

the Warbler

ASGD Successfully Launches Annual Photo Competition

The annual Share the View international digital nature photography competition was a huge success! The contest ran from October 15 through November 30. We received over 1,600 entries from photographers around the world, netting the club approximately \$5,000 for our education and outreach programs.

Thirteen cash prizes totaling \$2,800 were awarded in mid-December to the following photographers:



Photo Credit: Dave Welling

GRAND PRIZE (\$1000): Kim Taylor; **FIRST PRIZES (\$250):** Suzi Eszterhas (two prizes!), Joe LeFevre, Lee Rentz; **HONORABLE MENTIONS (\$100):** Kenneth Lassman, Dave Welling, Ken Archer, Richard Wylie and Michael Qualls; **JUDGE'S CHOICE AWARDS (\$100):** Myer Bornstein, Gordon Gardinier, Sharon Draker. Congratulations to all of them!

In addition to the cash prizes, 250 photos from 116 photographers were recognized for display on the contest web site. We were extremely pleased to have a lot of local participation in this group. Colorado was well represented, with 28 photographers submitting images. The second largest representation was from Florida, with 7 photographers entering the contest.

Although the judging was anonymous, we were delighted to find that photos from several ASGD members, including Bill Eden, Lee Farrell, Bill Bevington and Bob and Nancy Stocker, were recognized in the elite 250. International photographers were also well represented in the top 250. We received entries from Australia, Canada, Great Britain, Germany, Hungary, Panama, Singapore and South Africa.



Photo Credit: Richard Wylie

If you haven't seen the winning photos, they are displayed on the contest web site, and we hope you go to the site regularly so that you can enjoy this gallery again and again. The winning shots captured truly amazing moments in our natural world.



Photo Credit: Myer Bornstein

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Visit at <http://denveraudubon.contestvenue.com/>

Thank you to all of the volunteers who helped promote the contest and to all of the photographers who submitted entries. Special thanks to Wendy Shattil and Bob Rozinski for bringing this project to ASGD. Their experience and expertise in managing the competition guidelines, contest web site and judging was key to the success of the competition. We hope to work with them for many years to come. As Rick said to Louie in Casablanca, "...I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship..."



Photo Credit:Ken Archer



Photo Credit:Suzi Eszterhas



© Kim Taylor

Photo Credit: Kim Taylor

Bird Banding Station Open

April 28-June 3 (station closed May 18-19)

Visitors watch research in action and see warblers, sparrows, woodpeckers, thrushes, and other song-birds up close at

Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory's bird banding research station. The Audubon Center is open Saturdays & Sundays, 8am-12pm on the above dates - volunteers and staff greet you and guide you to the station.

Easy to moderate walking on flat trails.



Photo: Suzy Hiskey

*Meeting Place: Audubon Center at Chatfield.
Registration NOT required. However, if the station is busy, there may be timed sessions*

ASGD Birdathon May 2012

By Mackenzie Goldthwait

It is not too soon to start planning!!

For some it's a "walk in the park", for others it may be their "Big Day" of the year, but no matter how you approach it, the day you select to conduct your ASGD Birdathon is a red letter day for Audubon Society of Greater Denver and for the birds. The May Birdathon has proven to be one of the major fund raising events for ASGD. And did we mention that it is also a HUGE amount of fun? So much fun in fact, that we are considering trying an entirely new route this year just for the fun of it!

The Birdathon has become the second most important fund-raising event of the year for ASGD and we want to keep that going! To ensure further growth, it is imperative that as many people as possible participate by either:

- 1) soliciting sponsors and then going afield to see as many species as they can, or
- 2) by pledging their support to one of the "sponsored" teams that will be out in the field.

Either way, you will benefit ASGD and the environmental programs that it offers. As past participants of many Birdathon excursions, we can assure you that the sense of accomplishment is doubled by lining up pledges and then going out to see how many species you can find. Your supporters then "owe" the ASGD their pledged amount multiplied by the number of species you see. Even if your birding skills are barely fledged, we urge you to participate. If you honestly believe you are unlikely to see a huge number of species, and cannot find a "ringer" (expert birder) to guide your effort, convince your supporters to pledge a little more per species.



If they don't want to gamble (suspecting perhaps that you'll subsequently get Hugh Kingery to show you how he saw more than 180 species in Denver County*) then ask them for a lump sum donation to support the effort. The event is to be enjoyed by all participants, and the greatest pleasure is derived by those who actively participate. We encourage all ASGD members to seek out pledges and spend a few hours outdoors, enjoying our favorite activity while benefitting our favorite nonprofit organization.

The rules are straightforward and simple:

- 1) Get your pledges lined up before the date you conduct your outing (these may be either \$ per species, \$ per species not to exceed a specified dollar amount, or as a lump sum). Some donor may even seek to challenge you further, offering for example, extra dollars for every species you find breeding.
- 2) Plan your outing to encompass the best weather and the habitats you like to bird.
- 3) Conduct your tally (species seen or heard only - no need to count individuals) within any 24 hour period in May in Colorado.
- 4) Then be sure to let your supporters know how you did, thereby letting them share in your excitement while you collect the pledged amount. We like to let them know everything we saw, the surprises we found, including the missed "sure bets" we *thought* we had pinned down, and the outrageous excuses we generate enroute (e.g. "our navigator fell asleep so we were lost for an hour", or "we were so mesmerized by the Bobolink that we couldn't tear ourselves away," etc.).
- 5) All pledges are tax deductible and donors will, upon request, be given a receipt.

Last year's teams plan to improve on their performance this year, and we hope that they will be joined by many other ASGD members forming their own teams with equally catchy names. Regardless of how much money you raise or how many species you see, we will all have fun and appreciate the effort which translates directly into benefits to the Audubon Society of Greater Denver.

* Hint: it took him a lifetime, and Hugh is nearly as old as I am.

SUMMER FIELD TRIPS IN HIGHLANDS RANCH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION BACKCOUNTRY WILDERNESS AREA

The Audubon Society of Greater Denver (ASGD) announces a new partnership with the Highlands Ranch Community Association Backcountry Wilderness Area. ASGD will be conducting four field trips in the Highlands Ranch Community Association Backcountry Wilderness Area. The four trips begin in May, the 3rd Saturday of each month through August:

May 19: Grigs Road Wilderness Area

The Grigs Road area has trails descending off a plateau through prairie grasslands surrounded by Cliff and Pine areas. These backcountry wilderness areas contain a large variety of plains, cliff and mountain pine birds and wildlife. The birds include jays, buntings, orioles, grassland sparrows, Lewis woodpeckers, shrikes, as well as a variety of raptors such as Golden Eagles, Long-eared Owls, Northern Saw Whet Owls, and Prairie Falcons.

June 16: Wildcat Mountain Trail

Wildcat Mountain has a circular trail that winds down through prairie grasslands, along a stream with cotton and willow trees; by a pond with ducks and swallows in the summer; and finally up to the top of a ridge line with pine trees and high cliffs where eagles and hawks nest. It is approximately a 3-hour hike. Along the trails you may see a variety of reptiles including but not limited to leopard frogs, chorus frogs, toads, rattle snakes, bull snakes, and western garter snakes.



July 21: Sanctuary Wilderness Area

The Sanctuary Wilderness Area is closed to the public with vast acreage providing a sanctuary to wildlife. It adjoins Daniels Park, a Denver mountain park, and the Cherokee Ranch Conservation Area. There are no trails in the Sanctuary. We will tour the area with a hay wagon stopping at various locations to view birds and wildlife that flourish in this wilderness area including turkey flocks, eagles, hawks, elk and deer herds, bear, bobcats, mountain lion, and other species.

We finish our summer bird and wildlife walks at Wildcat Mountain.

August 18 : Wildcat Mountain Trail

We will be announcing these trips in our newsletter under programs. Each trip will be limited to 25 people. Registration will be done by the Highlands Ranch Community Center, and open to participants from the



Photo: Highlands Ranch Community Association

Highlands Ranch Community and Audubon. The trips will be led by Audubon Master Birders and Naturalists. If you have any questions, please contact Cindy Valentine, Audubon coordinator, 303-589-4431, or Hope Marasco, Highlands Ranch Wilderness Area Coordinator, 303-471-8876.

Conservation Report

By Polly Reetz

Watching this year's legislative session, you have to remember that the action is being determined by two things: 1) the House is controlled by Republicans and 2) the Senate is controlled by Democrats, similar to the situation in the US Congress. This means that (mostly) a Republican-sponsored bill won't pass the Colorado Senate and a Democratic-sponsored bill won't pass the House, with rare exceptions. So it goes with governing in these United States this year.



Photo: Dick Vogel

An overall goal of many bills, which just happened to be introduced by Republican members, seems to be to tie state government up in knots. For example,

- SB 6 requires the Legal Services Committee (of the legislature) to review all state regulations to find whether these regulations meet certain standards. This is where you have to wonder what these folks were thinking. Either the state must hire a large number of people to do these reviews (thus increasing state spending) or the reviews will take a VERY long time, thus handicapping the state's ability to ensure the public health and safety. Your choice.
- HB 1075 reinstates the annual limits on state spending specified by the Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR) and dictates how any extra state income must be spent. We just voted to get rid of these limits – also called the ratchet effect – a few years ago.
- HB 1007 requires a cost/benefit analysis of all proposed rules. Under current law such an analysis can be requested, in any case.

- More time lost or more state employees needed.

There are more of these; just not the space to discuss them here. Check the Conservation page on the ASGD website for more details.

Then there are the bills that make you scratch your head in wonder. One would ban numerical standards for nitrogen and phosphorus in effluent water quality determinations. This would make it harder to treat water to new federal standards. Water treatment is expensive, yes, but it's got to be done sooner or later, and it costs less to do it sooner.

One bill is aimed directly at a member of the Public Utilities Commission, the current environmental member Matt Baker. HB 1016 prohibits PUC members from communicating with anyone not on the PUC who has an interest in what the commission does. So Baker can't talk to his wife, who works for a conservation organization, without being disqualified from the PUC. Did you know legislation could be that personal?

Audubon knows of only one bill so far that's aimed at diverting lottery funds from trails, open space, wildlife and parks. It sounds innocuous enough: it sets up a new lottery game and requires that the proceeds go to support veterans' programs.

While veterans certainly deserve public support, we need to find some other way to provide it. Consider that:

- 60% of money from the lottery is used for prizes; the rest is divided among the Conservation Trust Fund that funnels money to local governments for parks, trails or open space (40% of net proceeds), State Parks (10% of net) and GOCO itself (50 % of net, for State wildlife, open space, and trails).
- If a new, separate game diverts funds, GOCO will probably not suffer, as income to that program is capped at about \$50 million of the net proceeds.

But the State Parks could lose part of their share, as could local governments. State Parks' budget has already been cut drastically and more cuts will significantly affect their operations.

Conservation Report *(cont.)*

- Schools will also lose out. GOCO proceeds above the \$50 million cap are required to be spent on capital construction for Colorado school.
- If money is diverted to a new game, there will be less overflow from GOCO and less for schools.

It's still early in the session. There are some good bills out there as well as some other bad ones. You can check the Audubon lobbyist's report at www.auduboncolorado.org - it's updated every two weeks. To follow bills, go to the legislature's website: www.leg.state.co.us

Update on Chatfield Reallocation: The draft EIS will be out "sometime this year." We are trying to plan for it's review but it's difficult without definite dates. Stay tuned!

HawkQuest Returns May 12th!

Front Range Birding Company Open House



Arts & Crafts Fair
BBQ & Music
Dove Race



New Scopes & Binoculars in Stock

9956 West Remington Place
(NE Corner of C-470 & Kipling)
303-979-BIRD (2473)



Thank you Audubon Members!
You earned ASGD over \$50 with your purchases.

A Nature Center for You and Your Family

Open 7 Days A Week
M-F 10-6 Sat 10-5 Sun 12-5
www.fronrangebirding.com

**10% off storewide purchases
plus FRBC will donate an
additional 5% to ASGD for
mentioning this ad**

Offer Expires: April 30, 2012. May not be combined with any other offers. Optics not included.

CELEBRATE

JOHN JAMES AUDUBON'S 127TH BIRTHDAY

SUPPORT AUDUBON SOCIETY OF GREATER DENVER

SATURDAY, APRIL 14, 2012

6:00 - 9:00 PM

444 CHERRY STREET, DENVER

SILENT AND LIVE AUCTION

NEW ORLEANS STYLE DINNER BUFFET

WINE AND BEER



TICKETS: \$55 INDIVIDUAL OR \$100 COUPLE

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT WWW.DENVERAUDUBON.ORG
OR CALL 303-973-9530



We are looking for items for the silent and live auction.

Popular items have been field trips, baskets of goodies, homemade items, tickets to cultural and sports events, restaurants, birding stuff, vacation getaways, etc. Also, we need volunteers to help during the party. We have a lot of fun and it is a great way to get involved and give back to ASGD! Please call Laurie Duke at 303-204-1963 if you have any auction items or wish to help at the event.

Lois Webster Fund

Mark your Calendars
**ANNUAL RECEPTION AND PROGRAM OF
THE LOIS WEBSTER FUND**

Thursday, May 3, 2012
The Daniels Fund, Rooms 126 and 127

7:00 pm: coffee and dessert
7:15 pm - 8:30 pm: meeting

We are pleased to invite members of ASGD to the Lois Webster Fund annual reception and program on May 3rd. You will hear presentations from our 2011 grantees on the results of their research on Colorado non-game wildlife. Join the LWF Committee members and old and new friends for a cup of coffee or tea and dessert!

The Lois Webster Fund hosts this annual event to say THANK YOU to all of our wonderful contributors and to introduce the Lois Webster Fund to others who are not familiar with our activities. The program includes:



Photo: Hugh Kingery

A comparison of the declining and abundant bumblebee species, the Colorado Bird Breeding Atlas II, and the responses of burrowing owls to black tailed prairie dog alarm calls.

Lois Webster Fund (cont.)

The event is located at 101 Monroe on the North side of 1st Avenue just east of Cherry Creek Shopping District. Please park in their lot located at 1st Avenue and Madison, west of the building. The arm will rise up as you enter and exit. No code is necessary. (If you wish to carpool, please, call Margot at 303-733-2868.)

We look forward to seeing you on May 3rd. (If you have questions, or wish to carpool, call Margot Wynkoop, 303-733-2868)

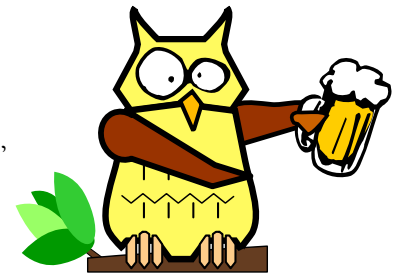
Bird & Brew Trivia Night

Join Us for thrilling, action-packed nature trivia

Wednesday, March 28 7-9pm

Breckenridge Brewery Ballpark Pub
2220 Blake Street
Denver 80205
www.breckbrew.com

Gather together a team of up to six or join a team that night. You don't have to be a trivia master or nature scholar. It's really all about hanging with friends, having fun, enjoying great food ...and crushing the other teams.



\$5 entry fee per person - proceeds support ASGD programs
303.973.9530 or info@denveraudubon.org

Urban Christmas Bird Count 2011

A Northern Goshawk delighted Lynn Willcockson's Urban Christmas Count group when it perched on a power pole in suburban Cherry Hills – at Colo. Blvd. & Mansfield! Doris Cruze mentioned “a Ring-billed Gull standing in the middle of the (South Platte) river, and the water came up only to the bird's knees! That tells the story of low water levels and lack of birds for us on Sunday.”



Photo Credit: Lynn Willcockson

Denver Urban counted 35,492 birds of 82 species, both less than our 23-year average of 37,955 birds and 83 species. Low counts included ducks – 3,870 (59% of average), Ring-billed Gull, 1,142 (73%), Rock Pigeon, 1,660 (76%), magpie, 288 (40%, average 726), starling, 2,486 (50%), New World sparrows 481 (55%), House Finch 652 (45%), and House Sparrow 740 (42%).

Robins highlighted the count: the total of 1,386 almost doubled the previous high of 794 (well – 75% more), and exceeded the average (313) by 443%. Other new high counts included Red-tailed Hawk, 92 (average 50), Downy Woodpecker 80 (avg. 39), and Bushtit 54 (avg. 7, but seen on 7 of the last 8 counts). And, naturally, the 19,749 Canada/Cackling Geese amounted to 55% of the total count.

Favorites included a Long-tailed Duck, originally found by Bill Wuerthele in City Park in early December. Paul Slingsby's group walked 7 miles from Cherry Creek Dam to University Blvd.; he says, “A Hooded Merganser pair gave us a duet of head dipping and splashing with the beautiful crests of both male and female spectacularly displayed in a spray of glowing droplets. They then paraded past us, still strutting their stuff, with the low angle winter light causing both the merganser pair and the water to glow.”

Sometimes common species shine. Harriet Stratton mentions “a murmuration of European Starlings - high above University Hills (used to be) Shopping Center - shifting shapes and altogether dipping and banking - letting the sun silver their underwings for a gleaming second before turning in perfectly choreographed precision to form yet another form.....really quite a display.....for about 60 birds.” Mary Keithler's favorite, “a Belted Kingfisher at Bible Park. It was a handsome male, which gave 2 parties a great look and we also enjoyed hearing his rattle.” Kevin Corwin mentioned “Cedar Waxwings who popped up in a large flock of robins just east of Cranmer (Sundial) Park.”

Photo Credit: Marilyn Rhodes



Coincidentally, two leaders mentioned as favorites species seen only by their groups. Polly Reetz: “the Brown Creeper we spotted over by the train tracks, south of the Carousel.” (The count averages 10 creepers.) Bob Brown's group watched

Tebowers: Mary Katz, Cheryl Chesick, Bill Wuerthele, Celia Greenman, Joan Cox, Randy Raak, Marilyn Rhodes, Sharon Guenther, Lucy Queeney and Jim Guenther -the Denver Botanic Gardens/Cheesman Park/Denver Country Club/Wash Park CBC Group "Tebowing" after a successful Christmas Bird Count. Highlights were a Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cedar Waxwings, a Merlin and a Bald Eagle. It was a Happy New Year's Day indeed! Photo by Bob Santangelo, January 1, 2012, Denver Urban Christmas Bird Count

Christmas Urban Bird Count (cont.)

a Rough-legged Hawk that sat still for all of us. “Over the years they’ve become less frequent at Cherry Creek State Park.” (One Rough-leg = 15% of the count average of 7.)

“I guess raptors were the show stoppers for us,” wrote Mike Serruto, “but among them: bald eagle who flew low and slow off his/her perch, making several passes over a magpie in an effort to knock it off its lunch.”

Bob Santangelo said, “Toss-up between the Merlin and Bald Eagle we found at Denver Country Club. The Merlin because it is an exciting species to find in the city this time of year - plus, this bird flew into Cherry Creek and waded in the water - and the Bald Eagle soaring over the golf course. My close ‘2nd’ would be the flock of beautiful Cedar Waxwings gobbling berries at the Botanic Gardens.”



Photo: Lee Farrell

gobbling

At Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge, our group marveled at an extraordinary-looking Ferruginous Hawk: solid chestnut from chin to tail with a necklace of white spots and an enormous yellow gape.

“A Hooded Merganser pair gave us a duet of head dipping and splashing with the beautiful crests of both male and female spectacularly displayed in a spray of glowing droplets.”

Bolstered mainly by reports from 4 feeder watchers, we set a new high for Bushtits, the 54 a bit higher than the 48 we found in 2009.

Welcome Bluebirds

Saturday, March 17th, 9:00am-12:00pm



Audubon Nature Center

Build an edible Blue-bird Box; presentation—Bluebird Project: A Helping Hand; Build & Paint a Blue-bird Box, & Tour ASGD Bluebird Boxes onsite.

ASGD Members: FREE

Nonmembers: \$5/adult; \$10/family

Craft/Box Fees apply to everyone (\$10—25)



Backyard Birds

By Hugh Kingery

An immense gaggle of robins, all over metro Denver and the foothills, I think, provides the biggest bird story this winter — bigger than a rare owl, tardy thrasher, or vagrant sparrow.

The Denver Urban Christmas Bird Count tallied 1386, 75% more than ever (previous high, 794; 24-year average, 285). Collectively, the four Denver-area counts (Denver Urban, Denver, Douglas County, and Evergreen) tallied 4,678 robins!

On Jan. 12, I counted 325 robins flying across our driveway. Maybe more. Maybe fewer. (The way they swirl around you have to have eyes in the back of your head to count accurately.)



Photo: Sara Cook

Other Franktown birders see more, too: Chris Arthun, Dave Rapley, Meg Johnston; also Ed Furlong in Evergreen and LeeAnn Joswick in Highlands Ranch. Doug Kibbe reports “hundreds of robins that fly back (from the east) to Dakota Ridge late in the afternoon.”

Ed Furlong consulted *Birds of North America*, which states, “Restless migrant and wintering flocks are seen in many new areas within the geographic range of the breeding population, where there is either damp soil

in the back of your head to count accurately.) Urling and I marvel at their chorus that emanates from the oaks and conifers at and near our house. They chatter, tweet, sing, squeal, and squawk incessantly, particularly in the morning and mid-afternoon. Flocks fly out and blanket the trees; they announce their presence constantly.

or a source of berries. Wintering numbers may vary significantly from year to year in many (especially northern) areas.”

What they find for food puzzles me – this morning some dined on juniper berries/cones – and that makes me wonder how the Townsend’s Solitaires can persist. The droves of robins browbeat the solitaires by sheer numbers. Yet the invaders spend time in the scrub oak and the riparian stream bottoms and on the ground. They don’t patronize our feeders (suet, seeds, e.g.). Our complement of solitaires dropped from six in November to three this month.

The Denver Urban Christmas count ended up with 35,492 birds of 82 species, both less than our 23-year average of 37,955 birds and 83 species. See the count report on another page.



Photo: Sara Cook

Among the Urban count’s high counts, Bushtits reflected their recent colonization of the city. Lynn & Liz Willcockson have enjoyed a flock this fall. On Dec. 26, Lynn “brought two feeders to the back porch and as I finished I heard Bushtits next to the back porch. I picked up the feeders, one in either hand, and started to step off the porch when the Bushtits came to the feeders as I held one in each hand. Three fed on one and two on the other. So I just stood there while they fed and when they were through I slowly moved back to the location in the yard where the suet feeders hang. As I hung them up more came and lit on the feeders even before I finished hanging them up. I could have touched them. I wondered, had I placed a small piece of suet in my hand, if they would have fed out of my hand.”

Barb Haymond describes typical Bushtit behavior. “Every morning in our back yard, right after John fills our log suet feeders, we have a huge flock of Bushtits that visit. We have counted at least 20 and they stay for several minutes. Then, in a flash, they are gone. They make multiple visits during the day, especially when the weather is snowy.”

Backyard Birds (cont.)

Polly Reetz commented on city raptors: "This fall we've already had Sharp-shinned/Cooper's hawks in our backyard three times! In past years we haven't seen any until December; I wonder if they had a good reproductive year and there are more of them than usual, or if the weather is influencing their patterns of movement. Without marked birds, it's hard to tell. One, a beautiful adult Cooper's, spent quite a bit of time on the ground in the shrubbery by our back fence, ferreting out the House Sparrows that had hidden there. Unfortunately it didn't catch one."

"We had our first backyard kill on Jan. 10: a Sharp-shinned caught a House Sparrow, sat on the ground in our vegetable garden and ate it all except one foot (which we found later). It then perched on a dead hollyhock stalk for about an hour so we got a very good look at it, a beautiful immature bird, over the 2 hours it took to eat and rest."

"Is there any place that Red-tailed hawks DON'T hang out? We spotted one on a telephone pole at the intersection of Cherry Street and Leetsdale as we left King Soopers on Dec. 18. It swooped off and circled the grounds of the Greek Orthodox Church, then headed out towards Hilltop. We saw another fly out of the small detention pond just north of I-25th on University on October 30 (it's really more of a cattail marsh at this point) and perch on a light pole close by. They both seemed undisturbed by all the traffic and noise. Always a treat to see them here in the Big City."

Add Monna Krebs' Jan. 14 raptor report: "When I came home from walking at Colo. Mills this morning, I saw a big blob in a tree in my next-door neighbor's backyard next to the Wheat Ridge Greenbelt. I knew it had to be a Bald Eagle as it was too big to be any other bird. Others wondered what I was looking at, and were thrilled to see the eagle."



Photo: Dick Vogel

Josette Mastra reported three Western Bluebirds in her Parker birdbath Nov. 30. Then "a Townsend's Solitaire took a drink with a female House Finch. At least six juncos under the feeder in the front (ignoring the 6-point buck, doe, and yearling.) I don't want to leave the house!"

Karen Metz has hosted a Brown Thrasher since Nov. 9 in her Franktown yard. "When I saw a Brown Thrasher just off my back deck, I expected it to be a one-day wonder, a traveler on a brief lay-over. It seems I was wrong. Before this bird came along, I'd not observed so closely this species' feeding technique and how it uses that long bill. It thrusts its bill into the ground with as much force as does a Hairy Woodpecker into a tree trunk. I've watched this Brown Thrasher pound into the ground a half-inch deep and come up with worm-like invertebrates. When s/he pounds on coarsely cracked corn, bits fly all over."

According to Cornell's website, the Brown Thrasher is known to strike people and dogs hard enough to draw blood when defending its nest.

"This thrasher's daytime resting place has been the camouflage of fallen reddish-brown oak leaves. Snow cover demands a new strategy and s/he'll be busy today moving snow and tossing leaves to maintain a camouflaged bedding."

Adding to the city's Wild Turkey supply, Tina Jones saw one in Bow Mar Jan. 10. "The Turkey came out from a very shaded, shrubby area that had loads of leaves on the ground. Origin unknown I would say, as far as the bird seen today." On Jan. 2 Jill Holden "walked downstairs and on the deck was the red fox curled up in a ball sleeping with the wind bristling his fur. He is probably well fed on black-oil sunflower seeds. The birds are looking for their feeders, but they will have to wait since I don't want to disturb him. They don't realize that this fox is important to keep the mouse population under control, and without him I might not be able to put out food for them anymore."



Photo Credit: Cornell Birds

Backyard Birds (cont.)

He just got up and after several yawns and a couple of stretches moved up close to the house where he curled up again facing away from the house. This time he had his head up. So much for staying near the stairs for a quick get away, but there is still not far to go, so not much difference. If he heard me unlocking the door, he could be to those stairs before I could get the door opened and come out.

On Jan. 10 at 3:30 a.m. I saw that the fox had returned to the same place at the top of the deck stairs, but I had a hard time making sense of his position. There seemed to be too much of him. As I stood there trying to make out what I was seeing a fox arose from his sprawled position – next to a



second fox who was still curled up in a tight circle. The fox that was curled up raised his head to look up at the fox that had arisen as it headed down the stairs. The remaining fox then resumed his nap. He was still there when Mark and I got up a couple of hours later,

but quickly disappeared. Knowing that this is a favorite sleeping spot I have been sure to shovel the snow from the area at the top of the stairs when I am shoveling a path out to the bird feeders, so they had a nice dry area to sleep on even though we still have snow on the ground.”

I welcome your contributions to this column. Send a note or postcard to P.O. Box 584, Franktown 80116, or email me: ouzels8@aol.com

The famous Roadrunner spotted at Dinosaur Ridge



Photo: Marilyn Rhodes

Beginning Birding Class

New to birding in Colorado? Wonder where to begin? Join Colorado's foremost and most entertaining couple as they introduce the art and science of birdwatching as no one else can. Learn bird identification, choosing and using binoculars and field guides, and much more. Instruction takes place, not in a classroom but rather on field trips to the best birding spots in the Denver metro area. Learn to develop a practiced eye and ear. Meet new friends and change the way you spend time outdoors. Make up any field trips that you miss during future class sessions. Be forewarned: this class has hooked hundreds on the lifelong adventure of watching birds!

March 29 - classroom session

April 7, 14, 21, 28, May 5 & 26 Field Trips to bird-watching sites around Denver including Chatfield, Barr Lake, and Castlewood Canyon State Parks, Wheat Ridge Greenbelt, and Genesee Mountain

Date TBA: Zoology Dept., Denver Museum of Nature & Science

\$150/members, \$175/non-members (includes membership)

Graduates of the class may drop in at \$20 a field trip

Pre-Registration required. Call 303-973-9530 or e-mail info@denveraudubon.org

12 *Leaders: Urling & Hugh Kingery*

Loss of Local Green Space A Result of Jeffco School Proposal?

Jefferson County Public Schools has asked the City of Lakewood to re-zone the open lands adjacent to a dead end street at 2090 S. Wright Street in Lakewood. The land currently belongs to the School District, although as late as 2008 there were plans to transfer it to the City for addition to the adjacent Hutchinson Park. Now the district would like to sell the land so that the K-12 Rocky Mountain School for the Deaf can be constructed on the site, part of which was formerly zoned for an elementary school that was never built. It is an open area with ravines, water, trees, bushes, and edges with an expanse of shortgrass vegetation. It provides water, food and shelter for birds and a corridor for movement of elk, deer, and fox, among other species. It also provides wonderful views of Denver and Littleton and the City fireworks on July 4th.



Photo: Dick Vogel

While we certainly recognize the school's need for an updated facility to meet children's special needs, their building, parking lot, and play area will dramatically and negatively impact the residential area's quality of life. Placing a major facility on the dead end street will create traffic congestion on Wright, Asbury Place, Iliff, and Warren, and create an after-school events parking problem on those same streets, which our children currently use for biking and playing.

Audubon members should be concerned that the neighborhood would lose the ravine and associated open land that now provide space...

Audubon members should be concerned that the neighborhood would lose the ravine and associated open land that now provide space for dog walking, kite flying, wildlife watching, scenic views, and a place for children to play out-of-doors in an unstructured environment, an activity important for the development of physical and mental health.

Although the school's director stated that the school would enroll a maximum of 100 students, discussion at a school board meeting revealed that the school had plans to grow. An associated dormitory may be constructed and take up even more land.

The school has options to build elsewhere, possibly including a site near the library at Kipling and Quincy. However, green space once lost is lost for good. Small neighborhood open spaces like this are where children learn to enjoy and observe the out-of-doors environment. More information is available at www.2090coalition.com or by contacting Dale Rosene at 720-209-8427.

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Sandhill Crane Festival, Monte Vista, Colorado Friday, Saturday and Sunday, March 9–11, 2012

Experience one of Colorado's most impressive wildlife spectacles against the backdrop of the snow-capped Sangre de Cristo mountains. See 20,000 Sandhill Cranes feeding on Monte Vista Wildlife Refuge, flying in at dusk and out at dawn, and young cranes dancing to attract their life-long mate. Between dawn and dusk we'll bird the area lakes and roads for waterfowl, wintering eagles and raptors.

After a community pancake breakfast on Saturday, the Crane Festival presents various short workshops and lectures of interest to naturalists, and a local craft fair. Following the Sunday fly-out, return to Denver. The leader will stop at feeders and wildlife areas along the route.



Photo Credit: Lehman

Leader: Audubon Master Birder, Harriet Stratton

Registration: \$250/per Friends member (double occupancy) \$290/Single; nonmembers add \$40 each. Includes lodging for two nights at the Pecos Inn, fortified continental breakfasts, dinner Saturday night and a tax-deductible donation to ASGD. Be prepared to buy Friday dinner and Saturday-Sunday lunches. Register by phone with credit card at ASGD

303-973-9530 or mail fee total to ASGD by March 1.

Details: Meet at the Pecos Inn, Monte Vista, on Friday at 4pm for the evening fly-in. Participants will provide their own transportation to Monte Vista. Audubon can help coordinate carpooling. Monte Vista is a scenic 4 hour drive from Denver.

The Spring Dance in Southeast Colorado Saturday-Sunday, April 21-22, 2012

Marvel at the ancient, springtime courting ritual of Lesser Prairie-Chickens,

Sunday morning, April 22 at a lek on private property east of Lamar, CO. Watch as the males flaunt their feathers and throat air sacs while running and jumping to, hopefully, attract a partner.



Photo Credit: Robert Martinez

Trip leaves Denver 8am Saturday, April 21, by car caravan. Along the way, we stop at Fountain Creek (south of CO Springs), Pueblo Reservoir or City Park, and John Martin Reservoir. Arrive at Blue Spruce Motel in Lamar about 5pm. Dinner in Lamar and early to bed for 3:30am wake-up and continental breakfast at motel. Leave motel 4am to meet school bus (which also serves as our blind) in Granada at 4:30am. Arrive at lek before sunrise and observe the "dancing" ritual until approx. 7am. Return to Granada (bathrooms!) and drive our cars 6 miles to the home of tour operators, Fred & Norma Dorenkamp, for a chuck-wagon breakfast. Return to motel 9:30am & check out. Bird the Lamar Community College trail (Northern Cardinal) before returning to Denver.

Leaders: Audubon Master Birder, Harriet Stratton and Arena Dust Tours

Registration: \$200/per Friends member (double occupancy) \$220/Single; non-members add \$25 each. Price includes guide services, dinner and one night lodging in Lamar, early continental breakfast and later chuck-wagon breakfast, and a tax-deductible donation to ASGD. Limited to 15 participants. Questions: Harriet Stratton 303-798-9924. Register by phone with credit card at ASGD 303-973-9530 or mail deposit to ASGD.

Deposit Due: \$100 due at registration and balance due by March 22.

Details: Bring sack lunch for Saturday.

The Spring Dance (cont.)

Audubon can help coordinate carpooling.

Physical Requirements: Easy terrain. Travelers should be prepared to spend time outdoors and on the bus (viewing time) in cold temperatures. Bus does NOT have a bathroom and all must remain on the bus for approx 3 hours.

Cape May in Spring May 5-11, 2012

Every spring, as waters warm and full moons cause tides to grow high, horseshoe crabs leave the ocean floor and make their way to shores and estuaries along the Atlantic coast to spawn. Delaware Bay is home to the world's largest population of horseshoe crabs. The eggs left on beaches during crab spawning are an important food source for migratory shorebirds, including Red Knots. This trip has been scheduled to correspond to May's full moon and spring migration. We will be targeting migratory birding hotspots on both the Delaware Bay and Atlantic Ocean sides of the Cape May Peninsula. Each day may find us back at some of the



Photo: Sean McDermott
<http://cmboviewfromthecape.blogspot.com/>

locations we've already visited, as new birds could have arrived overnight. This exciting adventure provides ample opportunities to see, first-hand, what makes the local ecology of this region so special. Leaders: David Trently of Partnership for International Birding and Sheridan Samano of Reefs to Rockies
Registration: \$1495/per Friends member (double occupancy) \$1,970/Single; non-members add \$75 each. Price includes guide services, six nights lodging in historic Cape May, New Jersey; all meals, transportation in rental vehicles from Philadelphia airport, entrance fees, two boat tours: whales, birds & dolphins and a final night sunset cruise, and a tax-deductible donation to ASGD. Limited to 14 participants. Questions: Sheridan Samano 303- 9530 or mail deposit to ASGD. Deposit Due: \$500 due at registration and balance due by March 28

Details: The trip starts and ends in Philadelphia. The group will use rental cars to move between locations.

Physical requirements: Easy to moderate. This trip will include hikes over uneven terrain. Travelers should be prepared to spend time outdoors.

Bird Brazil August 4-19, 2012

Hyacinth macaws, hoatzins, greater rheas, southern screamers, jabirus, toco toucans, white woodpeckers and bare-faced curassows are only a few of the many birds we'll see on this trip to the southern Amazon Basin and Pantanal. In the Amazon, we stay at the superb Cristalino Lodge which is surrounded by 5.5 million acres of primary rainforest — where over 570 bird species have been recorded. The lodge's 150 foot tower gives us access to the forest canopy where we may see the black-girdled barbet, red-fan parrot, Amazonian pygmy-owl and white-whiskered spider monkey.



Photo credit: Bill Eden

The Pantanal is the world's largest freshwater wetlands - about the size of New York state. Among the birds we'll seek here are the sungrebe, maguari stork, golden-collared macaw, black-collared and savanna hawks, Chaco chachalaca, red-billed scythebill and numerous species of herons, egrets, ibises and kingfishers. Mammals we may encounter include the giant otter, capybara (the world's largest rodent), Brazilian tapir, black howler monkey, crab-eating fox, puma, and the elusive jaguar. We'll also be visiting Chapada dos Guimaraes, an area of mesas and deep canyons with waterfalls and home to birds such as the blue-winged macaw, collared crescent-chest, Chapada flycatcher, and white-eared puffbird. Our trip ends at Serra das Araras where we have a chance to see the harpy eagle.

Travel (cont.)

The tour leaders will be Brazilian guide Paulo Boute, who has included Roger Tory Peterson among his clients, and ASGD's Bill Turner.

The physical requirements of this trip are easy to moderate. There will be some walking over uneven, but mainly level, terrain in warm to hot conditions and also some travel in small boats in the Amazon and Pantanal. Most land travel will be in an air-conditioned coach.

Based on current exchange rates, the land cost is \$5295 per person double occupancy from Cuiaba, Brazil. Add \$75 per person for non-Friends members. The land cost also includes flights from Cuiaba to Alta Floresta and return. Roundtrip airfare Denver/Cuiaba is estimated to be about \$1600. The land cost price is based on a group size of 8. With fewer people, a small group surcharge will apply. Maximum group size is 10.

For a detailed itinerary and any questions, please contact Bill Turner at (303) 795-5128 or e-mail toursbyturner@aol.com.

Programs

River Fowl

Saturday, March 3, 9am-12pm

What attracts the Barrow's Goldeneye to this particular section of the S. Platte River? Or The Long-tailed Duck? Possibly the same combination of watery habitat that draws so many waterfowl in winter. Now we know why it is possible to spot raptors here. Join Master Birder candidates on this winter walk along the river. Dress for weather and level walking. BFBGWS***

Meeting Place: Parking lot at 88th and the S. Platte River

Leaders: Cynthia Madsen, Cheryl Chessick, Sharon Pfeifer, Janet Shin

Registration required: \$10 Friends member, \$12 Non-member

Walk the Wetlands

Sunday, March 4, 9am

Sunday, April 1, 8am

Everyone welcome, members and non-members alike! Hike along the South Platte River looking for early spring migrants and lingering winter birds. This is a wonderful adventure for all ages. BFBGWS. 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

Nesting Raptors of the Front Range

Sunday, April 1, 9am-3pm

Saturday, April 7, 9am-3pm

Back by popular demand. Choose 1 date. Follow Master Birders Kris Koff and Tom Bush on a car caravan to view Bald Eagles, Great-horned Owls, and Red-tailed Hawks tending their nests. What's in that nest? This is a car trip with stops along public roads with very little walking. Stops are brief and not suitable for extended



Photo credit: Dick Vogel

photo studies. Bring your lunch or buy at the Safeway deli where we will eat lunch and discuss trip highlights. BFBGWS.

Limit 12 participants each day.

Meeting Place: I-25 to Exit #225 at 136th Ave. Meet at Walmart parking lot on west side of I-25.

Leaders: Kris Koff and Tom Bush
Registration required: \$10 Friends member, \$12 Non-member

Explore Chatfield State Park

Saturday, March 31,

8am-12pm

Saturday, April 28, 7am-11am

Join volunteer naturalist & bird expert Joey Kellner in exploring various habitats inside Chatfield

State Park in search of feathered treasure. All ability levels are welcome. Please bring sturdy shoes for hiking (1-3 miles) and dress for the weather on this 4 hour birdwalk. No pets. Sunscreen and insect repellent as needed. BFBGWS.

Meeting Place: Platte River parking lot within Chatfield State Park, past the Kingfisher Bridge over the Platte, right turn.

Leader: Joey Kellner

Registration NOT required: No Fee

***Bring Binoculars, field guides, water and a snack.

Programs (cont.)

Bear Creek Lake Park

Saturday, March 31, 8am-12pm

Join Mike Henwood, birding expert in this park and author of the Bear Creek Lake Park bird list. He'll help us find and identify birds wintering in the park and early migrants. The varied park habitats will yield their treasures: waterbirds on the lake, sparrows in the grass, raptors along the creek, and perhaps a glimpse of nesting owls. Dress for weather and some walking on level park paths. BFGWS.



Photo Credit: Marilyn Rhodes

Meeting Place: Bear Creek

Lake Park entrance. From C470 go east on Morrison

Road one-quarter mile. Pay \$5 per car park fee. Drive to Skunk Hollow Picnic Area where organized trip begins.

Leader: Mike Henwood

Registration required: \$10 Friends member, \$12 Non-member

Water Bird Courting & Nesting Behavior

Saturday, April 28, 1pm - Dusk

View water birds, herons & raptors at Jim Baker Reservoir. Species sighted in previous years: Clark's & Western Grebes, Red-breasted Merganser, American White Pelican, Black-crowned Night Heron, nesting Great Blue Heron, Franklin's Gull, Double-crested Cormorant, Osprey & Bald Eagle. We observed the Grebe courting ritual here in April 2009, April 2010 and April 2011 after noon and in the hours just before sunset. We hope to repeat the experience this year! The Grebe and Heron viewing location is an easy 3/4mi walk from the parking lot.

*BBFGWS**.* Call Marilyn Rhodes, 303-674-9895, with questions. Leaders can be reached before and during the field trip on their cell phones: Bob, 720-641-3899; Marilyn, 720-333-2551.

Meeting Place: Access Jim Baker Reservoir on the east side of Tennyson and 60th. Parking is limited at Jim Baker, so we've made arrangements with Mark VII Equipment to park in their empty lot. Their address is 5981 Tennyson, just west of the Jim Baker lot.

Leaders: Audubon Master Birders Marilyn Rhodes & Bob Santangelo

Registration required: \$10 ASGD Friends

and/or Evergreen Audubon member, \$12 nonmember

Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch

Sunday, April 29, 9am-noon

Join Audubon Master Birders and RMBO Hawk Watchers on a steep traversing path surmounting Dinosaur Ridge to be up among the river of migrating raptors. You are eye level with or above the birds! With a magnificent Denver backdrop, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory biologist Jeff Birek will explain RMBO's HawkWatch project collecting data on the hawks and eagles migrating on this arial highway over the hogback. Dress for ascending a slope in weather. The walk while a bit steep is doable at your own pace. BFGWS.

Meeting Place: Stegosaurus Lot, SE quadrant of Morrison Exit off I-70

Leaders: Dave Hill and Cynthia Madsen

Registration required: \$10 Friends member, \$12 non-member

Take your Birdwatching Skills to a Higher Level

Tuesdays : May 1, and May 8, 6:30-8:30pm

Defining and distinguishing characteristics of similar appearing bird species is the emphasis of this class. Go beyond the basic introductory birdwatching skills! Includes common Colorado resident birds and seasonal migrants. A few of the birds you will view: ibis species, yellowlegs, dowitchers, the small sandpipers, female tanagers, Cassin's and purple finch, terns, and resident flycatchers. Increase your confidence with identification skills. Don't forget to bring your bird field guide to class.

Programs (cont.)

Take your Birdwatching Skills to a Higher Level (cont.)

Meeting Place: Audubon Center at Chatfield

Instructor: Tina Jones, long time Colorado teacher and Audubon Master Birder. Questions call Tina Jones, 303-906-5479

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

Earth Day/BIG Day

Saturday, April 21st

Make a difference in your community! From 8:30am—12pm join us for the “B.I.G.” (“Be involved, Give”) Day created by the South Metro Denver Chamber of Commerce. From 12pm—3pm bring your lunch and spend the rest of Earth day with us! Learn about taking care of the environment and how you can help! Families can learn how to make jewelry and other crafts from recycled materials found in your own home!

BIG Day Projects include: Remove invasive weeds, building maintenance, center storage organization, trail maintenance, garden maintenance, and prep work for Bird Banding Station. Earth Day programming includes: kids’ recycled arts and crafts & an environmental presentation about how to care for the earth everyday!

Meeting Place: Audubon Center at Chatfield. Registration required for The B.I.G. day service: No Fee registration NOT required for Earth Day programs: Free to Friends members; \$5/nonmembers; \$10/families Donations to ASGD appreciated.



PROGRAMS IN PARTNERSHIP DENVER PARKS

Bear Creek Park

Saturday, March 24, 2012, 9am-11am

We will walk along Bear Creek to see what birds are around and will end the walk west on Dartmouth at Harlan to view the beaver dam area. The walk should be along the creek on easy metro area paths. Please dress for the weather. BBFGSW.

Meeting Place: Bear Creek Park. Go east on Dartmouth from Sheridan Blvd, south on S. Raleigh under 285 to the first parking lot by the river.

Leader: Local birding and Bear Creek expert, Mike Henwood

Registration required. No fee. Donations to ASGD are appreciated.

Westerly Creek

Saturday, April 21, 2012, 9am-11am

We will explore this riparian area where Sand Creek meets Westerly Creek. This is near the Stapleton development. We should see wading birds and ducks, as well as hawks and songbirds. Be prepared for some possible off-trail hiking. BBFGSW.

Meeting Place: Sand Creek Trailhead west on Smith Road off Havana to the dirt lot approximately at Dayton St.

Leaders: Audubon Master Birders Karen Bickett and Tom Bush.

Registration required. No fee. Donations to ASGD appreciated.

Bluebird Project Help Needed

GOOGLE EARTH HELP NEEDED

If you know how to load places into Google Earth please consider helping the Colorado Bluebird Project in their effort to put the location of all their nestbox trails out on Google Earth. Contact Kevin Corwin at CBPKevin@aol.com for more information. Thanks!

BLUEBIRD NESTBOX MONITOR NEEDED AT CHEROKEE RANCH

The bluebird monitoring program at Cherokee Ranch has over 200 nestboxes on several trails, and they need an additional monitor for one of those trails (about 32 boxes). No experience needed. Contact Jill Freeman at djfreeman@q.com if you're interested or need more information. Thanks!

Needed: Coordinator for Safe Skies Program

Several years ago ASGD initiated a collaborative program which we called Safe Skies, to encourage building management companies, corporations and state facilities to turn the lights off in skyscrapers above the 5th floors during the bird migration season (approximately March 15 to May 31 and August 15 to November 1).



Unfortunately the person who headed up this effort has moved out of town, so we are looking for someone interested in taking over the program.

Responsibilities would include meeting with representatives of building management companies, Xcel, and other interested groups; coordinating ASGD work on this effort; collecting information from other bird conservation organizations and communicating with our members.

Please call the office at 303-973-9530 if you think you are interested!



Leave a Legacy

PROTECT BIRDS & HABITAT. EDUCATE GENERATIONS.

The Audubon Society of Greater Denver (ASGD) offers an opportunity to make a gift or bequest to leave a lasting legacy. ASGD invites friends who share a commitment to protecting birds, other wildlife, and their habitats to consider making a personal investment in the future of our conservation and education programs through one of the following giving techniques:

- Make a current gift of cash, appreciated stocks, mutual funds, or real estate
- Include a bequest to Audubon Society of Greater Denver in your will.
- Name Audubon Society of Greater Denver as a beneficiary of the assets remaining in your retirement plan at your passing.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL 303-973-9530

OR E-MAIL

INFO@DENVERAUDUBON.ORG

Legal Designation: If you wish to name Audubon Society of Greater Denver in your will or estate plan, we should be named as: Audubon Society of Greater Denver, a nonprofit organization, organized and existing under the laws of Colorado, with its principal business address at 9308 S. Wadsworth Blvd, Littleton, CO 80128.

Tax Identification Number: 23-7063701

Date of Incorporation: September 30, 1969

Gifts, bequests and donations to the Audubon Society of Greater Denver are deductible under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Summer Audubon Adventures

Summer Camp at Audubon Nature Center

Wade in ponds and rivers! Collect insects! Track wildlife! Go birding by bike!

There is so much to experience outdoors at the Audubon Nature Center.

Please contact the host camp to register.

Colorado Academy:

<http://www.coloradoacademysummer.org/> or 303-914-2531

There is something for everyone at Colorado Academy Day Camps! Audubon Naturalists lead children in discovering wildlife and the outdoors. CA Summer Camp is American Camp Association (ACA) accredited. This level of confidence requires compliance with up to 300 standards that encompass all aspects of camp operations.

Meets in Southwest Littleton and includes transportation to the Audubon Center at Chatfield.

June 25 Wading in Wild Water Habitats

July 9 Wildlife Detectives

July 23 Birding Bonanza

Thorne Nature Experience:

<http://www.thorne-eco.org/old/summercamp.htm> or 303-499-3647

Thorne Ecological Institute has connected over 200,000 kids and adults to nature since 1954! Experienced instructors lead enthusiastic kids outside to explore the wonders of the Front Range. For more than 55 years Thorne has been connecting youth to nature through summer “Camp Experiences” and hands-on outdoor activities for youth ages 3-15 in Boulder and Littleton!

Week-long camps for ages 3-15 meets at Kassler Center at Waterton Canyon.

Over one dozen programs weeks of June 18, June 25, July 9, and July 16



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A special thanks to Doris Cruze for making curtains for our office! It really brightens up the place.

