



On The Wing

Volume 47 Number 3

Boulder County Audubon Society Newsletter

Sept-Oct 2017

BCAS 4th Tuesday Program Series

7:15 p.m., September, 26, 2017

Evi Buckner-Opler: Monarch Butterflies, Natural History, Migration and Conservation



The Monarch is the most widely recognized and beloved butterfly, but it is in trouble. Pesticides, habitat loss and deforestation have all conspired to reduce their population to a fraction of what it once was. Their decline has been fast and precipitous.

Evi Buckner-Opler's illustrated presentation will feature mostly her own images on the natural history, migration, and conservation of the Monarch. Many of the photos were taken on Evi's trip to the Monarch overwintering sites in Michoacán, Mexico.

Evi will suggest ways we can all help the plight of this iconic butterfly to insure the species' survival. Recently, the Monarch has reached a higher level of prominence due to a petition by the Xerces Society and others directed to the Secretary of Interior to place that species under provisions of the Endangered Species Act.

Evi Buckner-Opler is an accomplished lecturer, photographer, and artist. She was born in Oberammergau, Germany. She has lived in Colorado since 1976, and became intrigued with butterflies, especially Monarchs, after she met and married renowned lepidopterist Paul Opler.

7:15 p.m. October 24, 2017

Bryan Guarente: Meteorology and Zugunruhe

Each spring and fall a cascade of hormones triggered by changing daylength lures migrant birds like a Siren's song toward the poles or equator. This period, called Zugunruhe (migratory restlessness), is the basis of bird migrations. Is it a misfortune that this migratory drive coincides with some of the most violent weather systems, or is it perhaps instead a gift when seen through the eyes of an efficiency seeking, meteorologist bird? In fact, the frenzied flow of high and low pressure weather systems, typical of spring and fall and found in the mid-latitudes (30° to 60°) gives rise to the winds that fuel migration. Understanding weather and how big-picture weather systems affect bird movements can be useful tools for birders seeking rarities, fallouts and other exciting migratory phenomena. Bring your internet-enabled device to participate in the quizzes during this talk.

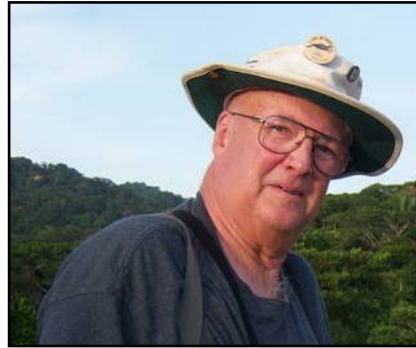


Bryan Guarente began birding at age 7 in Pennsylvania with his dad. He became an avid lister while at the University of Northern Colorado (B.S. in Meteorology), frequently visiting local haunts like Lower Latham Reservoir and Crow Valley Campground. Weather and bird migration came together while listening to night flights at the University of Illinois while getting his Masters degree in Atmospheric Science. Bryan now teaches Earth Sciences for Boulder's online COMET Program.

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

**J. D. Birchmeier “Birch”
(1942-2017)**

“Birch” as he was fondly known, was born in Owosso, Michigan and grew up on the family farm. For 39 years, he taught advanced science classes to high school and college students and was acknowledged with many awards including Outstanding Science Teacher in the Metro Detroit area. He mentored hundreds of students with their science fair projects, shepherding 43 of them to regional and international awards.



The fates smiled on Colorado when he and wife Nancy chose our State to retire to in 2006. He immediately joined several clubs and organizations. Boulder County Audubon counts their blessings to have been one of them. Birch is renowned within the Boulder environmental community for his incredible devotion to building and installing over 500 bluebird and swallow houses. His handiworks still remain which help these species thrive at Walker Ranch, Betasso Preserve, Heil Ranch, Bald Mountain, Shanahan Ridge, NCAR, and Eldorado Canyon State Park.



But Birch did not stop with the above species. He realized that many birds, bees and bats were also suffering housing shortages. He took it upon himself to research and start building and installing bat houses, bee boxes and nest boxes for Wood Ducks, kestrels, Barn Owls, wrens and flickers. I talked to him once about his dedication to working with wood for the benefit of so many species. He told me he did it to honor his father, who was also handy with tools.

Besides being a member of BCAS’s Board of Directors, he gave tirelessly to other organizations including the Boulder Bird Club, Colorado Field Ornithologists, as the newsletter editor for the Longmont Astronomy Club, on the Longmont Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, where he was a strong voice for conservation, as manager of the Blue Bird Trail at Walker Ranch and as an active member of Longmont’s Hope and Hoe Garden Club.

We so miss your enthusiasm and dedication to BCAS. RIP....

Pam Piombino

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Next issue deadline:

(Nov 2017 issue) Oct12.

Contact editor via link at: <http://www.boulderaudubon.org/on-the-wing-newsletter/>

Field Trips & Events Sept-Oct, 2017

Family Birding Bird Watching for Beginners, Greenlee Wildlife Preserve at Waneka Lake, Lafayette

Sunday, September 3, 2017, 1-3 p.m.

Free, no reservations necessary

Experienced birdwatchers from Boulder County Audubon are partnering with the Lafayette Open Space Department and will be on hand to help beginning birders who are invited to experience the fun and discovery of bird watching at the Greenlee Wildlife Preserve.

These events are held the first Sunday of each month from May-November. Boulder County Audubon has binoculars to share, and spotting scopes available for more distant viewing. We want to assist you in the fun activity of identifying birds in their most natural habitat. We also have games for children and young adults at our Identification Station.

Parking is available at the Waneka East or West parking lots and Greenlee is located on the northwest side of Waneka Lake.

For more information contact Martin Ogle at 720-612-0506 or martin@entrepreneurialearth.com

Heil Valley Ranch with Carl Starace

Wednesday, September 20, 2017, 8:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.

Free, Limited to 12 people, reservations: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/birding-at-heil-valley-ranch-with-carl-starace-tickets-37162594320>

Leader: Carl Starace

Carl will take a small group to this lovely section of the Boulder County Open Space system. The fall migration will be in full swing so anything is possible. Turkeys are very common and almost a certainty. Other target birds include Pygmy Nuthatch, Mountain Chickadee, Townsend's Solitaire and Red-naped Sapsuckers. Golden Eagles are often spotted soaring overhead and this is a great place to see the tassel-eared Abert's Squirrel.

We will meet inside the entrance off Left Hand Canyon Road at the new parking area by the old ranch sheds. Bring the usual: sturdy shoes, water, hats, binoculars and cameras if you desire.

Arapaho Ranch, Nederland, Tree Swallow and Blue Bird Box Clean-Out

Saturday, September 23, 2017, 10 a.m.-12ish

Limited to 12, reservations: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/arapaho-ranch-nederland-tree-swallow-and-blue-bird-box-clean-out-tickets-36987477541>

1:00 or so, Buffet Lunch on BCAS at the Himalayas Restaurant in Nederland

Leader: Pam Piombino

For many years, Dr. Robert Cohen's lifetime work revolved around monitoring all facets of high elevation Tree Swallow and bluebird nests, with the emphasis on the swallows. He had a fatal accident several years ago and left approximately 100 boxes on the gorgeous Arapaho Ranch without a caretaker.

The owner of Arapaho Ranch has asked BCAS if we will step in and help maintain these important and heavily used nest boxes. This is the land along the valley to the north of Eldora Ski area, and east of the Eldora town site, on Middle Boulder Creek. It is a haven for wildlife with almost no public access. Moose, beaver, bear, elk, deer and coyote thrive, along with many bird and insect species. It is truly a privilege to be invited onto this property. Meet at Eben Fine Park at the west end of Arapahoe Avenue at 9:20 to carpool.

Here is a wonderful article that Dr. Cohen wrote, "Tree Swallows on the Trail": <http://www.sialis.org/tres.htm#feathers>

BCAS will provide gloves, masks, garbage bags, water and snacks. If anyone has an electric screwdriver, please bring one as it is most helpful to remove the tops for access to the interior of the nests. As a thank-you, we would like to take the crew out to the lovely buffet at the Himalayas Restaurant in Nederland afterwards. If you fall in love with the project, we would love to talk to one or more folks about being the permanent monitors of these boxes.

Field Trips & Events Sept-Oct, 2017 (cont'd)

Birds and Brews, East Boulder Trail and Avery Brewing with Eric DeFonso

September 24, 2017, 4 p.m. to about 7:30 p.m.

Free, RSVP at <https://www.meetup.com/Boulder-Birds-and-Brew/events/242772120/>

Leaders: Eric DeFonso

Join one of Boulder County Audubon's newest and most popular programs to first, "Bird", then, meet the group at a local pub for "Brews". You buy the drinks and we will buy the snacks! Meet in the parking lot of Teller Farm North on the south side of Valmont Rd., halfway between 75th and 95th Streets.

Waneka Lake Park, Lafayette, Bird Migration Celebration

September 24, 2017, 1:00 P.M.-3:00 P.M.

Free, no reservations necessary

Explore the wonderful world of birds! Boulder County Audubon will once again have an information and education station at this annual event. We will be leading bird walks and playing bird identification games with children. This event is family oriented and will feature prizes. Boulder County Audubon will have children's nature books for sale.

Open Space 50th Anniversary: Celebrate Boulder's Greatest Treasure

Thurs., Oct. 12, at SEEC, CU's East Campus, 5pm Reception; 6pm Program

Free, but **Registration is required** at <https://openspace50th.eventbrite.com> (Also, see details about the location, parking, and the program at this url.)

You'll enjoy hearing the Founders tell great stories of how our open space system got started; joining in the celebration with food, music, videos, and photos of our first 50 years; and learning about the creation of a new Center **for Sustainable Landscapes and Communities** at CU Boulder and the vision for moving forward over the next 50 years.

This event is being organized by a diverse group of Open Space advocates and users, including founders of Boulder's Open Space program and former Open Space Board of Trustees members, and is held in collaboration with the City of Boulder Open Space & Mountain Parks, Boulder County Parks & Open Space, and the University of Colorado - Boulder.

It's Sprague's Pipit Time! with Bill Kaempfer

Saturday and Sunday, October 14 and 15 with an overnight in Wray, CO

Fee: \$50 per person and your share of car fees if you are not a driver.

Limited to 10 in 3 cars, you MUST car pool.

Reservations: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/its-spragues-pipit-time-with-bill-kaempfer-tickets-37163164024>

Leader: Bill Kaempfer

Is it early October? Then it must be Sprague's Pipit time! This elusive bird comes through eastern Colorado like clockwork every fall. Because these Pipits' habitat preferences are very specific, we can set up a field trip to maximize the chances of seeing these secretive birds with some accuracy.

Join Bill who knows these prairie areas better than any other birder, for a weekend long trip to eastern CO to look for these elusive Pipits and other grassland denizens. For the target bird, you will visit a prime, private conservation area. Saturday night, you will stay in Wray, CO. Sunday, you will swing through southwestern Nebraska for other great birding areas before heading home. The route back will be determined according what places are hot or not. Meeting time and place will be arranged later.

Pack lunches for Saturday and Sunday. Breakfast is provided by the motel on Sunday morning. On Saturday evening, there is a great restaurant in Wray named, "4th and Main". The participants on the Prairie Chicken trip earlier this year very much enjoyed the dinner there. You will be responsible for making your own reservations at the Cobblestone Inn, Wray, CO. I will call and reserve a block, so you should mention you are with the BCAS group for the price I have negotiated.

Field Trips & Events Sept-Oct, 2017 (cont'd)

Sandstone Ranch and Firestone Gravel Pits with Carl Starace

Wednesday, October 25, 2017 8 a.m.-11 a.m.

Free, limited to 12 people, reservations: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/sandstone-ranch-and-firestone-gravel-pits-with-carl-starace-tickets-36987737318>

Leader: Carl Starace

This is definitely a trip for which you will want to carry your spotting scopes and share with those who don't own one. This City of Longmont recreation area has abundant wildlife once you move south and east away from the developed areas. There can be an amazing variety of raptors present including Bald Eagles, Cooper's Hawks, Red-tailed Hawks and Kestrels. The riparian area along Saint Vrain Creek has Wild Turkey, Dark-eyed Junco, Downy Woodpeckers and many other passerines. The river and gravel ponds will reward you with Northern Shoveler, Ring-necked Duck, American Wigeon, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Gadwall and Ruddy Duck.

This is a walking excursion. Wear sturdy shoes, hats, bring water, cameras, binoculars and scopes. We will meet at Sandstone Ranch in the parking lot on the south side of the big soccer field.

The Boulder Ensemble Theater Company Presents A Play, "Birds of North America"

Friday Oct. 27, 2017, 7:30 p.m.

Tickets with Special Discount Code Below, General Admission, \$31, Seniors, \$28, Students, \$15

Post Performance: A Discussion on Current Bird Conservation Issues, led by Steve Jones and on Saturday morning, a special field trip led by one of our star Teen Naturalists, Luke Pheneger. Details below.

Boulder County Audubon is delighted to be partnering with the Boulder Ensemble Theater Company for the world premier of the play, *Birds of North America* by Anna Moench. This production was the WINNER of the 2015 American Theatre Wing's National Theatre Company Award and is the most recent winner of BETC's nationally recognized Generations new play competition.

In Anna Moench's "Birds of North America," while birding in their backyard over the course of ten years, a father and daughter struggle to understand each other. Their politics and personal views couldn't be more different, but family bonds compel their annual migration. This gorgeously written family drama, full of humor and insight, explores how we connect with the people we just can't fly away from and how the world of birds is changing."

BCAS hopes to have many of the area's birdwatchers in attendance for this special evening. To order tickets, please go to: <http://betc.org/birds> The discount code will be FORTHEBIRDS, all caps. That will get people who use it \$5 off, per ticket, for the "Birds of North America" performances on 10/27, 10/28, or 10/29.

Please let Pam know if you plan to attend: Piombino.pam@gmail.com

Post Play Field Trip, "Birds of North America" Sawhill and Walden Ponds with Luke Pheneger

Saturday, Oct. 28, 9 a.m.-11 a.m. or so

Free, no reservations necessary

Leader: Luke Pheneger

Boulder County Audubon is offering this field trip in conjunction with the play, *Birds of North America*, which you are all invited to attend. Please see the description above.

This outing will be led by one of the Boulder area's star young birders and Teen Naturalist, Luke Pheneger. Join Luke for this amble around one of Boulder's most productive public wildlife habitats. The waterfowl will be in their shimmering breeding plumages, raptors should be gliding overhead, and our wintering birds chipping from the trees and bushes.

Wear sturdy shoes, bring your binoculars and scope if you have one, water and snacks. If you need binoculars, BCAS has loaners. Please meet at the parking lot at Walden Ponds, off of 75th Street in Boulder.

A Visit to the Butcher Shop

Carol McCasland



An intrepid group of 'Shrikers' visited the Colorado Eastern Plains May 27 with Dave Leatherman to find Loggerhead Shrike larder. This was one of the Boulder County Audubon's Interludes with Nature trips for 2017. And what a trip it was! Dave had staked out many interesting 'items' that had been impaled on barbed wire fences by that little butcher bird, the Loggerhead Shrike. We saw everything from crickets to snakes to parts of birds to lizards. We did see Loggerhead Shrikes along the way, including a nest with tiny nestlings, which we singly and quickly observed, getting out of the there just as mom Shrike returned with some food for her babies.

One of the most gruesome 'impalees' was a tiny baby bird (right), seemingly just hatched, as it had no feathers at all. We also saw a hog-nose snake, a bird wing, and a lizard egg taken from

the lizard that was impaled on the other side of the road. And of course the usual Shrike menu: lizards and insects galore.

Along with the larder-viewing, Dave shared some interesting ideas he has about this 'butcher bird'. His theory is that the birds are not just storing food for later snacking, but purposely placing gruesome bits to mark territory, to warn other male shrikes that this is NOT their territory, and to impress the 'girls' that he would be able to amply provide food for her and her babies. Dave pointed out that a part of one lizard was at one spot, and another part of supposedly the same lizard was further down the fence line. Now why would the bird bother to do that, except maybe to mark territory.



After our trip, some of us 'shrikers' got the 'bug' and went out again to view more gruesome-ness. We saw a headless grasshopper sparrow stuck in a tree and a rattlesnake stuck on a fence. Now that takes some calculated and fast movement on the shrike's part to grab that rattlesnake right behind the head without getting bit! Dave later shared with us a photo of half of a kangaroo rat impaled on a tree! This is not a bird you want to mess around with!

seemed to have found many other things to impale this year.

On July 29, the BCAS Board went out to the Eastern Plains for our annual retreat, and of course, we had to get out and run the fences! Pam Piombino found the most amazing Rainbow Scarab Beetle, nicely impaled. Those of you who follow COBIRDS probably saw the recent post by Dave Leatherman about the lack of 'hoppers' this year on the Northern Eastern Plains. Indeed, we did not see very many 'hoppers' impaled on any of our trips. But the Shrikes

An interesting video just recently posted by National Audubon follows a Loggerhead Shrike pair as they court and raise a family. The researcher discovered and documented that juvenile shrikes practice their impaling skills with leaves on branches and twigs. Check it out for a fascinating 22 minutes.

<http://www.audubon.org/news/watch-new-shrike-film-shows-previously-undocumented-butcher-bird-behaviors>

This trip was brought to us by Boulder County Audubon's Interludes with Nature, an annual fund raiser that helped to send 3 of our teen naturalists to Hog Island Audubon Camp in Maine and to the ABA Teen camp in Estes Park this year. Please help support this program by signing up for some amazing trips at our annual Holiday Sale on November 28, 2017.



(all photos by Carol McCasland)

BCAS Award Winners - Spring 2017

Community Environmental Champion Karen Hollweg



Karen Hollweg has long been a stalwart of the Boulder environmental community, from early work in the BioBlitz and other citizen science projects, but most importantly in ensuring that Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks continues to fulfill its charter purpose of preserving functioning ecosystems.

Professionally, Karen is nationally known for her leadership in scientific education. She was a classroom biology teacher in middle and high school and is a consultant to several national science and environmental education projects. She was the 2008-2009 President of the North American Association for Environmental Education. At the National Academies' National Research Council she was responsible for the dissemination and implementation of the National Science Education Standards, and she was Principal Investigator on seven different NSF-funded education projects. In 2007, she was awarded an Indo-American Environmental Leadership Fulbright to study environmental education for sustainability in India, and is currently a Fulbright Specialist, consulting internationally.

Here in Boulder, Karen has been one of our most important activists on open space issues. She worked on the five-year effort on the Open Space and Mountain Parks Visitor Master Plan, and has worked tirelessly on every single Trail Study Area since then, badgering many of us to stand up and defend our precious open space to preserve the native ecosystems, not just exploit them for human recreation.

Thank you, Karen!

Tim Hogan: Environmental Advocate Extraordinaire

Tim Hogan has been a knowledgeable and very effective advocate for protection of native plant communities and wildlife in Boulder County for more than 30 years. While serving as Collection Manager for the University of Colorado Herbarium, a position he has held since 1991, he has expanded and synthesized our knowledge of native plant communities in Boulder County and throughout Colorado.

Along with his responsibilities in the herbarium, Tim has pursued floristic studies in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, the Needle Mountains in the San Juans, the Eagles Nest Wilderness in central Colorado, Boulder Mountain Parks and Open Space, and Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. He's served on a variety of boards and advisory groups pursuing conservation biology and ecological restoration. He also has contributed invaluable information to *Colorado Flora, Eastern Slope* and *Colorado Flora, Western Slope*, the two seminal guides to stop listening him Colorado Flora authored by William Weber and Ronald Wittmann.



Tim Hogan (L) and Steve Jones (R)

One of Tim's unique gifts is his ability to instill understanding and compassion for wildlife and wild places through words. His numerous letters to the editor, along with his testimony at public hearings, have heightened our community's understanding of our stewardship responsibilities to nature and of the rights of native plants and animals to survive and flourish. Tim has become our community conscious for wildlife and wild places, and what a clear and compelling voice his is!

Open Space 50th Anniversary: Celebrate Boulder's Greatest Treasure



This autumn marks the 50th anniversary of the passage of Boulder's Open Space tax, the first of its kind in the United States. The original election victory marked the beginning of our iconic Open Space program that has become Boulder's greatest treasure. To commemorate the leadership of the founders, celebrate that far-sighted decision by the people of Boulder, recognize those who have contributed to the success of our city's Open Space and Mountain Parks system, and focus attention on the next fifty years, we are hosting an event on the evening of October 12th at the beautiful SEEC building on CU Boulder's east campus.

Please plan to join us for this once-in-a-lifetime celebration! You can register and find more details at <https://openspace50th.eventbrite.com>

NOTE: The event is free, but registration is required and entitles you to free parking, the reception and program.

This October 12 event will be a fun community-wide occasion that will

- Start with a celebratory reception,
- Engage open space users of all stripes and ages,
- Feature posters & other memorabilia from the 1967 campaign and wonderful footage of Al Bartlett, Ricky Weiser, and other "mothers" and "fathers" of open space, and
- Announce the creation of the new Center at CU and describe our vision for the major positive role we imagine it will play in the future of Boulder's City and County Open Space lands. The Center will help to inform decisions about coming challenges, and insure that future generations will be able to enjoy this treasure as much as we have.

The planning group's diverse membership includes:

- * Ruth Wright and Oak Thorne, representing the Founders, and Jim Crain and Gwen Dooley, representing former staff and trustees who have tirelessly worked to grow and sustain the system; plus
- * Allyn Feinberg, Roger Briggs, Karen Hollweg, Tina Nielsen, Mark Gershman, and Sharon Collinge who have been working for several years to establish a new Center at CU, tentatively called the *Center for Sustainable Landscapes and Communities*.

Discover iNaturalist - A New Tool For Your Naturalist Toolkit

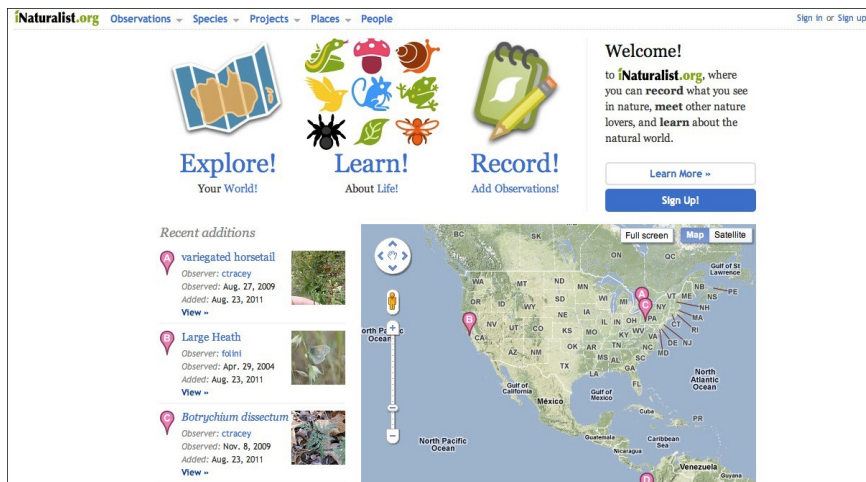
Laura Steadman

How often do you ask yourself “What’s that flower? Bug? Animal?” I do this ALL the time. In the past, I would take a (bad) photo, note some details, and try to look it up in field guides once home. Sometimes that’s not enough! I might still be stumped. Good news! There’s a new, free tool to help with just this problem!



iNaturalist is a website and smartphone app that makes it easy to share your observations, get help on identification, contribute your knowledge to a community of other nature-lovers, and even help public lands managers and scientists! Think eBird with a focus on photography and not just for birds. With the smartphone app, your iPhone, iPad, or Android becomes an observation tool. Snap a photo, upload it to iNaturalist right from your device, and provide an identification. You can also use your other camera and

upload photos through the website. Not sure what you just saw? iNaturalist attempts to automatically suggest an ID, and you can also enter non-species level identifications (e.g., “Butterflies and Moths”). Other naturalists then suggest an identification or agree with yours. For me, this process has been immensely helpful in slowing down to really study what I’m seeing (have *you* tried photographing butterflies with your iPhone?). Having this app has encouraged me to take the time to investigate what it might be, and then finally get help in identifying things when before I would have remained confused and frustrated.



Are you good at identifying a certain species, perhaps western tanagers and Colorado columbine? You can help others by suggesting identifications for their observations! Curious what’s been reported in your neighborhood or favorite open space? iNaturalist makes it easy to explore sightings anywhere in the world. This is also great for browsing what you might see on an upcoming trip!

All of this is great for personal learning and feeling like a part of a community of like-minded nature-lovers. One of the coolest aspects of iNaturalist, however, is that you’re sharing information with public lands managers and scientists. Boulder City and County have teamed up on iNaturalist with their “Boulder County Wildlife” Project. By observing animals in Boulder open spaces, you’re helping the city and county know what’s out there.

So, what are you waiting for? Check out <http://www.inaturalist.org> and start improving your identification skills today!

Good news for County Ecosystem health, and Otter interesting information

County biologists and naturalists exult: wild otter spotted in a closed-access County lake in January 2017.

Occasionally seen in high altitude lakes and streams in Boulder County, the appearance of an otter or otter family always elicits cheers from those who care about these harbingers of good ecosystem health. There have been otters in the past couple of years in the upper S. St. Vrain River area near good ponds—along with the ubiquitous beavers.

Most of us who travel have seen far more ocean-going otters than their river cousins.



For most of the year, the North American otter is most active from dusk till dawn, but in the winter months, it may be more commonly seen during the day. Slow-moving fish, and to a lesser extent amphibians and crustaceans, are this species' favoured fare, but a wide range of other food types feature opportunistically in its diet, including birds, reptiles, molluscs, small mammals, and fruit. A quick lunge from a position of ambush is the most commonly employed hunting method, but prolonged chases do sometimes occur.

The one recently seen near the St. Vrain River was not hunting, and appeared unusually brave and curious—so perhaps either young and naïve or one of those movie-hero type animals. It swam back and forth with a flip of its graceful tail, examining closely the humans on the snowy bank nearby. Conclusions drawn

(“Nope, they seem harmless; nope, not interesting females; nope, no good food smells here.”), it headed away to explore the lake and no doubt nearby hiding places.

The social structure of the North American otter is extremely variable, with some animals being solitary, while others live in family units comprising an adult female with offspring, or occasionally even in large groups made up solely of adult males. Groups of otters typically hunt and travel together, and will also utilize the same den and resting sites. Dens are made in riverside burrows, under rocks or vegetation near water, in hollow trees or undercut banks, or even in beaver and muskrat lodges.

Owing to its aquatic nature, the North American otter is confined to areas with permanent water. However, this includes a wide variety of habitats from rivers, creeks and streams, to coastal waters, swamps and lakes.

By the turn of the 20th century, the North American otter had been extirpated from large parts of its range as a result of habitat loss, pollution, and unregulated trapping for its luxuriant fur. In particular, the development of coal, oil, gas, tanning and timber industries had a devastating impact on the quality of wetlands and other water bodies throughout the continent. Fortunately, since then, the otter population has undergone a significant recovery, owing to reintroduction efforts, and improvements in trapping management and water quality.

In coastal areas, this species is extremely vulnerable to oil spills, with an untold number having died in the aftermath of the grounding of the Exxon Valdez off Alaska in 1989. Chemical pollution is more of a problem inland, where the outflow of harmful pollutants into lakes and rivers can be extremely detrimental to the survivorship of this highly sensitive species. In remnant areas where otters have been reintroduced, there is increasing discussion over the loss of intra-species diversity resulting from the mixing of different subspecies.

While otter trapping continues, with between 20,000 to 30,000 individuals taken annually for the fur trade, the current harvest strategies are not thought to pose a threat to the sustainability of existing populations. Nonetheless, there is concern that current harvest rates are limiting this species potential to expand its range in some areas.

Information and photo from www.arkive.org

Summer Hog Island Audubon Camp

By Luke Pheneger



Black Guillemot (photo by Luke Pheneger)

On June 11 through the 16th I attended a the Hog Island Audubon Camp for teens just off of the coast of Maine in the Atlantic Ocean, and it would end as one of the best weeks of my life. Over the course of the week I got to do bird banding on Burnt Island, bird song study sessions with special microphones to study sonograms, and visit the famed Eastern Egg Rock; the home of one of the largest collections of seabirds in North America.

One of the most enjoyable moments of the camp was when we visited Eastern Egg rock, and along with gawking



Arctic Tern (photo by Luke Pheneger)

at the mass quantity of seabirds we also got to help with maintenance around the island. We got to help trim the trails and build a new blind for the interns on the island. I really appreciated that along with Hog Island teaching us about the natural world they also helped us give back to the community who are helping these birds.

I learned a lot over the course of the week but the main tip I took away from the camp was to study every bird to see what it does individually. The island has a 360 degree view of the ocean so I could constantly watch everything that was going on, I watched the loons dive for fish, the Guillemots eat crustaceans, and study the Eiders dancing around each other in huge flocks. I had a great time at Hog Island and thank the Boulder Audubon for helping me experience this once in a lifetime opportunity.

Outstanding Young Area Naturalists



Alex Posen



(L to R) Jasey Chanders, Eva Getman, Topi Martinez, and Owen Robertson

Oh, Those Odes!! Dragonflies, That Is!

Carol Kampert



Eight of us spent a delightful morning on Friday, July 28, discovering the magic world of dragonflies and damselflies (dragons and damsels) at the newly restored Pella Crossing near Hygiene, Colorado. Led by dragonfly and damselfly experts Ann Cooper and John Barr, participants in this Boulder County Audubon “Interludes With Nature” trip ambled along the shores of the ponds at Pella with binoculars in hand, focusing on Blue-eyed Darners, Halloween Pennants, Western Pondhawks, Widow Skimmers, and other Odonata (Odes) species with equally extravagant names.

While observing the behavior of these colorful, gossamer-winged insects, we learned that these ancient insects can fly forward (up to 40 mph), backwards for short distances, and also hover in place because of their four unique, independently-mobile wings. In addition, we saw male dragonflies patrolling their territories along pond edges, zipping back and forth between the



boundaries of the territories and chasing off any potential invaders.



We also learned about the difference between dragonflies and damselflies: dragonflies are large and chunky and hold their wings stuck out to the side when perched on vegetation or rocks; damselflies are small and dainty and perch with their wings folded along their sides or at an angle above their backs.

It was fascinating to see males and females flying together in mating wheels and to observe females dipping their abdomens in the water to lay eggs. A fun fact: Odes hatch out of eggs under water and spend a significant part of their lives - from a few weeks to five years depending on the species and conditions - as wingless, predatory larvae in the water. They then emerge

as winged adults during the spring, usually living for only a few more months as the airborne adults we are familiar with.

Thanks to Ann and John for sharing their invaluable expertise and inspiring enthusiasm about Odes during the excellent “Interludes With Nature” trip.



To learn more about the fascinating world of Odes, I highly recommend two beautifully illustrated books by our own Ann Cooper: [Dragonflies of the Colorado Front Range](#) and [Dragonflies Q&A Guide: Fascinating Facts About their Life in the Wild](#)

(All Photos by Dale Ball)

Biking and Birding in Glacier National Park (July 2017)

Maikel L. Wise

Susan and I decide to mix things up and explore the west side of Glacier National Park. This is an opportunity to go birding in an area we haven't explored before because of rumors about crowds. We prepare by reading David Benson's book *Glacier is for the Birds*, and by listening to recorded birdsongs to burn them to memory.

The Going-to-the-Sun road is still closed, so next morning, I ride my bike from the campground to the alpine tundra of Logan Pass. As I start the fifteen-mile climb from through cedar-hemlock forests, I hear Varied Thrushes, Swainson's Thrushes, Northern Waterthrushes and Townsend's Warblers. I hear a chickadee but can't quite make out the species: four species to distinguish here—I need to study all of their sounds again and not just the simple ones. Through a break in the forest, Vaux's and Black Swifts mixed with Tree Swallows are swooping. When the light and angle are right, I can note the forked tail of the Black Swift. However, it fans the tail out often and the fork disappears.

My bird brain hears a sound. I've studied it... I know it... a neuron fires! Pacific Wrens are singing on top of stumps. On our hike yesterday we counted twenty-one Pacific Wrens. But were they all Pacific? Mmmm...I need to study these again to decide if some are Winter Wrens. I scan the ground and see little wrens scurrying among the nooks and crannies of the forest floor catching bugs.

At mile one, I get an opening along the river and scan. Luke Pheneger, a Boulder Audubon Teen Naturalist nine hundred miles away in Colorado, jumps to mind. He has been texting us, "Go to a place with rocks sitting in the middle of the rapids. Harlequins like to sit on those." We're supposed to be mentoring this fifteen-year-old but alas, it seems like he mentors us. And there they are as promised: a male Harlequin Duck with two females. In about two weeks the male Harlequins will leave and let the females raise the young.



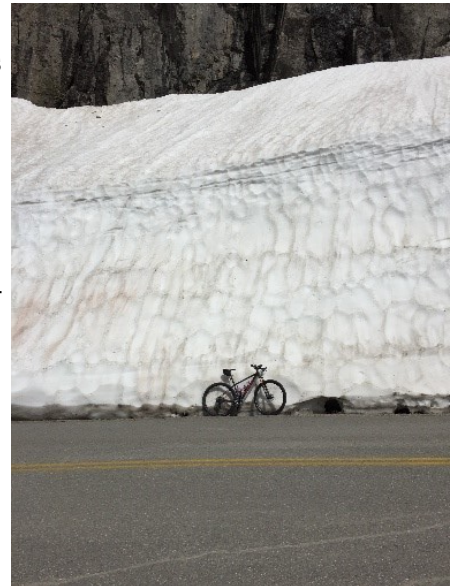
At mile two, I spot a lone female Harlequin. At two and one-half miles, there is an avalanche chute on the right allowing diverse and shrubby vegetation to prosper. Birds--but bears as well--love these areas. In the distance, I hear "Quick, free beer," Ted Floyd's handy mnemonic. An Olive-sided Flycatcher is certainly perched on a snag catching bugs up there, but I can't find it. "Pid-der-rik". I see the glint of the red-and-yellow of a male Western Tanager. (Mental note: I need to re-listen to Black-headed and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks). "Sweet-sweet-sweet-a-little-more-sweet". I see the Yellow Warbler but know that I should start seeing/hearing Wilson's Warblers soon. I hear a loud woodpecker about three feet off the ground just thirty feet away. Then a Pileated Woodpecker pops out. Susan hasn't seen one before, so I note the location to show her later. Ohhhh, I love the diversity of avalanche chutes.

Biking and Birding in Glacier National Park (cont'd)

When the road steepens, I hear dozens of Chipping Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos (Oregon)--some are difficult to differentiate by sound alone. I recall Nathan Pieplow's classes and how he demonstrated sonograms showing how they can be identical. At ten miles, an accipiter dives straight in front of me...Sharp-shinned Hawk I suspect, but it was too fast: I can't see the wrist-to-head relationship. Maybe one less junco or sparrow in the world now? I'll list "Accipiter-Sp." Above the ridgeline a Golden Eagle soars. I remember a documentary showing how Golden Eagles knock young goats and sheep off cliffs. I stop near Bird Woman Falls overlook and see an American Dipper moving upstream.

At mile thirteen, large snowbanks flank the road as I hit Krummholz habitat. Ranger David Benson said during one of his bird hikes that White-tailed Ptarmigans were less frequent on Logan Pass than in previous years, but I'm still hopeful. I get to the parking lot at the top and see only two NPS cars-- never before so few at this time of day. No Ptarmigans, nor Rosy Finches either, but the White-crowned Sparrows are everywhere. It is time to head back down.

At the campground, I tell Susan excitedly about finding the ducks. We head back up, and she sees them. We find seven: two males and five females. Luckily, we find the Pileated Woodpecker too. Then lumbering along and preventing us from going to the avalanche chute is a large black bear. Well, there is always tomorrow for birds. But maybe we can still look for owls.



We send Luke his Harlequin photos and jokingly taunt him with "Going to look for Northern Hawk Owl and Gray Owl now." He replies, "Go to Camas Creek Trail. There was a Hawk Owl there yesterday. Look on the outskirts of the meadow. They are diurnal, so you can see them during the day. The Hawk Owls like the open grassland areas, like a hawk." Egads. It was supposed to be a joke but now we're obligated.

The next day, we get a late start and head up toward Camas Creek. The area burned years ago, and the road is pothole-infested. Here we see an Osprey nest on a snag—certainly not as stable as the fabricated poles in Boulder County.

We pass Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets. I hear the single whistle notes of a couple Townsend's Solitaires. The forest begins to open up to a large meadow. We walk north off the trail and set up the spotting scope in the shadow of a tree. I begin scanning and see an American Kestrel on an old snag in an area of that meadow. On the backside of another snag, I get a brief glimpse of a Lewis's Woodpecker peering around. I go back and forth and only see Northern Flickers and Red-naped Sapsuckers. At our backs, "Fitzbew" repeats over and over as Willow Flycatchers stake their territory. Mosquitoes approaching Biblical proportions are attacking areas of exposed skin, and the bug repellent doesn't work as advertised. We hear and see two Sandhill Cranes land on the northeasternmost part of the meadow. They forage for some time, keeping their distance from us. We do the same. I think back to Lewellen, Nebraska, with Steve Jones and the first time we heard these cranes - magical.

Biking and Birding in Glacier National Park (cont'd)

Then I notice something running directly towards us through the sedges and grass. It is low to the ground and is not slowing down. I think to myself, "What is it running from? What is behind it?" Then just before the Columbian Ground Squirrel jumps on my leg, I kick it about three feet. It changes direction and heads towards Susan. She kicks but it has already sunk its teeth into her gaiters. We think, "I hope it doesn't have rabies." She checks her skin and notices no flesh wounds. Whew, no rabies shots.

We head to the western part of the meadow. Susan is losing blood fast—to the mosquitoes. We scan one last time and about one-half mile away Susan spies a Northern Hawk Owl. We look at the tail, head, and shape and convince ourselves it is not something else. We decide to head up the closed road to get a closer vantage point. We move north about a quarter mile. Susan spots the owl again: This time the owl is only three hundred feet away, looking right at us. We get pictures and view it with the spotting scope. This is a "lifer," so we are both excited. As soon as we are in cellphone range, we text Luke. He is excited and promptly responds, "Now for the Great Gray Owl, you will want a more wooded area."

Because it is getting dark, we don't want to be in a 'more wooded area' near dusk since we are not the highest on the food chain. Susan texts back: "Luke, we ain't going after no Gray in Grizzly ground zero near dark time unless you're with us." I married a (birding) woman of good sense.



Northern Hawk Owl (photo from Audubon.org)

(Photos by Maikel Wise unless otherwise indicated)

Birds and Brews in Boulder

Eric DeFonso



On July 16, I had the privilege of leading about 20 experienced and new birders with Ann Tagawa on our bimonthly Birds and Brews outing, this time on the Bear Canyon Trail in South Boulder, just south of NCAR in the beautiful Flatiron foothills. The trail leads up initially through and then alongside the riparian corridor of Bear Creek, but also provides terrific views of mixed short and tallgrass leading into ponderosa pine woodlands. With this terrific variety of habitats we were able to tally raptors like American Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, and Turkey Vulture, as well as more riparian woodland species like Yellow Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Gray Catbird, and even a Belted Kingfisher.

The real excitement started however when one small group of us

initially came across a pair of entangling Prairie Rattlesnakes. As that pair receded into the tall grasses along the trail, a third rattler came into view (above) just beyond the other two. Don't worry, we stayed well clear of the active snakes but did get ourselves in position to view them safely once they were well off the path. Little did we realize that another amazing wildlife viewing experience was about to happen!



(continued on next page)

(photos by Eric DeFonso)



Later, we headed back down the trail to get back to our cars so that we could then make our way to the Southern Sun for some snacks and beverages. While we were all strolling, chatting and enjoying the late afternoon tranquility, I raised my bins to check out what looked like an odd-shaped tree stump. To my surprise and delight, I saw that it was a live Bobcat! I hurriedly whisper-yelled “Bobcat bobcat bobcat!” at my group to get them to stop and turn



around to see what I was seeing before the cat left. Thankfully, the cat was very cooperative and most all of us got long, great looks at this usually secretive and elusive creature!

Looking ahead.... Coming in November!

Double Joy on November 28, 2017. Mark your calendars for both our Annual Holiday Sale, which includes the start of the sign-ups for next year’s Interludes with Nature series,

AND Scott Rashid, founder of the Center for Avian Research and Rehabilitation Institute, who has partnered with Boulder County Audubon for a long term project to increase the number of nest sites for the enigmatic Barn Owl.

Boulder County Audubon’s Annual Holiday Sale

And Speaker, Scott Rashid

An Intimate Look Into The Lives of Barn Owls

5 p.m., November 28, 2017. Every year, BCAS hosts a Holiday Sale, bursting with gifts for the naturalist in your life. Many of the area’s finest artists showcase their wares in a splendid array of genres. Please come and enjoy home-made seasonal treats along with mulled cider while browsing and (we hope) buying!

The evening of the Holiday Sale also begins your opportunity to sign up for our ever so popular, “Interludes With Nature” fundraising trips. Watch Nature-Net in early November for a list of the coming year’s offerings: always the very best leaders and best places!

7:15 p.m. For four years, Boulder County Audubon has been partnering with Scott Rashid of the Center for Avian Research and Rehabilitation Institute in Estes Park (CARRI). Scott posited that Barn Owls were uncommon due to the lack of nesting cavities. BCAS helped provide funds to install nest boxes on private properties in northern and eastern areas of Boulder County. Hear Scott tell of the wonderful successes and interesting data gleaned from this fruitful project.

Scott has spent a lifetime on avian research. He is a licensed bander (including hummingbirds), an author and fine artist. He has published numerous articles, and three books which will be available at the sale: *Small Mountain Owls*, *The Great Horned Owl* and *Northern Goshawk*, *The Gray Ghost*.



Scott Rashid with juvenile Barn Owl in hand (courtesy of LinkedIn.com)

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