

the Warbler

WE'RE GEARING UP FOR THE SECOND ANNUAL

SHARE THE VIEW

INTERNATIONAL DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

October 15 through December 1, 2012



TIME TO GET OUT IN THE FIELD AND TAKE A WINNING PHOTOGRAPH!

Attention all photographers: The 2012 Share the View contest begins October 15. Don't wait until the last minute. Act now to capture some award-winning shots. Keep your eye on the prize!

Updates to the contest website <http://denveraudubon.contestvenue.com/> are underway. They'll be completed prior to the start date and you'll be able to submit digital entries online, saving \$10 when you submit 6 entries for the price of 5.

CONTEST PROCEEDS BENEFIT DENVER METRO SCHOOL CHILDREN

Proceeds from Share the View support our ongoing education efforts in Denver Metro area schools. We serve over 2,500 students annually and are working to expand our programs even further to reach more children. We appreciate the help and support of all our members in promoting the contest and this worthy effort.



HELP US REACH OUR GOAL

Our goal this year is to double our entries. Prize money has been increased to \$3,500 because... we've added a SECOND \$1,000 CASH PRIZE! We're also modifying the rules to better balance the emphasis on creativity and originality with technical skill.

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2nd Annual Share the View

HERE'S A RUNDOWN ON THE 2012 CONTEST.

- Eleven cash prizes will be awarded:
- Two Grand Prizes of \$1,000 – one for Best Bird Photo, one for Best in Show.
- Four first place prizes of \$250
- Five second place prizes of \$100
- Entries will be accepted from October 15 through December 1, 2012
- Photographers may enter an image entered in last year's contest provided it was not among the top 250 images selected in the 2011 contest.
- Judging will take place in early December 2012.



WE WANT YOU!

We have many expert photographers in our group who are often tapped to make presentations around the state showcasing pictures from their travels. One of the award winners from the 2011 contest, our own Lee Farrell, has been asked to share his work with members of the Denver Field Ornithologists at their September meeting, details below.

Digital Photography: Aid to Better Bird Watching with Lee Farrell Monday, September 24

On the 2010 DFO member survey, one member noted that DFO has a number of excellent photographers and suggested that some of our programs feature those photographers. Our September 24 meeting will respond to that suggestion when member Lee Farrell talks about digital photography as an aid to better bird watching.



DFO Meetings are held at the Museum of Nature and Science in the Ricketson Auditorium and start promptly at 7.30pm. They are open to the public without charge.

DFO members have expressed a desire to have more programs featuring member photographers and we hope our member photographers will respond to their call and to ASGD's call to enter the Share the View Competition.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Please help us spread the word by distributing flyers and making announcements at meetings or gatherings of photographers and birders. We would really appreciate it.

ASGD receives requests periodically from local news sources for photos and information for their nature-related articles. We'd like to enlist the talents of our member photographers to take on a monthly article, contributing photos and information

about something timely that's going on in the birding world. For instance, articles about unusual migrants in the spring and fall, breeding activity during the spring and summer and winter residents would be good candidates for publication. Articles on rarities, like the ross's gull at Cherry Creek, the greater roadrunner in Jeffco, the Arctic tern in Boulder, the snowy owl at Barr Lake,



would also be of great interest. We would include a tagline with each article promoting ASGD and/or Share the View.

Contact Karl, kbrummert@denveraudubon.org, or Marilyn Rhodes, cloverlane@aol.com, if you'd like to sign up to do an article or two.

FIRED UP AND READY TO GO!

Thanks to all of you for your support of last year's competition. We are determined to make the 2012 contest a huge success. Please join us by entering your photos or by promoting the competition as often and in as many places as you can!

Conservation Report

by Polly Reetz

Since the last conservation column, the US Army Corps of Engineers released the Chatfield Reallocation project Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for public comment (June 8, 2012). Three public information meetings were held in late June, and Audubon of Greater Denver has been alerting our members to the release, the meetings, and the issues involved.

Public Comment - The public comment period has been extended from 60 days to 90 days: the new deadline for comments is now Sept. 6, 2012. If you haven't sent your letter yet, please do so. Addresses and a list of ASGD concerns can be found at our volunteer-organized website: www.savechatfield.org It's imperative that your opinions of this extremely damaging project be heard!

Please send a copy of your Corps of Engineers letter to the Governor of Colorado, John W. Hickenlooper: The State is the chief proponent of the project. (Colorado State Capitol, Room 136, 200 E. Colfax Ave, Denver CO 80203-1792).

The comment period was extended thanks to letters by many ASGD members, the Colorado Congressional delegation, and many organizations including ASGD. Unfortunately the extension is still not enough time to review a 2,500+ page document (the Corps' own headquarters staff took over a year to analyze the preliminary version of the DEIS). ASGD will be requesting another 30-day extension to ensure adequate public notification and review.



Our Main Concerns - ASGD has stressed over and over again that:

- The additional water the proponents want to store in Chatfield will only be there about 3 years in 10 because their water rights are very junior (young). Most years the water level will be right where it is now.
- To store the additional water, vegetation along the shoreline and about a half-mile up the South Platte from Kingfisher Bridge, and in the Plum Creek delta, including wetlands and mature cottonwood forest, will be cut down and torn out, leaving extensive mud flats. This is a serious loss of a biologically rich habitat and the recreation that goes with it.
- The 100-year-old cottonwoods and their surrounding forests, and the free-flowing stretched of the S. Platte and Plum Creek can't be replaced (mitigated). It's a net loss.
- The DEIS analysis of alternatives is very weak. Only cursory attention was given to more active water conservation, aquifer storage and re-charge, use of gravel pits, and Project WISE, a proposal to store water in Reuter-Hess reservoir (several of the Chatfield proponents have joined this effort.)

Basis of Audubon's Concerns - The underpinning of ASGD's concerns about the Chatfield Reallocation is the knowledge of our members – knowledge of the bird populations, habitats, and recreational opportunities at the State Park. We are unique in this regard! Our Walk the Wetlands field trips, studies by Hugh Kingery and Joey Kellner, the bird-banding programs cosponsored by ASGD and the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, the designation of Chatfield as an Important Bird Area (IBA) by National Audubon – all these reinforce our desire to preserve riparian forests, wetlands, and recreational uses there.

Conservation Report *(cont.)*

Alert readers of the DEIS may have already found inaccuracies in the description of Chatfield's bird resources. For example, the DEIS states that red-tailed hawks and great horned owls are uncommon nesters at the State Park. We know better – these two species nest quite commonly at Chatfield and use some of the big cottonwoods that would be torn out by the proposed project. The consultants' survey of breeding birds was done in late June (NOT prime breeding time) on two days in mid-to-late morning. We can expect gaps in the record as a result.

More Information - ASGD volunteers have posted our position points, photos, addresses and other information at www.savechatfield.org. They share many of ASGD's concerns.

A list of Colorado Parks and Wildlife's concerns about wildlife and recreational impacts is included – VERY interesting reading.

Please take action on this very important issue - Send your letters and comments by September 6, 2012 to: US Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District, CEN-WO-AA, Attn: Chatfield Reservoir Storage Reallocation FR/EIS, 1616 Capitol Ave., Omaha, NE 68102

Email: chatfieldstudy@usace.army.mil
Questions, comments, concerns? Call Polly Reetz, 303-333-2164 or reetzfam@juno.com, or Ann Bonnell, 303-979-6211 or abonnell@juno.com.



Great horned owl by Dick Vogel

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Conservation Status and Population Structure of Front Range Bumblebee Species

Bumblebees are among the most charming members of the insect world—fuzzy, colorful, industrious and unconditionally beneficial. They are important pollinators of both native flowers and crop plants. Unfortunately, like other groups of pollinators, bumblebee populations have declined in recent years. Several environmental factors seem to be implicated in these declines, including habitat alteration, pesticide use, and parasites. But in addition, recent studies suggest that low genetic diversity may also make bumblebee populations vulnerable to extinction.

In North America, six of about fifty species of bumblebees show some evidence of decline. However, abundance data is unavailable for most locales making it difficult to assess their overall conservation status. Species ranges can be inferred from older collections, but abundance is a different matter—only recently have people begun systematic monitoring of populations. In 2010 my research team began monitoring bumblebees at multiple sites and elevations along the Front Range of Colorado. Because insect populations can fluctuate greatly from year-to-year, we will monitor the same plots for five years.

Photo credits: Carol Ann Kearns Ph.D.



Of the six declining species, two, *bombus occidentalis* and *b. pensylvanicus*, were once considered abundant along the Front Range. These species were largely absent from our two-year survey (we saw one *b. pensylvanicus*). *b. occidentalis* was once cultivated for crop pollination until commercial populations were decimated by mites in the 1990s. Entomologists suggest that diseases and parasites may have invaded wild colonies leading to rapid declines of native species.

Most bumblebee conservation studies have focused on environmental problems that could affect population viability. However, conservation biologists working with mammals and plants routinely evaluate genetic diversity within species, because genetic diversity is correlated with reproductive success and the ability to adapt to stochastic fluctuations in weather and climate change. Low genetic diversity can produce inbreeding depression which can reduce vigor, survival, reproductive success and adaptability. Only recently have biologists considered that genetics might play a role in bumblebee declines.

Some front range bumblebee species have broad ranges while others are found in isolated patches of suitable habitat. The varied population structure of the 23 species of front range bumblebees provides an opportunity to examine the interaction between population structure, patterns of population decline and genetic diversity. Species with broad distributional ranges typically have more genetic diversity and gene flow between populations than those species found in isolated patches. High elevation species are restricted to mountaintops, effectively isolating populations from interbreeding.

Conservation Status and Population Structure of Front Range Bumblebee Species (cont.)

Photos credit: Carol Ann Kearns Ph.D.



With funding from the Lois Webster Fund of the Audubon Society of Greater Denver, and Boulder County Nature Association, I began a study focused on quantifying genetic diversity in local *bombus* species. I have been looking at three species: *b. occidentalis* (once widespread, now reported to be in rapid decline),

b. pensylvanicus (once widespread, in decline in part of its range), and *b. appositus* (widespread in distribution, and stable). I have isolated two different fragments of mitochondrial DNA (cytochrome b and 16S fragments) from both modern specimens and from older museum specimens.

I anticipate that this project will provide baseline population data on front range bumblebees and ultimately contribute to our understanding of the role of genetic variability in bumblebee declines.



Bird & Brew Trivia

Wednesday, October 3, 7-9pm

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

\$5 entry fee per person - proceeds support
ASGD programs

303.973.9530 or info@denveraudubon.org



Moving On...

by Suzy Hiskey

This fall I am leaving my position as the School Programs Coordinator with ASGD to finish my BS in Biology at Metro State University of Denver. I am excited about the opportunity to increase my knowledge of nature



and conservation so I may return to the field with a greater passion and understanding for the wildlife and ecosystems we all love. I've enjoyed the experience and connections I've made with ASGD and look forward to working and volunteering with my new degree in hand!

by Karl Brummert

"We are sad to see Suzy go, but it is a great opportunity for her to focus on completing her Biology degree. Suzy has done much to advance both school and public programs at ASGD over the last two years. She spearheaded the effort to develop monthly family programs at the Audubon Center. She created a system to greatly improve the 'visitor flow' at the bird banding station on the weekends. She helped with expanding the Audubon Naturalist training. She has updated the school program curriculum, implemented a new teacher evaluation, and started developing relationships with new schools. We will miss Suzy's enthusiasm and great ideas. We wish her luck at Metro State and look forward to her continued involvement as a volunteer!"

Backyard Birds

by Hugh Kingery

Francis Commercon, after the July 1 Walk the Wetlands, went back to watch a black-chinned hummingbird nest. “I was worried that she didn’t leave the nest for the first hour of observation. Apparently I was indeed the cause of her distress, for when I began placing cut branches over me, she seemed to find me less threatening and buzzed right over to check me out. After closely scrutinizing my face, she whirred away and returned shortly after. After that, she made frequent trips back and forth from her nest, all of which I recorded.” I guess bushes see more than people. Black-chinned, rare in metro Denver five years ago, have arrived and stayed in numbers.

Black-chinned hummingbird



Photo Credit: Dick Vogel

Jeff Stroup on May 20, checked last year’s hummingbird nest 6 feet high in an oak tree: “Clearly it’s slightly larger with new nest material – looks mostly like spider-web material. Appears that some housekeeping and enhancements are going on. About 2 pm we saw the female sitting in the nest. She started turning around and around in the nest for about 15 seconds. Looked like she was moving things or stamping down new material as she was moving around in the nest. Then flew off. The second nest remains empty but now (June 3) appears ragged with pieces around the nest cup missing. Appears to be used for nest material for another nest- perhaps the lower nest I’ve been watching or maybe another one somewhere?”

Ron Baker said, on June 5, “I have lived out near Castlewood Canyon for about 15 years, and always had hummers, mostly broad-tails, in huge numbers. Usually I go through 100 pounds plus of sugar every year.

This year, I have had maybe 10% the usual number. Some friends of mine who live in the foothills outside Colorado Springs also have far fewer than usual.” Spring migration seemed paltry this year, and some people have seen fewer birds – especially hummingbirds (including us).

Karen Metz has house birds rather than yard birds. “Two summers ago a male spotted towhee followed me into my house a few times, apparently wanting a mealworm to take back to its nest. I had to train myself always to keep the back door closed. Last year, a pair of Cordilleran flycatchers discovered and nested in a hole that led into a garage soffit. One morning, I found a fledgling COFL inside the garage. The parents outside called and called and the fledgling finally flew out after flitting in the rafters for more than an hour. We later filled in the hole that the flycatchers, not we, had discovered.

Flycatcher



Photo Credit: Dick Vogel

“After last Sunday’s outdoor work and having the garage doors open, I found a Cordie flying among the rafters. S/he seemed quite content and was probably dining on miller moths, although I didn’t actually see it take any.

“Early today (June 12), while carrying plants out onto the deck (and not even thinking about closing the door behind me), I saw a miller moth fly in – common enough occurrence. I was outside for no more than two minutes but after I walked back into the house, I heard a Cordie and realized that the call was much too loud to be coming from outdoors.

“I found the bird perched on the piano. Because I have an open concept house with a high ceiling and large windows, you can imagine my next concern. Fortunately, the Cordie stayed on the lower level and eventually chased a miller that landed on a window screen. S/he stayed on the screen long enough for me to pick it up. And the Cordie called from my hand as I carried it out the door.”

Backyard Birds (cont.)

Rhonda Kelly, working on the Audubon Master Birder nest assignment, saw “a common grackle nest. The baby had just left the nest and the female was coaxing it with food. Further down the path, I came across another nest and no one was home. It was rather low and exposed in a small conifer, so I took a closer look. There was a piece of paper woven in the nest with a smiley face on it! I’m sure it’s from this year because the print is so clear on that paper, plus I would have noticed it last year.”

Rhonda also saw “a couple of small brown birds perched on the fence outside the bay window — a pair of Northern rough-winged swallows checking out a vent that comes out of the side of my house. I don’t know what the vent connects to, but first one went in, and then the other one. They took turns like that a couple of times and then left. I did a little research and turns out they will nest in man-made structures. I don’t know if they will nest in it. I kinda hope not because I don’t know what comes out of that vent.”

Tom Parchman, on May 18, emailed about, “a raven nest in the garden center at Lowe’s at Colfax and Miller – in an outdoor area with a corrugated covering, back in an area with only a little foot traffic. The nest was not occupied when I was there but four birds were sitting nearby in the rafters.”

Dick Anderson specialized in city raptor nests. “I was out June 8 with Mara Purdy of Denver Parks and Gregg Blew of Wellshire exploring a route we will take to bird the course in August. [This year ASGD initiated a series of bird hikes with Denver city parks and Highlands Ranch open space.] Gregg is very proud of the course (he is the manager) and the birds he has on the course. He showed us where a pair of Swainson’s hawks have decided to nest this year -- their second year on the course. We watched one groom and then amble through the trees watching the golfers go by.

Common Grackle



Photo Credit: Dick Vogel

According to Gregg the pair have been a bit aggressive toward people close to the nest site.

“A pair of red-tails has nested on the course for a number of years, always coming back to the same nest — now quite large and really bulky. The pair have two nestlings — still downy but with flight feathers on wings and tail clearly developing. We watched one of the adults return to the nest tree, spend some time choosing and breaking off a short branch with leaves to carry back to the nest. A pair of Western kingbirds took exception to the return of the adult and was fussing about the nest tree. The red-tail basically ignored them.”

Dick also has a Swainson’s nest near home. “We watched as both adults returned to the nest (on July 11), one with a rodent (probably a small ground squirrel) to feed the nestlings

-- there are two, possibly three. We could see the nestlings through the scope as they got up to take part in the meal the adults brought to them. The one who returned with the rodent left almost immediately, the other took up ‘sentinel’ duty as the nestlings ate their fill. We were alerted to the exit and return of the hawks by the resident blue jays as soon as an adult came anywhere near the nest, the blue jays set up a fuss.”

Meredith Anderson talked about a mourning dove nest in her yard. “It took her three days to build it [a long time for such a flimsy affair]. When she first started building, the sticks blew out but she didn’t use the original nest sticks for rebuilding – she went for new ones. I watched her through rain and hail and wind; I have hopes for baby doves in the yard.”

Red-tailed hawk photo credit Dick Vogel



Backyard Birds (cont.)

Gina Gerken, in Castle Pines, “has a new bird nesting in my yard this year - a Western wood-pewee. The nest is on the top of my metal sprinkler system control box that hangs on the side of my house. It is right beside a window and we get to watch all activity without disturbing them. The nest is absolutely lovely and so well disguised that at first I thought it was just a pile of leaves and debris.

“Gotta love the baby birds - my juvenile white-breasted nuthatches practice their defensive postures at the feeders and bird bath. They will puff up and then in a slow, robotic fashion lift one wing and rotate it in a circle and then lift the other. They get really into it, but other birds largely ignore them! We saw a young hairy woodpecker peeking into the window and squawking, with no fear of us or our indoor cats peeking out. And finally, the baby house finches - looking pretty much like an adult, with the exception of the one crazy feather sticking straight up on top of it's head!

“This year, by mistake, I made one of my house wren couples very happy. I had a very large, loose pile of sticks about to be removed. When I went to haul it away, a house wren came out from the center. I began watching and found he spent much of his time within the sticks, so I decided to make it a permanent part of my landscape. Thought it was also interesting that this is the first year that the house wren male didn't fill multiple boxes with sticks. I believe he and his mate were so enamored with the stick pile that they initially were nesting there — and then made a last minute switch to one of my wren boxes.”

Bill and Suzanne Wuerthele in Park Hill hosted three rare migrants in June. On the 5th, “a red-eyed vireo. Heard it singing and, after much searching, found it in the basswood tree at the edge of our backyard (fortunately, it continued singing for quite a while, as is their wont).

“Even more remarkable, on June 14, a chestnut-sided warbler. Heard it singing in the neighbor's yard yesterday evening, and by the time I got my binoculars,

Blue Jay



Photo Credit: Dick Vogel

it was in our yard, still singing. A beautiful, breeding-plumaged male. It did not hang around - there and gone in about five minutes.

“Then another amazing backyard bird (actually, in a neighbor's tree, so technically not a yard list bird for us) — a scarlet tanager. Suzanne heard it singing and alerted me. A harsh, tanager song, and of course, we thought it would be a Western. But, we found it at the very top of a neighbor's Chinese elm, still singing away. It stayed for an instant and then flew. I jumped on my bike and followed the direction of flight, but I never saw or heard it again.

“These are not dates one would associate with migration, and so I wonder if these might be birds driven out of the foothills/montane areas west of Ft. Collins by the fire. Is it possible there are a number of these eastern birds in residence in the foothills and are now being flushed out by the fire? I remember

White-breasted nuthatch



Photo Credit: Dick Vogel

hearing a singing ovenbird at the Denver Botanic Gardens during the Hayman Fire in 2002 (again, the middle of June). At the time, I suspected that it had been flushed from the foothills by the fire since it was well past the time when a migrant would have been expected.” A few of these vireos and warblers nest in the foothills, maybe in the Fort Collins foothills, and Boulder birders reported a scarlet tanager off territory last year.

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

Thank you to all those who donated to and/or participated in Birdathon 2012

You made this important annual fundraiser an enormous success. Birdathon is to the birding community what a pledge walk or run is to other organizations: a

way to engage our members and friends in a fun fundraising event for all skill levels and ages. It is an important element in our overall fundraising strategy, critical to offering our popular educational programs, participating in citizen science projects, and operating the Audubon Nature Center at Chatfield.



The 2012 Birdathon exemplified the true spirit of the event when 12 teams large or small took the field and found some birds!

➤ The 2012 Audubon Master Birder class formed not one, but THREE, teams and raised \$1777 among

them.

- A team leader discovering at the last minute that her team disappeared went out by herself and found 30 species and raised over \$100.
- A team of three experienced birders turned their Birdathon effort into a true 24 hour adventure and braved rain, wind, and cold to find 144 species and raise more than \$5500.
- Donors pledged more than \$10,000 in amounts from \$10 to \$744.

Thank you again for your support of the Audubon Society of Greater Denver, whether in the field or by donating a pledge. In honor of you we will continue to offer the many programs that enable us to impact both people and nature in the greater Denver region. From science-based programs for school children, to adult classes and field trips, to conservation action by members committed to protecting wildlife and habitats, it is YOU that makes it all possible.

DID YOU KNOW...

Just a few determined people can make a big difference in the world?

FIND OUT HOW TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

6:30 – 8:30PM

BEMIS PUBLIC LIBRARY,

6014 S. Datura St., Littleton, CO

Talk with grassroots organizers – like yourselves – about how to work effectively at the city, county, state or federal level to protect wildlife habitat, support open space, and push for responsible development! The ASGD Conservation Committee is

sponsoring this session on Wednesday, September 19, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Bemis Public Library, 6014 S. Datura St., Littleton CO. Our speakers include:

Art Beck, Lakewood organizer of a neighborhood group to maintain open space

Kathy Spinella, who has worked to control development around Barr Lake State Park

Jo Evans, Colorado Audubon lobbyist, retired, and a longtime conservation activist Chatfield experts from ASGD

Don't miss this fun and informative session!

Light refreshments will be served

RSVP to the Audubon office, 303-973-9530 by Sept. 15.

Photo Credit Dick Vogel - Roxborough State Park



Audubon Summer Interns

Kristine Helsper



Hi, my name is Kristine Helsper and I recently joined the Audubon Society of Greater Denver's staff as a seasonal intern in July. I just graduated from Colorado Christian University with a bachelor's in General Science and a minor in Outdoor Leadership. I previously worked as a backpacking guide

at Camp Kivu in Bayfield, Colorado. I am a newlywed as of June 23, 2012 and my new husband Casey and I live in Lakewood. I really enjoy backpacking, mountain biking, reading, and my new found hobby, birding.

My name is Lindsey Earl, I'm a junior Environmental Sociology Major at CSU. This summer I'm interning for the Audubon Society of Greater Denver in order to play up the environmental/nature side of my major. I hope to go to graduate school for Medical Anthropology (...at least I think), and eventually live or travel to 'undeveloped' countries. In my free time, I go to concerts, create art, thrift, explore my surroundings, and more recently...geocache! Come and chat with me, if you ever have a chance!



Lindsey Earl

PROTECT BIRDS & HABITAT, EDUCATE GENERATIONS

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

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL 303-973-9530

OR E-MAIL

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