

the Warbler



AUDUBON
SOCIETY
of GREATER DENVER

since 1969

MAY 2014 ASGD BIRDATHON

Start Planning Now for the May 2014 ASGD Birdathon

For some it's a "walk in the park," for others it may be their 24 hour marathon "Big Day," but no matter how you approach it, the day you select to conduct your ASGD Birdathon is a red letter day for the Audubon Society of Greater



Spotted Towhee by Dick Vogel

Denver. Birdathon is a major fund-raising event for ASGD and 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 you can, or 2) by pledging your support to one of the teams you know will be afield.

Either way you will benefit the ASGD and the environmental programs that it offers.

As a past participant on many Birdathons, I can assure you that the most fun is derived by lining up pledges and then going afield to see how many species you can find. Your supporters then "owe" the society their pledged amount times the number of species you see. If you feel like you are not a great birder and are unlikely to see a huge number of species, convince your supporters to give a little more per species. The event is to be enjoyed by all participants, and the greatest pleasure is derived by those who actively participate. We encourage all members of the society to seek out pledges and spend a few hours afield, enjoying our favorite outdoor activity while benefitting your favorite nonprofit organization.



Red-tailed Hawk by Dick Vogel

Broad-Tailed Hummingbird by Jeff Stroup



Rose-Breasted Grosbeak by Dick Vogel

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Continued next page - see rules

May Birdathon *(cont.)*

The rules are straightforward and simple:

- 1) Get a team of your birding buddies together, and pick an inspired team name. (Examples are 4 Vets in Search of a Bird, Hypoxic Featherheads, Great Railed Tackles.)
- 2) Get your pledges lined up before the date you conduct your outing (these may be either as an amount per species or as a lump sum). Some supporters make the event even more challenging by offering bonuses (e.g. double their per species pledge for all birds found before sunrise, or a greatly increased amount for any member of certain groups of birds: owls, herons, raptors, nesting confirmation, etc.).
- 3) Plan your outing to encompass the best weather and the habitats you like to bird.
- 4) Conduct your tally within any 24 hour period in May in Colorado.
- 5) Then let your supporters know how you did; thereby letting them share in your excitement while collecting the pledged amount.
- 6) All pledges are tax deductible and supporters will, upon request, be given a receipt.

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

- Written by Doug Kibbe

Bird Banding



Bird Banding Station Open

April 26 - June 1 (station closed May 2-3) 7am-11am

Visitors: Watch Research in Action!

See warblers, sparrows, woodpeckers, thrushes, and other songbirds 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 to greet you and guide you to the station. Easy to moderate walking required on flat trails.

Meeting Place: Audubon Center at Chatfield

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

Conservation Report by Polly Reetz

Do you care about bald eagles, dippers, sandhill cranes, yellow warblers, and Lewis' woodpeckers? A process now moving forward will drastically affect them. Read on.....

Water has always been a contentious subject in Colorado – “whiskey is for drinkin’, water is for fightin.” With the advent of global climate change it’s expected to be more so. Most climate models predict the Colorado River Basin, whence much of our Denver–metro-area water comes, will get warmer and drier, and most economic models predict a burgeoning population for the State – a doubling by 2050. More people and less water is a certain prescription for conflict. Current projections estimate that there will be a 20% gap between Colorado’s water supply and the demand.

In response to these predictions, in 2013 Gov. John Hickenlooper directed the Colorado Water Conservation Board to develop a State Water Plan in order to provide direction for future water resource use. A draft is to be submitted to the Governor by the end of 2014, and a final plan is due in December 2015, but the preparatory work is going on NOW. The Plan will be based on the work of 9 river basin Roundtables, created by the Colorado General Assembly in 2005 (HB 05-1177, the Colorado Water for the 21st Century Act); ASGD is in the South Platte River Basin. Each Basin Roundtable will develop its own plan, and these Basin Implementation Plans will be incorporated into the overall Colorado Water Plan.

The Roundtables are made up of about 40 members including representatives from each city and county in the basin, and one from each of the agricultural,

industrial, environmental, recreational and water supply fields. Unfortunately this arrangement means that environmentalists are heavily outnumbered on these panels, and nonconsumptive water uses like wildlife and recreation may get only lip service.

Audubon’s concerns about the Water Plan include:



Male Mallard by Dick Vogel

While municipal, industrial and agricultural needs for water have traditionally been quantified in terms of acre-feet, nonconsumptive water needs have not. Recreation and wildlife add billions of dollars to Colorado’s economy each year and are important to our lifestyle and well-being, yet the amount of water needed to support them and keep our rivers and streams healthy, is unknown. In order to have a balanced water plan, the State needs to quantify nonconsumptive needs for water as well as the traditional municipal, industrial and agricultural ones, so they can receive equal consideration.

Many of our rivers and streams are in poor condition, due to dams and diversions carried out over the last century. We are not starting out in this planning process with healthy rivers! Aquatic and riparian ecosystems, and the bird species dependent on them, have suffered. Many of our rivers are already diminished and some dry up during the breeding season, and further diversions will cause the losses to our water-based recreation and wildlife resources. The State Water Plan needs to outline a strategy to restore ecological health and balance to our rivers and streams.

Conservation Report *(cont.)*

The first priority of the Colorado Water Plan should be comprehensive water conservation – the cheapest, easiest and fastest way to “create” more water. The Plan should include strategies to ensure that every drop of water is used as efficiently as possible, in municipal, industrial and especially agricultural processes (agriculture uses about 90% of the water in Colorado). Reuse, recycling, water metering, tiered pricing and leak detection and repair will be crucial.

Only “smart” water projects should be considered, such as storage of water in aquifers where it can’t be lost to evaporation. Construction of new dams and reservoirs should be minimized.

Natural stream flows are critical for maintaining wetlands on which species like sandhill cranes depend for roosting during their migration. The southwestern willow flycatcher nests near wetlands, as does the yellow-billed cuckoo. Both are priority species for Audubon and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Bald eagles depend on our larger rivers, like the Colorado, throughout the year. The American dipper requires healthy, free-flowing streams where it can dive for aquatic insects. The Lewis’ woodpecker needs healthy riparian forests, including mature cottonwoods in which to nest.

What You Can Do: All of the Basin Roundtables are holding public meetings and are soliciting comments from the general public (the South Platte Basin Roundtable held one on March 3 in Denver). Anyone can send in comments, either to the Colorado Water Conservation Board at www.coloradowaterplan.com or to the South Platte Basin roundtable at SouthPlatteBIP@hdrinc.com. Please write and demand that wildlife and recreational needs for water receive equal attention with the traditional “consumptive” uses. Use some of the points above. Explore low-flow fixtures and water-wise landscaping to help keep water in our streams. We can all contribute to keeping our rivers and streams healthy!

Front Range Birding Company's Open House June 7!

Bird banding demo with RMBO's Meredith McBurney
20% off everything birds eat! Food, wine, coffee, more!



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Saturday 10 am - 5 pm



Saturday Night Wild

On March 15, 2014 we held our annual spring benefit, Saturday Night Wild! For the first time in five years, the weather completely cooperated



Photo credit Laure Duke

(no snow or rain), giving us a beautiful evening. The Inn at Hudson Gardens, which resembles a log cabin, was the perfect rustic setting for our event. Over 125 of our Friends, supporters and bird lovers joined us for great food, a variety of silent auction items, and time to mingle with each other. Staff from Elements Massage in Littleton provided chair massages. Deanna Curtis and her team of volunteers introduced guests to live birds of prey, including a barn owl, an

eastern screech owl, a red-tailed hawk, and a peregrine falcon. Throughout the event, Ron Dorr provided wonderful classical guitar music. Carl Norbeck, the former executive director of ASGD, and his daughter Catherine led an exceptionally entertaining live auction where items such as a sailing trip, cases of wine, and an adventure trip to the Four Corners area were won after lively bidding. Hope to see you next year!

Mother's Day

Breakfast and Bird Banding -
2nd day added!

Saturday, May 10, 9am - 11am

Sunday, May 11, 9am - 11am

TREAT YOUR MOTHER TO A ONE-OF-A-KIND EXPERIENCE!



After a light continental breakfast, enjoy a leisurely spring hike and a visit to our popular bird banding station.

Give the gift of seeing songbirds up-close as they migrate through the South Platte River corridor.

Backyard Birds by Hugh Kingery

As I mentioned in the last Warbler, when you call Denver Audubon and want a wildlife question answered, you press Zero – and it rings our home phone. We talk to all sorts of interesting people with interesting questions and observations. This winter, the most puzzling and difficult to answer come from people who have “no birds.”

Polleke Siraa emailed on Feb. 2, “In previous years, whenever we handed out a handful of fresh peanuts, the news was quickly spread in the jay community and the nuts would be gone in no time. Now the nuts stay for weeks and an occasional jay comes by to pick one. My initial reaction was: is there something wrong with the quality of the peanuts?



Blue Jay by Dick Vogel

But there are also considerably fewer sparrows, finches, chickadees, and nuthatches. We only filled the seed feeder once since fall. The suet feeder is even worse. We have only had one pair of downies, no nuthatches, no chickadees, no flocks of bushtits, and now the downies are gone too. There is about a third of the suet left and has not been replenished since early November. Again I thought: is there something wrong with the suet?

“Another detail. Next to the suet feeder aggressive ivy covered the west wall of the house. Sparrows and finches used to build their nests there and last spring we had several pairs of grackles. In September I had to have the ivy removed because the house was being repainted. Could the bareness of the wall be a deterrent? Another change: my neighbor removed five crabapples from his backyard. They lined the fence between us and provided a wonderful launching pad for the birds to visit the seed feeder and the platform. Other trees around aren’t as convenient as the crab apples.

“So my question: do these environmental changes cause the birds to disappear? Is something else going on?”

Many people have complained about fewer birds -- but not many look at changes in local habitat the way Polleke did. I’ll bet the changes had some impact, especially the lost crabapple trees. I’m not sure that the ivy has that much impact, although I suppose that it did provide a good evening roost. Providing cover – trees, shrubs, and the like – makes a big difference to the comfort level of the birds that use your feeders.

Diane Grant (Centennial), on Feb. 4, said that she’s “putting out the same bird seed (safflower, sunflower black oil) but no birds. Actually, just not as many.” She has a great mix coming in: two nuthatch species, Black-capped Chickadee, juncos, House Finch, occasional Bushtits. Numbers not as great as other years.”

Bill Wuerthele in Park Hill noticed “a sharp decline in the number of House Finches coming to our feeders. Two friends, one in the Wash Park area and one in Boulder have noticed a similar decline. Tuesday, when the cold weather set in, I counted 12. That is the high count for this year’s FeederWatch so far - the low this season is 2 and the average for 6 count periods is 5.” He compared this



House Finch by Dick Vogel

year’s counts with the previous three winters. Lowest counts then: 10-15, averages 22-26, and high counts, 38-50. I haven’t done a similar analysis for our Feeder-Watch reports, but we’ve noticed another phenomenon: we might see a dozen finches at our feeders, but each afternoon, a big bush 100 yards below the house always had 60-80 finches.”



Black-Capped Chickadee by Dick Vogel

(Cont. next page)

Backyard Birds *(cont.)*

We've heard similar laments from several other callers and some who say they simply have no birds and had them in previous winters. I don't know the answer, but birds require food, shelter, and water to survive. Feeder food comprises only part of their diet, and maybe some found a lack of natural food and moved on.

The other common thread of our Zero calls: Robins. The first call came on Jan. 30. **Mary Boll-Jefferson** asked about a flock of 25-50 robins she saw in Southglenn— a big flock of robins in winter (snowy winter-time) seems contrary to our ideas of robins as harbingers of spring.



Robins by Rex Nelson

Two calls on Feb. 1: **Rex Nelson** reported, "Robins in bird bath (and one starling). They were even singing today— what a hoot!" and another caller wanted to know what to feed her flock.

Bill Wuerthele, in Park Hill, on Feb. 6, reported "huge flocks of robins in the neighborhood recently. This morning, after a very cold night, the robins descended on our two heated water baths, nicely demonstrating the importance of water availability in the winter. I estimated well over 100 robins in the yard at any one time (and one lone Cedar Waxing mixed in). Here's a photo. Both baths looked like this for about 20 minutes."

Debbie Berwick (Englewood), for several days up to Feb. 23, watched "50-100 robins (during the cold & snow) diving into a pile of raked-up leaves from the fall. They bury themselves in the leaves, and poke under the leaves, tossing them aside, apparently seeking food."

Although the robin calls to Zero started Jan. 30, our Urban Christmas Bird count tallied 791 on Jan. 1. The previous three counts counted 268, 1,386, and 627. Robins form flocks in winter that roam the metro area looking for fruit. Sometimes they invade junipers, sometimes Pyracanthas and crabapples.

Two contributors reported Rufous-sided Towhees – which the American Ornithologists' Union has split into two species; ours now named Spotted Towhee.

Bruce Ducker saw one at his central Denver feeder Jan. 27, and **Barb Haskell** on Jan. 31 reported one at her Arvada feeder. "It usually comes late in the day. Our feeder contains black oil sunflower seed and suet on the tree. I saw the bird's picture in the Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds (1977). The bird looked like that one but his tail was standing up." That bird book needs updating!



Pine Warbler by Glenn Walbek

Gretchen and Rich Sigafos on Jan. 23 emailed from Highlands Ranch pictures of a mystery bird that visited "our feeders for at least 4 weeks now. We see the bird in the morning from about 7-9 a.m. and again in the late afternoon." Last seen, Jan. 25.) The pictures showed a Pine Warbler, and **Glenn Walbek** took some very fine photos. He commented, "Probably as long as any Pine Warbler has ever come to a feeder in winter."



White-Breasted Nuthatch
by Bruce Paton

John and Cassie Pazour, Centennial, on Mar. 3, "had a large number of goldfinches at the feeders last week - stayed for a day or two and were gone - several were well advanced into breeding plumage. This week it's been pine siskins en masse."

Bruce Paton, Denver, Mar. 4, took photos of a White-breasted Nuthatch, only the second to visit his garden in 27 years.

(Cont. next page)

Backyard Birds *(cont.)*

Barb Shissler, Jan. 26, emailed, "The winter birds we get in our small backyard in Jefferson County are fun, but usually the same. We have Eurasian Collared-Doves, Northern Flickers and Downy Woodpeckers, Black-capped Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Dark-eyed Juncos, House Finches and House Sparrows -- and sometimes a flock of Bushtits. Therefore, I was very surprised to see a Townsend's Solitaire taking a drink in our birdbath -- a first for our yard."

In Highlands Ranch, **Lyn Williams** reported, "It's been a fairly quiet winter around here. We were forced to stop offering seed due to the preponderance of House Finches with their persistent avian diseases. We have two double-suet holders and two hanging peanut feeders. Bushtits come almost daily, along with Downy Woodpeckers, Red-shafted Flickers, and lots of chickadees. No American Goldfinches this year--despite our "upside-down" thistle feeder (which is House Finch proof). Occasionally, juncos stop by to eat under the suet feeders; when I see them, I sprinkle some thistle on the ground. We have scrub-jays, Blue Jays, and magpies, as well as a few crows and starlings."



Townsend Solitaire by Dick Vogel

West of Castle Rock, **Brenda Beatty** reported almost the same selection. She added Steller's Jay, American Tree Sparrow, and Mountain Chickadee. In Roxborough Village, **Jill Holden** rejoiced on Jan. 26: "I had a nice surprise when at least 8 Bushtits checked my feeders out. The bigger House Finches quickly moved in though and the Bushtits flew into the tree by the deck. A loud motorcycle went by and they were gone, practically disappearing into thin air it seemed, but then Bushtits normally do move through an area quickly."

Barbara Spagnuolo saw the first bluebird, a Mountain Feb. 18 in Castle Rock and **Sheri Coleridge** enjoyed two in Parker Mar. 14. ASGD's Walk the Wetlands on Mar. 2 saw a flock of 51 migrants.

Raptors always draw attention. Bald Eagles showed up near Parker Mar. 9 (**Joelle Mastra**) and Surrey Ridge Mar. 13 (**Sheri McAdoo**). Zero brought an interesting call from Sandra (NLN) about a pair of Great Horned owls on their "campus." That turned out to be the Level 3 Communications in Broomfield, and **Kathanne Lynch** volunteered to visit the site (so did **Amy Morton**); on Mar. 13 Kathanne reported back.

"They have a pair of owls who have perched in the same tree since January. The owls have been seen to copulate; however, they have not gone on nest yet. Today, in fact, the pair was not seen in the courtyard where they have been seen daily. If the birds do nest, and have young, accommodations may be needed for the birds' and employees' safety. Time and circumstance will tell.

This campus has 2700 employees.

The CEO attended the talk.

The Facilities Manager attended the talk.

I spoke with him privately as we walked the grounds near the small nest in the tree where the pair of owls have perched.

Level 3 has placed one of their security cameras to directly look at the nest.

All the employees have access to the live feed from the camera.

These owls are the 'talk of the town' among the employees."



Mountain Bluebird by Hugh Kingery

Your contributions write this column. I'd like to hear from more folks in urban and suburban Denver.) Send a note or post card to P.O. Box 584, Franktown 80116, or Email me: ouzels8@aol.com.

Lois Webster Fund

Lois Webster Fund Announces Grantees For 2014

The Lois Webster Fund (LWF) of the Audubon Society of Greater Denver is excited to announce the projects selected to receive grants in 2014. The LWF received thirteen excellent proposals for grants for research and education projects on Colorado non-game wildlife totaling over \$41,300. The LWF had \$6,900 available for funding in 2014. The LWF Committee members were very impressed with the quality and significance of this year's applications. They included both research and education initiatives with a variety of partnerships and projects that will have an impact on the conservation of Colorado's non-game wildlife.

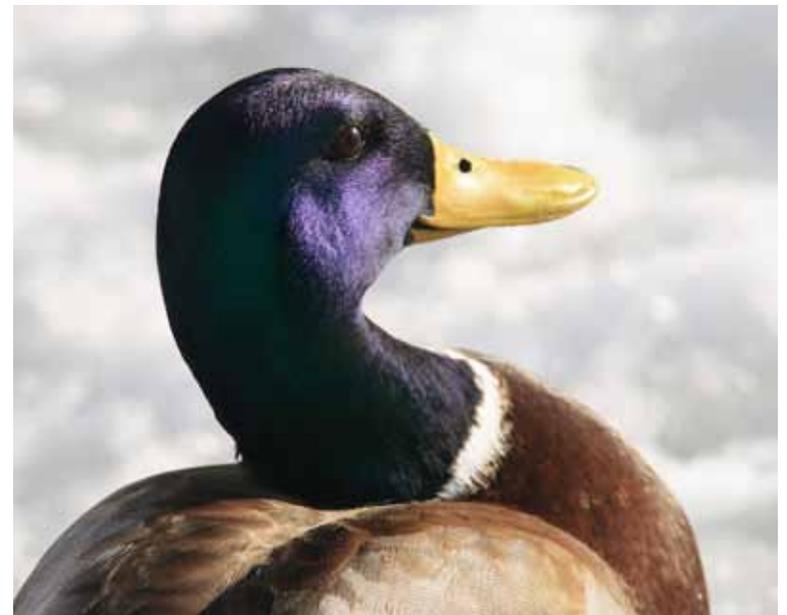
The LWF Committee found the following three projects to be particularly outstanding and has awarded them grants for 2014:

- Habitat Use by Mountain Plover during Nest Incubation: Colin Woolley, University of Colorado, Denver. Location: Weld County, Colorado.
- Effect of Heavy Metal Stream Contamination on Bat Communities Along an Elevation Gradient in the Eastern Rockies: Laura Heiker, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley. Location: "Colorado Mineral Belt" (Boulder, Clear Creek, Gilpin, Grand, Summit, Lake and Chaffee Counties).
- Avian Response to Habitat Manipulation and Fire in the oil and gas fields of Northwest Colorado. Travis Gallo, Colorado State University, Fort Collins. Location: Piceance Basin of northwest Colorado.

These projects will be conducted during the upcoming field season and the results of this research will be available starting next fall. Be sure to look for

the results of these studies in upcoming Warblers. We hope you will also plan to attend the LWF Annual Program in the spring where the researchers give fascinating presentations on their projects. Their photos and stories are often amazing and often humorous as these dedicated young scientists explain the methodology and results of their projects.

The LWF was established to fund research and education projects "designed to lead to the conservation of non-game species in Colorado." It is dependent on contributions from members of the Audubon Society of Greater Denver and other friends. We hope you will join us in supporting these scientists and their worthwhile projects. Please visit the ASGD website, www.denveraudubon.org and go to Research, Lois Webster Fund or send your tax deductible gift to the office of ASGD.



Male Mallard by Dick Vogel

Leave a Legacy

Educate Generations - Protect Birds and Habitats into the Future Include ASGD in Your Will and Other Gift Planning Options

The Audubon Society of Greater Denver offers an opportunity for you to make a gift or bequest to leave a legacy and a lasting impact. The goal of planned giving is to help you plan your estate and charitable giving in a way that benefits you, your family and ASGD. We invite friends who share a commitment to educating all ages about birds, other wildlife, and habitats to consider making a personal investment in the future of our programs. There are several ways you can make these planned gifts to charity and enjoy tax and income benefits:

- **Specific, Residuary and Contingent Bequests**
- **Retirement Accounts and Pension Plans**
- **Insurance**
- **Securities**
- **Charitable Remainder Trust (CRT)**
- **Charitable Gift Annuity (CGA)**

Please consult with your financial planner and attorney to assure you receive the best financial advantages and that your intentions are carried out fully.

We would be glad to discuss any planned giving option with you – in confidence and without obligation. For more information, please call 303-973-9530 or e-mail Karl Brummert, Executive Director, at kbrummert@denveraudubon.org

Please Let Us Know

We often receive bequests from people whom we have never had the opportunity to thank. If you include Audubon Society of Greater Denver in your estate plans, please let us know. We value the opportunity to express our gratitude in person to let you know that your gift is greatly appreciated now and for future generations of people and birds to come. Those people who have notified us of their intention to make a bequest to the Audubon Society of Greater Denver are invited to our Legacy Circle. Legacy Circle special events and activities highlighting the work we accomplish together will keep you connected to the “legacy” that you have planned for us.

Legal Designation: If you wish to name Audubon Society of Greater Denver in your will or estate plan, we should be legally designated

as: “Audubon Society of Greater Denver, a nonprofit organization (Tax ID #23-7063701), with its principal business headquarters address of 9308 S. Wadsworth Blvd, Littleton, CO 80128.”

Date of Incorporation: September 30, 1969



Volunteers, Donors, New Members and Officers

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Amy Morton
Ann Cline
David Rossbach
Debra Powell
Deidre Duffy
Gary Ellis
George Mayfield
Gwen Moore
Kristin Salamack

Larry Wiberg
Laurie Chotena
Linda Tedford
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Mary Lou McCandless
Mary Lyon
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Sally Berger



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Website/Media

Dick Anderson
Mary Urban

Your volunteer hours are very important to us!

As we use them to raise money through grants and the SCFD. Please record your hours on Volgistics or email Kristine Helsper your hours **completed** between July 2013 through December 2013 as soon as possible. Thanks!

Field Trips & Classes

Chuck Aid, Karen Bickett, Kevin Corwin, Bill Eden, Martha Eubanks, Patti Galli, Mackenzie Goldthwait, Judy Henderson, Mary Keithler, Hugh Kingery, Urling Kingery, Lois Levinson, Cindy Valentine, Wendy Wibbens

Gardening/Maintenance

Fred Griest, Robert Stone

Thanks to all committees, board members and Audubon Master Birders for volunteering their time.

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Leslie Beltrami

Harriet Stratton donated a microwave

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Robert Weber

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