peck House in Empire at 9am for their hummingbird feeders.

*Leaders: Tom Bush and friends
\$170 Friends member, double occupancy; \$195 Friends member, single. Non-members add \$40. Includes one night's lodging at North Park Inn in Walden, continental breakfast Sunday morning and lunch Sunday. Pack for birding enroute lunch Saturday. Dinner is your responsibility Saturday night.*

Backyard Birds



by Hugh Kingery

JO ANN BUSHNELL reported two-week early Mourning Doves that arrived in her Lakewood yard Feb. 21. One begged for food and couldn't figure out how to conquer the chain link fence that separated it from the two others. Feb. 20-25 two Eurasian Collared-Doves arrived, fed with the Mourning Doves and flickers. Collared-Doves, as I've mentioned here before, have invaded the state and live in most Colorado towns by now. They resemble Ringed Turtle Doves shown in older bird books, but have darker plumage. The latter can't survive our cold winters, and in fact survive hardly anywhere in the U.S. now.



*Eurasian Collard Doves
Photo courtesy of Dick Vogel*

BRUCE LEIGH, on Jan. 22 and Feb. 3, found a White-winged Dove, first in Willow Creek Park, Arapahoe County, then in a yard that backs up on the park. He hears the bird more than he sees it. This dove, also spreading, has come north from Rocky Ford and appears in scattered yards over the northern Front Range cities.

CYNTHIA MADSEN writes from Centennial, "This FeederWatch for Cornell is turning out to be a wonderful opportunity to study bird behavior in addition to seeing who comes to the yard. At 10:30 today (Mar. 9) a female adult Sharp-shinned Hawk landed on the fence. A squirrel decided to get past her, but wasn't able to muster the courage. Meanwhile not more than ten feet away and oblivious



*Sharp Shinned Hawk
Photo by Cynthia Madsen*

to this whole scene, a male House Finch was parked in the caged feeder (as they have a tendency to do). The Sharpie landed on the feeder, reached in, and extracted the House Finch. What a sight! Before, on March 1, I had a juvenile Cooper's Hawk land on my waterfall. I think my yard is becoming the McDonald's Arches for quick fly-through lunches!"

AMY LAW-ZIEGLER, on Green Mountain, saw, in late February, an "unusual sight. A squirrel had come across a dead sparrow, and was eating it. I knew that most rodents wouldn't pass up carrion, especially in winter, but I'd never seen it before." On Mar. 1, "waiting at stop light at Union and Alameda," she wrote, "I saw a crow juking through the air. Then I realized it was mobbing a female kestrel. They engaged in an aerial dog fight worthy of any two ace pilots. I don't know what the kestrel had done – flying by the crow nest site or just in the wrong place at the wrong time – but the crow was out for blood. They tumbled through the air above buildings, and dodged between cars in a parking lot. I have never seen birds fly with such intensity before. After the crow finally broke off (exhausted, I presume), the kestrel dropped onto the top of a telephone pole. She almost missed the landing and fell off the edge. Once safely out of reach of the crow, she shook herself several times, looking like the victim of a mugging trying to regain its composure."



*American Kestrel
Photo by Dick Vogel*

KAREN VON SALTZA'S company moved into a new building in the northeast corner of the Tech Center. "Adjacent to the parking lot is a well-established prairie dog town. I always park nearby to check on the activity. On Mar. 1, as I walked out for lunch, I saw a Ferruginous Hawk sitting on a lamp pole. He was very calm and just watched as a small group of people stopped to see what I was so excited about. Yesterday, as I left for lunch, I saw the hawk soaring high on the thermals above. The Rufous V formed

by his legs was clearly visible as were the white 'fingers' at the tips of both wings. This morning I noticed that three lamp poles are well marked with white wash." The Ferrug returned to its lamp pole Mar. 4. "When I saw him the other day he was facing me straight on and I was dazzled by the white. Today I saw him from behind and he is still brown – first year light morph." These hawks subsist on prairie dogs in the winter – they particularly like Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge.

SANDI PARKER, in south Denver, on March 12, saw a small earless owl in the trees above her feeders. I guessed at Saw-whet, although Eastern Screech-Owls are more likely show up in urban Denver.

THE SAME NIGHT, Gina Gerken in Castle Pines emailed, "I've been bummed that my Saw-whet Owls haven't returned to my box. They've nested three years in a row in that box. It's probably because a big fat flicker has taken over the box. (He's sitting right now on my roof loudly pecking the metal on my chimney – and beating his chest at the same time.)

"I ORDERED two more owl boxes that came yesterday and what timing...at twilight, I finally heard the owls! They were calling to each other from my neighbor's yard. I walked over and stood near, but not too close, to the one that was calling and just enjoyed listening. As I was standing there, I happened to look up and one was sitting above me in the pine! After all these years, I've never even seen an adult, except as a blurry streak. They are truly one of the hardest birds to see because, except during mating, they are only active in total darkness, don't call often, and are very tiny and secretive. Because there was just a little light, I could only see its silhouette as he sat about 15 feet above me. It was moving around excitedly, sort of bobbing like a



*Saw-whet Owl box
Photo courtesy of Gina Gerken*

burrowing owl, looking off in the direction of his mate, not seeming to notice me at all. Today I plan to hang my new boxes and keep listening. These two may have found a spot in my neighbor's yard, and so be it. I got my fix and I just hope they get to nest."

ADDENDUM, MAR. 13: "Last night, the flicker roosted in the box. This morning I decided to move it and substitute a new box for the flicker. I lifted the box off its hook and the saw-whet flew out! She (I'm assuming it's the female) flew just a few feet to a tree, with the flicker drumming on the metal chimney. After almost falling out the window, I quickly rehung the box and closed the window. She didn't look too alarmed. She sat for a few seconds and stared, pooped, roused, and flew back into the box! So – wonder if there was any contact between the flicker and owl coming and going?" Wait two months for the next installments.

POLLY REETZ, "after a hawk walk at Cherry Creek State Park, got home to find chickadees, House Finches, Downy Woodpeckers, and a Brown Creeper in our yard, all in the space of about a half hour. The creeper is a first sighting – they may have been there before, but we haven't been there to see them. [They have a high-pitched call and song that Urling can hear and I can't.] The creeper was eating the 'corn' snow on the ground even though we have a heated bird bath it could have drunk from."



Brown Creeper
Photo courtesy of ASGD

ON MARCH 5, Terry and Dotty Biggs saw in a Littleton park a likely Greater White-fronted Goose; these birds resemble some oddball domestic ducks, so I'm never sure whether they made a rare appearance or whether



White Fronted Goose
Photo courtesy of ASGD

the park bird is one of those things Urling calls "farm ducks." Nonetheless, Dotty says, "It is a beautiful light gray-brown (dark taupe) on the head, neck, and chest. It has white on the face and under the tail. Looks like the picture on p. 47 of Kaufman's."

ON FEB. 6, Lois Levinson emailed, "This morning with several inches of snow covering the ground and tree branches, there was a flock of Cedar Waxwings feasting in my crabapple trees, along with a flock of American Robins. Indoor birding, alas."

THE FIRST 'MIGRANTS' showed up on Feb. 1: Charlie Lawrence saw "a Yellow-rumped Warbler at work (61st and Washington). Seemed very cold and looking for a place to roost. Sandy Righter, in south Denver, "reported a thrush while walking our dog," said Bob. The thrush "had a spotted front, was eating berries, and looked like a Hermit Thrush." Both birds occur in winter – Dick Schottler's group found a half-dozen along the Platte on the Urban Denver Christmas Bird Count.



Yellow Rumped Warbler
Photo courtesy of ASGD

DORIS CRUZE reported, Mar. 7, "an unusual bird at my suet feeder. I have several suet cages hanging in the backyard, and have regular visitors like Mr. & Mrs. Downy, flickers, Bushtits, and White-breasted Nuthatches. For the last couple of days, I have had a wren on the suet. It is junco-size, reddish-brown on the back, and buffy underneath, with a very conspicuous white eye-line, and of course the stiff wren tail. It does not hang around, but behaves more like the Bushtits – coming in to feed and then disappearing, only to return the next day." It sounds like a Carolina Wren – a rare Colorado species, but one which nested for the first time in Marty Poole's backyard in an



Carolina Wren
Photo courtesy of ASGD

unused playhouse in south Denver during the first Breeding Bird Atlas, 25 years ago.

JOY SCHIEVING had a new yard bird Jan. 24 – a Townsend's Solitaire. These birds set up winter territories around berry-productive juniper trees, both in town and in the foothills – except we have had none in Franktown this winter instead of the usual



Townsend's Solitaire
Photo courtesy of Bill Eden

three or four.

KATHY DRESSEL, also in Franktown, typically has 9-12 flickers at her feeders at once. She has noticed several hybrid males that have a red patch on the nape, a red mustache, and yellow-shafted feathers. At our feeders, three miles away, we see a female hybrid: no marks on her brown face but with yellow under-wings and tail feathers. These flickers hybridize all over eastern Colorado. (Ann Bonnell suggests that no flickers in eastern Colorado are pure Red-shafted or Yellow-shafted.) And this morning, speaking of woodpeckers, I can hear a Downy drumming on a power pole – spring comes.



Flicker
Photo by Boone Seagraves

I WELCOME YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS to this column. Send a note or post card to P.O. Box 584, Franktown 80116, or Email me: ouzels8@aol.com.

In addition, you can also post your contributions on the ASGD Facebook page! It is a great way to instantly share your bird stories and sightings.



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The Audubon Society of Greater Denver (ASGD) and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colorado (BBBSC) have joined forces. When you donate a vehicle to ASGD, you also benefit BBBSC. Here's how it works: ASGD handles the initial calls; BBBSC handles the details.

To donate a vehicle: Call ASGD at 303-973-9530 or send an e-mail to info@denveraudubon.org.

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Kara Spittler and Robert Martinez
 donated a flat screen monitor to
 the office.

The Audubon Society of Greater
 Denver gratefully acknowledges
 the generous donations from
 King Soopers and Whole Foods
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 the annual Legislative Forum
 possible.

Lockheed Martin Supports ASGD GPS Programs



We would like to thank Lockheed Martin for their generous support of the Audubon Society of Greater Denver's GPS program. Over the last year, the GPS units we purchased with funding from Lockheed Martin have been put to great use by a variety of groups. We partnered with a local business to establish geocaching sites at the Audubon Center as a teambuilding exercise. A boy scout group visited the Center over several weekends to further hone the cache locations and coordinates; those caches are now frequently searched for by geocaching enthusiasts. We have also developed and offer regular GPS training programs for families throughout the year as part of our Certificate in Outdoor Adventure series. And recently, we hosted a birthday party for a group of children who were, to quote one of the parents, "really, really happy!"

Thank you again to our neighbors, Lockheed Martin, for their support!

Thank You Volunteers

Field Trip & Program Leaders: Mary Keithler, Harold & Betty Oliver, Barbara Shissler, Harriet Stratton, Karen von Saltza

Little Fledglings: Kate Frost, Urling Kingery

Audubon Center Great Backyard Bird Count and Birdseed Pickup: Arlene Raskin, Bob Santangelo, Doris Cruze, Mackenzie Goldthwait, Michael Kiessig, Tom Bush, Mary Keithler, Angela Grun, Dick Anderson, Blake Naito

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Welcome New Volunteer Naturalists: Bev Day, Bob Santangelo, Brian Hoffman, Ginger Sawatzki, Jack Sawatzki, Kate Frost, Marsha Heron, Megan Miller, Rhonda Kelly, Sheila Burns

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ASGD Wish List

- 1 17" or greater Flat Screen computer monitor
- New Windows 7 compatible scanner
- 6 qt – 16 gal. Clear plastic storage bins with lids
- electric pencil sharpener for Audubon Center
- Wood pellet stove – Travis Industries Model Yankee PS or similar
- Outdoor literature box for Audubon Center
- Gift certificates to Murdochs, Home Depot, Lowes, or Office Depot



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Date of Incorporation: September 30, 1969

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