



THE Warbler

JULY/AUGUST 2009

NEWSLETTER OF THE AUDUBON SOCIETY OF GREATER DENVER

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CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE GREATER DENVER COMMUNITY

Nature Festival and FUNdraiser on target

by Carl Norbeck, ASGD Executive Director

The first annual Audubon Nature Festival and FUNdraiser held on Sunday, June 7 was a great success! Groups of all ages came as families or with friends to enjoy the beautiful day and nature at its best. Over 500 visitors helped the Audubon Society of Greater Denver celebrate its 40th anniversary.

Highlights of the Festival included:

- Classes and field trips on beginning bird-watching and photography and connecting kids with nature.
- The monthly Walk the Wetlands bird watching expedition.
- Bird-banding by the Rocky Mountain Birding Organization. 33 birds



Over 500 visitors enjoyed the beautiful day and nature at its best at the The first annual Audubon Nature Festival.

representing 14 bird species were banded. The Yellow Warbler was the most common; the Red-eyed Vireo was the most unique—the first ever banded at this banding station.

- Presentation by Denver's Ashley Delau on Coexisting with Coyotes and Robin Nagel from the Lieutenant Governor's office on Connecting Kids with Nature.
- Conservation awards to Allen Stokes and Gary Graham.
- Bluegrass music provided by Julie Stratton and the Mile Markers.
- HawkQuest featured a live Peregrine Falcon, Harris Hawk, Great Horned Owl, and Bald Eagle.
- Colorado State Parks, Colorado Division of Wildlife, South Suburban Parks and Recreation Foundation, Carson Nature Center and Thorne Ecological Institute
- Vendors included Abo's Pizza, Schneid's Smoke House, Small Honey Company, Kaladi Brothers Coffee, Front Range Birding Company, and S&S Optika.

The Festival is also a celebration of the successful opening of the Audubon Nature Center on weekends since

January. In the past the Audubon Center has been open for programs only, used primarily as a classroom and outdoor laboratory. The opening of the Nature Center for drop in use on weekends provides a high quality outdoor adventures for families and adults closer to home. The response to this new initiative for ASGD has been excellent for a fledgling Nature Center with over 2,000 visitors since January 1. Our goal is for 5,000 visitors in 2009 – hopefully you will be one of them.

Colorado Lieutenant Governor's Initiative

Lt. Governor Barbara O'Brien is hosting a series of forums on "Colorado Kids Outdoors." These forums respond to the growing body of scientific evidence indicating that lack of contact with nature is linked to worrisome childhood health trends, including obesity, attention disorders, and depression. In short, findings show that children who play outdoors are physically and mentally healthier.

How can parents help their children become more active outdoors? Visit a Nature Center! They are a great place to get unplugged, learn about nature, and develop healthy habits that will last a lifetime. We invite you to join us on the weekends at the Audubon Nature Center at Chatfield and participate in our outdoor adventures led by skilled naturalists.

For more information on the Lt. Governor's Initiative, go to www.colorado.gov/ltgovernor and click on Kids Outdoors.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE-

On this, the 40th anniversary of the Audubon Society of Greater Denver (ASGD), it is an honor to assume the position of President of the ASGD Board of Directors. First, I would like to thank our outgoing President, Doris Cruze, for her many years of dedicated service and leadership. She has successfully guided our organization in fulfilling its mission of serving the Denver community. I also must thank the many people who have made ASGD such a successful organization: the founders—who we celebrate this year—as well as the members, the donors, and the volunteers. That's you! In a very true sense it is your organization. The role of the staff, the Board, and myself is to serve as stewards of the time, money, and energy you so generously contribute to ASGD to make it what it is.

But we cannot rest on our past laurels, especially in these tenuous times. ASGD must and does continue to serve the community by offering natural science education to over 4,000 students annually, by advocating for fact-based environmental conservation, and by conducting research on Colorado's threatened species. This 40th anniversary also marks another notable accomplishment—opening the Audubon Nature Center to the public on weekends.

Last December volunteers put in a lot of "sweat equity" at the center. Used previously as a classroom for school programs, the larger building became a first class nature center allowing us to offer both indoor and outdoor activities. Plans are also afoot to upgrade the smaller building to a natural science laboratory. On the weekends the center hums with activity as families and children explore the out-of-doors and begin developing their understanding and appreciation of our natural world. This development is vital for all of us because people protect what they love; all of us are helping educate our future conservation leaders. If you haven't yet visited the nature center, I invite you to drop in on any weekend. I think you will be excited by what you see.

ASGD's 40th anniversary is a time to celebrate our four decades of hard work, friendships, and adventures. You have helped make the Audubon Society of Greater Denver what it is today. With all of us working together, we have made, are making, and will continue to make a positive difference in our lives as well as lives yet to arrive: those of tomorrow's children.

Tom Parchman, President

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!

Barbara & Bill Schneider, Brigitta Arvin, Claire Montour, Connie Heath, Dan Schwartz, Debbie & Dean Danielson, Dick Prickett, Dorris Brown, Dougal Graham, Ed & Linda Fritchie, Eleanor Whitehurst, Eloise Morley, Erika Phebus, Helen Moenke, James & Jean Fredlund, Jane Covode, Jean Eddins, Jimmie & Linda Orlovski, John & Carolyn Perna, John Backlund & Salley Rickenbacker, Kelly Boyle, L. Earl Barry, Laura Derrington, Lorraine Hatcher, Lydia Toll, Mike Henwood, Robert Beck & Kathleen Wells, Robert Heberton, Sara Hanlon, Sheridan Samano, Terry & Dotty Biggs, Tonapah Colbert, Valerie Sewell, Wanda Bailey, Wilbur Moulton



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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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Bird-A-Thon 2009

by Linda Strand

The May 2009 Bird-a-thon was an astounding success – the event involved birders of all ages and all skill levels, introduced birding to a school group, covered the South Platte Basin and made over \$7,800. Efforts ranged from a 10-minute decision to pledge \$10 to a true 24-hour field adventure.

The winning team included Mackenzie Goldthwait, Doug Kibbe and Jeff Dawson who identified 141 species and raised over \$3,000. They have set the bar high for the 2010 Bird-a-thon.

Also providing a significant contribution were Hugh and Urling Kingery's team with 122 species and over \$1,500 in pledges and Deb Mallory's Team, the Great Railed



Birdathon team from Rick's Center for Gifted Children at the University of Denver receiving award as top student team in 2009

Tackles, who covered 9 different sites, finding 86 species and contributing over \$1,600 in pledges.

We were extremely excited to have a school group from Rick's Center for Gifted Children at the University of Denver. Their team included 15 students – first time birders, guided by Karl Brummert, Mary Keithler and Bill Eden, finding 22 species and turning in over \$550 in pledges.

Thanks to one and all—whether you banded or simply wrote a check—you have made a significant contribution to ASGD's ability to continue to present programs to our members and friends. THANK YOU and mark your calendars for May, 2010, the next ASGD Bird-a-thon.

I Want to be an Ornithologist

by Kylie Mattes

My name is Kylie and I'm 9 years old. My sister Payton is seven and my mom and dad are Gary and Veronica. We are the Mattes Family. We love to go to the Chatfield Bird Banding Station. We first got interested in birds when we found a Say's Phoebe nest on our front porch. They had four babies! This is our second year with the Say's Phoebe on our porch. We heard about the bird banding from Karl at the Audubon Center. He said it was a great experience and recommended we see it.

The first time we went, it was just me and my dad. He woke me early on a school day. He prepared my clothes and backpack so I could be at school by 8:45! I was so excited to see the birds up close. Meredith, the zoologist in charge of the bird banding, put me right to work going with her to check the nets. I held the bags she put the birds in after she took them out of the nets. After she took a bird out of a net she told me what net it was from and I got to hold the bag until we got back to the picnic table. I had such a great time that I asked my dad if we could go back

and do it again.

The second time my dad took me was again before school, and we took my little sister Payton. This time Meredith let me write in the book. The book was for all the information about each bird we caught. We would first see if the bird had a band on its leg. If it did she called it a recap (meaning "recapture"). If not, she put a band on it. I wrote down what time it was caught, the band number, net number and Meredith measured and weighed the bird. I also learned what abbreviations were used for the birds: Yellow Warbler is YWAR, Gray Catbird is GRCA, Yellow-Breasted Chat is YBCH.

My whole family went three more times. We all had a great time participating in the bird banding. I especially liked it when I was allowed to hold the birds before we let them go. I also liked watching Meredith and the other volunteers get the birds out of the nets. I love being outdoors with animals. I told my parents I want to become a zoologist and study birds when I go to college.

Audubon Society of Greater Denver on FACEBOOK

ASGD has a Facebook page. Visit the site and sign up as a FAN of the Audubon Society of Greater Denver. We'll post programs and activities on the page, up-to-date news about the organization, and the nature center. There is a discussion group for you to post your questions, comments, bird or nature sightings. You can share the page with other friends

and keep up with your Audubon friends and members. The best way to join is to put the word "Facebook" in your computer search engine and then look for Audubon Society of Greater Denver. You need to have a personal profile on Facebook to access the page – but it's easy to start and a great way to receive quick news about ASGD.



Eagle Eye

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

If you have been reading the papers, listening to the radio or TV, or using the internet, you know that the Colorado Legislature adjourned in early May. The reports neglected to mention that legislators passed Audubon's top two legislative priorities!

First came the **Rules Review bill**, HB (House Bill) 1292, which reviewed all the rules promulgated by state agencies for the last year, including, quite crucially, the new oil and gas regulations. The version presented for legislative approval contains significant compromises with industry, and Audubon would have preferred the original rules formulated in stakeholder meetings. But even the compromise version is much better than the current status quo.

After a long, arduous fight, the rules passed with only minor changes and now contain protections for public health and for wildlife habitat from the impacts of oil and gas drilling.

One issue that wasn't settled in these new regulations is how far oil and gas rigs must be set back from streams. The language in the final regs specifies a 300-foot setback from Gold Medal trout streams – but this protects only a very small percentage of Colorado's riparian habitats. Audubon would like to see these setbacks required for ALL streams. At some future point the public will be invited to participate in a stakeholder process that will work out a solution to this question.

Audubon's second priority, **the reauthorization of the Habitat Stamp** (HB 235), also passed, though not without a good deal of jockeying. The bill:

- Authorizes the Wildlife Commission to create a "Wildlife Passport." Passports can be marketed through a wider variety of vendors than the Stamp, so they'll be more accessible to non-hunters. The Commission can charge up to \$25 per passport.
- Allows the requirement that 60% of the income from the Stamp be spent on big game winter range to expire in 2010. The Habitat Stamp Commission will have greater freedom and flexibility to decide which lands they want to protect, whether by outright purchase or via conservation easements.
- Requires that up to \$500,000 of the stamp income be spent for instream flow protections. This was a contentious amendment to the original bill, but the final language specifies that the Water Conservation Board can apply for this money, while the Habitat Stamp Committee can – but doesn't have to – approve the applications.

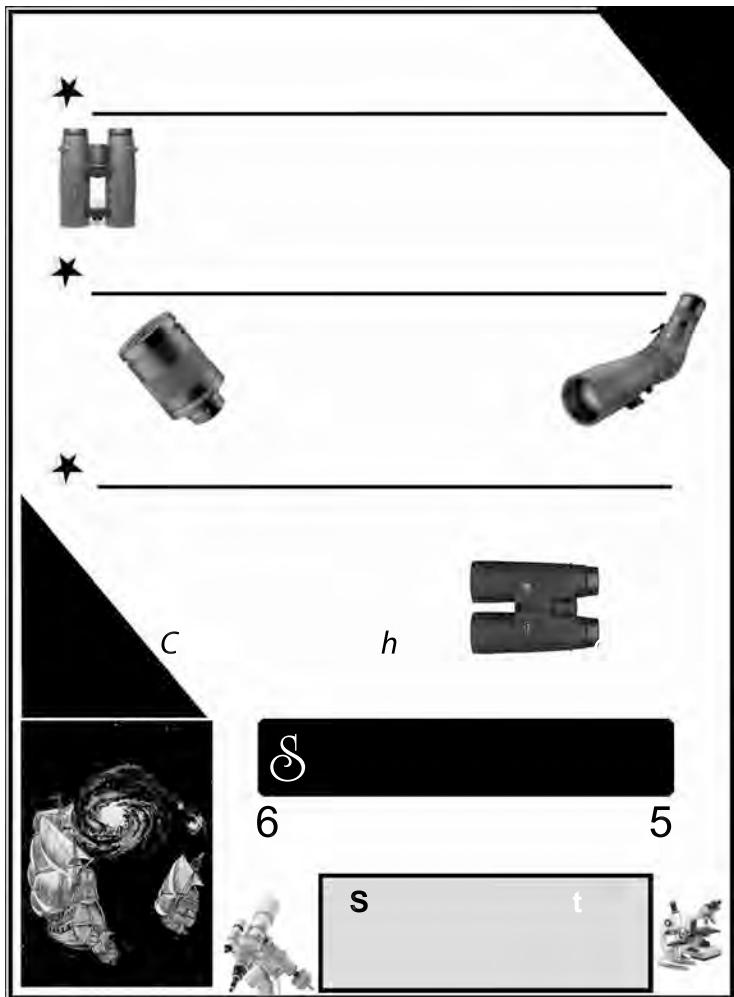
Several bills mentioned in the last Eagle Eye did in fact get approved by the legislature. They include: 1) HB 1149, requiring developers to offer **solar electric pre-wiring** as an option in new homes. Colorado is the first state in the US to enact such a statute! 2) HB 1129, outlining a process that allows

up to 10 new developments (no more than 2 per river basin) to use cisterns to collect rain water for residential use – which has been illegal in Colorado up to now. The developments cannot be connected to a city water system (which bars developments that are Denver Water customers).

The resolution calling on the State to "adopt policies" to **preserve and protect short grass prairie habitat** died in committee, due to adamant opposition from a large part of the agriculture community. Evidently some in this group consider a call to preserve short grass prairie tantamount to criticism of farming and ranching practices.

One bill dropped into our lap, so to speak. HB 1067, allowing a tax credit for donation of water rights to the Colorado Water Conservation Board to **preserve instream flows**, passed both Houses, to our surprise. It caps the value of such tax credits at \$2 million per year and is only effective in years when the General Fund grows 6% (not this year!). And unfortunately an amendment added at the very end of the process significantly weakens the Instream Flow program. Audubon will work with other supporters of the program next year to reverse this defect.

All in all, the 2009 session was quite a good one for the environment; a number of good bills passed and all the egregiously awful ones died. There is a bit of unfinished business on such topics as forest health, wind power options for new homes, protection of instream flows and other recondite issues. To get the drop on the 2010 legislature, plan now to attend the next Legislative Forum on February 20, 2010. Look for announcements in the fall issues of the Warbler.



You have created a family of bird enthusiasts

by Karl Brummert, Audubon Center Director

Too often, children experience nature through television programs which usually include action-packed entertainment. They watch biologists travel to exotic locations, search for and capture wild animals, and explain fascinating facts about them. But how often do children – and adults – have the opportunity to experience wildlife biology firsthand, in “real life”, right near home?

Every May at the Audubon Nature Center at Chatfield, they have that opportunity.

Meredith McBurney, an ornithologist from the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, captures both migratory and resident songbirds in soft meshed nets around the ponds, along the banks of the South Platte River, and in upland areas at Chatfield. After she and her volunteer assistants gently remove the birds from the net, they bring them back to their “research station”. A small metal band imprinted with a unique number is carefully put on the bird’s leg. Then, the researchers record data about age, sex, fat, molt, weight, and wing and tail length.

Like the host of a Discovery Channel program, Meredith explains details about the data they gather and describes each species captured. The difference, however, is visitors interact with Meredith (you

can’t do that with Jeff Corwin!). Meredith lets children gently touch the birds and even hold and release them. It is a rare experience that no doubt leaves a lasting impression.

Several families made their visit to the Chatfield banding station a frequent outing both during the week and on weekends. One mother, who home schools her children, even included the experience as part of her curriculum.

“We have learned so much about birds,” the mother of three said. “Yesterday a bird landed on the fence and our 7 year old daughter said ‘look mom, there’s a song sparrow.’ She can identify almost all of the birds we have seen banded. My 2 year old daughter often climbs up on the picnic table right next to Meredith so she can get a good look at the birds. The other day when we were at the station she said ‘no molt’. (One of the checks Meredith does on each bird.)”

Our goal at the Audubon Nature Center is to give people unique opportunities to discover nature in a relaxed, comfortable environment. We want to empower parents with the confidence to explore with their children. We hope to create an experience that includes an element of real adventure.

The banding station is just one exciting and unique way to do this. We will offer more throughout the year.



Francis Commercon works to release a warbler from a bird banding net.

ASGD Art and Photo Contest and Sale Colorado Wildlife, Birds and Plants

Friday, Saturday and Sunday, December 4 – 6, 2009

Calling artists and photographers of all ages – the Audubon Society of Denver is sponsoring an art and photo contest. Amateurs and professionals submit your art and photos for judging and show. Prizes will be awarded for the best and artists and photographers will have the opportunity to sell their work at the show. What a great idea for holiday presents.

Winning entries will be displayed at the show at the Audubon Nature Center on Friday, December 4 through Sunday, December 6. Rules and regulations are posted on the website at www.denveraudubon.org or can be mailed by calling 303-973-9530 or by e-mail at info@denveraudubon.org. Art and photos must be delivered to the Audubon Nature Center on Saturday, November 28, 2009 or Sunday, November 29, 2009 between the hours of 10 am and 2 pm.

Theme:

Colorado Wildlife, Birds and Plants

All entries must in some way represent the natural elements of

Colorado whether it’s a photo of the South Platte, a sculpture of a fox or cottonwood tree, a painting or drawing of a deer beside the stream, an aspen quilt, or a stained glass cattail window.

Categories

Paintings/Drawings

Sculpture, Glass, Textiles

Photos (Traditional and non-enhanced digital)

Digital Art and Photos

Age Groups:

Youth under 12

12 - 18

18 - over

Professional (Age does not apply to this category.)

Art will be judged by category and by age. Prizes will be awarded in category/age groups that have a minimum of 3 entries and a single award for best of show.

ASGD's 2009 Environmental Stewardship Awards

ASGD's Environmental Stewardship Awards are presented annually to recipients in two categories: ASGD Member and Community Member. These individuals have made significant contributions to environmental conservation over a period of many years.

ASGD Member



Allen W. Stokes, Jr.

Allen is an attorney and a lifelong environmental champion. He is a life member of the National Audubon Society and has been an active supporter of ASGD since 1972 in many capacities: Board Member, Board President, member of capital campaign committee for creating the Audubon Nature Center at Chatfield, and member of ASGD's Lois Webster [wildlife research] fund. He has also served as a member of the West Mexico Connection Committee that raised funds for the University of Guadalajara's Laboratorio Natural Las Joyas and its biological station in the Sierra de Manantlan Biosphere Reserve in Jalisco.

Community Member



Gary L. Graham

Gary is an innovator, wildlife expert, and author. His career has been devoted to championing conservation values. Recently Director of Audubon Colorado, he initiated a number of innovative programs such as Restoring the Rio, Bird Connections with the World, Grasslands and Grouse, and Rivers of Birds. Prior to that he was the Director of the Wildlife Division for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). While with TPWD he created the Landowner Incentive Program which became the model for conserving rare species on private lands across the U.S. Gary holds a PhD in biology specializing in birds and bats of Peru. He is the author of the *Texas Wildlife Viewing Guide* and the *Golden Guide to Bats of the World*.

Johns Manville Service Day at the Audubon Center

About 30 volunteers from both the JM Headquarters in Denver and their Technology Center in Littleton spent a beautiful spring day prepping the Audubon Nature Center at Chatfield for the summer visitor season. They weeded and mulched the native plant gardens surrounding the Nature Center, created planters around the trees, and installed a flagstone platform under the bench on the entrance pathway. The transformation amazed us all, and the Nature Center had a fresh new look for the Audubon Nature Festival and FUNdraiser the following weekend. We can't thank the Johns Manville volunteers enough for all their hard work!



ASGD Calendar of Events

JULY 2009

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3 ASGD Office Closed Independence Day 4
8am Walk The Wetlands 10am-3pm Audubon Center Open 5	6	7	8	9	10	7am Lair o' the Bear FT 10am-3pm Audubon Center Open 11
10am-3pm Audubon Center Open 12	13	7pm ASGD Board Meeting 14	15	16	8am Filius Park (Mt. Evans) FT 17	10am-3pm Audubon Center Open 18
8am Prospect Park FT 10am-3pm Audubon Center Open 19	20	7pm Conservation Committee 21	22	23	24	10am-3pm Audubon Center Open 25
10am-3pm Audubon Center Open 26	27	6:30pm Hummingbird Class 28	29	30	31	

AUGUST 2009

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						10am-3pm Audubon Center Open 1
8am Walk The Wetlands 10am-3pm Audubon Center Open 6:30pm Hummingbird FT 2	3	4	5	6	7	10am-3pm Audubon Center Open 8
10am-3pm Audubon Center Open 9	10	7pm ASGD Board Meeting 11	12	13	14	10am-3pm Audubon Center Open 15
10am-3pm Audubon Center Open 16	17	18	19	20	21	10am-3pm Audubon Center Open 22
7am Biking Waterton Canyon FT 10am-3pm Audubon Center Open 23	24	25	26	27	28	10am-3pm Audubon Center Open 29
10am-3pm Audubon Center Open 30	31					



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!

July & August 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 with fun close to home.

Walk the Wetlands

Sunday, July 5 & Aug 2 at 8:00 am
Leader: Hugh & Urling Kingery;
Master Birders
Pre-registration NOT required

Meeting Place: Audubon Center at Chatfield

Description: This 2-3 hour leisurely hike is a great opportunity to learn how to find and identify birds found in the habitats around the Audubon Center. All ages and abilities welcome. Bring water, binoculars and field guides.

Lair o' the Bear Park

Saturday, July 11
7:00am (half day)
Leader: Karleen Schofield
\$8/Friends members, \$10/non-members
Pre-registration required

Meeting Place: Far end of the parking lot.

Description: Lair o' the Bear is one of the premier sites for observing foothills nesting species such as Lesser Goldfinch, Lazuli Bunting, Cedar Waxwing, American Dipper, Plumbeous Vireo, Virginia's Warbler, and Cordilleran Flycatcher. Habitats include coniferous, riparian, and deciduous woodland as well as creek, marsh, and brushy meadow. July is the perfect time to see late nesting and fledgling birds. This outing will involve several miles of moderately strenuous hiking. Bring lunch, water, sunscreen and bug spray.

Filius Park

Echo and Summit Lakes (Mt. Evans)
Friday, July 17
8:00 am (full day)
Leader: Lynn Wilcoxin
\$10/Friends members, \$12/non-members
Pre-registration required

Meeting Place: Go west on I 70 to Evergreen exit then 2 miles to first Bergen Park exit (stop light) and turn right to Filius Park (100 yards). Bring lunch and water. Mt. Evans has a \$6 per car fee. Golden Eagle Pass may be used.

Description: Avoid the Mt. Evans weekend crowds! Explore diverse habitats from foothills to alpine. We hope to see Green-tailed Towhee, Pine Siskin, Western Bluebird, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Rufous Hummingbird, White Capped Rosy Finch. Group is limited to 10 participants.

Prospect Park

Saturday, July 25
7:30am (half day)
Leader: Jackie King
\$8/Friends members, \$10/non-members
Pre-registration required

Meeting Place: Prospect Park Lake near the permanent restrooms, south of West 44th Ave., just east of Robb St.

Description: This is an excellent area to see warblers as well as shore and water birds. Bringing lunch is optional. Leader is using a scooter for mobility so this trip is accessible and will involve easy walking.

FIELD TRIPS, CLASSES & PROGRAMS

To Register Call 303.973.9530

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



Hummingbirds of Colorado

Their Natural History and How to Attract Them

Monday, July 27 [classroom] from 6:30 to 9:00 pm

Sunday, Aug. 2 [fieldtrip] from 6:00 to 8:30 pm

Leader: Tina Jones, Master Birder 303-794-2647

\$20/Friends members, \$23/non-members

Pre-registration is required

Meeting Places: classroom session--Audubon Center at Chatfield; for field trip—at instructor's house/yard at 4400 Bow Mar Drive, Littleton

Description: Colorado regularly gets 4 different species of Hummingbirds, but the state has had up to a total of 11 species. Learn what plants attract Hummingbirds and how to design a hummingbird garden. The classroom session covers Hummingbird behavior, life styles and adaptations. Identification of adult Hummingbirds will be discussed along with learning how to I.D. tricky females and immatures. The instructor of this class has had her bird habitat yard featured in the Denver Post, and in several books and articles. Bring binoculars and a notepad. Class size: Limited to 15.

Biking And Birding In Waterton Canyon (Rain Or Shine)

Sunday, August 23 from 7 to 10 am

Leaders: Jennifer Gutierrez-Hughes, Triathalon Olympian from the Sydney, Australia Olympics; and Janet Sacks and Mary Fran O' Connor

Cell phone contact for more information:

Janet at 720-320-6565

\$10/Friends members, \$12/non-members

Pre-registration required

Meeting Place: Audubon Center's parking lot with a hybrid or mountain bike, bike helmet, binoculars, water and a snack in your backpack. If you need help inflating tires or making minor adjustments to your bike then please arrive by 6:30 am for on-site help.

Description: We will ride to the top of Waterton Canyon (6 miles one way - gradual incline) and stop 3 times along the way for bird watching. Jennifer will give everyone riding technique advice along the way.

~LOOKING AHEAD~

Evening Under the Full Fruit Moon

Friday, September 4, 7:30- 10 pm

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

Pre-registration preferred;

Admission available at the event

Meeting Place: Audubon Center at Chatfield

Description: The September full moon name refers to the harvest. We hope to harvest glimpses of night creatures visible in moonlight or heard nearby as we walk along the ponds and South Platte River habitat of the Audubon Nature Center. A campfire and snacks welcome us back from the walk. Relax as a local storyteller spins tales of the natural world around the campfire.

Beginning Bird Watching Class

Classroom Session at the Audubon Center at Chatfield

Thursday, Sept. 17, 7-9 pm

Field Trips: Saturdays, Sep. 19, 26,

October 3, 10, 17, 24 - 8 am - 1 pm

Leaders: Hugh and Urling Kingery

\$145/Friends members, \$165/non member

Pre-registration required

Description: Are you new to birding but don't know where to begin? Colorado's foremost - and most entertaining! - birding couple introduces you to this popular outdoor hobby like no one else can. Learn how to identify birds, choose a good pair of binoculars, select field guides, and much more. We'll take trips to some of the best birding spots in the Denver metro area. Change the way you spend time outdoors.
(You can make up any field trips you miss during future spring or fall class sessions.)





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

Elk Bugling Weekend - Nicaragua Ecotour Grand Lake

Friday, Saturday, Sunday, October 3 - 5, 2009

Leaders: Harriet Stratton and Master Birders

Price: \$185 per person. Non-members \$225

Meeting Place: TBA near Grand Lake, Friday at 5p.m.

Description: During the September-October mating season, bull elk stage their own passion play of sorts. The characteristic rutting call of bulls can be heard from just before dusk to dawn. We'll head to Grand Lake just past Rocky Mountain National Park for a family style visit to a 5 bedroom contemporary mountain cabin. From our scenic retreat we'll find meadows of elk enacting their historic ritual. The traditional pot of chili will simmer to warm spirits after the evening adventures. Saturday's agenda will include an easy hike into Rocky Mountain National Park with time for exploring the shops and restaurants of Grand Lake. Dusk will find us Elk Bugling with dinner later out on the town. Sunday offers another opportunity for a mountain walk before the scenic drive home.

Details: Registrants will provide their own transportation and are responsible for their own Saturday lunch and dinner. Friday chili and Saturday and Sunday breakfasts will be provided. Audubon can coordinate carpooling.

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

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. 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. 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 go to Solentiname Island located in the lake which has distinctive flora and fauna. We then fly back to Managua and explore the western shore of the lake including the colonial 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 on the Pacific coast where you can enjoy the beach before returning to Managua.

Price: \$1850 per person includes most meals, services of a local guide, transportation and internal airfare. Deposit of \$500 per person required. 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).

Detailed information, itinerary, and registration contact Becky Beckers at 303-766-5266, email at AgentBecky@aol.com, or visit www.TravelForTheBirds.com.v

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backyard birds...

by Hugh Kingery



RAIN, SNOW, DRIZZLE, AND CLOUDS agree with migrants – the spate of birds lasted all spring. I collected a record 76 reports for this column and, with Warbler space limits, offer them more telegraphically than usual.

FOR THE ASGD BIRDATHON, Mackenzie Goldthwait and Doug Kibbe (starting at Julesburg at 5 a.m.) counted 141 species, May 17. May 10, Urling and I, with help from eight others on the Rocky Mountain Arsenal Spring Count, tallied 122. Other Spring Count trips: 110 at Bear Creek Lake State Park (Mike Henwood), 108 at Cherry Creek Reservoir (Allison Hilf), 103 at Barr Lake (Charlie Chase), and 86 at Waterton (Urling and me). Notice May 10 dates on many reports below.

MEREDITH MCBURNEY, master bander and articulate teacher at the Audubon Nature Center banding station, May 10: "First time ever that we've had an experience like this at Chatfield. Processed 157 birds today. Three times our previous high – we've had 50 once or twice before. Birds were practically flying into the nets as we opened them, and we had to close for an hour mid-morning because of rain, but we finally started closing about 2:30 because we were freezing. If it hadn't been so cold we might still be there!"

HER BANNER YEAR included record numbers (especially Yellow-rumped Warblers) and rarities such as White-eyed Vireo, Hooded Warbler, and Black-throated Sparrow (and a Sharp-shinned Hawk). Best: "An already-banded Yellow Warbler that we caught at Chatfield at the end of May, 2007, was banded in late 2006 near the Pacific Coast in Costa Rica. Capturing a bird banded elsewhere is pretty rare, and to have one that really tells something about how far our little migrants are traveling is quite special."

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAKS: Misi Ballard, in Orchard Hills, saw the first May 8. On May 10: E. B. Ellis in Roxborough village, Sarah Heit in Aurora, and Tom Halverstadt in Louviers; May 13, Kay Chambers in Perry Park ("Yipee"), May 21, Peggy Roberts in town at her safflower feeder, May 28 one at Welchester Park, Lakewood. Others saw Black-headed Grosbeaks – Caroline Hancock in Highlands Ranch, Nan Brehmer on Green Mountain ("on Mother's Day"), Debbie Trujillo in NW Elbert County, and in Franktown, Kathy Dressel, Ken Gammon, and us. Evening Grosbeaks, a species seen less and less in recent years: Kay Chambers (Douglas County), Lisa Crispin (Castle Rock), Char Gottlieb (Arvada).

WESTERN TANAGERS: Patty Echelmeyer saw 50 in the Wheat Ridge Greenbelt on May 10. Seen in backyards: Kathy in Franktown, Flo DeCesare, Greenwood Village ("lucky me"), Pat Skinner, Parker ("exciting"), and Peggy Roberts' neighbor (Peggy didn't see it, though maybe she heard one). Caroline spotted a Summer Tanager May 14 – a metro rarity. Tom and Kirk Huffstater found a Cardinal in Louviers on May 17.

DAVE RIGGS NOTICED 6-10 Bullock's Orioles on May 10 because he saw a Ruby-crowned Kinglet on the fence looking up. Other oriole spotters: Debbie and Nan. Caroline added Green-tailed Towhee and Lazuli Bunting to her yard list on May 17. We added White-eyed Vireo on May 19 and Indigo Bunting on May 26.

CINDY JOHNSTONE and Angie Koehler discovered unique city visitors: a gobble of (three) Turkeys (Wild?) that cruised through the Washington Park area April 9-18. Cindy took photos of them perched on a fence and walking down the sidewalk.

TURKEY VULTURES: A friend of Mary Jane Black's saw a kettle of vultures circling over her house in Cherry Creek on April 4. On April 15, Char Gottlieb in Arvada saw "40 plus vultures above my house, traveling west very slowly. Soaring, not flapping." She saw 10 on April 16; they roost within a mile of her house.

COOPER'S HAWKS have become citified. Patty reports three nests in the Wheat Ridge Greenbelt. Amy Law-Ziegler discovered a nest in Green Mountain and took pictures. Neighbors said they have nested there for several years; they also said the "hawks had cleaned out the Mourning Doves in the immediate area." On May 19, Caroline Vigil (Aurora) noticed "a sparrow that had a funky 'hair style.' It went to the feeder, but as it left, a hawk came out of nowhere and its talons picked off the bird. Unbelievable! My daughter said she saw feathers go everywhere." In south Denver, Joy Schieving saw Cooper's three times in March and once in April; Dave sees them regularly across the back alley.

PETER IANGAN (CENTENNIAL): "a Sharp-shinned Hawk monitors the birds feeding at our bird bath. The hawk's routine is to catch a bird and leave a pile of feathers with no sign of the remainder of the bird. In April we saw the Sharp-shin perched on our maple tree plucking all the feathers from a robin. The hawk consumed all of the robin, cleaned his beak on a limb, and departed."

LISA WATCHED A GOSHAWSK dine "on pigeon right next to our house. I don't want to go into too many gory details. The pigeon was plucked, feathers all around the carcass. I wish the hawk would go for the many voles in our yard and not the other birds."

BETTE LEVINE – from a very urban LoDo 10th-floor loft – sent a picture of an American Kestrel perched on her balcony. "Indeed a pair is chirping and mating. They did seem to take over a nesting area that some small birds have inhabited for years, in an air vent just below us." May 3, Flo watched a Northern Harrier taking a bath in the High Line Canal (during its two weeks of water flow). Dave saw one in his alley, twice in April.



Backyard Birds continued on page 14

CATS CRAVE BIRDS, as you who attend to Audubon's Cats Indoors program know. Kelen Turner's cat caught a Cedar Waxwing that she rescued and, for repair, took to Mackenzie, who set the broken leg and took to a rehabber. Kelen appreciates the care but regrets that she won't see it again. Another caller wanted advice about whether and how to move a robin's nest threatened by her cat.

PINERY (PARKER) OFFICIALS stocked their lake with fish in May; almost instantly, Pat Skinner says, a flock of White Pelicans arrived. Kathy saw 12 on May 9, Lynne [NLN] on May 12 saw four, plus "a tree full of cormorants. At least 25." Sandhill Cranes: Debbie saw 250 overhead Apr. 6, and Rick Brune saw 150 at 3 p.m. April 10 in Lakewood.

RICK ADDED A REMINISCENCE from last spring: "With the wind screaming out of the northwest, I saw a flock of geese desperately trying to fly north into the ferocious headwind. At times they went backwards. Just as they would get their V formed, the wind would break it up. I continued to watch them fly slowly across the road. That's when I noticed the last 'goose' in the V was different. It was a Bald Eagle!"

THE BUSHTIT SAGA CONTINUES. March reports from Peggy Gonder in Westminster, Patti & Scott Locke, and Joy. In Centennial, Kevin Corwin saw a Red-breasted Nuthatch on April 10, and Ken Gammon had one in Franktown, among very few reports this winter. OK to delete per Hugh.

IRA SANDERS REPORTED A SURPRISE: "While waiting for TurboTax to load I went down to check the feeders. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw a Rosy-Finch in the tray. I haven't had a Rosy-Finch at my feeders in more than 15 years. I was even more surprised when I realized it was a Black Rosy-Finch, which I have never had in the county much less at my feeder."

LYNN ACKERMAN IN HIGHLANDS RANCH: on May 10 passing through her yard, a mixed flock of sparrows: White-crowned, Clay-colored, and Chipping. At the same time in Elbert County, Debbie hosted 10 White-crowns, and Nan reports several in April and May.

ELEANOR PICKERING: "Ravens seem to be moving into Littleton near commercial areas, possibly encouraged by the year-round availability of fast-food leftovers. There is an active nest on a metal power pole on south Broadway and another in a residential area near Coal Mine Road and Pierce, and possibly a third nest on Mineral Avenue. Several years ago, when South Platte Reservoir was under construction, Ray Sperger and I saw a pair building a nest inside a large piece of inactive equipment on the reservoir site. We couldn't find out if it succeeded, though I think it unlikely."

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVES continue to burgeon. Ken counted two dozen in late April. Deb Ostergard in west Denver had one "all winter, just one, thru all the yucky weather. A new one recently arrived (in April) to keep him company. I think the new arrival is slightly smaller. Maybe babies soon... Mourning Doves are starting to arrive. I think we have seen three at the feeders."

JAN JUSTICE-WADDINGTON heard of two in March. "Eight thousand-plus altitude (she lives up Coal Creek Canyon) seems to be no problem. Apparently it is not going to migrate? That's not fair to Band-tailed Pigeons and Mourning Doves." Big questions: do the two dove species compete? Will Collared-Doves drive out Mourning Doves?

BY APRIL 22, DAVE [NLN] says most of the robins moved on. "It was a joy during the dry winter to keep them in our location by providing lots of fresh water for them. It seems that we were the only water source in the immediate area. I now realize the importance of providing fresh water for all the birds – when none is available naturally they will flock to it."

NAN: "11 or more robins plus as many House Sparrows gathered by a deep puddle formed by the still-melting snow by our driveway to take their spring-clean-up bath!" She wonders if our winter robins migrate from Montana and Canada; yes, almost certainly.

GINA GERKEN ENGINEERED installation of 44 bluebird boxes in Castle Pines Village. "CPV metro allowed us to put boxes on their property. I put out four – three in ideal bluebirds spots and one token box for the Metro employees: right by the parking lot, not an enticing bluebird spot, but one that I hoped would be used so that people could really see it. Then Metro added a barometer to the top, back, of the box – a bright, white gizmo with little cups attached that spins wildly in the wind. I considered asking them to move it – but I decided just to write off that box as one that would never be used. Of course, all the boxes I checked yesterday (Apr. 22) had scraggly beginnings of new nests except for the barometer box. With cars and trucks coming and going and the barometer spinning wildly, a proud pair of Mountain Bluebirds sat happily nearby guarding their new home that held an almost complete nest! These are the kinds of things that make the effort worthwhile!"

OUT OUR WAY, Western Bluebirds seem to have started to supplant Mountains. We used to have 3-4 Mountains in our boxes; this year we have one Mountain and three Western pairs. Brenda Beatty in Castle Rock sees only Westerns this year, and Kathy noticed that, in Castlewood Canyon State Park, numbers of Westerns making nest attempts and their fledglings have increased since 2004. She saw the same thing at the bluebird trail south of the park on the Winkler Ranch. Veronica Holt sees only Westerns, but she lives in Western habitat – ponderosa pines in Elizabeth. OK to delete per Hugh.

MARCH SNOWSTORM TALES: Tom (Bush?): "Over 70 birds swarm all over my feeders competing for every available perch and ground space. On Mar. 26 we counted 15 House Finches, 20 Pine Siskins, 18 Dark-eyed juncos, 6 Black-capped, and 2 Mountain Chickadees, 2 Spotted Towhees, 3 Scrub-Jays, 5 American Goldfinches, 2 crows, 2 Northern Flickers, one Steller's Jay, and 2 starlings. In between snow days the usual count is about 10 birds at a time. Re-stocking feeders in the middle of a snowstorm was interesting."

URLING STARRED in a Douglas County News-Press article on spring birds that came out the day of the March blizzard. At one point that day, ten Western Bluebirds perched on one box – none went in and they all flew away.



Urling Kingery admires a Great Horned Owl with staff member from HawkQuest at the June 7th Nature Festival at the Audubon Center at Chatfield State Park.

Backyard Birds continued from page 14

APRIL 17-18 SNOWSTORM TALES: Kirk Huffstater: "Highlight -- all the Spotted Towhees – I counted 23 at one time! Plus 2 Chipping, 3 White-crowned, and 1 Song sparrow, 3 Blue Jays, 5 Western Scrub-Jays, 12 Pine Siskins, 10 House Finches, 10 Black-capped Chickadees, 1 Downy Woodpecker, 1 Northern Flicker, 5 Western Bluebirds, 15 American Goldfinches, 4 juncos, 3 American Robins."

BOB SPENCER IN GOLDEN: "Two juvenile Mourning Doves; on Mar. 26 two adults came but this month only one came. So that is why! The young ones fed most of the day, no adults tho. Lots of Eurasian Collared-Doves. A small group of blackbirds came to the drum feeder. Outstanding in the center was one Yellow-headed Blackbird." In Arvada, Jan Eckhart watched finches and sparrows huddle under her carport.

URLING AND I: "After two days, snow continues to come down at a steady clip. A charm of 20 Pine Siskins, 4 American Goldfinches, and 4 House Finches spent the last four hours perched in the tops of scrub oaks. They chatter steadily. Occasionally they dip down to the feeders for sunflower chips or millet. Why do these small bundles of energy choose to sit in the most exposed places they can find during a steady snowfall?"

WARREN FINCH ANSWERED, "They may be getting solar heat through the storm clouds."

LISA CRISPIN: "The snow was so densely packed that the finches could hop around on top without sinking in. Our siskins, goldfinches, and House Finches were also hanging out in a tree near the feeder, but a lot of them were feeding, too."

NAN'S SNOW OBSERVATIONS involved mammals: a red fox and squirrels. Ken Gammon also had a mammal report from Franktown. "Mar. 14 a young coyote walking in dry creek bed. About four feet west of coyote was a crow with broken right wing. From scrub oak came adult goshawk heading for crow! Coyote jumped all the way over the crow and scared off the goshawk. Coyote and crow walked north off my site. Next day went looking for crow feathers; found none."

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

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