



# On The Wing

Volume 39, Number 5

Boulder County Audubon Society Newsletter

Nov-Dec 2009

## Change is Coming to *On the Wing*

The Boulder County Audubon Society (BCAS) Board has been considering solutions to a budget problem. The approximately 1200 National Audubon Society (NAS) members who live in Boulder and Broomfield counties are also members of BCAS. However, NAS returns to our chapter far less of the NAS members' dues than the cost of printing and mailing *On the Wing* to all those addresses. Those costs represent about half of the annual BCAS budget, most of which must be raised locally. We need to reduce budgetary strain by lowering the cost of communicating with members.

Beginning in fall of 2010, only the September-October and May-August newsletters will be mailed out to all BCAS members. The November-December, January-February, and March-April newsletters will be available electronically on our website. (Printed copy option—next paragraph.) To ease into this transition, we will be publishing just one electronic-only newsletter (March-April) during the next 10 months.

We plan to follow the lead of the Denver chapter and provide printed copies of the electronic issues of OTW on request to local Supporting Members (those who contribute directly to Boulder County Audubon Society). Every issue will be available online. New issues are posted to [www.boulderaudubon.org](http://www.boulderaudubon.org) on or before the first of the months of September, November, January, March, and May. Supporting Members who would like to save the paper and cost of printed issues of OTW can receive email notification when a new issue is available online.

Notification that new issues are available will be posted on Nature-Net. See <http://www.boulderaudubon.org/naturenet.htm> for information about Nature-Net.

Looking to the future, our transition to electronic publication suggests interesting possibilities. Currently, the online and paper editions differ only in the color pictures in the online version. Each issue has eight pages, with rare exceptions, dictated partly by cost. However, there is no reason that the online edition could not have additional features, because extra pages don't increase the cost of the online edition. This experiment may be tried with one or more issues in the 2010-11 publication year.

## BCAS 4th Tuesday Program Series

November 24, 2009

### Small Mountain Owls

Scott Rashid



Scott Rashid's new book contains 160 striking photos and drawings of four small mountain owls of the Rocky Mountains: flammulated owl, northern pygmy-owl, northern saw-whet owl, and boreal owl. He'll discuss the lives and ranges of these tiny predators, along with their anatomy, coloration, vocalizations, diets, hunting strategies, and nesting behaviors. Scott has been banding birds and studying small owls in Rocky Mountain National Park for 20 years, so expect wonderful stories about owl encounters and owl behavior. Scott will sign copies of *Small Mountain Owls* after the program.

Scott is a licensed bird bander, bird rehabilitator, artist, and researcher. As an artist, Scott has been able to depict aspects of the owls' behaviors that have not been previously described. His art is presently hanging in private collections throughout North America, Europe, and Australia.



Northern Pygmy Owl—Bill Schmoker

**Holiday Sale beginning at 6:15 p.m.  
Program at 7:30**

Unitarian Universalist Church of Boulder, 5001 Pennsylvania Ave. (55th St. between Arapahoe and Baseline)

## November-December Field Trips and More

**Monday, Nov 16, 7:30 p.m.** Steve Jones and Ruth Carol Cushman will sign copies of their new book, *Wild Boulder County, A Seasonal Guide to the Natural World*, at the Boulder Bookstore.

**Monday, Nov 16:** New moon

**Dec 2:** Full moon

**Dec 5-7:** sunset at 4:35 p.m. is earliest of the year

**Sunday, December 20, 2008, dawn to sunset: Christmas Bird Count.**

Take part in one of the oldest counts in the nation. Join one of the teams of 2 to 5 birders to count all or part of the day or at your backyard feeder. Please contact count coordinator Bill Schmoker at 303-702-9589 or [bill@schmoker.org](mailto:bill@schmoker.org).

Birders of all experience levels are welcome; the more pairs of eyes the better.

**Dec 16:** New moon

**Monday, December 21, 7-10:30 a.m.** 21st annual Winter Solstice sunrise hike on East Boulder (White Rocks) Trail. Meet at the Teller Farms North parking area on Valmont Road a half-mile west of 95th St, at 7. Dress warmly and expect frosty scenes populated by ducks and hawks. Bring a thought, poem, or quotation to share at a brief sunrise ceremony at the Boulder Creek bridge. Optional breakfast afterward (around 9) at the Garden Gate Café in Niwot. RSVP for breakfast to Steve Jones ([stephen.jones@earthlink.net](mailto:stephen.jones@earthlink.net); 303-494-2468).

**Sunday, Dec 21, 10:47 a.m. MST:** Winter Solstice and shortest day.

**Dec 31-Jan 9:** Latest sunrises

### \*\*\*\*\* Save the Date \*\*\*\*\*

Looking for a unique gift?? Want to finish all your holiday shopping early? Boulder County Audubon is having it's **Holiday Sale** before the November meeting on **Tuesday, November 24 at 6:15.**

Come join the holiday festivities and enjoy hot cider and home- made cookies. There will be Nature-related books (and their authors to sign them), nature art, jewelry, T-shirts, back packs and other great gifts.

This year we are introducing special services to buy, for example:

A dinner cooked by a professional chef for your guests in your own home

A harp player that comes to your home to play for your holiday party

A hike led by an experienced naturalist for your group, etc.

**WE ARE ALSO STILL LOOKING FOR CONTRIBUTIONS. DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING SPECIAL TO OFFER??**

Craft-making? House Painting? OR do you have a cabin or condo that you would offer for a weekend? You can charge full price for your service and keep 40%, the rest goes to fund Audubon's important educational work. You do not have to be present to offer your special service.

To inquire about offering your special contribution, Call: Mary Balzer 303-499-0662 or Maureen Lawry 303-499-3833.

### Boulder County Audubon Society

#### — Officers —

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*Vice President*

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Nancy Neupert, George Oetzel

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([s.ponsor@comcast.net](mailto:s.ponsor@comcast.net))

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*Audubon of Colorado Liaison*

Bob Turner (303)499-2669

*Christmas Bird Count Coordinator*

Bill Schmoker (303)702-9589

*Wildlife Inventory*

Alex and Gillian Brown (303)494-3042

*On the Wing* © 2009 Boulder County Audubon Society

To contact the editor, use the link in  
[www.boulderaudubon.org/newsletter.htm](http://www.boulderaudubon.org/newsletter.htm)

**Next issue deadline: (Jan 2010 issue) Dec 14.**

### Bluebirds 2009

George and Marti Oetzel

We added three new bluebird nest box trails\* in 2009, the fifth year of BCAS nest monitoring activities. Our 20 volunteers monitored 106 boxes on eleven trails in six different county and city open space areas. In the first year of the monitoring program, Mountain Bluebirds (MOBL) were predominant over Western Bluebirds (WEBL), with more nests and more chicks fledged. Each year, we have seen more WEBL nests and a gradual reduction of MOBL nests, so the WEBL now greatly outnumber the MOBL. This is particularly true of the lower trails, at about 6000 feet, where 147 WEBL chicks and only 15 MOBL chicks fledged in 2009. At Walker Ranch, above 7000 feet, the WEBL dominance is less striking: 115 WEBL chicks and 52 MOBL chicks fledged this year.

If the results from the new trails were excluded, we would have had fewer total birds fledged this year than in 2008. The 2008 season was exceptional for the numerous double clutches (second nest by a pair on top of their first nest) that resulted in many more chicks fledged per occupied nest box. Not only were there fewer double clutches in 2009, but there were also more nests in which the number of chicks fledged was less than the number of eggs laid. Some eggs never hatched, some chicks died in the nest, and there was more nest predation than we have seen in previous years. Most of the predation appears to have been due to snakes, but a bear smashed one box with chicks at Betasso.

In one extraordinary case, at Betasso, MOBLs desperate for a nest site started building a nest in the barbecue grill. We learned of this via phone from Susan Spaulding, BCPOS wildlife technician, early on a Friday morning. Since people probably would want the grill over the weekend, we hurried up to close the cleanout door on the grill and mount a new box on a tree not far away. That box was inspected within minutes by WEBLs and Violet-green Swallows, so we brought up and mounted yet another box nearby. There's a happy ending, as the MOBLs raised three chicks in the second box.

The adjacent chart summarizes the nesting results at Walker Ranch for the five years, where the number of boxes has been reasonably consistent. Trails in the other areas have been added gradually over the past three years and lack a comparable history.

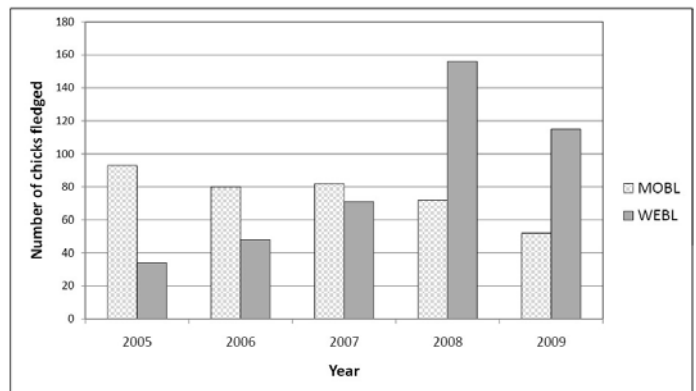
\* Nest box trails are not developed trails like regular park trails. They are cross-country routes that connect a number of boxes, sometimes requiring wading through chest-high grass in July.



MOBLs attempt to add to nest after grill door closed.



MOBL mom brings food to box near grill.



Number of MOBL and WEBL chicks fledged each year at Walker Ranch

## Arctic Air Brings the Birds Close to Home

Steve Jones

What happens when a series of arctic cold fronts descends on Boulder County during the peak of the fall bird migration? We got to find out this October, as temperatures plummeted to 15° and cold air blanketed the county for nearly two weeks. Mean daily temperatures during the first 13 days of October were a full 14° F below average.

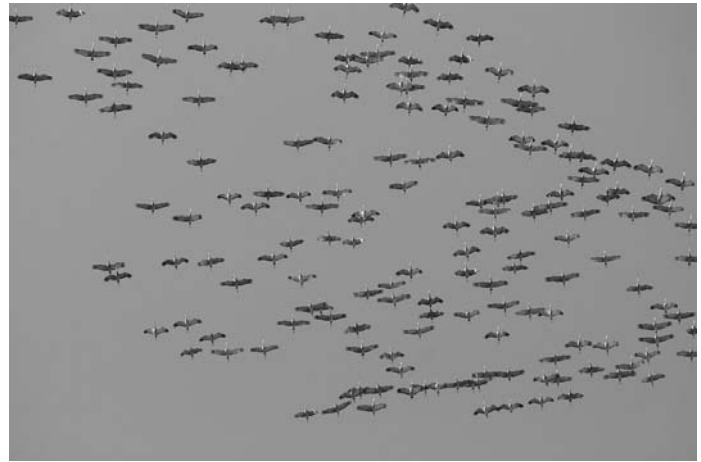
The most vigorous front struck on October 10-12 just as thousands of greater sandhill cranes were migrating through. With no thermals to lift them skyward, the cranes hung around for several days. Ted Floyd spotted 200 at Prince Lakes in Lafayette. Other reports came in from Louisville, North Boulder, and Haystack Mountain. Crunching through the snow along Coal Creek on the morning of the 12th, I watched flock after flock pass overhead while elk bugled in the distance. It felt like being in Yellowstone.

On the evening of the 15th, Larry Arp found a torpid poorwill holed up in his small chicken coop in Heatherwood. Larry checked on the bird the following morning and found he could pick it up and carry it into the house, where it slowly thawed out. It wasn't until almost noon when the poorwill finally began to arouse. After Larry took it outside and set it down in the sun, the little guy finally opened his gaping mouth in a threat gesture, stretched his wings, and flew off southward. "His flight pattern reminded me of a boomerang," Larry recalls.

Appropriately, an arctic tern lingered at Cherry Creek Reservoir during the height of the cold air surge. Todd Deinenger spied two mew gulls on the north shore of Boulder Reservoir, and David Waltman found 20 bald eagles and two Sabine's gulls at the reservoir on the 12th. As the cold eased later that week, Alan Bell found a white-throated sparrow in his North Boulder County yard, and Nathan Pieplow observed a McCown's longspur mixed in with a flock of horned larks and American pipits at Lagerman Reservoir.

Nearly everyone commented on the dry brown leaves dangling from the cottonwoods, green ashes, and other deciduous trees on the plains. Several longtime Boulder County residents said this was the first time they'd ever seen our fall colors snuffed out so fast.

As I write this, it's 73° outside and the meadowlarks are singing.

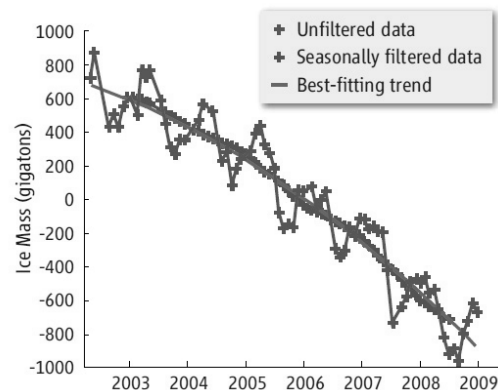


Cranes over Crow Valley — Steve Jones



Thawing Poorwill — Larry Arp

### Mass of the Greenland Ice Sheet



The two great ice sheets—Greenland and Antarctica—appear to be shrinking at an accelerating rate, according to measurements by the GRACE satellites. Scientists are uncertain how long the acceleration will continue.

– [www.sciencemag.org/cgi/reprint/326/5950/217-a.pdf](http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/reprint/326/5950/217-a.pdf)

## Boulder West Trail Study Area

Linda Andes-Georges

On Tues. Sept. 15<sup>th</sup>, the community caucus meeting convened to choose representatives to the Community Collaboration Group (CCG) which will soon begin discussions of development of the West Trail Study Area (TSA) in Boulder City Open Space. In the case of this particular TSA, the area in question includes most of the former Mountain Parks, in other words, some of the most cherished (and over-used) land in the City natural lands system. The caucus assembly broke into interest groups (conservation, recreation, neighborhood, and cultural) to elect their representatives.

Although the start of the CCG that evening was rowdy and rocky, with mountain bike adherents joining all of the "election caucuses" in an attempt to gain an advantage in the CCG discussions, the green group participants exited feeling satisfied that we have five very good people speaking for the birdwatchers, contemplative hikers, botanists, butterfly lovers, and unaffiliated folks who hope to preserve nature and wildlife in Boulder Valley.

Of course, the creation of specific visitor use policy and rules for this TSA must come under the over-arching policy documents already in place (like the City Charter, the Visitor Management Plan, etc). The intent of the CCG process is that agreements (one hopes that agreements are possible) will be consensus-based, which should guarantee that no single interest group can easily overpower the others. A facilitator, Todd Bryan from the Keystone Group, is shepherding the discussions. The CCG meetings are expected to last a year to 18 months, after which any consensus recommendations will be sent to the Open Space Board of Trustees with the anticipation of approval.

An Audubon member and a BCNA member have been elected as Conservation members to the CC Group (with another BCAS member as alternate), so we can expect regular updates from them. Other green reps are from FOBOS and the Sierra Club. Look at the City website for more details (Google "West TSA Boulder" for options).

**Wild Bird Center** 303-442-1322

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birding specialists"



www.wbcboulder.com

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

## Inching Toward Zero Waste

George Oetzel

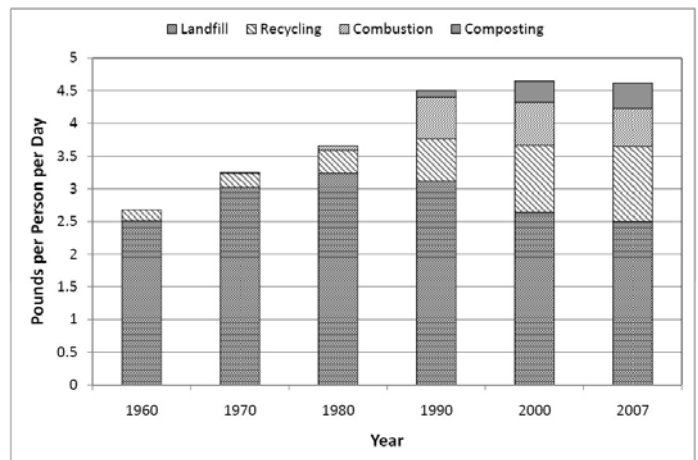
The zero waste signs in the Boulder Farmers' Market are just one indication of a trend that is gaining currency throughout the U.S. Among the reasons are limited landfill capacity, concern about pollution by hazardous materials, and reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, particularly methane, from landfills.

The third concern is illustrated by the case of Shoreline Amphitheater, Mountain View, CA, which was built on landfill. In the opening year, a fan attending a concert flicked a cigarette lighter and ignited methane leaking from the landfill. Costly remediation was required.

A recent report by the EPA recognizes that sources of greenhouse gases, such as fossil fuel combustion, are only part of the problem. They adopt a systems approach in which they include in "materials handling" all aspects of the provision of goods and the provision of food, including disposal of waste. They calculate that this category is responsible for 42% of U.S. GHG emissions. The balance is divided among use of appliances and devices (8%), buildings(25%), transportation (24%), and infrastructure (1%).

The effort to reduce waste disposed of in landfills is an uphill battle, because the amount of waste generated per person and the population both keep increasing. Materials are removed from the stream flowing toward the landfill through recycling, composting, and combustion to produce usable energy.

The figure shows how these different components of waste processing have varied since 1960. Note that the efforts to remove materials from the landfill stream have only reduced the amount per person to the same level as that in 1960, and there are more people today.



References:

[www.epa.gov/osw/nonhaz/municipal/pubs/msw07-fs.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/osw/nonhaz/municipal/pubs/msw07-fs.pdf)  
[www.epa.gov/oswer/docs/ghg\\_land\\_and\\_materials\\_management.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/oswer/docs/ghg_land_and_materials_management.pdf)

## BOULDER COUNTY WILDLIFE INVENTORY, MAY 2009

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

Reporting for May 2009 followed the trend of recent years with many reports of rare birds but few of common species. Thus the number of bird species observed (215) was much lower than it probably need have been. International Bird Migratory Day at Walden Ponds and the Indian Peaks Spring Count (IP) did help, but did not have the widespread coverage needed to get all possible species. Birds that were missed included **Northern Harrier, Golden Eagle, Prairie Falcon, Ring-billed Gull, California Gull** and **Horned Lark**. Perhaps the most exciting days of the month came with the cold front on May 10 and 11. For two days it seemed that one could go anywhere in the county and find an amazing number of birds including rarities. **Clay-colored Sparrows** were reported in their hundreds from all over the eastern part of the county; this is a bird which is usually found only in single digits if at all.

Shorebird migration was still going strong for the first half of the month with all the expected species reported. **Black-bellied Plover, White-rumped Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper** and **Red-necked Phalarope** were new species for the year. Duck species were hard to find and generally reported in very low numbers. Again it is necessary to be out looking for these species early in the month when there is more chance of them being found. Three species of tern were reported: **Forster's Tern, Black Tern** and **Caspian Tern**. Among the many **White-faced Ibis** reported, there were at least two **Glossy Ibis. Cattle Egret** was new for the year.

Warbler migration was also strong with a few rarities. Black-throated Green Warbler was seen for the first time since 2007. Three Black-throated Gray Warblers were reported and six Blackpoll Warblers in five different locations. This year there did not seem to be any one particular place that was significantly better for warblers; sightings came from all over the county. Other unusual warblers included a **Tennessee Warbler**, a **Nashville Warbler**, a **Chestnut-sided Warbler**, two **Magnolia Warblers**, a **Worm-eating Warbler**, two **Ovenbirds** and a **Hooded Warbler. Wilson's Warblers** were barely reported with just one sighting in the high country at the end of the month, but there was no shortage of reports of our other breeding warblers. It will be interesting to see whether the number of **Wilson Warblers** is down throughout the summer.

The **Scarlet Tanager** in Gregory Canyon returned on schedule for the third consecutive year. Three separate **Summer Tanagers** were also reported. **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** seemed to be everywhere with nine reported. Sparrow reporting was good with a **Field Sparrow** being the rarest sighting. A **Gray-cheeked Thrush** was the first reported since 2007. Large numbers of **Swainson's Thrushes** were reported, especially during the cold front of May 10 and 11. This seems early for this species which is often still migrating at the beginning of June. However, the number of **Hermit Thrushes** reported was far less than normal. Two unusual flycatchers were **Eastern Phoebe** and **Cassin's Kingbird** which were both last seen in 2006.

For a complete list of sightings please go to the Boulder Audubon County website at [www.audubon.org/inventory.htm](http://www.audubon.org/inventory.htm)

Here you will be able to discover such details as to who spotted the first returning migrants of the year, and where various species were seen.

### CONTRIBUTORS TO THE MAY INVENTORY

Linda Andes-Georges, Alan Bell, Mike and Mary Blatchley, Maggie Boswell, , Alex & Gillian Brown, Marlene Bruning, Lauren Burke, Jack Collom, Raymond E Davis, Ted Floyd, Lonny Frye, Steve Frye, Peter Gent, Dave Hallock, Paula Hansley, Thomas Heinrich, Pat Heller, Steve Jones, Bill Kaempfer, Elena Klaver, Joanie Kleypas, Steve Larson, Tom Lechleitner, Marcia Marvin, Kathy Mihm-Dunning, Mark Miller, Gene and Lynn Monroe, Christian Nunes, Peggy Oakes, Sue A. Olmsted, Laura Osborn, Nathan Pieplow, Peter Plage, Bill and Inez Prather, Scott Severs, Tim Smart, Cara Stiles, Marcel and Joel Such, Walter Szeliga, Joyce Takamine, John Tumasonis, John Vanderpoel, Knut Waagan, David J. Waltman, Wild Bird Center, Eric Zorawowicz, Dan Zmolek.



High Plains Snow Goose  
FESTIVAL

FEBRUARY 26-28, 2010  
LAMAR, COLORADO

Featured Guest: Pete Dunne  
[www.highplainsnowgoose.com](http://www.highplainsnowgoose.com)  
719.336.4379

*Celebrating Watchable Wildlife and  
Heritage History in Southeast Colorado*

## The Prairie Saga

Maureen Lawry

Great News... the puppet show, *The Prairie Saga* is back for its second season. The stars of the show are a prairie dog and his grandma. They spend a day avoiding their predators and enjoying life in the prairie dog town. After each show the audience expresses their surprise that the prairie dog is a keystone species and how complex their lives are. The kids' comments say it all! Here are a few unedited statements:

- "I liked how you could learn so much just by watching a pupet show."
- "I changed my mind beacuse (about Prairie Dogs) I used to think they were just creachers, but now I now there helpful".
- "I thot it was grate!"

Last year Audubon funded eight performances and there were requests for more. This year we are grateful to have a matching grant from the Terra Foundation. With this extra funding we can now offer sixteen performances. This helps us educate future decision makers about the prairie, one of the most endangered ecosystems. To learn more about the program or to book a show call Maureen Lawry: 303-499-3833.

Our education specialists hope to expand this popular show to a sort of ecosystem series, perhaps tackling plains/riparian or ponderosa/pine woodlands in the future. Many thanks to Deb Henson for contributing \$200.00 specifically to fund the puppet show. Contributions of any size are welcome to help make the program available to more audiences and to fund creation of the expanded series.



Prairie dog meets Coyote – Maureen Lawry

## Grocery Coupons

We are no longer able to supply grocery coupons by mail. Envelopes with plastic cards can't be processed automatically, so require extra postage. Coupons will still be available at the monthly meetings while supplies last. Bring your checkbook to the meeting. Denominations:

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

## Beverly Sears Honored

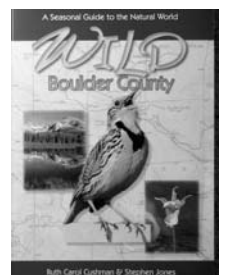
Bev Sears and her husband, Wes, who died in 2005, were leaders in the Boulder County Audubon Society for many years. Bev remains an active member and inspiration. We are delighted that Bev was one of five 2009 recipients of the Boulder Chamber of Commerce "Women Who Light the Community" award. Below is an edited version of the Web announcement for the award luncheon. ([www.boulderchamber.com/wwltc2009.aspx](http://www.boulderchamber.com/wwltc2009.aspx))

The 14<sup>th</sup> annual Women Who Light the Community Awards luncheon took place September 18 at the Millennium Harvest House Hotel. This year's five honorees were nominated by members of the community who recognized their outstanding contributions and were selected by a committee for the impact they are making in Boulder County and beyond through civic, professional, and community involvement.

**Beverly Sears** has been committed to bringing people together for 48 years. Her volunteer activities are too numerous to name individually, but here is a sample: in addition to being one of the longest-standing members of the Zonta Foothills Club, she has also contributed her time and efforts to the People's Clinic, Colorado Music Festival, Boulder County Audubon Society, Democratic Women, Fortnightly Club, Unitarian Universalist Church, and Special Transit. She is a former Boulder City Council member who built the funding for the graduate school and research institutes at CU; raised a multi-million dollar endowment for CU; and created a small grants program now called the Beverly Sears Grants Endowment.

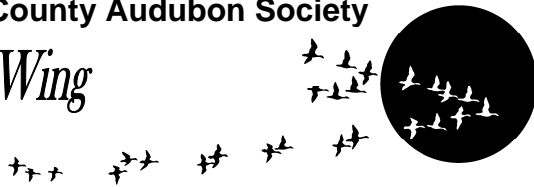
We thank Bev for her myriad contributions to Boulder County Audubon and the entire Boulder community. Her enthusiasm, optimism, can-do approach, and encouraging words have energized all of us.

BCAS authors Steve Jones and Ruth Carol Cushman will sign their new book at Boulder Bookstore Nov 16, 7:30 p.m.



Boulder County Audubon Society

*On The Wing*



P.O. Box 2081  
Boulder, CO 80306

[www.boulderaudubon.org](http://www.boulderaudubon.org)

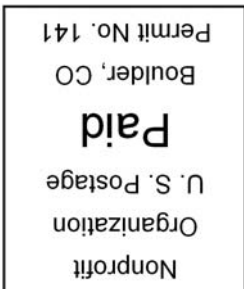
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### Become a Supporting Member of Boulder Audubon

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 \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Beginning with the March 2010 issue, paper copies of the Nov-Dec, Jan-Feb, and Mar-Apr issues of *On the Wing* will be mailed only to BCAS Supporting Members who request them. Issues will be available online at [www.boulderaudubon.org](http://www.boulderaudubon.org).

Make check payable to  
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P.O. Box 2081 Boulder, CO 80306

\$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