



THE

Warbler

NEWSLETTER OF THE AUDUBON SOCIETY OF GREATER DENVER

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CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE GREATER DENVER COMMUNITY

ASGD celebrating 40 years

What is a prairie dog worth? An ecologist, a rancher, a wildlife enthusiast, a rodent control agent, all would have a different evaluation. One thing is certain: this small animal, whose colonies once covered vast areas of the western plains, is rapidly being destroyed." This quotation is from the first newsletter (January-February 1969) published by the Denver Audubon Society, original name of the Audubon Society of Greater Denver. It drives home the reality of how much and how little some things change. As we celebrate

the 40th Anniversary of ASGD it has been enlightening to review old issues of the newsletter, gaze at



old photos and interview founders, to gain a perspective of how far we have come and now with renewed energy how far we have yet to go. As with the issue of the prairie dog, ASGD has much to be proud of, and much yet to accomplish.

Throughout the 1970's, Denver Audubon was clearly an organization for adults, serious about birding and serious about conservation. Issues included oil shale, predator control, the Colorado wildlife conservation stamp, planning for the Chatfield dam – sound familiar. Trips were all about the birds. In 1974, a program to learn more about the metro area parks was offered due to fears of an energy crunch and higher gas prices. Hugh Kingery offered his first Beginning Bird Watching course in 1971.

The 1980's saw the start of an emphasis on educating urban youth about the environment. The Urban Education Project became a national model for bringing nature to urban children. Birdseed sales

started as a fundraiser. The Grassland Institute was held annually for several years extolling the importance of the short grass prairie. Audubon joined with the Division of Wildlife

to host the South Platte Riparian Institute. A Warbler article urged members to be more environmentally conscious in their selection of Christmas gifts. Audubon fought the construction of the Two Forks Dam on the Platte.

The 1990's started the effort to establish the nature center and initiated our partnership with Chatfield State Park. Denver Audubon Society became the Audubon Society of Greater Denver and a lease was signed with State Parks to renovate the stone buildings we now know as the Audubon Nature Center at Chatfield. The Lois Webster Fund was established in 1995.

The renovation of the two historic buildings at the Center was completed in 2006 and in 2009 we have established open hours on weekends.

We still work to conserve prairie dogs, fight predator controls, discuss the future of Chatfield and advocate for conservation. We still sell birdseed and Hugh and Urling Kingery, still teach Beginning Birdwatching. We've reached out to thousands of children, hoping to create the environmental stewards of the future. We welcome and recognize those with exceptional bird identification skills and those who just like to spend a sunny day in the wild. It gives us perspective to look at our past achievements. ASGD has much to be proud of, and much yet to accomplish.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE—

40 YEARS OF GROWING

This is a good time to take a minute and reflect on the Audubon Society of Greater Denver, where we have been, where we are now, and where we go from here. Old timers will remember when our office was a one-person part-time operation, moving every couple of years and Board members meeting in homes or at a church. The education programs were delivered to schools by our excellent volunteers, the Warbler editor was a volunteer, and field trips depended on volunteers to lead them. After the passing of Lois Webster, a fund was set up in her honor to give grants to researchers each year.

We finally found a home at Chatfield, with space for an office for the Executive Director, the office manager, a part-time naturalist, and a part-time bookkeeper. Building on efforts by other groups who established the Discovery Pavilion, we began work on the two stone buildings, clearing weeds, digging out Russian Olive trees, and hauling out trash. Funds were raised. Trails were built, a native plant garden was planted, a dock and boardwalk were added, and programs were planned. School groups began to come, while at the same time, volunteers continued to take programs to schools. The dedicated staff and volunteers brought the center to life. Walk the Wetlands became a monthly highlight.

Soon, the second building was cleared out, spruced up, painted, and made ready with meeting space, a workshop, and storage space. Another garden was planted. The Naturalist in Residence program was created and delivered to schools. A bird banding station attracted visitors in the spring, while a Bioblitz event helped census all the living things at the center. More funds were raised, and an endowment fund was set up to insure ASGD's future.

The amphitheater or outdoor classroom was completed, along with a memorial brick walkway, and a native American dance and drum group presented the first program. The Audubon Master Birder class was designed to attract serious birders. Monthly members meetings, now known as Evenings with Audubon, were revived, and brought in interesting speakers and programs on birding topics. The staff grew, volunteers pitched in, and the farmhouse was transformed into a nature center where today, visitors are welcomed for hikes, educational displays, games, and crafts on weekends.

Plans are in place to add an additional building to the center, with space for ASGD offices, meeting rooms, and up-dated facilities. It will take more fund raising, more hours by volunteers, and the support of all members to make this a reality. ASGD has come a long way in our first forty years, and we are looking forward to forty plus more exciting years.

So come join the celebration at the festival on Sunday, June 7 at the Nature Center. Meet with founders, volunteers, staff, and friends for a day of food, fun, celebrating, visiting, and enjoying your Audubon Society of Greater Denver.



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MISSION

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

MEMBERSHIP

FRIENDS OF ASGD receive the Warbler and additional membership benefits. Members of the National Audubon Society in the Denver Metro Area receive complimentary copies of the *The Warbler*.

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

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Attention ASGD members: change is coming

Beginning with the July-August issue of ASGD's newsletter, *The Warbler*, the following changes will be made:

- ASGD will continue to offer *The Warbler* six times per year.
- "Friends" members will receive the paper copies, by mail, just as before – no change. If "Friends" members would prefer to read the electronic version of *The Warbler* on-line – please notify us by e-mail at info@denveraudubon.org. You will be saving the earth's and ASGD's resources. You will be notified by e-mail through our listserv when the edition goes on-line at www.denveraudubon.org.
- "National" members—who join the National Audubon Society and thereby receive ASGD information—will receive printed copies of *The Warbler* by mail in the Spring (March/April issue) and in the Fall (September/October issue). All editions of *The Warbler* are available as PDF's on the ASGD website at www.denveraudubon.org

For our National Audubon Members who are not Friends members, we invite you to become a member of our local Audubon Chapter. Individual memberships are \$25 and Family memberships are \$35. It is the Denver chapter that offers local programs and events, runs the Audubon

*Nature Center at Chatfield and sends out *The Warbler*. All donations and membership fees to ASGD support the local chapter.*

WHY THE CHANGE?

Both concern for the environment and the use of dollars within the ASGD budget are bringing about this change. As most of you know, many organizations are switching to electronic versions of their newsletters as their members become more comfortable with "getting their news" on the web. *The Warbler* is very expensive to publish and mail to the over 3500 ASGD Friends Members and National Audubon Members. Funds spent on hard copies, we believe, are better allocated to programs throughout metro-Denver and at our Nature Center. The more copies we can offer in an electronic format, the more funding we can use to provide services to all of the Audubon family.

Please note the difference: Friends members are local members who join ASGD as either Individuals or Families. National members are those who join the National Audubon Society and receive ASGD information as a courtesy but are not local members.

We invite you to become a friend of the Audubon Society of Greater Denver. It's simple, just use the form on page 16.

Audubon Nature Festival

June 7, 2009 10:00am - 4:00pm

It's time to celebrate!

- Activities including guided walks, forums, treasure hunts, NSI (Nature Scene Investigations)
- Exhibits and Booths
- Food and refreshments
- Music

Fun for ALL ages at the Audubon Nature Center

Want more information?

call 303-973-9530; e-mail to info@denveraudubon.org

Visit our website: www.denveraudubon.org





Eagle Eye

Watching Public Policy for the Environment
by Polly Reetz, ASGD Conservation Committee Chair

BREAK OUT THE CHAMPAGNE! The bill that was Audubon's top priority in this session of the Legislature passed first the House, then on Marchh 25, the Senate, and now goes to Governor Ritter for his signature. HB 1292, otherwise known as the Rules Review Bill, contained the new regulations for oil and gas development in Colorado, with specific protections for wildlife habitat and public health. Despite determined opposition from the industry and their helpers in the Legislature, the bill survived several attempts to weaken the wildlife provisions and will now become law. The oil and gas industry is said to be evaluating their options for legal challenges.

HABITAT STAMPS: Audubon's second priority this year, SB 235, will reauthorize the Habitat Stamp, which is sold with game and fish licenses to raise money to protect important wildlife habitat in our state. Conservationists who do not hunt or fish can buy one where licenses are sold, but the purchase is (was) entirely voluntary, except for requiring that you have a Stamp to enter State Wildlife Areas. There were some problems with this set-up:

- People who didn't buy licenses did not necessarily frequent places where the Stamp was available.
- The US Fish and Wildlife Service insisted that any money raised from a fee to use State Wildlife Areas should be returned to them, since they supplied some of the dollars used to buy the SWAs.
- Not many non-hunters/anglers bought the Stamps, though they were originally touted as a way for these folks to contribute to wildlife management in Colorado.
- The stamps were never marketed properly.
- 60% of the money had to be spent on big game winter range, which upset anglers, who actually buy more Stamps than anybody else.

This year's bill contains solutions to these problems: **First**, it creates a Wildlife Passport, unconnected with the license system, which nonhunters can buy at many more venues as of Januaryary 1, 2011. **Second**, it eliminates the requirement that you possess one of these Passports/Stamps to use State Wildlife Areas. **Third**, the bill allows the use of some of the income from the sale of Wildlife Passports for marketing and publicity. **Fourth**, it removes the 60% winter range requirement. (The bill also contains solutions to several other problems perceived by the Division of Wildlife but it would take this whole article to explain them adequately).

SB 235 is working its way through the legislature and there have been several attempts to amend it, for example to require that \$1,000,000 of the stamp income be spent to acquire instream flow rights

OTHER BILLS OF INTEREST AND THEIR FATES SO FAR:

- A bill to ban plastic bags at a number of big box stores died on the Senate floor. These stores objected to being singled out, but the fact is that they supply a huge percentage of the plastic bags used by the public. But the bill had some real problems: paper bags, though they can be recycled, take a heavy toll on the environment, and many people objected to being forced to use them as garbage bags, totes, etc. For now, we encourage you to use cloth or recycled plastic bags, and lobby our legislators for a better bill that responds to these criticisms.
- A bill to loan money to school districts to install renewable energy facilities at schools is moving through the process.
- HB 1149 requires developers to offer solar electric pre-wiring as an option in new homes. Suppliers of other types of renewable energy, such as wind, would like to see the options broadened to include them too. Stay tuned.
- A bill to allow the use of cisterns to collect rainwater from up to 3000 square feet of rooftop has passed the Senate and gone to the House. As a homeowner, you could collect rain from your roof to use on your garden, provided you obtained the necessary permit.
- A resolution to promote protection of shortgrass prairie should appear soon; it is opposed by the agricultural community but supported (not as a top priority) by Audubon.

Join the fun, read the bills, get your legislator's contact info at www.leg.state.co.us.

Bush's Endangered Species Regulations Bite the Dust

In the Januaryary/Februaryuary *Warbler* we reported that the Bush administration had proposed and finalized a set of regulations that would have severely weakened protections for endangered species. In essence, federal agencies no longer had to consult with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marchne Fisheries Service to determine if their actions would harm an endangered or threatened species; they could make the determination on their own. The passage of the Obama administration's Omnibus Bill changed all that. Evidently it contained language revoking the new regulations; federal agencies once again have to consult with the two services if there's a chance their projects will affect a threatened or endangered species.



Join us for the

2009

Audubon Society of Greater Denver

BIRD-a-THON

Are you among the best birders in the Denver area? Would you like to prove it?

Or are you just beginning to get the knack of birding and would like to test your skills?

JOIN BIRDERS with the Audubon Society of Greater Denver (ASGD) as we host our annual **Bird-a-Thon** in May. **Bird-a-thon** is a fundraiser for ASGD. It's a lot of fun and raises money for a great cause. The proceeds help fund our nature center and programming for all ages.

Audubon Center at Chatfield The Adventure Continues...

The momentum is building at the Audubon Center as we approach the busy late spring and early summer season. Every weekend the center is buzzing with activity. Visitors come from all over Denver to explore nature and venture out on our naturalist-led hikes. Volunteers and community members contribute by helping us continue to upgrade the facility, create activities for children and adults, lead walks, and spread the word to their family, friends, and neighbors. We've even been featured in the Denver Post and YourHub.

We're also hosting events for and developing partnerships with other groups and organizations. For example, the Mountain Mamas, a local hiking group for mothers with babies and toddlers, held their annual Spring Fling on March 20 at the Audubon Center. Over 225 parents and children came out to enjoy the warm weather, nature activities, and birding hikes. Joy Opp, the founder of the Mountain Mamas, was thrilled: "Thank you so much for your hospitality and for having the BEST volunteers EVER! Your guides are spectacular and made our members and guests feel so welcome." We are certainly proud of our ever-growing list of "the best volunteers



Teams of between 2 and 20 participants select a day within the month of May, a site in the metro-area and spend between 4 and 24 hours counting species of birds. The pledge system works like most challenges where a dollar amount is pledged by team members, family, friends, businesses or organizations based on the number of species the team sees on their field day. Awards for the **BEST BIRDERS IN DENVER** will be given on Sunday, June 7, 2009 at the Audubon Nature Festival.

Two Challenges:

NATURE ORGANIZATION CHALLENGE: For the staff and volunteers of one of the many organizations who have great birders as their members – we are having a Challenge to determine the **BEST BIRDERS** in DENVER. Other organizations can use this as a fundraiser for their group as well as ASGD.

INDEPENDENT TEAM CHALLENGE: Anyone with an interest in birding can form a team and compete for prizes and the distinction of being among the **BEST BIRDERS** in DENVER.

Details, rules, forms, and other important information is available on our website at www.denveraudubon.org, by calling 303-973-9530 or by e-mail at info@denveraudubon.org.

We know you'll be birding in May, why not challenge your skills and help the Audubon Society of Greater Denver. See you in the field!

ever" who give their time and talents as center hosts and naturalists. A big thank you definitely goes out to them.

We are beginning to formulate a vision for this great community asset and we invite you to be an active part of expanding our vision. Our ideas include:

- Provide a fun, free nature activity center close to home for families and adults
- Create a comfortable atmosphere where parents can spend time with their children discovering nature, without feeling they have to be experts
- Introduce people of all ages to the plants, wildlife, and habitats of the Chatfield Basin through guided walks, family programs, adult classes, and children's workshops
- Be a community resource for birders, naturalists, and outdoor enthusiasts
- Provide a "base camp" and information resource for hikers, bikers, and other outdoor recreationists

We hope you will join us in the Audubon Center's success. Visit us often, spread the word, volunteer, donate, and offer your suggestions.

ASGD Master Birder Program—Session 3

Informational Meeting on June 15

ASGD'S Master Birder (AMB) program begins its third session on August 10. Widely acclaimed by our graduates, the administering committee, and Auduboners who enjoy the enthusiasm and leadership from the graduates, the Master Birder course offers a rigorous, year-plus program of 24 evening lectures/programs and 24 field trips. A Master Birder strives to inspire in others an interest to learn about and care for birds and conservation. Master Birders are ambassadors for birds, bird conservation, and ASGD, and are a resource for the public.

Lecturers and field trip leaders include not only Denver Audubon's best, but Colorado's best birders. The course covers bird identification, bird natural history, citizen science, and more. Applicants must have intermediate or better bird identification skills.

We charge a two-tiered admission “fee”:

1. \$250 to cover materials and honoraria to guest speakers and leaders; and



2. A commitment to volunteer for Denver Audubon
 - 10 hours/year during the course, and
 - 48 hours/year for the 2 years after completion of the course.

To learn more about the program, join us for an informational meeting on June 15 from 7-9 p.m. at the Audubon Center at Chatfield. We will review requirements, hear from Master Birder graduates, and answer questions. We will distribute applications which are due July 6. You can also download them from the ASGD website. Course applicants must pass a Colorado bird identification slide test, given on July 13.

Among course requirements (17 in all): compile a Colorado life list of 200 bird species, pass field ID testing for 100 birds by sight and 40 by sound, present a short research paper, participate in at least five citizen science activities (e.g., Cornell's Project FeederWatch, Cornell's eBird, ASGD Bird-a-thon, bluebird monitoring, breeding bird atlas), bird ten Front Range sites, lead an Audubon (or other) bird trip.

The ASGD website (www.denveraudubon.org) has a full description of the course and last year's schedule. The 2009-2010 schedule is under development.

Important Bird Areas in the ASGD Region?

Audubon's Important Bird Areas are sites selected because they support:

1. Species of conservation concern (e.g. threatened or endangered species)
2. Range-restricted species (species vulnerable because they are not widely distributed)
3. Species that are vulnerable because their populations are concentrated in one general habitat type or biome
4. Species, or groups of similar species (such as waterfowl or shorebirds), that are vulnerable because they occur at high densities due to their congregatory behavior.

Of the 53 IBA's in Colorado there are 11 within the ASGD region. They are: Barr Lake State Park, Bear Creek Valley, Castlewood Canyon State Park, Chatfield Basin, Chatfield State Park, Denver City Park Lake, Dinosaur Ridge, Rocky Mountain Arsenal, Roxborough State Park, South Platte Park, South Platte River Corridor

We want to highlight the details about these IBA's over the next year and are starting close to home with the Chatfield Basin and Chatfield State Park.

The Chatfield Basin is located where the Rocky Mountains meet the High Plains, and the southern desert lands meet the northern boreal forest. Chatfield State Park includes riparian woods and marshes, grasslands and a 1,500 surface-acre reservoir at the confluence of Plum Creek and the South Platte River.

The Chatfield Basin Conservation Network (CBCN) is a mixture of Federal, State and Municipal Governments along with private landowners who have developed a plan to coordinate the activities of developers and environmentalists to protect habitat connections and conserve major parts of the Chatfield Basin.

Within the 140 square miles, 29 of the 42 habitats listed in the Breeding Bird Atlas occur. Researchers have documented over 320 bird species in the area, which is considered to be a migration hot spot. Chatfield Reservoir hosts the largest population in Colorado of breeding American Redstarts and Least Flycatchers. It serves as a swallow staging and feeding area during spring migration. The reservoir attracts large numbers of waterfowl during migration.

The greatest threats to the Chatfield Basin are:

- high potential for development and habitat conversion which will isolate the protected areas from each other;
- invasive/non-native plants;
- disturbance to birds and habitats from recreational use;
- introduced animals;
- cowbird parasitism;
- pollution; and
- hydrologic changes.

Want to learn more? Log on to www.audubon.org/bird/IBA.

ASGD Calendar of Events

MAY 2009

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						10am-3pm Audubon Center Open
					1	2
7am Dawn Chorus 9am Walk the Wetlands 10am Audubon Center Open	6:30pm Beyond Birding 101		6:15pm *An Evening with Audubon		7:30PM Full Flower Moon Program	10am Audubon Center Open SPRING BIRD COUNT
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10am Audubon Center Open SPRING BIRD COUNT Mother's Day	6:30am SPRING BIRD COUNT	7pm ASGD Board Meeting				10am-3pm Audubon Center Open
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
7am Bear Creek Lake FT 10am-3pm Audubon Center Open						10am-3pm Audubon Center Open
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
10am-3pm Audubon Center Open	ASGD Office Closed					10am-3pm Audubon Center Open
24	Memorial Day 25	26	27	28	29	30
10am-3pm Audubon Center Open	* Formerly ASGD Monthly Member Meetings					
31						

JUNE 2009

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	10am-3pm Audubon Center Open
						6
8am Walk the Wetlands 10am 40th Anniversary Festival		7pm ASGD Board Meeting				10am-3pm Audubon Center Open
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
8am Lair o' the Bear FT 10am-3pm Audubon Center Open Flag Day	7pm Master Birder Info		2pm Field Trip Committee Meeting			10am-3pm Audubon Center Open
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
10am-3pm Audubon Center Open						8am Bird Calls 10am-3pm Audubon Center Open
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
10am-3pm Audubon Center Open						
28	29	30				



FIELD TRIPS, CLASSES & PROGRAMS

To Register Call 303.973.9530

Join FRIENDS of ASGD and Receive Discounts on Field Trips and Classes

The Audubon Center is located on Waterton Road off S. Wadsworth Blvd 4.4 miles south of C-470.

Your Summer Adventure begins at the Audubon Center at Chatfield!

May & June Hours
Saturday & Sunday, 10 a.m. -3 p.m.

Discover nature, go on a hike with one of our naturalists, spend time outdoors with your children, explore with other adults, and celebrate the start of summer with fun close to home.

Dawn Chorus at the Audubon Center

Sunday, May 3
7:00 a.m. – 8 a.m.
Leaders: Audubon Master Birders

Followed by:

Walk the Wetlands

Sunday, May 3 - Sunday, June 7
8 a.m. – approx. 11:00 a.m.
Leaders: Urling & Hugh Kingery and
Audubon Master Birders
Pre-registration: NOT required
Fee: None

Description: Everyone welcome. We will hike along the South Platte River looking for spring migrants and summer nesting birds. Bring binoculars, field guides, water, and a snack. We can lend you binoculars and field guides if you don't have them.

Beyond Birding 101

Monday, April 27 & May 4
6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Leader: Tina Jones, ASGD Master Birder
Fee: \$30 members/\$40 nonmembers
Pre-registration IS required
Call 303-973-9530 or info@denveraudubon.org

Description: Are you ready to take your bird identification skills to the next level? In this class you will learn about the field marks experts use. Learn how to identify the same bird in its spring and fall plumages. Learn how specific behaviors can help with identification. All levels of birders are welcome, although we'll hone in on the more difficult field marks. For more information call the instructor at 303-906-5479 (cell).

Evening Under the Flower Moon

Friday, May 8
7:30 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.
Fee: \$10/Friends/\$12 non-members
Preregistration appreciated.
Call 303-973-9530 or e-mail info@denveraudubon.org
Admission available at the event

Description: Native Americans called the full moon of May the "Flower Moon" because at that time of year, nature is in full bloom. Join us for a relaxing night out to discover what critters – mammals, insects, birds -- are illuminated by the light of the Flower Moon. Using all of our senses, we will explore the ponds and woods near the S. Platte River. Will we hear a Great Horned Owl or Common Nighthawk? Whose eyes will shine in the dark? Return to the Chatfield Amphitheatre for hot chocolate and S'mores around the campfire. Local singer/songwriter Julie Stratton will celebrate the full moon.

Bird Calls, Songs, and Other Noises

Saturday, June 27
8 a.m. - 11 a.m.
Leader: Alison Kondler, ASGD Master Birder
Fee: \$10/member, \$12/non-member
Preregistration IS required
Call 303-973-9530 or e-mail info@denveraudubon.org

Description: One of the more difficult aspects of birding is learning bird sounds. Luckily you don't have to rely on just your auditory memory to "tune-in" to the songs and calls of birds. Learn bird sounds using fun and creative memory techniques. We'll start with an indoor presentation then head out on an easy walk to listen to the birds. Bring binoculars, water and snacks.

FIELD TRIPS, CLASSES & PROGRAMS

To Register Call 303.973.9530

Join FRIENDS of ASGD and Receive Discounts on Field Trips and Classes



An Evening with Audubon 2009 Audubon Master Birders Graduation Ceremony

Program: Bird Friendly Coffee
Wednesday, May 6

Reception at 6:15 p.m.

Ceremony at 7:00 p.m.

Program at 7:15 p.m.

Fee: None

Pre-registration NOT required

Description: We'll start the evening with a reception and ceremony honoring our graduating 2009 Master Birder Class. Our program for the evening examines the link between migratory songbird habitat and the way coffee is grown. Details will be provided on how consumers can benefit songbirds by buying certain coffee brands and where they are available in Colorado. All are welcome as we celebrate our graduates and then taste great bird-friendly coffee. The program will be presented by Katie Morrison, a graduating Master Birder.

Other Colorado Field Trips

Led by ASGD's Naturalists or Master Birders

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day at Bear Creek Lake Park

Sunday, May 17

7 a.m. -11 a.m.

Leader: Mike Henwood (720-849-5070)

Fee: \$5 per car Park admission fee

Pre-Registration NOT required

Meeting Place: Bear Creek Lake Park entrance. From C470 go east on Morrison Road one-quarter mile.

Description: Have you ever seen a Dipper nest? Or a Great Horned Owl nest? Join Mike Henwood, who regularly birds this park, to find recently arrived nesting songbirds as well as northbound and westbound migrants just dropping in to feed. See hawks sitting on their nests and herons, cormorants, pelicans, and Wood Ducks populating the lake. We will drive to the Skunk Hollow Picnic Area and walk from there. Bring binoculars, field guide, water, and a snack.

Flycatchers, Dippers, Swallows, and Bluebirds at Lair o' the Bear Park

Sunday, June 14

8 a.m. - 12 noon

Leaders: March Keithler & Dave Hill, ASGD Master Birders

Fee: \$10/Friends members/\$12 non-members

Pre-registration required

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

Meeting Place: Lair o' the Bear Park. From C470 take the Morrison exit. Drive about four miles west of Morrison along Colo. 74, past Idledale, to the park entrance on the left.

Description: Join our Master Birders as we search the foothills for Lazuli Bunting, Violet-green and Tree Swallows, hummingbirds, and American Dippers. We may also see vireos, flycatchers, and Cedar Waxwings. Explore Bear Creek's varied habitats, including the streamside and canyon wall with a lush array of wildflowers and conifers. Bring binoculars, field guides, water, and a snack.

28th Annual Spring Bird Count

Join one of these knowledgeable leaders, who have birded these sites for years. Anticipate the delight of spring migrants and breeding arrivals in their showy breeding outfits. You can stay all day or drop out before or after lunch. Everyone welcome – just show up. More eyes spot more birds. No fee, no pre-registration.

Saturday, May 9

Barr Lake Periphery

Leader: Jackie King (303-287-1644)

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

Chatfield State Park

Leader: Joey Kellner (303-978-1748)

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

Waterton

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

Leader: Hugh Kingery (303-814-2723)

Meeting Place: 6:00 a.m. at Audubon Center.



ASGD TRAVEL

For More Information or to Register See the Trip Descriptions Below

Join FRIENDS of ASGD and Receive Discounts on Field Trips and Classes

San Juan Islands Sea Kayaking 4-day Trip to Stuart and Jones Islands

Date: August 3-6, 2009

With over 200 rocky, forested islands to explore, the San Juan Archipelago is a superb kayak destination. Experience the fun of paddling and camping on remote islands accessible only by boat! The pristine waters of the San Juan and Gulf Islands are host to over 80 resident Orca whales. Other wildlife sightings may include Minke whales, Dall's porpoises, seals, sea lions, and many bird species. Experienced sea kayak guides. Harriet Stratton, Audubon guide, 303-798-9924.

Cost: \$795 per person (a \$300 deposit is required at registration). Includes: sea kayaks, paddles, life jackets, dry bags, rescue equipment, all meals (could be called fine camp cuisine) with wine, campsite and tent. For more information, including registration details, visit Centennial Canoe Outfitters, Inc. at www.centennialcanoe.com or call 720-283-0553

Other Considerations: Trip is limited to 15 participants. Must be 13+. This trip is intended for persons in reasonably good health. You should be able to physically perform all activities associated with boating including, but not limited to, paddling, entering and exiting the boat under your own power, and carrying your personal gear to the campsite.

Birding Nicaragua

Date: Februaryuary 20-28, 2010 (8 nights, 9 days)

Experience the lakes, jungles, islands, and other ecosystems of Nicaragua. Our program begins with a short flight from the capital, Managua, to the small town of San Carlos located on the shores of Lake Nicaragua and the Rio San Juan. This is the gateway to the eastern jungle. Here we board boats and head down river birding along the way. This wetland environment is teeming with water birds and many tropical forest species. Our eco-lodge serves as a convenient base from which to bird and explore the history of this area. Explore El Castillo (The Castle), an old Spanish fort that dates back to the time of Henry Morgan and the Pirates of the Caribbean! Then we head out to Solentiname Island located in the lake which has distinct flora and fauna. We then fly back to Managua and explore the western shore of the lake including the colonel city of Grenada and the volcanic island of Ometepe, where we bird in both forest and agricultural environments. There will be some free time in Grenada to absorb the culture and also do some shopping. Our trip ends at San Juan del Sur out on the Pacific coast where you can enjoy the beach before returning to Managua.

Cost: \$1850 per person includes most meals, services of a local guide, transportation and internal airfare. Deposit of \$500 per person required at registration. Does not include travel insurance (which is strongly recommended), tips, departure tax, or roundtrip international airfare from Denver to Managua (currently pricing at \$700 per person). For a complete itinerary, contact Becky Beckers at 303-766-5266, email at AgentBecky@aol.com, or visit www.TravelForTheBirds.com.

28th Annual Spring Bird Count Contd. from page 9

Barr Lake State Park

Leader: Charlie Chase (720-690-4341);
charlie.chase@ef-den.org
Call leader if you plan to go.

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

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

Sunday, May 10

Lower Bear Creek

Leader: Mike Henwood (720-570-5070);
hawkhenn@aol.com

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

Castlewood Canyon State Park

Leader: Randy Lentz (303-680-3381)

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

Rocky Mountain Arsenal

Leader: Urling Kingery (303-814-2723)
Must register with leader in advance.

Monday, May 11

Cherry Creek Reservoir

Leader: Allison Hilf (303-888-5110)

Meeting Place: 6:30 a.m. at the Marchna on west side (near Cherry Creek High School) in Cherry Creek State Park.

The South Suburban Park Foundation

A long range partnership with ASGD

Thanks to committed efforts and a collaborative vision, the Audubon Society and the South Suburban Park Foundation have built a strong partnership to create a community based educational facility benefiting visitors from across the metro region. Working together since the early 1990's has been key to the successful development of the Audubon Center at Chatfield.

In 1994, the South Suburban Park Foundation received a challenge grant from Lockheed Martin Astronautics to continue their greenway efforts along the Platte River near the Waterton Canyon and Chatfield State Park area. The primary goal of this grant was twofold. First, to clean up an eyesore at Lockheed Martin's "front door" and secondly, to create the Discovery Pavilion, a major trail landmark celebrating the joining of three of the region's major trail systems: the South Platte River Trail, the Waterton Canyon/Colorado Trail, and the Highline Canal Trail. The Discovery Pavilion serves as a focal point as an interpretive center providing visitors the opportunity to learn about trail safety and etiquette, the ecology of the local landscapes, and the role of the South Platte River and water in Colorado's development.

Included in the area of the Discovery Pavilion were two dilapidated limestone farm buildings that had been used at one point by Lockheed Martin. Recognizing the environmental value of the area, the Foundation inspired a group of partners to look at the site for a complimentary use. The Audubon Society of

Greater Denver provided the commitment and resources to create a unique opportunity to renovate the buildings and provide important environmental education. Thus today, sits the current Audubon Center which provides invaluable outdoor community education. This facility is dedicated to the premise that given the will, commitment and know-how, people and enterprise can thrive in harmony with the environment.

Successful partnerships continue to be vital in meeting the goals of our organizations. 2009 marks the 30th anniversary of the South Suburban Park Foundation.

To celebrate our long range partnerships and successful collaborative projects, please join us Sunday, May 3, 2009. Program events include a 5K Fun Walk through the Big Dry Creek corridor, a ribbon cutting for the Big Dry Creek Trail, music, food and interpretive activities for all ages. To register for the walk and obtain more information, please visit www.sspf.org.



SOUTH SUBURBAN Park Foundation

LOIS WEBSTER FUND PROGRAM RESCHEDULED DUE TO SPRING BLIZZARD

NEW DATE: SATURDAY, MAY 16TH at 4:30 p.m.

Come hear Dr. Fritz Knopf discuss his report compiling over 20 years of research on the Mountain Plover on the Pawnee National Grasslands and other project managers present findings from their research sponsored by the Lois Webster Fund in 2008! Enjoy a glass of wine while catching up with old friends—and meeting new ones!

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. We look forward to seeing you on Saturday, May 16th.

RECEPTION AND PROGRAM OF THE LOIS WEBSTER FUND

SATURDAY, MAY 16th

4:30 p.m.: Reception

5:00 p.m.: Program:

**Compilation of Fritz Knopf's Mountain Plover Data from the Pawnee National Grasslands,
Pika and Climate Change
Burrowing Owls on the Pawnee National Grasslands**

AUDUBON CENTER at CHATFIELD

Directions: Take Wadsworth 4 miles South of C470, (past entrance for Chatfield State Park), Turn LEFT on Waterton Road. Turn Left into first parking lot at the Audubon Center sign.

Questions and carpool information: call Marchot at 303-733-2868.

Birds and Climate Change: Ecological Disruption in Motion

Audubon recently released a new study using Christmas Bird Count Data. These analyses would not have been possible without the hard work of CBC participants and the many chapters that organize and lead counts. We thank all that have participated over the years for their effort. The study explored if birds had shown significant shifts in their winter distribution over the last 40 years. As we all know, birds are good indicators of the environment. We think birds provide important information to people on changes in the environment and human quality of life. Audubon has a goal of working bird indicators into regular reviews of how the environment in the US is doing and hopefully helping drive policy and funding that benefits the environment and birds. These analyses of the CBC dataset on winter distribution are part of that effort.

The report, ***Birds and Climate Change***, is available on Audubon's web site at <http://www.audubon.org/bird/bacc/cbcanalysis.html> and provides more details on the analyses and results. To download the report from this web site, click on the "Download Report" link on the left side of the page or on the image of the report cover.

Audubon will continue to undertake scientific analyses of these data to learn more about the status of birds and conservation needs. Please consider donating through the web site at www.audubon.org to help us continue using the CBC data to move a conservation agenda.

Birds and Climate Change Ecological Disruption in Motion

A Briefing for Policymakers and Concerned Citizens
on Audubon's Analyses of North American
Bird Movements in the Face of Global Warming



February, 2009

– ASGD Donation Programs –

Donate a Vehicle

Help Birds! Help Kids!

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

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

A special thank you to Polly and Gene Reetz and Hugh and Urling Kingery for donating vehicles to kick off ASGD's vehicle donation program!

Leave A Legacy

Protect Birds! Protect Habitat!

The Audubon Society of Greater Denver has initiated a Planned Giving Program. Making a gift or a bequest is becoming a popular way to leave a lasting legacy. Protecting the birds, wildlife and places that make Denver special might be simpler than you think.

For more information, call ASGD at 303-973-9530 or send an e-mail to cnorbeck@denveraudubon.org

A special thank you to the estate of Arthur Levine for his vision of protecting Denver's special places through ASGD's natural science education and conservation advocacy programs.

backyard birds....

by Hugh Kingery



DENVER YARD-BIRDERS had another slow winter. Flo DeCesare, in west Centennial, cried for "Help. We are being attacked by robins. We have 25-30 robins daily in our waterfall and bathing in the pond. I was watering our evergreens and a bunch flew in the backyard and ran to the hose to be sprayed with water – what is going on?" Though on Green Mountain, Nan Brehmer had only 1-2 and Joy Schieving saw two. On January 11 Dave Riggs saw "robins everywhere, en masse. "They especially love fresh water in the bird bath." On a busy Sunday February 9 in south Denver, Bill Eden counted a dozen among 46 birds of 12 species. In the scrubby Castlewood/Franktown area, robin flocks mounted into the hundreds all winter; by spring solstice the numbers diminished. Probably a response to the driest winter on record. Bill's robin flock included two Cedar Waxwings. On February 1 Cedar Waxwings augmented Dave's robin flocks, on the bird bath with robins, starlings, and finches, and he saw several large flocks "gorging themselves in various fruit trees and especially the Mountain Ash."

PEGGY WAIT SPOTTED a Townsend's Solitaire "guarding its juniper tree near the Littleton Historical Museum. Bill's February 9 list included one too. On the hillside above our house, 6-8 solitaires spent the winter, and spring solstice inspired them to start singing again, though they don't nest here.

NAN "ADORES THE MAGPIES – ever since the first time that I saw them in the Black Hills, SD on our honeymoon in 1951, and in spite of the fact that when I asked local people what that "beautiful Black and White Bird" was, they looked at me as if I was rather weird!"

MOUNTAIN CHICKADEES and Red-breasted Nuthatches last year invaded the metro area, but few came this year. Bill Eden saw a nuthatch on his busy Sunday, but no one else mentioned them. Dave, this winter, saw "more juncos than I have ever seen."

DOUGLAS COUNTY BACKYARDERS sent several reports (many to the Audubon-sponsored Dougbirds chatline). Behind their house in Castle Rock, Shirley and Buzz Bowers have a gaping hole where construction has started on a major road extension. They walked up the site January 18 and saw "two Red-tailed Hawks (normal), scrub-jays in abundance, and a Northern Shrike. We had seen the shrike on our back fence near the first of January. It's encouraging that we see anything at all in the construction area." Karen Metz (Franktown) twice saw a Northern Shrike sweeping at juncos.

KAREN COMMENTED, "Spotted Towhees have become my forecaster of December and January weather. If several are still here in mid-November I expect the winter months to be dry." Shirley says, "We still see two Spotted Towhees in the yard, whereas last summer we had 10-12 most days. We quit seeing

them before the construction started, so can't blame it." Spotted Towhees migrate, and according to Niedrach & Rockwell's 1939 Birds of Denver our winter towhees belong to a different subspecies than our breeders. Maybe possibly they'll see more this spring. In our yard they started singing "Drink your teehee" in mid-March.

CHARLOTTE MIRABELLA (Franktown) saw a pair of Red Crossbills at her bird bath March 6. "We do not see them very often, so this was a nice treat." Karen sees crossbills, though seldom at her feeders, and Kathy Dressel's Franktown list doesn't include them among her "usual list" – 360 birds of 16 species. Pine Siskins dominate her "list" – she typically counted 250 in January. Veronica Holt (Elizabeth) had 155 in January. Karen typically counted 100, and our flock of siskins ran 75-150. Both Karen and we started seeing sick siskins and took in the feeders for a few days. We chloroxed them and then hung them only in the afternoons (siskins visited mostly in the morning) and now we see less than five per day.

BUSHTIT REPORTS: Bill Eden: 7 on February 9. Karen: "steady at a baker's dozen." Kathy: 6 but not every day. Urling and I: a pair regularly. They chatter constantly, but you have to look at the right time – ours spend no more than a couple of minutes on the suet feeders (peanut butter-flavored win their votes).

AFTER DAVE LEATHERMAN, on February 9, saw 18 Bushtits along the Poudre in Ft Collins, he posted on Cobirds this missive. "I would love to know what Bushtits eat. They are always in groups, always on the move. Their foraging style reminds me of the school kids I witnessed recently at the Arizona-Sonoran Desert Museum: you can hear them coming from a long ways away, little high-pitched squeals and bell-like notes, then you see them flitting along, soon they are all around you, stepping on your feet, hands on glass, impatient, looking here and there, loud, and just like that – gone. How could they ever find enough aphids or spider egg sacs or whatever to sustain their ADD-type activity? Surely bushtits have moved along the Poudre River in Fort Collins more than just once since 1974, but if a person wasn't there during exactly the right 5-minute period, it's hard to detect vapor."

FLO SPOTTED A KESTREL sitting above her seed feeders on March 11. "Head and back feathers a gray/bluish, breast a pretty honey color with lines across it, snow-white feathers at the end of the breast, large black beady eyes, aquiline beak, large feet, good-sized feet. He can swivel his head all around to see in back of himself." Probably an immature male. (I thought aquiline meant a bluish color, but no — it means hooked or curved.) Bald Eagles have recovered remarkably from DDT poisoning; Dave saw one at the corner of Santa Fe and Mississippi on his way to work in December.

ALISON KONDLER WATCHED a Sharp-shinned Hawk nab a female House Finch in our yard. The hawk flew really close to one of our windows with its lunch so I was able to observe the eating process a little too close for comfort. Yikes! I had no idea that they don't kill their prey before plucking out the feathers.

Backyard Birds continued on page 14

ASGD welcomes our New Friends Members

Thank you for joining ASGD. We hope you will take pride in the award-winning programs your "new" organization offers, and will join us at the Audubon Center at Chatfield for Outdoor Adventures. Welcome!

Alice Bradburn & Ariana Aghevli, Barbara McGovern, Connie Hauver, Cynthia Madsen, Debbie Wedlake, Dick Prickett, Elizabeth & Richard Maslow, Elizabeth Holtze, Eloise Morley, Jim Njos, Joyce Whitcomb, Karen Kurtak, Koa Halpern, Richard & Laurel Morris, Sally Jessee, Shaaron Solove, Susan Carr

Mayor John Hickenlooper Proclaims "Safe Skies Colorado"

On Marchh 16, 2009 the Mayor of Denver signed a proclamation that helps all of us. The document requests the owners of our tall buildings to turn off the lights in their empty offices after 11.00 p.m. This saves the owners money, and in turn helps air quality since less carbon dioxide, mercury, sulfur dioxide and other pollutants go into the air. Reducing emissions also means less global warming and of course with fewer lights on our migratory birds will have a hazard removed from their journey. ASGD will continue working with building owners and managers to keep lights off to save energy and money, reduce our carbon footprint, and help birds.

Backyard Birds continued from page 13

The finch was alive the whole time trying to fight it! Now I'm curious if all hawks have the same behavior, especially the ones with weak feet? Do falcons snap the neck vertebrae before plucking? Wow, this sure opened my eyes a bit." If Alison doesn't research this, do any of the rest of you have opinions or observations?

VERONICA REPORTS a fluctuating 10 or so Eurasian Collared-Doves. "They hover on the phone lines waiting for me to let the chickens out and throw cracked corn and milo on the ground. I think they are starting some early nesting activities. The dove numbers have increased significantly over the last year." Collared-Doves have really burgeoned. Our Audubon hot-line receives calls at least weekly. Urling and I saw several on the Cherry Creek trail in Parker March 21 and even one in the foothills, March 22, in Buffalo Creek (southwest of Denver) while exploring breeding bird atlas blocks.

A BACKYARD EXOTIC: Alison Kondler and Bill Eden "went to see a Chukar in the backyard of a Littleton resident. The

bird had come to her backyard several times in February and was probably an escapee. This is the first Chukar that either of us had seen and a beautiful



bird it is. Chukars were originally introduced into western United States from Eurasia as a game bird in the 1930's." Bill took several photos of the bird.

BUCKTHORN BERRIES ARE POISONOUS. Rick Brune, a landscape architect and Native Plant Society guru, emailed in response to a Backyard Birds contributor who last year wrote to say that he observed birds being sickened by eating berries from buckthorns in his yard. His conclusion was to leave the buckthorn rather than remove it. The Latin name Rhamnus cathartica refers to the cathartic nature of the seeds. If birds are eating them and becoming sickened, they are at increased risk of predation from domestic cats, etc. We don't know if the sickened birds observed are actually later dying.

BUCKTHORN IS A VERY SERIOUS WEED along riparian areas. I recently surveyed the vegetation along Cherry Creek through Denver and found that areas mapped as dominated by sandbar willows in 1996 by ERO Resources had in part become dominated by buckthorns, an introduced species, in 2008. It appears buckthorns can replace some native shrubs. Buckthorns, like Russian olives, should be removed whenever possible to slow their spread.

BACKYARDS BENEFIT from native plants. Consider this when you contemplate backyard landscaping. Boxelder trees, Rocky Mountain Juniper, chokecherry, buffalograss and blue grama, etc. benefit wildlife. (Lovely [exotic] plants such as tamarisk and dandelions spread voraciously – one to the detriment of all Colorado river courses, the other to annoy blue-grass green-grass zealots.)

AN AUDUBON DONATION: we bought a new car in Januaryary and instead of trading in our old car, donated it to Denver Audubon. ASGD accepts used-car donations through "Cars Helping Kids," which benefits both Denver Audubon and the Boys/Girls Clubs of Denver. CHK sold it for a better price than the trade-in (see Donate a Vehicle notice on page 12 of this issue).

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

We thank our valued Donors and Volunteers

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In memory of Bernice Overmyer from The Rhodes Family

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Colorado Bluebird Project

Kevin Corwin, Fred Greist, Jill Freeman, Kathy Dresel

A general thank you to the Master Birders

FRONT RANGE BIRDING OPEN HOUSE SET FOR MAY 2ND All - Day Event 10am - 5pm

Hawkquest Returns With 5 Raptors on Display

- Bald Eagle • Peregrine Falcon • Harris Hawk
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- Invitations to Friends' only events.
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YES! I am a FRIEND of the Audubon Society of Greater Denver.

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