



On The Wing

Volume 46 Number 3

Boulder County Audubon Society Newsletter

Sept/Oct 2016

BCAS 4th Tuesday Program Series

September 27, 7:15 p.m.

The Amazing Sounds of Birds

What bird uses its voice to echolocate inside dark caves? Which bird sings a duet with itself? Which bird sings over a thousand different songs? In this presentation, **Nathan Pieplow**, author of the forthcoming *Peterson Field Guide to Bird Sounds*, will share some of his most remarkable audio from over a decade of recording birds in the field. You will see the sounds as well as hear them, and learn the stories of the birds that made them, and what some of those birds are actually saying.

Nathan Pieplow is the author of the forthcoming *Peterson Field Guide to Bird Sounds*, and the founder of the website Earbirding.com. He is one of the authors of the Colorado Birding Trail, and a former editor of the journal *Colorado Birds*. He teaches writing and rhetoric at the University of Colorado in Boulder.



Photo of Nathan Pieplow at the Caura River in Venezuela in January 2007. Photo by Christian Nunes.

Program Meetings are at Unitarian Universalist Church of Boulder, 5001 Pennsylvania Ave. (west off 55th St. between Arapahoe and Baseline)

October 25, 7:15 p.m.

Sumatran Orangutans

Cindy Cossaboon, a great ape-keeper, will speak about the critically endangered **Sumatran orangutan**, whose population is threatened by hunting and deforestation for the construction of palm oil plantations. Orangutans are one of our closest living relatives! The orangutan is considered one of the world's 25 most endangered primates. A survey in March 2016 estimated the Sumatran orangutan population as consisting of 14,600 individuals. Cindy has made frequent trips to Sumatra to work with orangutans in rehabilitation centers. She will discuss the life history of the orangutan, global conservation efforts, and share some of her personal experiences with orangutans.

Cindy Cossaboon has been a zookeeper with great apes at the Denver Zoo for over 16 years. She is also an elected member of the orangutan Species Survival Plan steering committee.



Sumatran orangutan. Photo courtesy of worldwildlife.org, © naturepl.com / Anup Shah / WWF-Canon

Field Trips September 2016—December 2016

Rabbit Mountain Ramble Redux

Leader: Carl Starace

Friday, Sept. 16, 2016, 8 a.m.- noon

Free, no reservation needed

Rabbit Mountain continues to amaze bird watchers with the abundance and variety of its avifauna. Birds that are not easily found in other areas of the County are often encountered in this parcel of Open Space. Mid-September should grace us with Sage Thrashers, Bushtits, migrating flocks of Bluebirds, and perhaps a Sapsucker. Rock and Canyon Wrens make the cliffs their homes while keeping a wary eye for many birds of prey. Meet at the trailhead located along North 53rd Street. There is a sign directing you to Rabbit Mountain on the north side of Ute Highway (Rte. 66) east of Lyons.

Lincoln County: Some Ornithology, Some Herpetology

Saturday, Oct. 1, 2016, 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. (Rain or snow date, Oct. 2.)

Leader: John Vanderpoel

Free, limited to 10 in 3 cars. Reservations: Piombino.pam@gmail.com

Join John Vanderpoel, birder extraordinaire, to enjoy not only the avifauna, but also to look for snakes and reptiles in this most interesting area of the plains. John is fast becoming a respectable amateur herpetologist and is very familiar with location and species that can be found in Lincoln County. We should see rattlesnakes, lizards, and perhaps ornate box turtles as well as plains birds.

Pack food, water, cameras, and be prepared for any weather. Please be aware that there are NO facilities of any kind once we get past Limon where we will make a brief stop. Please let me know if you are willing to drive; we need one more driver. Meet at the Niwot Park N' Ride in the middle of the Diagonal Highway at 6:30 a.m. Participants from the Denver area can meet us in Benet at the King Soopers at 7:30.

Naked Birding???

Sunday, Oct. 2, 2016, 8 -11 a.m.

Leaders: Steve Jones and Ivan Getting

Free: No reservation needed and no limit

NO, you will not be without clothes, although you might feel rather naked without your binoculars, scopes, or cameras. However, you may bring guide books and a pad and pen.

Take this unique opportunity to hone your bird watching and observation skills by concentrating on size, shape, behavior, and song to identify the various species found at Sawhill Ponds. Birders of all skill levels are welcome. Meet at the parking lot promptly at 8 a.m. Bring water and a snack. Be prepared for any type of weather. Meet at the Sawhill Ponds parking lot off of 75th Street.

Colorado's Middle East

Saturday, Nov. 12, 6:30 a.m.-7 p.m.

Leader: Bill Kaempfer

Free: No limit, but do let Bill know you are coming and plan on carpooling:

kaempfer@colorado.edu

Colorado's Middle East? That would be Eastern Colorado between the South Platte corridor along I-76 and the Arkansas River Valley, east through La Junta and Lamar. Join Bill Kaempfer on this all day excursion to find what might be out there. Depending on recent reports, we will visit spots like Schaefer Reservoir in Lincoln County, Flagler Reservoir in Kit Carson County, and Last Chance in Washington County. These spots are all about two hours east, so be prepared to leave early and return late for this one day trek on the high plains. We will see lots of hawks and waterfowl and possibly Harris's Sparrow, Lapland Longspur, and Northern Shrike.

We will carpool and leave at 6:30 a.m. from the northeast corner of the East Boulder Rec Center. Dress appropriately for mid-Nov. weather, but we will probably only have short hikes here and there during our trip. Bring food and drink for snacks and lunch and expect to be home by 7:00 p.m.

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Teen Naturalists

Steve Jones, Elena Klaver,

Maureen Lawry

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Boulder County Audubon Society

Next issue deadline:

October 10

Contact editor at: sharona_974@yahoo.com

Great Boulder Caper

Friday, Nov. 25th, 2016, 7:30 a.m.-sunset

Leader: Ted Floyd

Free: No limit, no reservations necessary.

Work off some of that holiday turkey dinner on this annual outing with the ever energetic Ted Floyd, the erudite editor of ABA's magazine, *Birding*. From Ted: "Our very broad objective will be to visit various lakes and ponds in eastern Boulder County. Maybe we'll see Bonaparte's Gulls, Swamp Sparrows, Harlan's Hawks, Cassiar Juncos, diverse geese and gulls, problematic goldeneyes, a rare grebe or loon...or probably, something entirely unexpected."

No experience necessary. Children and non-birding companions welcome. Carpooling helpful. Bring binocs and scope if you have 'em. Bring leftover tofurkey (this is the Great BOULDER Caper, after all) and orange slices and such. Feel free to email lead caperer, Yours Truly, with any questions: tedfloyd57@hotmail.com. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at Cottonwood Marsh at Walden Ponds, off of 75th Street.

Boulder's 75th Annual Christmas Bird Count

Sunday, Dec. 18, 2016

Coordinator: Bill Schmoker

Free, and open to all ability levels

Start time depends on if you go out early for owls

The Boulder Circle of the CBC, sponsored by BCAS, will hold its 75th count on Dec. 18. All skill levels are welcome to join teams and help the leaders by contributing their spotting and identification skills. More experienced folks are urged to lead a small group to cover a specific area within the count circle. Anything can happen (both weather and wildlife) and it usually does. If you prefer, you can also stay at home and count at your feeder, while sipping mulled wine and munching snacks.

Following a full day in the field, we celebrate together with a compilation supper at the clubhouse at the Villa del Prado, 635 Mohawk Dr., Boulder, starting at 4:30. Boulder County Audubon will provide a main dish and salad. We ask participants to bring potluck appetizers, salads, and desserts **AS WELL AS YOUR OWN PLATE, CUP, AND SILVERWARE. THIS YEAR WE WILL ASK YOU TO DONATE \$1 IF BCAS PROVIDES THESE ITEMS.**

Please contact Bill Schmoker (bill.schmoker@gmail.com) to lead or join a team. This is THE social event of the Holiday Season!

30th Annual Winter Solstice Hike

Wed., Dec. 21, 2016, 7 a.m.

Leader: Steve Jones

Free: Limited to 25, register: curlwsj@comcast.net

This homage to the lengthening days of the Winter Solstice will meet at the North Teller/White Rocks Trail on the south side of Valmont, between 75th and 95th Streets. It is traditional to bring prose, poems, or serene thoughts to share in heartfelt fellowship. Share the magic of waterfowl in breeding plumages and soaring raptors, often including a lovely pair of Great Horned Owls.

Breakfast at the Garden Gate Café in Niwot follows at 9. When you register with Steve, please let him know if you plan on joining the group for breakfast.

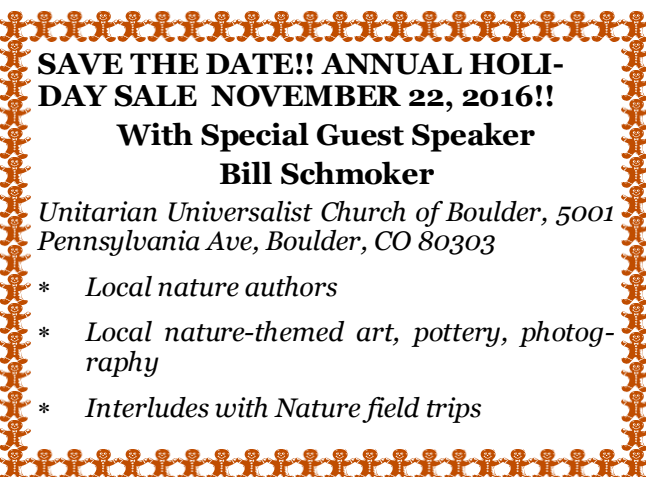
In Press: The Second Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas (L. E. Wickersham, Ed.)

Breeding Bird Atlases are critical tools for large-scale, long-term monitoring of breeding birds, unparalleled by other techniques. These projects document species distribution, breeding phenology, and habitat use, and when repeated at regular intervals, they can detect changes in these variables over time. Fueled almost entirely by volunteers, Breeding Bird Atlases are also some of the most extensive and influential citizen science projects ongoing today. Colorado birders conducted field work for the state's first Breeding Bird Atlas from 1987 to 1995. Published in 1998, *Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas* (H. E. Kingery, Ed.) detailed distribution, habitat use, and breeding status of over 250 species, a landmark achievement in Colorado ornithology.

The Colorado Bird Atlas Partnership and Colorado Parks and Wildlife initiated the state's second Breeding Bird Atlas in 2007; field work continued through 2012. Now, *The Second Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas* book is in press after four years of preparation. This ~750-page book follows in the footsteps of the first Atlas book and documents current distribution, habitat use, and breeding phenology of Colorado's breeding birds as well as changes in species distribution across a 20-year interval.

The Second Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas is in the final stages of editing and layout, in preparation for printing. Co-publishers Colorado Bird Atlas Partnership and Colorado Parks and Wildlife seek to procure as many pre-orders as possible and implement a mass distribution upon the book's launch. Pre-orders will guide the print run and insure coverage of the many costs of publication.

Boulder County Audubon is a financial Sponsor for the Atlas and numerous society members participated in data collection over the 6 years of field work. Some members also wrote species accounts for the Atlas II book. Audubon members can provide additional support for continued Breeding Bird Atlases in Colorado and in turn, long-term bird conservation, by purchasing *The Second Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas*. Please visit www.cobreedingbirdatlasii.org to pre-order your book today!



SAVE THE DATE!! ANNUAL HOLIDAY SALE NOVEMBER 22, 2016!!

**With Special Guest Speaker
Bill Schmoker**

*Unitarian Universalist Church of Boulder, 5001
Pennsylvania Ave, Boulder, CO 80303*

- * Local nature authors
- * Local nature-themed art, pottery, photography
- * Interludes with Nature field trips

An Adventure with the Nature Conservancy in SE Colorado

By Linda Andes-Georges

The JE Canyon Ranch is one of the biggest conservation purchases the Nature Conservancy has ever made—at least in cost. It is also one of the most dramatically beautiful, and one which has the customary NC mix of precious flora and fauna resources folded into its plains and canyons.



A jolly mix of BCAS stalwarts “purchased” the privilege of visiting this place (attend the next holiday sale to sign up for Interlude trips: you never know what will pop up there). We all felt that it far exceeded our vague hopes.

From native southwest birds to elk and mountain sheep to acres of valuable native grasses to deep-cut red rocks canyons in the Purgatoire River area, not to mention the ancient rock art in hidden alcoves, this property has it all.



It is in good hands at the moment, and eventually, when inventory studies are complete, and plans for ongoing research by interested scientists are under way or finished, some of the area will be returned to private hands—with iron-clad contracted agreements about its future management. No fancy ranchettes or hunting villas for the rich will ever sprout here.



(Photos courtesy of Linda Andes-Georges)

In memory of Elizabeth Barstow, former BCAS President

1921-2016

“Libby” Barstow moved to Colorado in 1955, where—a graduate of Cornell—she was about to embark on a lifelong adventure in learning about nature and finding ways to protect it. However after receiving an M.S. in Public Administration from C.U., her first important specialty was studying county land use planning. Subsequently, she became a land use planner in the City of Boulder, working with the Parks & Open Space department as they prepared the open space element of the Boulder County Comprehensive Plan. In 1975 she was appointed the first director of the new Boulder County Department of Parks and Open Space and served in that position until mid 1976. Libby then pursued graduate studies in environmental education and wildlife biology at Colorado State University. In the early 1980s she was the administrative assistant and newsletter editor for the Colorado Wildlife Federation (an affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation). This then led her into the non-fiction book publishing field, in which she worked until 2015. At Westview Press in Boulder, she served as a senior production editor. Following her retirement in 1996, she continued to do free-lance copy editing and proofreading on book manuscripts for scholarly publishers.



She married and divorced three times, and had a daughter who became a Kiwi—living in New Zealand, where Libby loved to visit her grandchildren and watch wildlife.

Somewhere in the middle of this very full life, Libby also served Boulder County Audubon, and was president of the chapter. We regret that we do not know exactly when or for how long, but several members of the community from the 1980s fondly remember her steadfast dedication. There is no doubt she helped to keep us going during our important early years. We send her family our sympathy and our regrets, as well as our thanks for having shared this remarkable and energetic person with us many years ago.

Fragments in Time: Fossil Hunting on the Western Slope

By Sandra Laursen

Nine intrepid participants hunted fossils at Douglas Pass in western Colorado on June 3-5 on a BCAS Interludes with Nature trip led by Pam Piombino.

Douglas Pass lies north of I-70 near the Utah border, along CO-139. At the top of the pass, we turned off the highway and followed a dirt road to an open meadow where we set up our tents. While the camping was primitive style, the views were spectacular. We walked a short distance to an outcrop of Eocene-era Green River shale, exposed and crumbling at a road cut.

Today the outcrop sits some 9000 feet above sea level, but fifty million years ago it was the bed of a shallow intermountain lake. Sediment washed into the lake and settled gently to the bottom, along with water-borne debris such as insects, leaves, and twigs. Over many millennia, the accumulated layers of fine-grained sediments were buried, turned to rock, and uplifted. Today, the overlying rock has eroded away to expose a popular fossil-hunting site. Because it lies on BLM land, collectors can take non-vertebrate samples for their personal use.

We learned to split the thin shale layers with a rock hammer and rock chisel, and to inspect both split faces with a hand lens. What ancient wonder would be revealed when we peered into rock for the first time in 50 million years? As our rock-splitting skills developed, so did our discernment about which finds to keep and which to classify as “leaverite”—as in, leave ‘er right there.



Double leaf print fossil. Photo courtesy of Tom Schlosser.



Some of us worked the eroded slabs that had slid to the road, while others scrambled up the slope to crack fresh rock. Some persisted at the outcrop for many hours, while others stopped for a nap or a wildflower walk. Sometimes an unlucky crack ran right through a fossil. But we were all delighted by the abundance of fossils we found, and by the detail we saw preserved in the ancient strata.

Some fossil finds were recognizable: a finely veined deciduous leaf, a forked twig with visible leaf scars, a bee, a piece of bark, a wonderful winged dragonfly. Others were mysterious: a seed pod? A bit of aquatic plant? Segments of a lar-



Bev Gholson collecting fossils. Photo by Elaine Hill.

va? Now my shoebox full of fossils represents two moments in time: a summer mountain weekend of camping and laughing with friends, and a long-ago day when a twig fell into a lake.



Photos of dragonfly and bee fossils courtesy of Tom Schlosser.

Note: you can sign up for our 2017 Interludes with Nature field trips during our annual Holiday Sale Nov. 22 at the Unitarian Universalist Church. See p. 3 for more info!

Boulder County Audubon Society May 2016 Conservation Awards

Lifetime Achievement Award:

Bill Kaempfer

Bill is no less than a pillar in the ornithological community. You might think that with all of his far-flung travel around Colorado and the erudite posts on his observations, he might be a dilettante. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

In fact, at the University of Colorado at Boulder, Bill is Senior Vice Provost, and Associate Vice Chancellor for Budget and Planning and a Professor of Economics. He has taught at several colleges from coast to coast after earning his PhD. at Duke. We are most fortunate that he settled in Boulder. His responsibilities at the University are mind-boggling and include, a academic prioritization, new degree approval, managing the annual budget process for all schools and colleges, developing new sources of revenue and strategic planning for space management and allocation.

Bill could boast (but he does not) of several types of life lists. Among them is a collection of publications, with 85 books, articles, book chapters and reviews to his credit.

In his spare time, Bill is one of the State's pre-eminent amateur ornithologists, and among the few who have seen over 400 species of birds in Colorado. He has contributed to both of Colorado's Breeding Bird Atlases, is the recent past president of Colorado Field Ornithologists, and a constant trip leader for that group as well as BCAS, Boulder Bird Club, Denver Field Ornithologists and the American Birding Association. Bill contributed to the BCAS wildlife inventory for thirty years, and was the only person to ever record a Vermillion Flycatcher in the snow in Boulder County

Further deepening his dedication to teaching in this particular field is the help he freely offers to all who seek to learn. He has provided assistance both as a counter and compiler to the Indian Peaks Four Season Bird Count (now in its 4th decade; a unique ongoing piece of documentation). We are not aware that anyone in the state covers more Christmas Bird Count areas, which is a National Audubon tradition; nor does anyone explore more out of the way and rugged dirt roads than this man. Follow him around to learn your state inside-out.

(cont'd on p.7)



Bill Kaempfer with Pam Piombino; courtesy of Linda Andes-Georges

Community Conservation Award

Boulder County Parks and Open Space wildlife biologists Michelle Durant, David Hoerath, Mac Kobza; and senior wildlife biologist Susan Spaulding

During the 1980s, Boulder County Parks and Open Space collaborated with local scientists and environmental groups to write one of the most detailed and progressive Comprehensive Plan Environmental Resources elements ever created. Since then, biologists within the department have collaborated with local environmental groups on a diverse array of wildlife monitoring and research projects. Just last year, several hundred volunteers participated in wintering and cliff-nesting raptor surveys, Abert's squirrel inventories, burrowing owl monitoring, waterfowl monitoring, and a variety of other projects. Michelle, Dave, Mac, and Susan helped organize or oversee all these projects and have been a joy to work with--always supportive of volunteers and always committed to protecting our precious wildlife species.



L to R: Mac Kobza, Michelle Durant, Dave Hoerath, Steve Jones. Photo courtesy of Linda Andes-Georges

In 2013 Boulder County Parks and Open Space revised the Environmental Resources Element, including a sentence acknowledging our responsibility to ensure that all naturally occurring ecosystems and their native species populations continue to exist and thrive in Boulder County. Staff is already hard at work on a reintroduction plan for black-footed ferrets, scheduled for implementation in 2020.

Michelle, Dave, Mac, and Susan are among the most dedicated and knowledgeable wildlife biologists Boulder County Audubon has ever had the privilege to work with. Time and time again, they have stood up for our native species, even when their words and actions exposed them to criticism. They fully respect the work of our volunteers and always welcome and incorporate monitoring data that we provide. We are very, very thankful for their courageous advocacy and enduring partnership.



Dusky Grouse

Photo courtesy of Robert Shade

BCAS May 2016 Conservation Awards

Junior Conservation Activist: Annika Sherrill

Most of us know Annika Anderson from seeing her in the background at the Saw-whet Owl Banding Station in Estes Park or in the background at Barn Owl Banding in the Longmont area. Annika quietly absorbs all of the information she hears and—rather than going home to play video games—she acts on that information.

When she heard the ‘adults’ discussing the amount of time a Saw-whet Owl spends in the mist nets before being collected to be measured and banded, and how a set of night-vision cameras would decrease the wait for the little owl, Annika was inspired to raise the money herself to fund those cameras.

At the ripe old age of eight, she baked a slew of cookies. Along with a donation box and her youthful enthusiasm, Annika was armed to engage and educate the public on the need to protect the various owls in Boulder County. Annika raised the full amount of \$800 for that first set of night-vision cameras which reduced the time a Saw-whet Owl remains in the mist net from up to 30 minutes to just a few minutes.

Since then, Annika continues to fundraise for owl conservation. She has created a series of shrinky-dink magnets and shrinky-dink key chains (zipper pulls: see photo) featuring her own artwork of owls. Currently, Annika is making ornaments from wooden disks that will feature some of her favorite owl images. Her most recent efforts will equip a second Saw-whet Owl banding station in the Boulder County area with an off-grid sound system and cameras.

This fall will be her fifth season participating in the banding station and in corresponding research to attempt to answer questions about migration of the Northern Saw-whet Owl as well as longevity of the species.

You can find Annika on any given day building Long-eared Owl baskets or painting American Kestrel Boxes. Everything she does is in the name of "happy owls," and sometimes even happy volunteers.



Annika receives her plaque from Board President Pam Piombino.



Tiny creation: Barn Owl zipper pull

(2016 BCAS Conservation Awards, cont'd.)

Bill Kaempfer, cont'd from p. 6

BCAS has benefited greatly from Bill's good will over the afore-mentioned four decades. He has been the organizer/compiler for our Boulder Christmas Bird Count; a winning participant and top money raiser for our Birdathons; a willing leader for countless field trips including those in our special Interludes series, and is always an inspiration and willing mentor to new birders.

Some of us envy his photographic memory of birds and trips, as well as his ability to call up a humorous anecdote of moments in the field that he can relate whenever things start to get dull. His i.d. skill in the field is extraordinary, as is his ear in identifying song. Lest you think Bill is impossibly perfect, we did find this quote from an interview given to a newspaper: "I am not convinced the Eurasian collared dove will always be here with us," Kaempfer said. Sometimes birds appear and have big booms in population and then they disappear."



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Boulder County Audubon
 on Facebook:
<http://tinyurl.com/zkvuntk>

Special recognition for Teen Naturalists

Teen Naturalist Appreciation Award: Astha Adhikari, Joanna Breahe, Jasey Chandlers, Cody Limber, Elisa Maxwell, Holden Maxwell, Topiltzin Martinez, Alex Posen, Aristeano Rice, Emi Roberts, Levi Stone, Joel Such.



BCAS expressed special recognition of our youth in May. Steve Jones graciously evoked their hard work for birds, habitat, and education of other youth in various ways. We applauded the curiosity and energy they have brought to our chapter for the past few years. They doffed their new BCAS caps and received a plaque to put in their (soon to be college) rooms.

Erie Bald Eagle Nest: Dreams of a New Home

By Dana Bove, Boulder County Audubon Board of Directors member

On December 15th, a friend and fellow photographer inquired about an old growth cottonwood near Erie, CO that had previously housed a bald eagle nest. He informed me that the big cottonwood was lying on the ground, along with several neighboring trees. After a number of phone conversations with state and federal regulatory agencies, I was surprised to learn that eagle nests could be legally removed or “taken” via the permitting system of US Fish and Wildlife (FWS). The Erie nest was permitted in order to build 2,200 homes on this undeveloped square mile tract. I was determined to find out what would come of these two bald eagles, and to also gain a thorough understanding of USFWS’s eagle permitting system. In the months after their nest was toppled, I spent numerous hours documenting and photographing this bald eagle pair. I am convinced that their story also speaks for the remainder of nesting eagles in Colorado’s Front Range, and their need for continued protection.



Dec 15th, 2015. Seven days after the nest was toppled; the pair perch on pumper behind the toppled nest tree. Photo courtesy of Dana Bove.



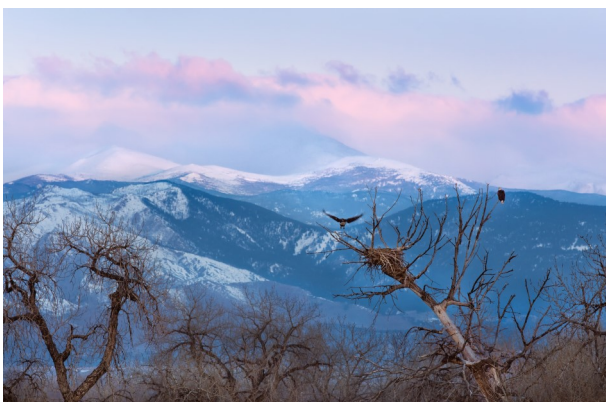
Dec. 29, 2015. Female from pair perching on site of future nest. Photo courtesy of Dana Bove.

A few days after the nest was removed, a friend and I visited the site of the toppled nest tree. There were at least three old growth cottonwoods on the snowy ground, and it was clear that the nest tree was the eldest and most weathered of them all. We spotted the displaced eagles on opposite ends of an oil pumper, just beyond the hulk of the toppled nest tree. Several days later, on a visit to the old nest site, we spotted the pair flying southwest, and followed them to a site about 2 miles from the former nest. We were delighted to find both bald eagles the next day near where they disappeared the previous evening. The female was roosting near the top of a weathered old growth cottonwood, while the male was in an adjacent cottonwood. A new nest began to take shape in that old cottonwood during the next month.

While there is a wealth of experiences to share from my observation of these two eagles, I’ll focus here on the challenges this nesting pair faced from burgeoning development in this part of Weld County. While the rural landowner and adjacent farmers welcomed the new nesting pair, actual and potential disturbances seemed to arise on a regular basis: target shooting with automatic weapons near the nest tree; natural gas drilling; a planned equestrian center nearby; coyote hunting and potential lead poisoning; and a track mounted excavator working at the base of the tree during incubation. Natural disturbances included constant bombardment by a pair of red tail hawks nesting nearby. The new nest failed after 55 days of faithful incubation. The pair was last seen about a week after the failed incubation, flying east after another round of relentless attacks by the nesting red tail hawks.



March 23, 2016. Female closes in on red tail after one of many attacks by hawks. Male in nest incubating. Photo courtesy of Dana Bove.



April 1, 2016. Sunrise pinks and incubation switch at nest. Photo courtesy of Dana Bove.

The story of the Erie bald eagle pair offers a compelling look at the impacts of rampant growth and development in the northern Front Range. Land use projections indicate that the majority (~70%) of the ~9mi² territory that the Erie bald eagles now hunt and depend upon will be lost to development in the near future. Boulder County Audubon Society (BCAS) is leading an effort to insist that our federally protected bald eagles and their nest territories are preserved amidst this fury of development. BCAS is one of nine conservation groups that will be meeting with USFWS and CPW to insist that Colorado nesting eagles are protected as they were intended to be under the Bald and Golden and Protection Act (BGEPA), and to assure that the public finally has a voice in the eagle permitting system.

Ron Ryder leaves Planet Earth behind

It has come to my attention that one of the greats of Colorado ornithology, Dr. Ron Ryder, has passed away. The birds are sad. I am sad. (Dave Leatherman)

Ron Ryder passed away Aug. 2, 2016.

His service to his country included two years in the Army (1945-46), and then in the Navy (1951-54), and later on an icebreaker in the Arctic, after which he remained a naval reservist until 1974. In 1955 he married fellow Colorado hiker Audrey Teele. He gained Colorado recognition as a professor of Wildlife biology at CSU, where he was much admired by his many graduate students. He and Audrey traveled widely, exploring habitats across the world. After retirement, Ron conducted numerous research projects, including environmental impact studies for wind turbines. He was an intrepid Christmas Birdcounter for years, as well as a member of many "green" organizations. The CFO named their highest recognition award in his honor, and he was the first recipient in 1995. His wife Audrey died in 2015, leaving Ron to hike alone until his death.

Post-scriptum from High Kingery:

Reflecting on Ron's legacy to our birding community, I remember an ABA convention in Fort Collins years ago which exemplifies his commitment to birders and to bird protection.

Ron spearheaded the search for Boreal Owls on Cameron Pass. Their efforts confirmed breeding, I believe the second Lower-48 breeding location. The search effort included putting up nest boxes, some of which the owls used.

When ABA came to town, most of the participants had a yen to add Boreal Owl to their life lists. In order to accommodate them, and in order to protect the owls from disturbance by hundreds of people individually cruising up and down the pass with tape recorders, spotlights, and other intrusive search weapons, he arranged an ABA Boreal Owl tour. On the appointed morning 4 buses (or maybe 2 - time exaggerates these things) drove up Cameron Pass and parked near an occupied nest box. As we filed off the buses, Ron instructed everyone to stay absolutely silent and to follow in single file to the appointed place. The 100 or so observers walked, single file, mouths shut, to the bottom of a clearing.

With everyone set, Ron walked up to a nest box at the top of the clearing. He scratched on the tree. Immediately a Boreal Owl head poked out. It surveyed the clearing for 30 seconds, then withdrew.

Everyone walked away, silently, single file, to the buses.

Success!



Red fox. Photo © Dana Bove. All Rights Reserved.



Colorado Native Bird Care and Conservation



Colorado Native Bird Care and Conservation

Two of **Colorado Native Bird Care's** patients from this spring/summer season: a Big Brown Bat and a Mourning Dove, who somehow survived a cat attack. (They treat many cat attack birds.) CNBCC has rescued and rehabilitated more than **200 birds and mammals** this year: check out their [website](#) for more info and to make a donation! They rely solely on funding from the public.

Photo © Colorado Native Bird Care and Conservation. All Rights Reserved.

Elk Loving Rabbit Mountain To Death?

By Linda Andes-Georges

This summer the County Parks and Open Space staff shared a dreadful conservation conundrum with the POSAC board and the public: A rather fat and happy—formerly migrating—elk herd is eating the vegetation on Rabbit Mountain in great gulps, and the long-term result of this will be decimation of some plant communities (impacting birds and other wildlife) as well as bare spots which used to have native plant cover. The elk herd has been asked to move on, as it used to do, first politely and then every more firmly, and the result has been that while it is now skittish, it has simply adopted a new lifestyle: a circular migration—or a back-and-forth between two prime browsing areas—but no longer a migration to the high country in the green season, as proper elk are supposed to do. Furthermore, increasing numbers of this aberrant herd are now boldly venturing into nearby fields for corn crop snacks, and the human neighbors of Rabbit Mountain are not happy about it.

Hunting in contiguous agricultural lands in the past couple years has not had the desired effect on the size of the herd—or its habits.

Alternative proposals were presented at the hearing. None are ideal, and some are frankly distressing. But the status quo cannot continue. Colorado Parks & Wildlife staff is urging that some form of the first two below be instituted. But County POS staff knows that these experimental solutions will raise deep concern among its stakeholders.

Proposals include:

—Culling the herd by professional hunters, which might persuade the herd to decamp to the high country for more peaceful browsing. RMNP has had some success with this method; however, the Park has vastly more territory within and around it as alternative grazing for the elk. Rabbit is a smaller, “closed” system.

—Culling by members of the general public, who would pay a hefty fee to the state for such easy pickins. This might be allowed during a specific limited time, but is less efficient (though more lucrative for CPW) than the first option.

—Letting the nearby agricultural fields like fallow for several years might provoke the elk to move on. However, paying farmers compensation for this is not in anyone’s budget (not the County’s, not the State’s).

—Erecting a fence around the mountain could be considered. But building the type of fence that deters a jumping elk (visualize the fences put up for bison herds) would be prohibitively expensive, and (see above) not in any department’s budget. Nor would this prevent the elk from decimating the open space vegetation, once trapped inside an enclosure. This would be an extremely unnatural, hyper-managed situation.

Now that humans have messed up the larger landscape and functioning ecosystems, we find ourselves obliged to make these awful management decisions.

Here are opinions by two well-informed members of the public. Which way do you lean?

(1) The best [option] would be to take away the food source by paying farmers to let those fields lie fallow. Corn is receiving very low rates unless it’s organic anyway. And it’s the corn that’s leading to their unnatural pattern of not migrating, and that only makes sense—it’s like luring bears with our calorie-rich garbage left unprotected, then killing the bears.

But the source of the problem is the corn. If we don’t take care of that either through fallow fields or fencing, they will indeed repeat this problem year after year. As Mr. Spock would say, “It’s only logical.” Let’s be at least as logical as the elk in trying out what will **really** work, not feeding into the hunters’ desires represented by the CP&W.

(2) My pragmatic side is winning this argument on the simple grounds we have an environmental treasure in Rabbit Mountain we simply cannot allow to be decimated by an aberrant and ever growing herd of elk. I also feel for the farmers whose crops are being damaged. My biggest concern is some form of culling or hunting will be done with much public furor and without the desired effect of returning this herd to a typical migratory pattern, meaning we will need to repeat the process every few years.

I do not oppose hunting for the simple reason we have eliminated all predators and positioned our species as the apex predator in almost all instances. As desirous as reintroducing wolves is to many of us, it’s not going to happen on the Colorado Front Range, in RMNP or perhaps anywhere in the state, so we must continue to rely on CPW to regulate hunting for ungulate population control and the overall good of the environment. One solution I could live with is to haze this herd off of Rabbit Mountain onto neighboring Forest Service land for a public hunt sufficient enough to move the herd to higher elevation and a return to migratory behavior.

Keep Cats Indoors!!

We can't say it too often: We love our domestic cats. We want them to prosper...indoors. They are domestic companions, and like domestic dogs, need to be cared for but not let loose to prey on our equally important wildlife. The latter, across Planet Earth, is increasingly vulnerable to huge numbers of stray, feral and uncontrolled domestic descendants of wild counterparts. Let's not forget that Lassie and Pixie were once wolves and leopards. They are still good at what they do; they practice constantly, often out of our sight—and we rarely see the consequences of their ferocious predation. Much research has been devoted to documenting the damages.



New Zealand, a nation of two fairly small islands, has struggled with protecting its natural heritage against “invading” species from the rest of the world for decades, if not centuries. Recently the small nation has made news as it sets out to eradicate non-native predators by 2050. It's almost too late: a third of its native birds were driven to extinction by non-native species like rats, weasels, possums and...feral cats (there are at least 14 million of them according to government estimates).

The least we in the U.S. can do is love and care for our cats indoors, where they live longer, healthier lives, and can watch birds with us—from inside the window, where their whiskery “kill reflex” looks kind of cute, like a sneeze.



Boulder Audubon led the annual Roll and Stroll hike at the Bobolink Trail in Boulder on April 23. Approximately 15 people attended. This trip was a collaboration between BCAS and OSMP.

Post-scriptum to the North Trail Study Area “Sky Trail”

By Jameson Chace, Alexander Cruz, Heather Swanson

On the importance of foothills shrublands to Colorado birds, *Colorado Birds*, Summer 2016, vol. 50, no. 3.

The clever marketing name assigned to a proposed new trail through a heretofore wild area of the north foothills won the day this year, both with the Open Space Board of Trustees and with the City Council.

It's too bad none of those folks paid attention to what our own University of Colorado researchers are telling us about preserving small—and if possible connected—patches of wildness in our midst. This publication follows a study documented in *Colorado Birds* (see above). Here is what two CU biologists and one OSMP biologist have to say about trails splitting shrubby habitat asunder:

“On... open space lands, with the threat of development removed, the largest remaining threats to these [shrubby] habitats come from fragmentation due to recreational development... Because of the small patchy nature of these habitats, they are particularly susceptible to reduction in patch size due to trail development. As a result, in planning for recreational use, land managers work to avoid placing trails through these shrub habitats whenever possible. [One might add, whenever they are not overruled by interest group politics.] ... Where trail placement is not able to avoid shrub habitat patches, trails near, but not within, shrub patches allow an opportunity for users to observe and better understand this rare and important habitat and the diverse bird community that lives there.”



BCAS started a new member outreach event on July 24 with a late afternoon birding walk at Walden Ponds, followed by happy hour at Upslope Brewery with appetizers provided by the chapter. There was a big turnout of 38 participants, most of whom were new faces. Steve Jones helped the group find and identify 33 species. We plan to have more of these outings and invite all to join us!

Black-footed Ferrets Reintroduced to Colorado

(from the CO Parks & Wildlife [website](#))

In 2013, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) launched an ambitious reintroduction program to return black-footed ferrets to Colorado. Since the program's inception, CPW has released 300 ferrets at six different sites in Larimer, Adams, Pueblo, Baca and Prowers counties. (NB: the most recent release took place at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge at the beginning of September. Twenty additional ferrets were released, joining the others that were released there in Oct. 2015.)

Most of the ferrets were acquired from the [National Black-Footed Ferret Conservation Center](#) (FCC) in Larimer County. Here, the captive-raised animals learn the skills necessary to hunt and survive on their own. Once the ferrets have demonstrated independence, they are released into the wild. Although Colorado's reintroduction program is still in its infancy, wildlife biologists are optimistic about the ferret's plight. Surveys indicate that ferrets remain at all six release sites, with successful breeding documented at two locations.

In the next few years, CPW biologists intend to release ferrets at additional sites with the hopes of establishing self-sustaining populations.



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Photo © cpw.state.co.us

**Boulder Rights of Nature Announces
Publication of a Vegan Cookbook!!**

Boulder Rights of Nature is publishing a vegan cookbook, authored by members and friends of BRON. The deadline for recipe submissions has been extended to Sept 15th and will be available for the upcoming holiday gift-giving season. Check out the [BRON website](#) for more information!!

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