



On The Wing

Volume 39, Number 2

Boulder County Audubon Society Newsletter

March-April 2009

BCAS 4th Tuesday Program Series



April 28, 7:30 p.m.

Bluebird Nest Box Monitoring in Boulder County

George Oetzel

In cooperation with Boulder County Parks and Open Space, Boulder County Audubon volunteers have conducted a very successful nestbox monitoring program over the past four years. While Western and Mountain Bluebirds are the focus of the effort, the boxes at Walker Ranch and other parks have hosted a variety of other species. In addition to pictures of the local effort George will describe how this "citizen science" effort meshes with a long-term national program, including interesting population trends and inter-species interactions

The 2009 monitoring season will begin in late April. There are openings for several monitoring volunteers. See the notice on page 6 and www.boulderaudubon.org for contact and other information.

George and his wife, Marti, started monitoring bluebirds in Menlo Park, CA after George noticed Western Bluebirds nesting in an oak-tree cavity in a downtown city park. They moved to Boulder after George retired from his engineering job at SRI International. George is in his sixth year as editor of *On the Wing*. He is also webmaster for BCNA. (www.bcna.org)



March 24, 7:30 p.m.

Wild Utah: America's Redrock Wilderness

Barbara Eubanks

This multi-media slideshow documents citizen efforts to designate public lands in southern Utah's spectacular canyon country as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. The 15-minute journey through redrock splendor will accompany a presentation on the current status of the Utah wilderness movement.

Barbara Eubanks is Interregional Outreach Coordinator for the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance.

Wild Utah: America's Redrock Wilderness was made possible through the generous donation of photos, music and words from concerned Utahans who wish to pass this heritage onto future generations, including narration by Robert Redford.



**See *On the Wing* earlier online, with color pictures.
Sign up for email notification (page 8)**

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)

Spring Event Calendar

Saturday, March 14, 7–10:30 a.m. Annual spring-welcoming breakfast hike at Sawhill Ponds. Leader: Steve Jones (303-494-2468 or curlewsj@comcast.net). 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.

Sunday, March 22, 2:30–4:30 pm. Burrowing Owl project orientation meeting at the Meadows Branch of the Boulder Library. (See Jan. *On the Wing*)

Friday-Sunday, March 27–29. North Platte River and Crescent Lake National Wildlife Refuge. Note: This trip is full.

Saturday, April 4, 8:30 a.m.–3 p.m. Ecosystem Symposium at Ramaley Auditorium, CU discusses *Fractured Landscapes*. See page 5.

Sunday, April 26, 7:30–11 a.m. Wildlife inventory in Chapman Canyon. Leaders: Steve Jones (303-494-2468; curlewsj@comcast.net) and Petrea Mah. Join the stewardship group for a casual stroll down Chapman Drive to look for forest birds and mammals. Bring something to share for a potluck picnic brunch somewhere down the canyon. It's a gentle 3 miles round-trip. Meet at the Flagstaff Summit turnoff (on the right 3.5 miles up Flagstaff Mountain Road) at 7:30.

Saturday, May 9, 7 a.m.–noon. International Migratory Bird Day celebration at Walden Ponds. View birds on the ponds, take a bird walk, enjoy refreshments. Visit the Boulder County Audubon website after mid-April for details: www.boulderaudubon.org.

Saturday, May 16, 7–10 a.m. Birds of tallgrass prairies and cottonwood woodlands. Leaders: Janet McLachlan and Steve Jones (303-494-2468; curlewsj@comcast.net). Ecostewards Janet and Steve will lead a leisurely walk along the South Boulder Creek Trail to look for and listen to summer resident birds, including western kingbird, western bluebird, lark sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, and blue grosbeak. Meet at the South Boulder Creek Trail west trailhead, just west of Broadway 0.5 miles north of Eldorado Springs Drive.

Busses, Trains, and Stimulus

The high price of fuel during the past summer produced a surge in transit ridership in the Denver Metro area as well as elsewhere. However, because of budget limitations, the Regional Transit District (RTD) was forced to reduce service. If the federal government sent money to RTD, it would prevent some job cuts—serving as a quick form of stimulus, since a job not lost is just as good as one created. Money for mass transit would also make it easier for low-income workers, who are so far bearing the brunt of the recession, to get to their jobs or to search for new ones.

However, the stimulus bill includes no funds for operating mass transit. It provides funds for new construction of both transit projects and highways. This reflects a long-standing political and policy bias against major urban transit systems. The argument against operating assistance is that systems that receive it will become less efficient and permanently dependent on federal assistance. In contrast, some studies have indicated that the capital-intensive federal policy has actually decreased efficiency by encouraging systems to over-invest in rolling stock while failing to fund service improvements that would attract more riders.

See <http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/02/13/buses-trains-and-stimulus/>

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Bill Schmoker (303)702-9589

Wildlife Inventory

Alex and Gillian Brown (303)494-3042

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On the Wing — five issues annually: Jan, March, May, Sept, and Nov. To contact the editor, use the link in www.boulderaudubon.org/newsletter.htm

Next issue deadline: (May 2009 issue) Mon., Apr 20.

Boulder County Audubon Species of Concern-a-thon

Help save rare, declining, and isolated birds in Boulder County. Adopt one or more species and:

1. Enjoy a catered (nibbles and refreshments) field trip to search for the species in the wild.
2. Receive a year-end update on the bird's nesting status.
3. Be invited to help monitor nesting populations.

Thanks for supporting threatened wildlife in Boulder County!

Species	Pledge	Trip Leader	Trip Date
Bald Eagle	\$60	Steve Jones curlwsj@comcast.net	Sun., 31 May, 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Burrowing Owl	\$50	Chris Abrahamson cabrahamson@aol.com	Sun., 28 June 4 – 8 p.m.
Northern Harrier and Osprey	\$45	Sue and Mark Ponsor s.ponsor@comcast.net	TBD
American Bittern and Green Heron	\$40	Petrea Mah petreamah@comcast.net	Sun., 17 May 6 – 10 a.m.
Flammulated Owl	\$35	Steve Jones curlwsj@comcast.net	Wed., 24 June, 6 – 10 p.m.
Barn Owl	\$30	Pam Piombino piombino.pam@gmail.com	TBD
Mountain and Western Bluebird	\$25	George and Marti Oetzel robin@birdhike.com	Sat, 30 May 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Bobolink	\$20	Linda Andes-Georges andesgeorges@comcast.net	Sat, 30 May 6 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Name _____ Phone/e-mail _____

Mailing address _____

Adopted species _____

Mail this form and your pledge to: Boulder County Audubon Society, P.O. Box 2081, Boulder, CO 80306,
Or you can contact your field trip leader directly.

Support Boulder County Audubon with your local membership

Funds returned from National Audubon memberships support about half of one issue of *On the Wing* per year and provide no support for our other activities. Join the Species of Concern-a-thon and add or renew your local membership with the form on page 8, or online at www.boulderaudubon.org.

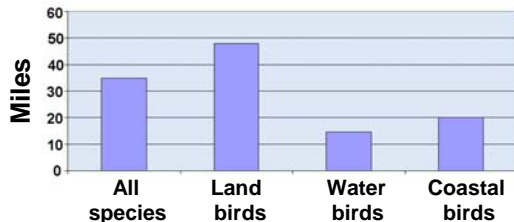
Climate Change and Birds

This is a condensed and edited version of the National Audubon *Birds and Climate Change* report, available online at <http://www.audubon.org/bird/bacc/>. The site has more information and links to suggestions for action.

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is more than just a fun outing. Participating in the CBC also contributes to science. Analysis of four decades of CBC observations reveals that birds seen in North America during the first weeks of winter have moved dramatically northward—toward colder latitudes—over the past four decades. Significant northward movement occurred among 58% of the observed species—177 of 305. More than 60 moved in excess of 100 miles north, while the average distance moved by all studied species—including those that did not reflect the trend—was 35 miles northward. There was also movement inland, from warmer coastal states into areas not long accustomed to winter temperatures suitable for their new arrivals.

The analysis found these trends among nearly every type of species, their sheer numbers and variety pointing to a powerful common force contributing to the movements.

Northward Shift in Center of Abundance over 40 Years

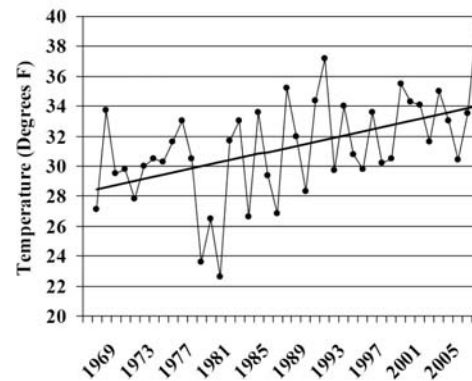


Climbing average annual temperatures have been well documented by scientists studying global warming. Average temperatures for January, the coldest month, rose more than five degrees F. in the continental U.S. over the past 40 years. Temperature increases coincided with anecdotal reports of northward movement of bird populations—now confirmed by Audubon’s analysis.

While causation is nearly impossible to prove, global climate change is by far the most probable explanation for these movements. Indeed, the movements are consistent with birds’ biological needs.

Rising winter temperatures make northern latitudes increasingly more hospitable to many species commonly found farther south. Audubon’s analysis reveals that species’ populations grew the most in the states experiencing the greatest warming, surpassing the growth in areas that didn’t warm as much. Similarly, the warming climate’s moderation of inland temperature extremes

Average January Temperatures in Lower 48 States



allows species to shift inland from the coast.

More than half of the **waterbird** species (52%) moved north, including a wide variety of ducks, such as Red-breasted Merganser, American Black Duck, and Green-winged Teal. Waterbirds have benefited in recent years from less ice cover in northern and interior states, but future conditions under global warming scenarios are not promising—a hotter and drier climate will dry many wetlands that waterbirds require.

Coastal waterbirds did not move inland, primarily because they require saltwater or habitats found only near saltwater. However, many of these species (46%) still moved north, including Black Turnstone and Black-bellied Plover (shorebirds) and Northern Gannet (a large fish-eating bird). The short-term health of many of these species is already in decline from development and the degradation of coastal habitats.

Feeder birds such as Pine Siskin, Boreal Chickadee, and Pygmy Nuthatch have moved hundreds of miles since 1966. Already adapted to human habitats, they are unusually well suited to a shifting climate. Most will fare well in the short term, as long as food is provided. However, northern-wintering birds are highly vulnerable to the sudden onset of cold and stormy conditions. They are also likely to further disrupt ecosystem balance by displacing less adaptable species.

(Continued on page 5)

Wild Bird Center 303-442-1322

"Your backyard
birding specialists"



www.wildbird.com/boulder

On 28th south of Canyon
In Boulder since 1989
M-F 10-6, Sat 9-6, Sun 11-5

(Continued from page 4)

Woodland birds that do not visit bird feeders, such as Spruce Grouse, American Three-toed Woodpecker, and Barred Owl, also showed long-distance northward movements. Their continued success in northern winters will depend on healthy forest habitat, which is already at risk due to both the drying effects of global warming and over-exploitation by humans.

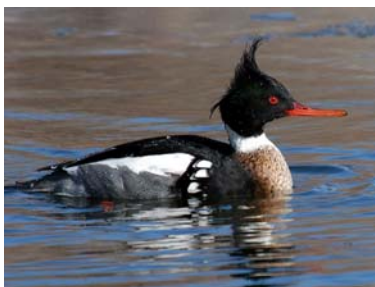
Grassland birds, including Eastern and Western Meadowlarks, Vesper Sparrow, and Burrowing Owl, are among the few groups that did not move north over the past 40 years. Only 10 of 26 (38%) grassland species moved north significantly, while nine moved south. Most probably could not move into northern areas despite increasingly moderate temperatures because conversion to intensive human uses such as row crops, pastures, and hayfields has greatly reduced availability of grassland habitat.

Whether they have already shifted their ranges or are unable to do so, bird species illustrate how the impact of global warming compounds other well-known threats. Scientists have long predicted dire consequences from global warming for birds and other species.

While predictions of specific consequences are outside the scope of Audubon's analysis, the study reveals that the ecological disruptions that threaten birds, other wildlife and human communities are likely already in motion. Arctic and alpine tundra and coastal beaches, Hawaiian forests, salt marshes, and mangroves are in great jeopardy. As the world warms, permafrost underlying the tundra will melt, allowing the habitat to be invaded by woody plants. As sea level rises, all coastal habitats are at risk. In undeveloped areas, coastal habitats may recede inland; but in developed areas, people and natural habitats will compete for the decreasing space. Habitats such as grasslands and deserts (including significant parts of the American West) will face increasing stresses, as will the species that depend on them. Carefully planned, science-based habitat conservation efforts will be increasingly essential to avoid a growing toll on birds and wildlife, along with the loss of a wide array of ecological benefits, from clean water supplies, insect control and seed distribution provided by birds, to travel and tourism revenues. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, birding related activities alone generate \$85 billion in input to America's economy.

Red-breasted
Merganser
(waterbird)

Bill Schmoker
(www.schmoker.org)



The symposium investigates impacts of habitat fragmentation on plants and wildlife and is free and open to all. Ramaley Auditorium is located in the Ecology and Conservation Biology Department building opposite the main (east) entrance to Norlin Library. Public parking (\$3 all day) is available in the recreation center lot, just north of the library, and in the parking structure on Euclid just east of the University Memorial Center. The SKIP bus stops at Broadway and University, just a quarter-mile from the auditorium. For complete schedule see www.boulderaudubon.org/ecosymp.htm

Please bring your own cup, plate, and silverware, so we can limit paper waste.

Morning Session

8:30-9:10: Free registration and coffee, welcoming

- *Fractured landscapes facilitate the emergence of novel ecosystems.*
- *Unraveling the causes of amphibian population declines in Colorado.*
- *Ferruginous Hawk diet and behavior in two grasslands in New Mexico with differing anthropogenic alteration.*
- *The effects of climate change on the grasshoppers of the Rocky Mountains of Colorado.*

Afternoon Session

- *Linkage models in integrative conservation planning.*
- *Lions and prions and deer demise: chronic wasting disease in the Table Mesa area south of Boulder.*
- *Riparian renaissance at Coal Creek: Wildlife response to fencing and buffering of a prairie stream corridor.*

2:45: Closing remarks

Sponsored by: Boulder County Nature Association, Boulder County Audubon Society, Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks, Boulder County Parks and Open Space, Colorado Native Plant Society, and University of Colorado

BOULDER COUNTY WILDLIFE INVENTORY SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER 2008

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

Fall migration is normally a much more drawn-out affair than spring migration, beginning with the arrival of returning shorebirds in July and ending with a few wayward stragglers leaving in November or early December. The massive migration of passerines often goes largely unnoticed, with much taking place at night. Much less is known about the norms for birds leaving than for their arrival. However, this year we seemed to have some late departure dates. Forty **Violet-green swallows** seen on 4 October seemed to be an unusually late sighting as did reports of **Rufous Hummingbird** as late as 14 October.

September sees the peak of fall migration, and this year was no exception. Several unusual species were spotted. An immature **Brown Pelican** had birders traveling all round the county as it flew from reservoir to reservoir. **Brown Pelican** was last reported in 2006 and this was only the third occurrence in the county. **Little Blue Heron** was reported for the first time since 2005. Other good sightings included **Red-necked Grebe**, **Long-tailed Jaeger**, several **Sabine's Gulls** and four species of **Tern (Common, Caspian, Forster's and Black)**. The first **Townsend Warbler** of the year was reported; these are more commonly seen during fall migration than in the spring. **Brown Thrasher** was also a new sighting for the year.

October, although somewhat lacking in reports also had some rarities. It was not clear whether the **Brown Pelican** seen in October was the same bird that had been seen a month before. **Dunlin**, **Red Phalarope** and **Black-throated Blue Warbler** were all new sightings for the year. **Black-throated Blue Warbler** had not been seen since 2006 and is often a late fall migration sighting. Shorebird migration was well reported with many different species seen. Warbler migration seems to have been largely overlooked with very low numbers of even our most common warblers reported. Lots of people enjoyed the sight and sound of migrating **Sandhill Cranes**. The flocks reported varied in size from hundreds of birds to single digits. Only rarely were there reports of birds seen on the ground. October is the month that cranes are typically seen in Boulder County. By the end of October, diving ducks had begun to reappear and grebes were well reported all month. It was also obvious that many birds had moved down from the mountains into the plains.

Altogether 171 bird species were seen in September and 119 in October. Some common species, such as American Dipper, went unreported both months. This resulted in the total number of species reported being significantly lower than it might have been. For the full listing of observed species go to www.boulderaudubon.org/inventory.htm

CONTRIBUTORS

SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER 2008 INVENTORY

Linda Andes-Georges, Mary Balzer, Alan Bell, Mike Blatchley, Ron Bolton, Maggie Boswell, Alex & Gillian Brown, Dave Cameron, Raymond E Davis, Todd Deininger, Kathy Mihm Dunning, Bill Eeds, Gene Ellis, Steve Frye, Peter Gent, Bryan Guarante, Paula Hansley, Jack Harlan, Ann Hicks, Steve Jones, Bill Kaempfer, Douglas Kibbe, Connie Kogler, Steve Larson, Tony Leukering, Carolyn Mahakian, Rob Massom, Gail Matheson, Mark Miller, Gene and Lynn Monroe, Christian Nunes, Debby Oberbeck, George Oetzel, Laura Osborn, Nathan Pieplow, Peter Plage, Suzi Plooster, Rolf, Ira Sanders, Bill Schmoker, Scott Severs, Steve Skinner, Tim Smart, Bob Spencer, Mark Stadtherr, Marcel Such, Joel Such, Walter Szeliga, Joyce Takamine, Neal Thielen, John Tumasonis, Knut Waagan, David J. Waltman, Wild Bird Center.

Bluebird Nestbox Monitoring 2009

Volunteers Needed



Three new nest box trails are planned for this season, so several new monitoring volunteers are needed for this rewarding and enjoyable activity. Monitors not only see the development of the nests, but also see other birds and animals and the changing wildflowers during the season. Although we refer to nest box "trails," the boxes are not located on established trails. Monitoring involves off-trail hiking, and some trails are fairly strenuous. The goal is for each box to be checked and observations recorded weekly from late April until mid-July. We also need substitute monitors who can fill in as needed.

Please contact Marti Oetzel, 303-543-3712

Raptors Turn Out for Valentine's Day

Sue & Mark Ponsor

As we loaded our spotting scopes in the car on this past chilly Valentine's morning, we saw a sharp-shinned hawk perched in our neighbor's tree. We knew it was going to be a good morning for our raptor tour. The morning was cold and overcast, which we hoped would keep the raptors perched for us.

We moved on to Lagerman Reservoir where we met our group of ten participants for a raptor tour of eastern Boulder County. Lagerman was totally thawed, so there wasn't the usual show of eagles breakfasting on the ice. But soon after leaving the reservoir we found a mature ferruginous hawk. He gave us a stunning sight, perched on a fencepost not more than eighty yards away. Around the corner, we found the most spectacular western red-tailed hawk, with rufous head and throat, and dark brown banding from top to bottom.

Other raptors viewed in the three hour trip were: a second ferruginous hawk, two male great horned owls, two northern harriers, one mature bald eagle, one elusive rough-legged hawk (he really didn't want to pose for us), one prairie falcon, twelve American kestrels, and twenty four red-tailed hawks, including another western and two Harlans.

In the week since we'd last been out, the red-tails were all pairing up and establishing nesting territories. Of the twenty-four red-tails, twenty of them were paired. Just in time for Valentine's Day. A grand total of 50 raptors, which kept us busy enough to not notice the cold until the trip was over.

More and Faster Warming

In a presentation at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Christopher Field of the Carnegie Institute of Science said that carbon emissions have been growing at 3.5% per year since 2000, up from 0.9% per year in the 1990s.

"It is now outside the entire envelope of possibilities considered in the 2007 report of the International Panel on Climate change," he said. The biggest factor in this increase is the widespread adoption of coal as an energy source. He added that past projections for declines in the emissions of greenhouse gases were too optimistic. No part of the world had a decline of emissions from 2000 to 2008.

China added about 90 gigawatts of coal-generated electric power in 2006, or nearly two large generating plants per week. [<http://www.pewclimate.org/global-warming-basics/coalfacts.cfm>]

GROCERY COUPONS SUPPORT BCAS

Every time you buy food (or wine or beer), you could be supporting this chapter and its goals of backyard habitat creation, schoolroom programs for kids, and protection of important bird areas in our own county.

Cards and certificates are used exactly like cash. You are whisked through the check-out line as though you were handing over greenbacks. Every \$100 you spend puts \$5 or \$10 into the BCAS piggybank for our local chapter needs at no cost to you.

Our friendly coupon sales contacts :
Maureen Lawry, tel. 303 499 3833, Bev Sears, tel. 303 499 4751, or Linda Andes-Georges, tel. 303 772 3239

Coupons are always available at chapter meetings, the fourth Tues. of each month. Bring your checkbook!

If you would like to receive your coupons or cards through the mail, we will double-enclose them and post them after receiving your check. A number of people are now doing this regularly. Use the order form below.

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Make checks payable to Boulder County Audubon Society and mail to BCAS Coupons, 2385 Vassar Dr, Boulder, CO 80305-5726



Rufous-morph
Red-tailed Hawk
Bill Schmoker

(See Valentines Day Raptors, this page.)

<http://schmoker.org/BirdPics/RTHA.html>

Boulder County Audubon Society

On The Wing



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Join Boulder County Audubon! (or Renew Membership)

Local memberships are an important part of the support that makes this chapter possible. We get very little return from national memberships. (NAS membership is not required for membership in the local chapter.) **Local memberships are for calendar year — It's time to renew!**

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail _____

Annual Boulder County Audubon membership

\$20

\$ _____ Additional contribution

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