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THE

# Warbler

NEWSLETTER OF THE AUDUBON SOCIETY OF GREATER DENVER

## Birds of Paradise—an Hawaiian EDventure

by Becky Beckers, *Travel for Birds*

### CHOOSE FROM THESE DEPARTURE DATES

August 2-9, 2003

September 6-13, 2003

November 1-8, 2003

Are you passionate about adding “lifers” to your list? Sightings of Hawaii’s “winged-jewels” abound on this University of Hawaii’s 2 island journey to Kauai and the Big Island of Hawaii. Join expert birding guides, field interpreters, naturalists and photographers as you discover Hawaii’s anchialine ponds, and shoreline habitats that offer awesome experiences. Encounter Apapane, Iiwi, Akiapolaau, Io, Palila as we journey through Hawaii’s lush tropical habitats. You’ll begin the Hawaiian birding EDventure in Kauai, staying at an oceanfront hotel in Kapaa. From this central location, we’ll branch out to explore

the wonders of the “Grand Canyon of the Pacific,” Waimea Canyon, and Kokee State Park. In this magnificent setting, we will look for endemic forest birds such as, Anianiau, Amakihi, and the Hawaiian Nene, as well as introduced birds. After you say “Aloha” to Kauai, you’ll take a short plane ride to Hawaii’s newest and largest island, the Big Island of Hawaii. Home to the University of Hawaii at Hilo, Mauna Kea with its 14,000-ft. lofty peaks, the dramatic Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, and 420-ft. Akaka Falls, you’ll experience many of the 11 climate zones and tropical splendor on this extraordinary island. You’ll settle into oceanfront accommodations and explore the “wet” and “dry” sides of the island, and have the opportunity

for diverse bird viewing in several habitats. Hawaii Volcanoes National Park and its variety of climate zones offer birders many opportunities for viewing and hearing many species of endemic Hawaiian forest birds. The backdrop of Kilauea and its amazing landscapes will make this an experience to remember! Our price of \$1,325 (double occupancy) includes 7 nights, 8 days (starting from Lihue, Kauai), inter-island air travel from Kauai to Hilo, oceanfront hotels, all ground transportation, park entrance fees and meals. Non-members add \$100 each. Pre and post trip extensions are available. Space is limited to 12 per group. For more information, contact Becky Beckers, Travel For the Birds at 303-766-5266 or email at AgentBecky@aol.com.

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## Auction Alert—help needed now

by Carol DeStefanis

The Auction Committee has been busy meeting and planning the annual auction, which will be held on Friday, April 11 2003, at the Pinehurst Country Club. We have been making some changes to the format that will make it a more fun and interactive event. The live auction was such a success last year that we will continue to have both a silent and live auction. To make it even more successful, we need everyone’s help!

We are looking for your assistance in soliciting donations from local merchants and others. Gift certificates from restaurants, theaters, and merchants, as well as arts, crafts, plants, theme baskets, and services are always popular. Large items such as mountain bikes, binoculars, cameras, vacation homes, or airline tickets are needed for the live auction. Be creative—offer your skills on a field trip or to repair a table or to weed a garden.

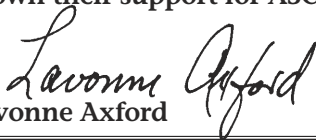
You can obtain letters from the ASGD office that introduce Audubon and explain the auction, and also receipts for merchants and others who donate items. Just send us a note at [www.ASGDoff@aol.com](mailto:www.ASGDoff@aol.com) and we will mail the information to you. Once you have gathered all your items just give us a call, and we can give you the specifics on drop off locations, etc. If you have any questions call me, Carol DeStefanis, at 303-779-0882. We look forward to seeing everyone there this year!

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I have been active in Audubon Society of Greater Denver (ASGD) for almost 20 years and am always amazed at the power of volunteers to get things done. I started out participating in the Kingery's beginning bird watching class and was quickly inspired by Lois Webster, one of ASGD's founders, to get more involved. Over the years, ASGD has shined through locally inspired projects such as, the Urban Environmental Education Project, The Grasslands Institute, Adopt-a-Platte, Conservation Issues, the Colorado Bluebird Project and, most recently, the Audubon Center. In addition, the Lois Webster Endowment Fund—created to honor Lois's memory—supports research, especially on birds like the threatened mountain plover (one of Lois's passions). These grassroots projects are what motivate me to stay involved and active in ASGD.

The Board of Directors is always vigilant to keep ASGD healthy and vibrant. We are facing a new challenge in the form of a significant reduction in our chapter's membership dues shares from National Audubon Society. For every member that joins Audubon, ASGD now receives less than \$3. Over the next three years, our dues share will be further reduced to only \$1.79 per member. The board has recognized that we must take steps now to insure that ASGD remains an active and sustainable organization. One of the solutions we are working on is the creation of a Friends of ASGD membership program that would allow each of us to give directly to the chapter and support our grassroots projects. Please watch future issues of the Warbler for more details.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has already shown their support for ASGD with a gift to our annual fund-raising drive.

  
Lavonne Axford

# Thank You!

### WITH GRATITUDE—THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING ASGD

- A gift of bird books, recorded bird songs and \$250 was received in loving memory of Kathleen "Kitty" Wason by her husband, John Wason. Kitty was an ardent birder and active member of The Evergreen Naturalists Audubon Society.
- A gift of \$82 was received in memory of Helen Rudolph.
- A gift of \$60 was dedicated to the Lois Webster Endowment Fund in honor of Margot Fraker Wynkooop.
- Gifts of \$25 and \$30 were received in memory of Judy K. Wiss for the Colorado Bluebird Project.
- Scott & Sandy Menough of Wild Birds Unlimited donated the proceeds of the book sales at the Fall Members Dinner to ASGD and supplied coffee for the event.
- Robert & Phyllis Palmer donated framed artwork, books and a fanny pack.
- Hugh & Urling Kingery donated a computer, monitor and printer.
- Laura Steigers donated a portable table and poster carrying case.

### APPLAUSE FOR OUR VOLUNTEERS!

- Trail crew leaders during the month of October: Richard Brandt, Jonathon Feiferek, Lynne Forrester, Fred Griest, Becky Hubbarth, Jerry Raskin and Bill Shackelford.
- High School Students from the Colorado Academy completed a service project at the Audubon Center in October. They did trail and garden maintenance, built a rock wall and pulled noxious weeds!
- Volunteers helped make our Fall Members Dinner a great success: Lynne Forrester, Courtney & Erlene James, Mary Marx, Jerry, Arlene & Jed Raskin, Mark Smith and John Steigers.
- Warbler Mailing Crew: Marc Goodbody, Bill Funk, Fred Griest, Allison Hilf, Doug Hodous, Jeanne McCune, Betty McGinnis, Vi Nicholson.
- Thanks also to Allison Hilf and Courtney James for their help in the office.



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For information about special projects, committees, general functions, events, fund raisers and partnerships, please phone, E-mail or write the ASGD office.

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### MISSION

ASGD is a nonprofit group, with over 3000 members, dedicated to maintaining the health of natural ecosystems through education, political action, scientific research and land preservation, with primary focus on birds, other wildlife and ecosystems of the South Platte River watershed.

### MEMBERSHIP

National Audubon Society members in the Denver Metro Area are automatically members of the ASGD and receive *The Warbler*.

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

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# TRAVEL, FIELD TRIPS, CLASSES & PROGRAMS

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



## FIELD TRIPS

### Walk the Wetlands

Sunday, Jan. 12 9 am  
(Second Sunday)  
Sunday, Feb. 2 9 am  
Leaders: Hugh and Urling Kingery  
Pre-registration: Not Necessary  
Fee: None  
Gather at: Parking lot of the Audubon Center at the Lockheed Martin Discovery Pavillion (contact ASGD for directions).

We will hike along the South Platte River looking for bald eagles, singing dippers, ducks, raptors, and other winter residents. Bring binoculars, field guides, water, snack, and lunch if you'd like to stay.

### Winter Hawks and Eagles on the Northern Front Range

Sunday, Jan. 19 9 am, OR  
Saturday, Jan. 25 9 am  
Leaders: Harold and Betty Oliver  
Pre-registration: Required.  
Fee: \$7/members, \$9/non-members  
Gather at: Holiday Inn parking lot, I-25 & 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue; trip lasts until afternoon. Bring lunch or buy it at McDonald's. Bring binocular and field guide.

The Olivers have generously agreed, again, to lead their popular trip on two different days—choose either one. Participants may see up to nine different hawk species. In past years the Olivers have recorded over 100 raptors on this trip, including numerous bald eagles and ferruginous hawks.

### Ducks In Winter

Sunday, Feb. 9 9 am  
Leaders: Harold and Betty Oliver  
Pre-registration: Required  
Fee: \$7/members, \$9/non-members  
Gather at: Pasquinell Park, northeast corner of Evans and the South Platte River.

Trip will last until noon. Bring binoculars and field guide. In winter ducks wear their most brilliant plumage. Join knowledgeable leaders Harold and Betty Oliver for spectacular, up-close views of hooded mergansers, goldeneyes, buffleheads, shovelers, and many other ducks, perhaps even an exotic species or two.

### Sandhill Cranes—Kearney, Nebraska

Monday-Wednesday— March 17-19  
Leaders: Hugh and Urling Kingery  
303-814-2723 Call them for help in arranging car pools.  
Pre-registration: Required  
Fee: \$200/member, \$250/non-members (double occupancy.)  
Gather at: 3 p.m. Country Inn and suites, Kearney; just northeast of I-80, exit 272. AAA says it takes 5 ½ hours to drive the 360 miles from Denver.

Join us at one of the heartland's most awe-inspiring migratory bird flyways. In mid-March tens of thousands of sandhill cranes visit Kearney. At 5 p.m. on Monday we'll go into the Rowe Sanctuary blind

on the Platte River to witness the cranes flying into the river bottom to roost for the night. At 5 a.m. on Tuesday we'll return to the blind for the cranes' awakening and departure to feed in the fields. Rowe's superb habitat attracts more cranes than any other spot on the river. During the day we'll visit Funk Wildlife Area where thousands of snow geese and other waterfowl stop over.

Very warm clothes are a must for the 2-2 ½ hours we'll spend in the blind. Price includes two nights lodging, two breakfasts, two lunches, entrance fees and guide services. Price of trip does not include dinners.

## CLASSES

### Beginning Bird-Watching Class

Thursday, April 3, 7-9 p.m. ASGD Office  
Saturdays, April 5, 12, 19 and 26, May 3 and 31  
Leaders: Hugh and Urling Kingery  
Pre-registration: Required  
Fee: \$120.00/members, \$150/non-members  
The first class will gather at the ASGD Office on April 3rd at 7:00 pm. (contact ASGD for directions).

Voted Best of Denver! 20 years ago and still going strong. Colorado's premier (and most entertaining) birding couple teaches the art and science of birding as no one else can. Learn bird identification, how to choose binoculars and field guides, and much more. Visit a variety of habitats and some of the best birding spots in the Denver metro area. Become observant and develop a practiced eye and ear. Make new friends and change the focus of your outdoor trips. You can make up any field trips that you miss during future fall or spring class sessions.

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

All birders welcome on Christmas counts, regardless of skills. Each count has several groups counting in different parts of a circle with a 15-mile diameter. Call the leader and find a party with the kind of bird-watching activity you'd like to try.  
Fee: \$5, collected by count leader for National Audubon Society  
Pre-registration: Required—contact leader

**SATURDAY, DEC. 28, 2002 DOUGLAS COUNTY**  
Roxborough State Park (303) 973-3959; register by Mon., Dec. 23.  
Information contact: Ann Bonnell, 303-979-6211, abonnell@juno.com.  
Chili supper at Roxborough State Park after count (\$2.00/person).

**WEDNESDAY, JAN. 1 DENVER URBAN**  
Hugh Kingery 303-814-2723, ouzels@juno.com  
See separate box on next page for information on how to participate.

**SATURDAY, JAN. 4 BARR LAKE**  
Tony Leukering, 303-659-4348

**SUNDAY, JAN. 5 BLACK FOREST**  
Judy von Ahlefeldt, 719-495-840, blackforestnews@earthlink.net

*See Christmas Count continued on next page*



# Legal professionals hit the trail

by Susan Smith, ASGD Administrative Director

Audubon Society of Greater Denver (ASGD) is very grateful for the energetic group of volunteers from the Mile High Chapter of the Association of Legal Administrators (ALA). ALA chose the trails at the Audubon Center in Chatfield State Park as the focus for their Community Service Day on Saturday, October 5. Forty-nine professionals and their friends from metro area law firms—and the businesses who support them—joined forces to complete the fully-accessible Audubon Discovery Trail. They built retaining walls, added sections of new trail, assembled benches, pulled noxious weeds and sowed native grass seeds. In addition, this group donated \$1,650 to ASGD for trail materials and tools.

Inspired by a nationwide challenge from its national headquarters, the Community Service Committee of the local chapter of ALA organized the project for members, their families, friends and vendors. "We chose this hands-on service project to leave a far-reaching legacy and give a variety of citizens more access to the beautiful outdoor spaces of Colorado," said Mark Maguire, ALA Chapter President.

In addition to volunteers and monetary donations from its member ranks, ALA got support from a variety of vendor companies who serve the Colorado legal industry. Ford Personnel, and Copy Corps were among the companies who contributed funds, volunteers, refreshments, prizes or in-kind donations to the project.

The photos included in this article show the ALA volunteers hard at work at the Audubon Center in Chatfield State Park.



# Birding in Panama

April 16–25, 2003

Join an intimate group of no more than 12 people on the birding adventure of a lifetime in Panama. The 10 day itinerary begins in Panama City with multiple birding adventures in that area where almost 350 species are counted each year. Your adventure culminates with a visit to the Costa Rica border of Panama and four days of birding in the cloud forest of Volcan Baru National Park. ASGD's group pricing for this trip is \$2750.00 per person, double occupancy. For more information and to order a brochure, contact the ASGD Office or call Mary Marx at 303-771-2441 for more details.

# Birds of Alaska

May 27–June 10, 2003

We invite you to bring your binoculars and learn about the birds of Alaska on our 14 night, 9 port cruise. Birdwatching field trips will be offered in addition to the onboard learning opportunities. Top professors and other noted authorities offer fascinating lectures and informal talks on the history, culture, art, geology, anthropology and biology of Alaska. ASGD's group pricing for cruise only starts at \$1496.00 per person, double occupancy. For more information and to order a brochure, contact Becky Beckers, Travel For the Birds at 303-766-5266 or email at AgentBecky@aol.com.

*Christmas Count continued from previous page*

## DENVER URBAN CHRISTMAS COUNT WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 1, 2003, DAWN TO DUSK

COUNT LEADER, HUGH KINGERY 303-814-2723, OUZELS@JUNO.COM

Platte River from North City limits to Mississippi, west to Buckley Field and Rocky Mtn. Arsenal. Start the New Year with a half day or whole day effort--a good way to start your 2003 Year List! Call one of the area leaders to join this special count.

5:00 pm after the count, Pot Luck at Casey Davenport's, 415 South High (5 blocks west of University, about 2 blocks south of Alameda); please call Casey or Jeff (303-744-0613) so we can count you in on the chili pot, Urling's brownies, and Casey & Jeff's hospitality.

AREA	LOCATION	LEADER'S TELEPHONE	LEADER(S)	AREA	LOCATION	LEADER'S TELEPHONE	LEADER(S)
1.	South Platte (south)	303-798-8072	Doris Cruze	8.	Kent School, S/Hampden	303-757-7000	Lynn Willcockson
2.	South Platte (north)	303-278-8035	Dick Schottler	9.	SE Denver, N/Hampden	303-935-4722	Walt Hackney
3.	Rocky Mtn. Arsenal	303-814-2723	Urling Kingery			Email: gyrfal@juno.com	
4.	Commerce City/Montbello	303-287-1644	Jackie King	11.	Fairmont, Lowry Field	303-979-6211	Tuesday Birders
5.	Sand Creek/Tollgate 3 Creek, Bluff L., & Aurora,	303-680-3381 303-699-1721	RandyLentz Buzz Schaumberg	13.	City Park/Park Hill	303-936-8661	Karleen Schofield
7.	Cherry Creek Res.	303-798-9683	J. B. Hayes	15.	Wash Park/Denver Country Club; Cherry Creek to Confluence; DU; Greater Glendale	303-744-0613	Casey Davenport

# ASGD's Lois Webster Fund provides transmitters for Mountain Plover study

by Margot Wynkoop

The Lois Webster Fund of the ASGD, a fund established to provide financial support for Colorado wildlife research projects, joined several other agencies including the USGS, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Colorado Division of Wildlife, the Colorado Farm Bureau and the Colorado Natural Heritage Program in supporting the first year of a multi-year study to "estimate survival rates of Mountain Plover chicks on agriculture croplands and to observe how different private agricultural practices affect chick survival." The Mountain Plover is a small buff colored bird, which, despite its name, summers on the short grass prairie where it nests on native grasslands, plowed fields and prairie dog towns. In 1999 the Mountain Plover was recommended for listing as a "Threatened Species" because its population declined over 63% between 1966 and 1996 and further declined by 90% since 1995. It has been the focus of the Lois Webster Fund's efforts since its inception because the bird's precarious situation was of particular concern to Lois Webster, who spent many years on the Pawnee Grasslands studying this unique species.

Victoria J. Dreitz, Ph.D., the Research Associate with the Colorado Natural Heritage Program managing this project, reported to the Lois Webster Fund Committee that "The drought conditions in 2002 inhibited us from being able to observe the impact of agricultural practices on chick survival because very few fields were tilled and/or planted. However, we were still able to estimate chick survival and examine movement patterns and utilization of habitats by adults to raise young."

During the first year of this study, which took place on private agricultural lands in Weld County, the Lois Webster Fund provided the transmitters that were placed on adult birds at or near nests at the time of hatching. A total of 26 transmitters, each weighing approximately 2.2 grams, were placed on the birds underneath the mantle feathers with an epoxy, which allows them to drop off during the summer molting season so the birds lose the transmitters before they take off on

migration. The Colorado Farm Bureau obtained approval from individual farmers to allow researchers to access their land. The researchers attached transmitters to 18 birds nesting on crop fields and 8 using rangeland.

Then, the researchers could easily find the birds with the transmitters to observe the movements of the adults with chicks.

Of the 26 nests monitored, many had two to three egg clutches, which resulted in a total of 56 eggs that hatched. Of those, only nine of the chicks survived to fledge size. Six chicks successfully fledged on cropland and three on rangeland.

According to Dreitz, "The low survival rate observed on the Mountain Plover chicks was primarily due to predation. Some other incidences that caused chick mortality were vehicles on county roads and over exposure to heat." With the help of ASGD's transmitters, researchers were able to track birds after the young hatched and left the nest. Five of the birds changed habitats, from range to cropland or vice versa. The drought this year is thought to have had an influence on these shifts.

The study will continue in 2003 with a goal of "estimating chick survival and understanding how different land uses may impact survival." Dreitz states,

"In 2003 we propose two directions: 1) continue to look at the role private, agricultural practices have on chick survival, and 2) investigate the role prairie dog towns have on chick survival." This study is particularly significant in that it actually tracks nesting Mountain Plovers and chicks on specific habitats to determine their survival rates. This information will be invaluable in determining ways to prevent the extinction of this bird. The transmitters are essential for the success of this ongoing research, and The Lois Webster Fund committee enthusiastically agreed to purchase the 30 transmitters, at a cost of \$4,000, required for the research in 2003. We will keep you posted on the results of next summer's research.

The Lois Webster Fund exists through the generous contributions of many friends and admirers of Lois Webster, and Coloradoans interested in wildlife research, particularly in the Pawnee Grasslands. If you would like to join us in supporting this project, please send your tax deductible donation made payable to the Lois Webster Fund of the ASGD to the ASGD office. Thank you.

The Lois Webster Fund Committee: Ed Butterfield, Walt Graul, Karen Hollweg, Urling Kingery, Polly Reetz, Allen Stokes, John Wright, Margot Wynkoop, Laverne Axford and Robert Judge.

## YOU ARE INVITED

### TO THE LOIS WEBSTER FUND

### RECEPTION AND PROGRAM

### THE MOUNTAIN PLOVER: CURRENT RESEARCH AND ISSUES

Thursday, February 6, 2003

6:00-7:30 p.m.

At The Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado Conference Room,  
Dos Chappell Bathhouse Building in Washington Park, Denver  
(Enter off of Virginia Ave. on the North side of the park. Turn south on  
Marion Parkway into the park. The first building on the left is the VOC Building.)

### FEATURED SPEAKERS

Victoria J. Dreitz, Ph.D.

*The Mountain Plover Agricultural Lands Research Project*  
Fritz Knopf, US Geological Survey, Biological Resources Division  
Walt Graul, Colorado Division of Wildlife

Wine and Cheese will be served from 6:00 until 6:30 p.m.

Questions or to RSVP: 303-733-2868





# Eagle Eye

Watching Public Policy for the Environment

by Polly Reetz

The election results bring to mind the Chinese curse, "May you live in interesting times." A Republican—and mostly conservative—majority in both Houses of Congress and a Republican President who has shown great willingness to throw out environmental protections promises a VERY interesting time the next two years. No matter what your party affiliation, you can look forward to writing frequent letters to your Congressman/woman defending some very basic environmental laws.

Birdwatchers should know, for example, that right after the 2002 election the U.S. Congress passed and sent to the President a Defense Department (DOD) authorization bill that gave the DOD a broad exemption from provisions of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). The Act, passed in 1918, is one of our oldest environmental protection statutes; it protects 850 species of birds from harmful practices - all except game birds (for which seasons must be set) and certain members of the Corvid (crow) family. The DOD had requested exemptions from EIGHT landmark environmental laws, including the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Marine Mammal Protection Act. So far only the Treaty Act exemption passed, but stay tuned.

Giving the Armed Services an exemption from the terms of the Act will allow the destruction of habitats of hundreds of thousands of migratory birds. The military can already request an exemption if there is evidence that military readiness would suffer, but in the 84 years the Act has been in existence the United States has maintained a strong defense without needing it. The exemption also means the US will be acting unilaterally in contravention of the Migratory Bird Treaty signed with Canada, Mexico, Russia and Japan. Usually changes in the treaty require years of negotiation. Finally, the exemption sets an extremely poor precedent for other

government agencies to follow.

The provision passed in November gives the DOD an interim exemption from the MBTA and directs the Secretary of Interior to come up with regulations for a permanent exemption for military readiness activities. It does require the military to avoid unnecessarily killing or harming migratory birds and to monitor the effect of the exemption. But who will make sure the military does this?

The Bush administration will undoubtedly try again to open the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and other protected federal lands to oil and gas production, weaken the Clean Water Act that protects wetlands and water quality, and pass legislation to allow inappropriate logging practices under the name of fire prevention. These and other assaults on environmental laws should indeed add interest and excitement to activists' lives.

In the State Legislature, also completely controlled by one party, we can expect bills to authorize new water storage projects, including (probably) a version of the Two Forks dam vetoed by EPA in 1989, bills to hobble government regulation by requiring governments to pay affected property owners (known as "takings" legislation), budget cuts for environmental enforcement, and other as-yet unknown horrors.

Adding to the interest level, West Nile virus may be back next year. Though it just made it into Colorado last summer, we should be watching for impacts on bird populations. Studies done in New York and Long Island documented declines in populations of swallows, cardinals, flycatchers, catbirds, mockingbirds, thrushes, waxwings (60%), titmice, wrens, jays and others. Crows are reportedly gone from the Washington, D.C. area—probably due to West Nile. With songbird populations down, bird-eating species like the peregrine falcon, Cooper's hawk, goshawk, and sharp-shinned hawk could possibly decline also.

But we can keep in mind the words of Molly Ivins in her November 13 column (*Rocky Mountain News*): "Just stay alert and involved, team. There is fun yet to be had." Lots of local land use issues can be influenced by citizen involvement - that's how we got Two Ponds National Wildlife Refuge, Aurora-Jewell wetlands, the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge, and (eventually) Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge. Write letters! Send emails! Although it's easy to give up, remember: there is fun yet to be had.

## ANNOUNCING THE 2003 LEGISLATIVE WORKSHOP

The Conservation Committee of ASGD and the Enos Mills Group of the Sierra Club will hold the 2003 Annual Legislative Workshop on Saturday, February 8, at Bethany Lutheran Church, 4500 E. Hampden Ave. Join us for another lively and informative session with our Audubon and Sierra lobbyists and guest speakers! Last year's workshop was voted a big success by all the participants. The agenda is as follows:

Registration starts ..... 10:00 am  
Discussion with Sierra and Audubon lobbyists 10:30 am  
Lunch (pot-luck) ..... 11:45 am  
Talk with legislators ..... 12:15 pm  
Break-out sessions ..... 1:00 pm  
Wrap-up ..... 3:00-3:30 pm

Cost of the workshop is \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door. Audubon members are asked to bring a salad, drink, bread, or dessert for the pot-luck. This year our proposed list of break-out topics includes wildlife, water, natural resource budgets, effective citizen lobbying, and "takings." We hope to host at least two legislators for the lunch talk.

*Please plan to join us for a half-day of fun, conservation issues, and good food.*

**YES! I will attend the 2003 Legislative Workshop on Feb. 8, 2003.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number /email \_\_\_\_\_

I will bring:  salad  bread  dessert  drink  •  I am enclosing a check for \$10. or  I will pay \$12 at the door  
 I cannot attend the Workshop, but here is my donation to ASGD to support our effort at the Legislature.

To reserve a space at the Legislative Workshop, mail this form and your check by Feb. 3rd to: ASGD, 9308 S. Wadsworth, Littleton, Colorado 80128. You can also call the office at 303- 973-9530 or email us at ASGDoff@aol.com. Please specify what you will bring to the pot-luck.

# backyard birds....

by Hugh Kingery



**URLING**, Karen Metz and I and on Oct. 14 joined in the international event dubbed The Big Sit! The Big Sit! has simple rules: count all the birds, no matter where they are, that you can see or hear from a circle with a 17-foot diameter. We stationed ourselves on the roof of our house, where our location occupied two pieces of plywood, one 5 x 10, the other about 2 x 4 (feet). From our vantage point we could see 2-5 miles to the south, east, and north, and half a mile to the west. We counted the birds that came into our feeders, including a White-throated Sparrow that visited us for a few days. Distant birds included a Golden Eagle, two Sharp-shins, and a Cooper's Hawk.

**FOLLOWING** rather liberal Big Sit! rules about counting birds, we used a beater. While Karen and I stayed on the roof with binoculars and scope, Urling walked down to the pond a quarter mile away. We had already seen 6 Mallards on the pond, but Urling, communicating by telephone, called to report a pair of wigeons, which Karen and I could see and even identify. Then she saw a Vesper Sparrow, but we couldn't see it at all. Then she flushed a Wilson's Snipe (it has a new name, formerly Common Snipe), which flew along the side of the pond. After about 5 minutes of telephone discussion in order to agree on the identity of the various marker points for locating the snipe, Urling walked along the shore of the pond to flush the bird. She did, and through the scope we saw it light in two places and then fly across the pond. She flushed a second one, and then re-flushed the first one, which we saw again.

**WE ALSO** watched 5 minutes of interaction among a crow, a magpie, and a Sharp-shinned Hawk—the hawk and the crows diving at each other. AND, the best according to Urling, a Red-Tailed Hawk flew by the cliff, carrying a long, skinny snake in his beak! Karen identified the snake as a western terrestrial garter snake.

**WE FIRST** encountered Big Sitters at a beach tower in New Haven, Conn., where big sitting originated. As a lighthearted event, it has flexible counting rules and reporting rules. We included the menu in our report (brownies, yogurt, pears, and sandwiches). ASGD plans Big Sit's next year at the Audubon Center and the Chatfield heron overlook.

**MORE** earth-bound backyarders have helped to document a major movement of Western Scrub-Jays this fall. Near DU, Ursula Barsch "did not trust [her] eyes" when she saw one Sept. 9 and Joy Schieving saw them three times the next week and twice in October. Kim Moore saw one in Thornton, first on Aug. 24 and then later in September and October—the first in 24 years living there! In Aurora, Elaine Hanak-Hall sees them daily, and has for several years now (except on Christmas count days), ditto Dodie Hampton in Aurora. We live in normal scrub-jay habitat, and we have normal numbers; so do Shirley and Buzz Bowers, also in Franktown, and Nan Brehmer on Green Mountain. The source of the interlopers remains a mystery. Backyarders might also look for Steller's Jays—this fall one made it all the way east to Lamar!

**OTHER** mountain birds also ventured into the city. Joy spotted a Red-breasted Nuthatch Sept. 1 and 16 and Oct. 26-29. Ellie Walker saw one in Wheat Ridge, and both Nan, and Shirley and Buzz saw them during the past two months. Joy and Ellie saw Mountain Chickadees, and Joy and Nan saw Townsend's Solitaires. Shirley and Buzz reported on Oct. 15 the first Evening Grosbeak I've heard about in several years, but it only stayed for an hour.

**A MOST** unusual stray showed up in Brenda Burrell's Golden yard. She took pictures of a red bird she couldn't identify and then compared them to her field guide and also brought them on Walk the Wetlands in October. We all think she pictured an Hepatic Tanager—which normally occurs in Arizona (a few breed in southeastern Colorado).

**MIGRANT** warblers graced several urban yards. In Arvada Elizabeth Witt spotted a Wilson's Warbler flitting around her hummingbird feeder and jumping in the Virginia creeper vines. (I remember one leaping around Virginia creeper when we lived in Denver.) Elizabeth also saw Yellow-rumps on two days. Ursula noted a Yellow Warbler, Sept. 2, but Joy really hit the warbler jackpot—Wilson's eight days in September, Orange-crowned Oct. 13-17, Townsend's Sept. 8, Yellow Sept. 29, and Nashville Sept. 12.

**ELIZABETH'S** hummingbird feeder also attracted its target, several Broad-tailed Aug. 1-Sept. 1. Joy likewise hosted hummingbirds, up until Sept. 15. Out in Franktown we saw our last one on Oct. 6. Over in Willow Creek, Betty Harwood thrilled at seeing a Fox Sparrow—red race—on Oct. 29. Ellie Walker reports a yard first—two Green-tailed Towhees in September. Joy also saw one Sept. 7-11 ("Another good month," she said.)

**PATTY** Perron emailed me on Oct. 24: "My Bushtits are back again—hooray! They came on the 18th and again today. It looked like about 25-30 of them. They chowed down at my suet stations and also worked over the ponderosas and pin-yons." Joy also has her Bushtits again, four on Oct. 13.

**BARBARA** Meyers emailed: "At my birdfeeder in Littleton I have a black-capped chickadee with a white back and two slate-colored juncos with large irregular patches of white around their eyes. Are these color variations unusual?" Birds frequently seem to show white feathers in the wrong places, a condition called partial albinism. We rarely see all-white albinos, but reports of partial albinos come more frequently. The other day Urling noticed a White-winged Junco that had a couple of extraneous white feathers.

**A TURKEY** Vulture surprised Ed Adams on Sept. 16 at Franklin and the Highline Canal. And on Oct. 6 in Aurora Jim Wilson saw overhead and heard two Bald Eagles, calling. Above them 150 yards he saw an all-white buteo, with dark wing tips and patagium—probably a Red-tailed Hawk.

**SHANNON** Jacobs didn't send any bird observations, but she suggested that we boldface the bird names in this column—let me know what you think. I also tried using italics for people names, but Urling thought that didn't work very well. I welcome your contributions to this column. Drop me a note or postcard at PO Box 584, Franktown 80116, or Email me, ouzels@juno.com.

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