



On The Wing

Volume 40, Number 1

Boulder County Audubon Society Newsletter

Jan-Feb 2010

On the Wing is Changing with the March Issue!

For the March and November 2010 issues, paper copies of *On the Wing* will be mailed only to Supporting Members who request them. Online-only Supporting Members will receive notification emails. Online availability of OTW will also be publicized on Nature Net. Memberships are maintained on a calendar-year basis. If your label says "Please Renew" your membership expired at the end of 2009. (Form for new and renewing Supporting Members, page 8.)

BCAS 4th Tuesday Program Series

January 26

THE BLACK-FOOTED FERRET RETURN OF A NATIVE

Sarah Bexell

One of the most endangered mammals, the black-footed ferret, once ranged widely wherever prairie dogs existed in mid-North America from Canada to Mexico. Ferrets depend on prairie dogs for food and for shelter. Prairie dogs, and ferrets by extension, were decimated by the conversion of prairie to cropland, by poisoning prairie dogs, and sylvatic plague. In 1979, ferrets were presumed extinct. Fortunately, a wild population was discovered in 1981. They succumbed to disease, but not before providing animals to begin captive breeding that has produced more than 6,800 young. Since 1991, more than 2,300 ferrets have been reintroduced at 19 sites. Recovery is within reach. However, as with many species, habitat constraints remain the fundamental obstacle to recovery.

Sarah Bexell is the Education Specialist for the Black-footed Ferret Recovery Program, a Research Scholar in Residence at the University of Denver Human Animal Connection Institute, and the Director of Conservation Education and Communications at the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding, China. She has a B.A. in biology/environmental studies and Ph.D. in early childhood education and conservation sciences. Her career has focused on effective education



Ferret—Sarah Bexell



February 23

COYOTES: LOVE THEM AND LEAVE THEM ALONE

Marc Bekoff

Coyotes are perhaps the most adaptable carnivore in the world. They can withstand the brutal, reprehensible slaughter by government officials and others "in the name of management", a strategy that has *always* failed, and they are able to flourish in a wide variety of habitats. Coyotes are tricksters, cunning, and sly — legends in Native American folklore. They simply are amazing creatures who deserve respect, compassion, and love. In my talk I'll focus on why it is wrong to talk about "the coyote" because of the tremendous variability and flexibility they show in social behavior and social organization. We also need to acknowledge that killing animals is an egregious insult on their lives and demeans us at the same time. Just who do we think we are?

More about Marc Bekoff, page 3.

Marc and a rescued European grey wolf at a sanctuary outside of Budapest, Hungary.



Refreshments and Socializing at 7 PM

Program at 7:30

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

Field Trips (see May 1 trip on page 4)

Saturday, January 30—Winter Waterbirds: Meet leaders Dave Madonna (plant manager) and Scott Severs (rostrhamus@aol.com) at Valmont Power Plant main (west) parking lot on 63rd Street north of Arapahoe Ave, 8:00am. We will be done by around noon. Join us for a unique opportunity to tour Valmont Reservoir. Many species of waterfowl, gulls, and grebes find the cooling ponds at the plant a balmy place to spend the winter. We'll also look for eagles, owls, and other birds of prey drawn in by the masses of birds.

Saturday, February 13—Great Backyard Bird Count Family Walk: 9—10 a.m. at Walden Ponds

Kids ages 7-12 and their families are invited to join Mary Balzer and Scott Severs for the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) family walk. The GBBC is a citizen science project where all people are invited to submit their observations of birds February 12-15. Kids will learn how to count flocks, use binoculars, and see great birds up close with binoculars and scopes. Co-sponsored by the Boulder Wild Bird Center. Please email Mary Balzer (marybalzer@qwest.net) to sign up. Limit 10 families. (Also see page 7.)

Saturday, February 20—Wheat Ridge Greenbelt: (With Boulder Bird Club) Meet leader Paula Hansley (720-890-2628) at East Boulder Rec. Center at 8AM to carpool to Wheat Ridge for waterfowl and winter birding. Then stop at Vincenza's Italian Restaurant nearby for brunch/lunch.

Saturday, February 27—Winter Raptors Trip in Weld County (focus on raptors harder to see in Boulder County: Ferruginous Hawk, Merlin, Rough-legged Hawk, Prairie Falcon, etc.) Meet leader Mark Ponsor (m.ponsor@comcast.net) at Niwot Park & Ride (Niwot Rd. and Diagonal Hwy), 7a.m. Bring lunch and snacks, and plan to return around 2-3pm.

Saturday, March 13—Spring Welcoming Hike: Meet leader Steve Jones (303-494-2468, curlewsj@comcast.net) at Sawhill Ponds Parking Lot, 7:30am. This will be a morning walk, done by noon. Bring portable finger food (something warm, sweet, exotic, or passionate) to share, and meet at the Sawhill Ponds parking area, west of 75th St between Valmont and Jay roads. We'll walk about 2 miles, enjoying the ducks, raptors, and other spring wildlife.

Saturday, March 20—Birding East Longmont: (With Boulder Bird Club) Meet leader Chris Owens 303-772-6048 at 8:00 a.m. at Jim Hamm Natural Area parking lot at County Line Road and 17th Ave, East Longmont, bird until 1—2 p.m. Visit hot spots to ID our winter visitors including water fowl and grebes.

Friday April 23-Saturday April 24—Prairie Chickens and more in Wray and eastern Colorado Field Leader: Scott Severs (rostrhamus@aol.com); Logistics/Organizer: Andy Cowell (cowellj@colorado.edu, 303-543-7504 Note: phone message in foreign language) **Limited to BCAS members**

About \$125 (hotel room, double occupancy, tour cost for visiting lek, mileage @ 0.12/mile). Contact Cowell by March 1 to sign up. Limited to 8 spots. Meet: Friday, 5:00 pm, location to be determined. We will rent a van and drive to Wray, have dinner, and stay in a hotel there. We will visit a lek to view Greater Prairie Chickens the next morning on a guided tour. Then after an early lunch, we will bird the plains and riparian areas nearby looking for spring migrants. Return home to Boulder 8-9 p.m. Saturday. Bonus talk Friday evening on role of native grouse species in Native American dancing and ceremony, by Andy Cowell (professor at CU researching Native American language and culture).

Boulder County Audubon Society

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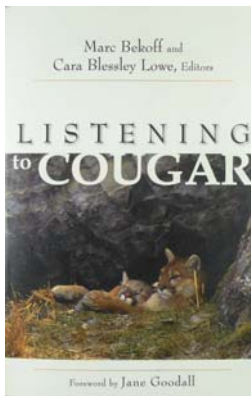
Wildlife Inventory

Alex and Gillian Brown (303)494-3042

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To contact the editor, use the link in
www.boulderaudubon.org/newsletter.htm

Next issue deadline: (Mar 2010 issue) Feb 15.



Listening to Cougar

(University Press of Colorado, 2007) is one of several books authored or edited by or in collaboration with Marc Bekoff, our February program speaker. In her chapter, "Introduction to Cougar," Cara Blessley Lowe provides a fine description of the 19 stories and essays in the book.

"This collection of essays and stories attempts to give voice to a controversial animal that few people have [seen] or ever will see. Each piece is introduced by a brief statement that does nothing more than hint at what you, the reader, will discover through these authors' eyes. Their experiences are diverse yet connected through the common denominator of awe. They come from varying backgrounds—some hunters; some academics, artists and poets, researchers; and some simply going about their lives—and are linked by an encounter with this great cat that has affected the way they view some facet of their lives. Their stories are a testimony to cougar's power, both symbolic and literal."

Marc will sign this or any of his other books at the Feb. 23 meeting.

Marc Bekoff

Marc taught at the University of Colorado for 33 years. He now is a scholar in residence at University of Denver, Institute of Human-Animal Connection, and board member of Project Coyote. He has published 22 books including three encyclopedias and also *Coyotes: Biology, behavior, and management*; *The Emotional Lives of Animals*; *Wild Justice: The Moral Lives of Animals* (with Jessica Pierce), and *The Animal Manifesto: Six Reasons for Expanding Our Compassion Footprint*. His websites are <http://www.literati.net/Bekoff/> and with Jane Goodall, <http://ethologicaethics.org/>.



Special Program in Lafayette

Tuesday, March 2, 7 p.m.

Lafayette Public Library, 775 Baseline Rd.

The Owl and the Woodpecker

Paul Bannick

Intimate photos of owls and woodpeckers, some of the finest ever taken, dazzle the eyes, but Paul Bannick's new book is much more than pretty pictures. Ecosystem by ecosystem, he explores the lives of woodpeckers and associated owls while clearly delineating their conservation needs. His special program for Boulder County Audubon will include stories about how he got the photos and what he learned about the fragile status and interdependence of these species.

Award-winning photographer Paul Bannick specializes in the natural history of North America, with special focus on his beloved Pacific Northwest. An experienced naturalist and outdoor educator, Paul creates most of his images while kayaking, hiking, or snowshoeing. Paul works full time as a director of Conservation Northwest, a conservation organization dedicated to protecting and connecting wild areas from the Pacific Coast to the Canadian Rockies.

Upcoming Tuesday Evening Programs in Boulder

March 23: Steve Jones, Linda Andes-Georges, and Paula Hansley. "Riparian Renaissance at Coal Creek." Hear how breeding bird populations have flourished along Coal Creek and see the new Boulder County Audubon-funded video about this 12-year chapter project.

April 27: Chris Ray, "Pikas and Global Climate Change." University of Colorado research associate Chris Ray will discuss how pikas are responding to global climate change in the central Rockies and Great Basin.

Wild Bird Center 303-442-1322



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Things to Be Thankful For

by Steve Jones, BCAS president

Around the New Year it's easy to grow discouraged over the general state of the world. The world seems to be plummeting into an environmental abyss, and each passing year renders that free-fall more vivid and painful. In Boulder County we can at least find solace in local activism and a shared environmental ethic that places high value on native ecosystem preservation. Here are a few of the positive developments that brightened Boulder County Audubon's past year:

Five Boulder County Bald Eagle pairs fledged eight young, an all-time high. Golden Eagles, Prairie Falcons, and Peregrine Falcons all had productive years. Ospreys and American Bitterns nested in sufficient numbers to make them candidates for removal from the Boulder County "rare" list. A wolverine was seen in northern Colorado for the first time in 90 years, and a pioneering wolf or two continue to frequent Rocky Mountain National Park. Our two prairie elk herds, now numbering more than 300, are thriving.

Boulder County Audubon volunteers documented nesting Green Herons (Walden Ponds) and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks (Marshal Mesa) in Boulder County for the first time. Territorial Hooded Warblers were heard singing in Bluebell Canyon, Baird Canyon, and on Eldorado Mountain. Gregory Canyon's celebrated Scarlet Tanager returned for the third consecutive summer.

160 members and friends packed the hall at our November meeting, the highest number ever to attend an Audubon event in Boulder County. Our November holiday sale raised close to \$1500 to support local conservation programs. Thanks to all who participated!

Our shortgrass-prairie puppet show, featuring prairie dogs, a ferret, a coyote, and delightful shadow puppetry, was featured in the National Audubon Society Newswire that goes out to all chapters.

We completed the most comprehensive Burrowing Owl survey ever undertaken in the county, with more than 40 volunteers visiting 75 sites. The 10 nesting pairs that were observed this year in Boulder County comprise a 30-year high.

We expect once again to exceed 100 participants in this year's 100th anniversary Boulder Christmas Bird Count, placing us among the top 25 count circles in North America for at least the 30th consecutive year.

Our bluebird trails at Walker Ranch, Betasso Preserve, Shanahan Ridge, Bald Mountain, and Heil Ranch fledged 329 mountain and western bluebirds. Results of this highly successful program were featured in a national magazine.

Our newsletter and website remain among the best Audubon sites in North America. If you haven't done so yet, check out the website: www.boulderaudubon.org.

Our number of local supporting members reached an all-time high—and our overall membership remains very strong at around 1200 individual and family memberships.

Our first Boulder County birding basics class was a lot of fun, and we're looking forward to offering an advanced class in the spring.

We completed our 33rd year of monthly wildlife inventories in Boulder County. All the data are now available on our website.

We initiated a new youth program which will include quarterly family field trips and birdwatching classes for children.

We initiated an effort to inventory and eventually restore wildlife habitat at our Dodd Reservoir Audubon Sanctuary.

We supported Audubon Colorado initiatives to protect Gunnison sage grouse habitat in western Colorado and establish new environmental regulations for gas wells throughout the state.

We continue to have what one of our interns described as "the best board I've ever seen," an inspired, cheerful, and supremely-dedicated group of naturalists, educators, tree-huggers, and generally caring folks (and we still have two openings! Please get in touch). It's a joy to be able to share this work with you, with our hard-working committee chairs, and with all our enthusiastic and supportive members.

Thank you all for helping to nurture the light of creation and beauty in Boulder County.

Field Trips (continued from page 2)

Saturday, May 1—Ecosteward rendezvous in Skunk Canyon: 7-10 a.m.

Ecostewards Elaine Hill, Carol Kampert, Maureen Lawry, and Steve Jones (curlwsj@comcast.net) will host a gentle hike up lower Skunk Canyon to look for wildflowers, spring-migrating birds, and mammals. Everyone is welcome, including potential new volunteers. Bring finger food to share during a potluck breakfast in the woods at the upper end of the canyon. Meet at 7 where Deer Valley Road dead-ends into Hollyberry Lane (from South Broadway take Dartmouth three blocks west, turn left onto Kohler Drive, and follow it all the way up to the top of the hill where it merges with Deer Valley Road).

BOULDER COUNTY WILDLIFE INVENTORY, JUNE 2009

Gillian and Alex Brown, 4560 Darley Avenue, Boulder, CO 80305.

Two birds stood out in June as exceptional. The first, a **Kentucky Warbler** found in Gregory Canyon lingered there all month. This elusive bird was last seen in the county in 1998, and tested many birder's patience with skulking behavior that made it remarkably difficult to observe, and even more difficult to photograph. Fortunately, it was fairly vocal. The other sighting was of a **Great-crested Flycatcher**, also last seen in 1998. This bird was only seen once by a single group of birders, and did not seem to generate the same amount of excitement as the **Kentucky Warbler**. The wildlife inventory has had four previous past records of **Kentucky Warbler**, and three of **Great-crested Flycatcher**, although multiple observers have seen each **Kentucky Warbler**. Possibly an added enticement for birders visiting Gregory Canyon was the chance of also seeing our resident **Scarlet Tanager**. This is the third consecutive year that this bird has been sighted.

Spring migration was still underway in the first half of the month, although not as evident as in May. A few species are known as notoriously late migrants such as **Willow Flycatcher** and **Swainson's Thrush**. A **Black-necked Stilt** was a late shorebird sighting. Some unusual warblers were seen, some of which might potentially breed in the county. These included a **Chestnut-sided Warbler**, three **American Redstarts**, three **Ovenbirds**, and two **Hooded Warblers**. Also seen, but probably not breeding were a **Northern Parula**, a **Black-and-White Warbler** and a **Northern Waterthrush**. An **Orange-crowned Warbler** seen on the Indian Peaks Breeding Bird Count (IP) was a very late spring migrant. Another bird that seems to be newly breeding in the county is **Black-chinned Hummingbird**. We were fortunate enough to have a pair in our South Boulder yard all summer, but never managed to locate a nest.

Six species of owl were well reported, including **Flammulated Owl**, nesting **Northern Pygmy Owl** and **Long-eared Owl**. There were two separate sightings of **Red-headed Woodpecker**, a bird last seen in 2007. This bird used to nest in the county but has become increasingly uncommon. **Dickcissel** was another bird that had not been reported since 2007. A **White-winged Dove** was seen in a Louisville yard in the early part of the month.

Altogether 172 bird species were reported in June. This is the second highest number of species reported for June since the wildlife inventory started, only surpassed by last year's 177 species. This was in spite of no gulls or terns being reported, and such common species as **Belted Kingfisher** being missed. For a complete list of sightings please go to the Boulder Audubon County website at www.audubon.org/inventory.htm.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THE JUNE INVENTORY

Lynda Ackert, Linda Andes-Georges, Mary Balzer, Alex & Gillian Brown, Mark Chavez, Raymond E Davis, Todd Deininger, Eric De Fonso, Jessie Dulberger, Norman Erthal, Ted Floyd, Paula Hansley, Kirk Huffstater, Steve Jones, Bill Kaempfer, Kevin Keirn, Loch Kilpatrick, Nick Komar, Chishun Kwong, Marcia Marvin, Mark Miller, Gene and Lynn Monroe, Christian Nunes, Jessie Oberbeck, Sue A. Olmsted, Laura Osborn, Nathan Pieplow, Jeff Romain, Ira Sanders, Susan Spaulding, Walter Szeliga, Joyce Takamine, Brent Thordarson, John Tumasonis, Glenn Walbeck, David J. Waltman, Cole Wild, Wild Bird Center, Bill Wurthel.

**Advanced Birdwatching Course**

Join bird-watching experts and other experienced birders for this exciting new offering from Boulder Audubon!

The emphasis of this course of study will be on identifying birds by sight and song in the context of their ecosystem niches on the Front Range.

The *tentative* dates of the classes/field trips are:

- Wednesday or Thursday Evening, May 19 or 20
- Saturday morning, May 22
- Saturday morning, June 5
- Saturday morning, June 19

The course is \$80 for BCAS members and \$90 for non-members. Please contact Mary Balzer for sign-up information (marybalzer@qwest.net) or check for details on www.boulderaudubon.org after Jan. 15.



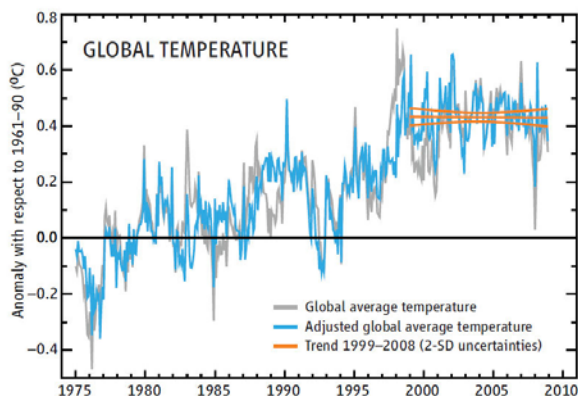
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About the Global Warming Pause

Observations that there has been little or no warming for the past decade have combined with hacked emails to produce a “hoax” frenzy among warming deniers. The figure shows that global temperatures indeed have remained flat for the past decade. Is it possible that warming has actually leveled off, or should we expect soon to see another upward step like that in 1998-99?



The basic physics of the greenhouse suggests that we should expect the upward temperature trend to resume within a very few years. Greenhouse gas emissions have not abated—in fact they are accelerating. Concern is increasing that other factors, such as reduced ice cover, may reinforce the warming trend.

Hadley Centre (England) researchers used climate modeling to try to quantify how unusual a 10-year warming pause might be. In 10 modeling runs of 21st century climate totaling 700 years worth of simulation, long-term warming proceeded about as expected: 2.0°C by the end of the century. But along the way in the 700 years of simulation, about 17 separate 10-year intervals had temperature trends resembling that of the past decade—more or less flat. From this result, the group concludes that the model can reproduce natural fluctuations of the climate system—perhaps from shifts in heat-carrying ocean currents—that can cool the world and hold off greenhouse warming for a decade. But natural climate variability in the model has its limits. Pauses as long as 15 years are rare in the simulations, and “we expect that [real-world] warming will resume in the next few years,” the Hadley Centre group writes. That resumption could come as a bit of a jolt to the deniers (and the rest of us) as the temperature catches up with the greenhouse gases added during the pause.

Do global temperature trends over the last decade falsify climate predictions?—J. Knight, et al., [in “State of the Climate in 2008”]. *Bull. Amer. Meteor. Soc.*, **90** (8), S22–S23.

www.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa/climate/research/2008/ann/bams/



Cranes and geese at sunrise—G. Oetzel

Audubon Rowe Sanctuary 40th Annual Rivers and Wildlife Festival

March 18-21, Kearney, Nebraska

BCAS helps to support the conservation and education work of the Rowe Sanctuary with a \$100 annual donation. Some of their projects:

- Nesting islands for the threatened and endangered Least Tern and Piping Plover have been built on the Sanctuary, with successful nesting each year so far.
- A large restoration project funded through a grant from the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund has restored a mile of wetland and nearly 400 acres of wet meadow on newly acquired land along highway 10 on the Sanctuary.
- Five miles of annual vegetation clearing from the river channel to provide suitable crane roosting sites at an average cost of \$20,000 has been completed on the Sanctuary. This replicates the natural clearing of the large spring flows that are no longer present.
- A half-dozen local educational programs foster knowledge of the Platte River and the cranes.

Featured speakers at this year's Festival include:

- Scott Weidensaul, author of *Living on the Wind: Across the Hemisphere with Migratory Birds* and other books;
- Michael Forsberg, author and photographer who has given a BCAS program, will also lead a photography workshop;
- Ron Klataske, director of Audubon of Kansas, will give a lunchtime presentation about the history of conservation efforts on the Platte;
- Chris Wood, from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, is the project leader for eBird, the online bird checklist.



IN MEMORIAM—SIGRID NOLL UEBLACKER

Thousands of raptors are injured every year, but for the past 27 years, if a raptor was injured within the range of Sigrid Noll Ueblacker and her Birds of Prey Foundation, it had the best chance of recovery and return to the wild. Sigrid's unexpected passing on October 28 at age 68 has been a devastating loss to everyone, but the Birds of Prey Foundation will continue her life's work and philosophy of compassionate care.

Sigrid founded the Birds of Prey Foundation in 1984 to treat injured and orphaned raptors and return healthy members to the wild. Sigrid's legacy includes the admission of over 10,800 birds, with approximately a 62% re-release rate.

A celebration of Sigrid's life, open to all, will be held in May of 2010. Watch the Foundation's website (www.birds-of-prey.org) for details. Memorial donations can be made to the Birds of Prey Foundation, 2290 S. 104th St., Broomfield CO, 80020, or online through the website.

Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)

— (See Field Trip, February 13, page 2)

The GBBC is a project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. The GBBC provides a real-time snapshot of bird distribution across the nation. Occurring over a four day period (Feb. 12-15), the count helps answer migration questions about our birdlife such as how does snow cover influence bird movements, how has the timing of bird migration changed, and what birds might need attention due to a sudden decline.

Everyone is encouraged to participate, because the Great Backyard Bird Count depends on data from citizens counting birds in their own backyards, parks, and open spaces. It's easy to join in the fun, simply count the birds in the backyard for as little as fifteen minutes on one or more days of the count. Then submit your results online at: www.birdsource.org Become an ornithologist in your own backyard!

Grocery Certificates

We are no longer able to supply grocery certificates by mail. Certificates will still be available at the monthly meetings. BCAS receives a 5% donation from the sale of King Soopers certificates and 10% from sale of Liquormart certificates. Bring your checkbook to the meeting. Denominations:

King Soopers, \$25 and \$100, Liquormart, \$25



*Restored gravel pit near the White Rocks Natural Area
— Steve Jones*

Boulder County Ecosystem Symposium: *Restoring Native Ecosystems*

Saturday, April 3, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

University of Colorado Ramaley Auditorium

Local scientists and naturalists will discuss efforts to restore native plant and wildlife populations to Front Range ecosystems. Speakers will include researchers from Boulder County Parks and Open Space, Wildlands Restoration Volunteers, Colorado Native Plant Society, and the University of Colorado.

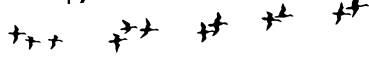
Free registration begins at 8 a.m. at the University of Colorado Ecology Dept. Ramaley Auditorium, opposite the main entrance to Norlin Library.

Symposium sponsors: *Boulder County Nature Association, Boulder County Audubon Society, Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks, Boulder County Parks and Open Space, Colorado Native Plant Society, University of Colorado.*

A full description of the program will soon be available on the Boulder County Nature Association website, www.bcna.org.

Boulder County Audubon Society

On The Wing



P.O. Box 2081

Boulder, CO 80306

www.boulderaudubon.org

Program Jan 26: Sarah Bexell

The Black-footed Ferret: Return of a Native

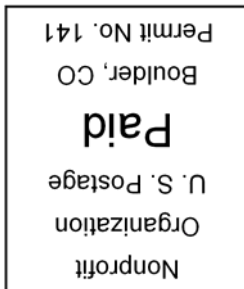
Program Feb 23: Marc Bekoff

Coyotes: Love Them and Leave Them Alone



Saturday, February 13—Great Backyard Bird Count Family Walk: 9—10 a.m.

Kids ages 7-12 and their families are invited to join us for the Great Backyard Bird Count family walk (see page 2). More about GBBC on page 7.



Become a Supporting Member of Boulder Audubon

We get very little return from National Audubon dues and have to rely primarily on local funding to support Boulder County Audubon Society activities.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

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\$20/year for ____ years, _____ Additional contribution. Total \$ _____

Options for receiving *On the Wing*: (check one)

- Paper copies of all issues of *On the Wing*.
- Paperless option—provide email if you want notification

Beginning with the March 2010 issue, paper copies of the Nov-Dec and Mar-Apr issues of *On the Wing* will be mailed only to BCAS Supporting Members who request them. All issues will be available online at www.boulderaudubon.org.

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