



# On The Wing

Volume 43, Number 1 Boulder County Audubon Society Newsletter

Jan-Feb 2013

## BCAS 4th Tuesday Program Series

**January 22, 7:15 p.m.**

### **Nancy Stocker: "Swift Fox Family Life"**

Over several years, Nancy Stocker observed and took intimate photographs of several families of swift foxes in eastern Colorado. The photos reveal the loving relationships among the adult foxes and their young, along with the foxes' hunting strategies and favorite prey. While focusing on the lives of these families, Nancy will also discuss historic changes in Swift Fox populations and current conservation concerns.

Bob and Nancy Stocker have been observing and photographing swift foxes in eastern Colorado for five years. Nancy has reviewed recent research and popular writing about swift foxes while developing "Foxy and Roxie," a Swift Fox story for children. Working with Denver Audubon, she has become a strong advocate for Swift Fox conservation.



Swift Fox with  
Ground Squirrel

And

Mom with Pups

– Nancy Stocker



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



**Boulder Audubon on Facebook**

<http://tiny.cc/ez7v6>

**February 26, 7:15 p.m.**

### **Dave Olson:**

### **"The Trumpeter Swan, Back from the Brink; a Restoration Success Story"**

As the largest North American waterfowl species, the Trumpeter Swan has always had a special place in bird conservation. Once abundant across most of North America, Trumpeter Swans were devastated by the early fur trade and by European settlement.. Fewer than 120 individuals were known to exist by 1936, though there were unrecorded flocks in parts of Alaska and Canada. Numbers have steadily increased with modern conservation, including protection from shooting, habitat preservation (formation of Red Rock Lakes NWR in 1936) and restoration programs. A 2010 continent-wide survey estimated 46,225 Trumpeter Swans populated North America.

Dave Olson is a Migratory Game Bird Coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service who has worked on Trumpeter Swan monitoring and reintroduction programs for more than 20 years. He has served as a refuge biologist at Red Rocks Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Seney National Wildlife Refuge, and the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge complex. He and his wife, Sabra, a horse trainer and accomplished artist, live on a ranch in Boulder with her parents and their two chil-



Trumpeter Swan at Marshall Ponds – Steve Jones

## Field Trips

### Saturday, February 2, 2013—Gullpalooza with Ted Floyd and Friends

Please join us at Valmont Xcel Power Plant from noon to sundown for the annual Gullpalooza celebration of all things Laridae. We will have special guest leaders, along with Ted Floyd, author and editor, Smithsonian Field Guide, Birding Magazine. Probably the largest regularly scheduled bird walk in the country, the winter excursion within the confines of the Xcel facility has become the premier winter bird walk in the Front Range. Meet at 12:00 noon, bird until sunset. Bring water and snacks and have boots and clothing appropriate for cold weather. From Arapahoe, take 63rd Street north to the power plant entry gates on the east side of the road. Leaders: Ted Floyd (contact by e-mail only: [tedfloyd57@hotmail.com](mailto:tedfloyd57@hotmail.com)) or Bill Schmoker 720-201-5749.

**Saturday, February 23, 8:00 AM:** Birding Hike around Union Reservoir (with City of Longmont Parks Department)

We will find a good variety of ducks, grebes, and gulls as well as migrants such as pelicans. Bald Eagles, may be on the nest and other raptors will be in active breeding season. It's a chance to consider the revised trail plan for this area and to enjoy one of the jewels in the Longmont Park system.

Dress for the weather and bring water, sun screen, a hat or dark glasses, and binoculars. Meet outside the southeast entrance to the park on Colorado Road 26 east of East County Line Road. For more information and to reserve a spot call or email Petrea Mah at [petreamah@comcast.net](mailto:petreamah@comcast.net) or 303-494-4121.

**Sunday, March 3:** Ski and Snowshoe Tour of Hessie Area. Steve Jones ([curlwsj@comcast.net](mailto:curlwsj@comcast.net); 303-494-2468) will lead a three-hour ski or snowshoe tour of the Hessie area where the Eldora ski area is proposing a significant expansion. We'll look for seed-eating birds, including crossbills, along the way. Meet at 8 at the Settlers Park parking area, 3rd and Canyon. Lunch at Kathmandu afterwards, with return to Boulder around 2.

**Sunday, March 10—Dippers!** Did you know the American dipper is North America's only aquatic songbird? And that they have an extra eyelid, commonly referred to as a "nictitating membrane," that allows them to see under water? Join Sharon Daugherty and Donna Nespoli for a meandering stroll along the St. Vrain river in Lyons to search for early spring nesting American Dippers. We will also search for Scrub Jays, American Goldfinch/Lesser Goldfinch, owls, and other common late winter/early spring residents. And we will point out where the beavers live in the area! Geared to beginning birders. 8 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Bring binocs and warm clothing and lots of water for our stroll! Meet at the Bohn Park 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue parking lot (just south of Park St.) Contact: [sharona\\_974@yahoo.com](mailto:sharona_974@yahoo.com), 720-236-5683.

**Approximate dates, March 28 – April 1:** Sandhill Cranes/Greater prairie chicken extravaganza

If you haven't ever done it, you really need to see and hear the sandhill cranes as they take flight at sunrise off the Platte River in Kearney, Nebraska. The blinds along the Platte at Rowe Sanctuary provide outstanding viewing and photo opportunities. We'll "rental van" to Kearney for evening and morning crane viewing. Then onto Great Bend, Kansas for the Lesser and Greater prairie chicken leks. Another amazing sight to see! Last year, we watched as a coyote waltzed right through the lek totally unaware of our presence in a blind only a few feet away. Of course, we'll also spend time at Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife area and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge for shorebirds and waterfowl. We might even see a whooping crane or two as they migrate back to Wood Buffalo National Park. Space limited to twelve passengers. Email Mark Ponsor, [m.ponsor@comcast.net](mailto:m.ponsor@comcast.net)

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County Audubon Society

**Next issue deadline:**  
**(Mar 2013 issue) Feb 13.**

Contact editor via link at:  
[www.boulderaudubon.org/newsletter.htm](http://www.boulderaudubon.org/newsletter.htm)

## Pesticides: Now More Than Ever

In his blog, published Dec 11 in the New York Times, Mark Bittman says,

*How quickly we forget.*

*After the publication of "Silent Spring," 50 years ago, we (scientists, environmental and health advocates, bird-watchers, citizens) managed to curb the use of pesticides and our exposure to them — only to see their application grow and grow to the point where American agriculture uses more of them than ever before.*

*And the threat is more acute than ever. While Rachel Carson focused on their effect on "nature," it's become obvious that farm workers need protection from direct exposure while applying chemicals to crops. Less well known are the recent studies showing that routine, casual, continuing — what you might call chronic — exposure to pesticides is damaging not only to flora but to all creatures, including the one that habitually considers itself above it all: us. [http://tinyurl.com/ca2txkk]*

He cites three catalysts for his column. The first is from the American Association of Pediatrics:

*Children encounter pesticides every day and are uniquely vulnerable to their toxicity. A new policy statement from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) outlines the harmful effects of pesticides on children and makes recommendations on how to reduce exposure. The policy statement, "Pesticide Exposure in Children," and an accompanying technical report are published in the December 2012 issue of Pediatrics. Prenatal and early childhood exposure to pesticides is associated with pediatric cancers, decreased cognitive function and behavioral problems. According to the AAP, recognizing and reducing children's exposure to pesticides will require improved medical training, public health tracking, and regulatory approaches.*

He mentions that recently disclosed evidence shows that pesticide exposure in pregnant women may cause their children to tend to become obese.

Perhaps worst is that genetically modified crops — intended to reduce the need for pesticides — have actually led to increased use of pesticides over the last decade or so, because of the development of resistant insects.

Pesticides are found in nearly every stream in the U.S, over 90% of wells, and in over half of the ground water in both rural and urban areas.

The long-term solution is to reduce pesticide use, and the ways to do that include some of the typical laundry-list items that find their way into every "how to improve American agriculture" story: rotate crops, which reduces attacks by invasive species; employ integrated pest management, which basically means "think before you spray"; better regulate pesticides with emphasis on

protecting the most vulnerable. Farmers need options for obtaining conventional (non-GMO) seed and to move more generally toward organic principles.

Recent studies have shown that, while organic and conventional produce are nutritionally similar, the organic products have greatly reduced pesticide residues. That alone is sufficient reason to buy organic when you can.

American Assoc of Pediatrics article:  
<http://tinyurl.com/c3stv4o>

## Boulder County Fracking Rules

*Excerpt from a Dec 16 letter to the Daily Camera by Commissioners Cindy Domenico, Deb Gardner and Will Toor*

What do the new regulations do? The new regulations are designed to achieve the maximum protection for air quality, water quality and the environment that is legally possible for counties under current state law and are designed to address land use impacts associated with oil and gas operations. The regulations set a dual track. An operator may either go through a process which sets general standards -- including no significant degradation of water quality, maximum possible distance from surrounding land uses, and air quality requirements -- and be required to go through public hearings with the planning commission and the county commissioners. Or an applicant could voluntarily enter an expedited review process, which would be faster and more predictable -- but in order to qualify, they would need to agree to abide by a set of requirements that include standards that the county could not otherwise impose. Both tracks require the payment of transportation fees to pay for any damage to county roads, and to pay for extensive water quality monitoring conducted by a neutral third party.

Now that the county has passed regulations, could drilling start immediately? No. These regulations are quite complicated, and will require significant effort to implement.

Daily Camera: <http://tinyurl.com/bvbatfo>

## Grocery Certificates

Certificates are 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, \$100; Liquormart, \$25



## BOULDER COUNTY WILDLIFE INVENTORY, MAY 2012

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

This was one of the poorest showings for May for many years with only 195 bird species reported. However, this may well be because of poor reporting rather than an absence of birds. This year there were no spring counts taking place in May, nor did anyone undertake a "big day". Consequently many birds that were surely present went unreported. In this category were **Black-crowned Night Heron**, **Sharp-shinned Hawk**, **Prairie Falcon**, **Ring-billed Gull** and **Brown Creeper**. For the best results in May, one not only needs to observe rarities, but need good overall coverage as well as strong shorebird and warbler migrations. Unusual shorebirds included a **Short-billed Dowitcher** at Walden Ponds and a group of **White-rumped Sandpipers** at Union Reservoir. Exciting warblers included two **Northern Parula**, a **Chestnut-sided Warbler**, two **Black-throated Gray Warblers**, a **Blackburnian Warbler** and a **Worm-eating Warbler** that flew into a South Boulder window. Fortunately the last mentioned bird was only stunned.

One **Caspian Tern** was reported on Baseline Reservoir; this was the only tern reported. Diving duck numbers were way down with only a few observed. A **Red-throated Loon** on Baseline Reservoir was a good sighting. **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** were observed in many different locations in both the plains and the foothills. A **Cassin's Kingbird** was seen at Walden Ponds. Two **Summer Tanagers** were reported. Seven different **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were reported in a variety of locations. A single **McCown's Longspur** was seen in the short grass prairie to the east of Boulder. An **Eastern Meadowlark** was reported in Lafayette.

### CONTRIBUTORS TO THE MAY 2012 INVENTORY

Dave Alcock, Linda Andes-Georges, Dale Ball, J.D. Birchmeier, Kat Bradley-Bennett, Kitty Brigham, Alex & Gillian Brown, Dave Cameron, Mark Chavez, Sharon Daugherty, Raymond E. Davis, Todd Deininger, Allison De Van, Jessie Dulberger, Bill Eeds, David Ely, Ted Floyd, Lonny Frye, Steve Frye, Peter Gent, Sallie Greenwood, Bryan Guarente, Paula Hansley, Peter Hartlove, Thomas Heinrich, Chuck Hundertmark, Steve Jones, Elena Klaver, Petrea Mah, Luis Matheus, Steve Miodinow, Gene and Lynn Monroe, Nick Moore, Christian Nunes, Laura Osborn, Peter Plage, Peter Ruprecht, Scott Severs, Cara Stiles, Marcel Such, Joyce Takamine, John Tumasonis, David J Waltman, Bruce Webb, Wild Bird Center, Bob Zilly, Eric Zorawowicz.

### Rubber Dodo Award

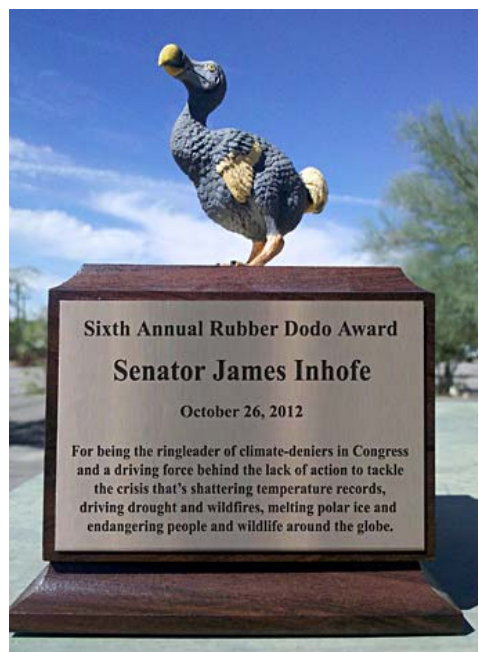
The Center for Biological Diversity gives out the award every year to the worst of the worst -- those in a class of their own for their monumental opposition to protecting wildlife and the environment.

More than 15,000 Center supporters cast votes, and Senator Inhofe was voted the worst of the worst.

When it comes to denying the science and reality of climate change -- aka the single-greatest threat to life on Earth -- the Oklahoma Republican is simply peerless, a driving force behind the tragic lack of U.S. action on global warming.

2012 is on track to become the warmest year yet. The average temperature over the continental U.S. for Jan-Nov was 3.3 degrees above the 20th century average and one degree above the previous record, set in 1934. Arctic sea ice melted to a record-breaking low; there were droughts, crop failures, massive wildfires, floods, and other dire signs that global warming is tightening its grip. Releases of greenhouse gases continue to increase, leading many scientists to believe that global warming can no longer be limited to less than the 2° C believed to be a critical threshold for the environment.

Senator Inhofe and his cronies claim it's all an elaborate hoax, and stubbornly block action to combat the crisis.



### Chasing Ice - Directed by Jeff Orlowski - 76 minutes

The heart of the global-warming documentary *Chasing Ice* is the dramatic time-lapse film footage of huge segments of glaciers collapsing and melting way, as well as the adventure of attempting to capture that footage in highly dangerous places. The final scenes of an unprecedented event are stunning.

## Wolverine M56 in Colorado

Linda Andes-Georges

*Gulo gulo* is not a cousin of the famous J.R.R. Tolkien anti-hero, Gollum, although they do have a few similarities (like the noises they both make when gobbling prey). But with all due respect to Tolkien, the biggest weasel—the wolverine—has a story just as interesting as the fictional character. Recently, the story of one wolverine in particular has captured the imagination of the public, and received much media attention.

M56 is not a colorful name like his Latin name (*Gulo gulo* means Gluttonous glutton—or Double Glutton, if you will). But as he travels across large swathes of the West in search of a mate and of prey, M56 is becoming a sort of charismatic “hero” to those who wish to preserve a role for predators in the U.S—and a symbol of the growing group of species threatened by Climate Change: a spectrum ranging from pikas to polar bears, with many birds, frogs and others in the middle.

M56 was originally outfitted with a radio transmitter in early June, 2009 in the Grand Tetons. He had had a lovely life there, but he felt—like Daniel Boone—that his neighbors were getting a bit too close and it was time to move on to more exclusive hunting grounds. Being essentially a solitary creature, he did not know, as he headed southeast across the Red Desert of Wyoming toward Colorado—something like traveling through Mordor, for a predator—that he would sorely miss his female neighbors in just a short time.

Wolverines love to cover ground, and M56 did well with his hunting along the way. He had no idea that he was becoming a media star for humans because of the great distances he was traveling, and because he was finding his way back to a region that had not seen such a beast for over 90 years.

Ray Rafiti provides a story on his website of finding M56 and has given us permission to use the accompanying photo and text. (<http://tinyurl.com/brgntxp>)

*“In early June 2009 researchers with the Greater Yellowstone Wolverine program began following the wayward route of a young male wolverine (M56) they had trapped and outfitted with a radio transmitter in the Grand Tetons. Known to travel great distances and occupy large territories it wasn’t until M56 crossed into Colorado that interest began to swell*

*“On June 26th I was in Rocky Mountain National Park looking for nursery elk herds in the tundra to photograph. I found and began working a solo bull grazing along the edge of timberline. The elk methodically worked uphill, relaxed and paid no attention to my presence. It was pretty unusual when the elk came to full attention and bolted uphill. He began to trot and cast a gaze back into the trees. I looked the same direction*

*and saw what at first appeared to be a bear cub walking out of the trees into the open. I ran into a wolverine in the Wind River Range years ago, so it didn’t take to long to register this was not a bear cub. Wildlife photography is often about being in the right place at the right time. There was no doubt this was one of those moments. The little guy proceeded to walk right to me, stopping about 30 yards away. He looked uphill at the elk, looked downhill and then wheeled racing up and over the steep slope. I managed to grab a couple dozen frames before he vanished.*

*“The entire population of wolverines in the lower 48 states is estimated to be less than 300 animals. M56 left the Yellowstone ecosystem to breed and to proliferate his species. It’s unlikely he’s found a partner since my photographs were the first documented evidence of a wolverine in Colorado in more than 90 years. Trappers killed wolverines for their fur, ranchers killed them fearing livestock losses and civilization has divided their range, removing necessary travel corridors. Researchers expect climate change will further challenge their sustainability. M56 remains in Colorado. I saw him again a year later in the talus slopes of Mt. Evans.”*

In April, 2011, another photographer “heard a thrashing ruckus beneath the Sawtooth ridge on Mt. Bierstadt, and thought a large bear was approaching. M56 then emerged silently. ‘When I saw it’ [Cameron Miller says], ‘I wasn’t scared at all. It looked curious.’

Wolverines depend utterly on surviving within a wide variety high elevation locations like the Rockies, habitats containing the arctic and subarctic conditions they require. Individual ranges can be from 150 to 500 square miles; the rougher and rockier and colder the better. Like Gollum, wolverines eat nearly anything. Winter births occur in dens that are typically in the debris pile at the base of an avalanche chute and buried under deep snow cover. A tricky habitat niche indeed!

On Jan. 18 U.S. Fish & Wildlife will announce a decision on the feasibility of reintroduction to Colorado, which historically had a stable population of these winter-loving animals.



## Climate Change—No Good News

Yet another attempt to forge an agreement on dealing with climate change opened on Monday, 26 November and continued until Saturday, 8 December 2012 at the Qatar National Convention Centre in Doha, Qatar. The result was pretty universal disappointment.

"This is not where we wanted to be at the end of the meeting, I assure you," said Nauru Foreign Minister Kieren Keke, who leads an alliance of small island states. "It certainly isn't where we need to be in order to prevent islands from going under and other unimaginable impacts."

The World Bank provided an excellent review:

"A 4°C warmer world can, and must be, avoided – we need to hold warming below 2°C," said **World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim**. "Lack of action on climate change threatens to make the world our children inherit a completely different world than we are living in today. Climate change is one of the single biggest challenges facing development, and we need to assume the moral responsibility to take action on behalf of future generations, especially the poorest."

The report, reviewed by some of the world's top scientists, is being released ahead of the next comprehensive studies by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2013/14, and follows the Bank's own Strategic Framework for Development and Climate Change in 2008 and the World Development Report on climate change in 2010. "Turn Down the Heat" combines a synthesis of recent scientific literature with new analysis of likely impacts and risks, focusing on developing

### "Bird Count Retrospective"

with Bill Weber, Thursday, January 10, 7 p.m.

George Reynolds Branch Library,  
Table Mesa Drive opposite King Supers

Though best known as the dean of Colorado botanists and founder of the University of Colorado herbarium, Bill Weber has been a birder and naturalist all his life, beginning in the 1930s when he founded the Sialis Bird Club in Bronx Park. He and his young friends were actually responsible for the "Wooden Dovekie" incident of the Christmas Census. His notebooks from those early years have contributed to a new book by Paul Buckley on early birding in the New York City area.

Dr. Weber, now 94, will share stories from those early years. In the spirit of the occasion, we will also reveal results of this year's Boulder Christmas Bird Count, conducted on December 16. Copies of Dr. Weber's seminal field guide, *Colorado Flora, Eastern Slope*, will be available for purchase and signing.

countries. It chronicles already observed climate change and impacts, such as heat waves and other extreme events, and offers projections for the 21st century for droughts, heat waves, sea level rise, food, water, ecosystems and human health.

The report says today's climate could warm from the current global mean temperature of 0.8°C above pre-industrial levels, to as high as 4°C by 2100, even if countries fulfill current emissions-reduction pledges.

"This report reinforces the reality that today's climate volatility affects everything we do," said **Rachel Kyte, the Bank's Vice President for Sustainable Development**. "We will redouble our efforts to build adaptive capacity and resilience, as well as find solutions to the climate challenge."

World Bank: <http://tinyurl.com/b2azjkt>

Union of Concerned Scientists: <http://tinyurl.com/c9f43f9>



An irruption of Common Redpolls in Nov-Dec this year has included numerous sightings in Boulder and adjacent counties. Dean Colprit said in a Dec 16 email, "The redpolls found my feeders yesterday. I counted 11 of them. They didn't stay long, just long enough to get two good shots." He provided us with the above picture, and he has a website with a great many excellent pictures of both wildlife and scenery.

<http://www.hiddentrailphotography.com/>

### Birds and Beans Coffee

Buying delicious, organic, shade-grown Birds and Beans coffee not only supports greater biodiversity and the small farmers, but now also supports BCAS! When you order at <http://Birdsandbeans.com> just add Boulder County Audubon Society in the 'comments' field and we get a little kickback from each bag ordered.

## Novel Pest Control

Three days a week, a pair of Harris's hawks named Mowgli and Melvin are stationed by the edge of an artificial pond at the Water Garden, an office park in Santa Monica, CA.

They are making sure that the pond and its environs remain free from the hundreds of sea gulls, pigeons and crows that would otherwise leave behind droppings and bacteria.

Airstrike Bird Control is promoting the ancient sport of falconry to potential customers. For each Airstrike Bird Control assignment, a master falconer is deployed to scare away the problem birds by using either hawks or falcons. Hawks are better for smaller spaces; falcons, which fly at a higher altitude, are more suitable for large areas, like vineyards.

"The objective of the program is what we call hazing," said Brad Felger, co-owner of Airstrike Bird Control.

"You're intimidating them, you're scaring them, so they don't want to be there." During the early, intensive part of the program, the falconers and the birds are at the job site seven days a week. Once the problem is under control, they scale back their schedule. Work can be seasonal or year-round. The practice is catching on, particularly among farmers and wine growers whose livelihoods depend on sustaining their crops, Mr. Felger said.

Edited from New York Times article , Dec 22. For more, see <http://tinyurl.com/c3t4nhb>



Harris's Hawk in TX – Bill Schmoker

## West Antarctic Warming

In spite of the protestations of the deniers, the evidence of global climate change continues to grow. A recent article in *Nature Geoscience*, written by NCAR climatologist Andy Monaghan and others, shows that the West Antarctic Ice Sheet has been warming about twice as fast as previous estimates.

The discovery raises additional concerns about Antarctic contributions to sea level rise. "If this melt continues, if the summer warming continues, we could begin to see increased runoff from the West Antarctic Ice Sheet later in the century that could enhance its ongoing contribution to sea level rise," Monaghan said.

Analysis of the temperature record from Byrd Station, in the center of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet, shows an increase of 4.3 degrees in average annual temperature from 1958, almost double what was previously thought. That is three times faster than the average temperature increase around the globe for the same period.

The temperature at Byrd Station sometimes rises above freezing during the summer, and this research raises the possibility that it might happen more often in the future. More surface melting would weaken the ice sheet, which is already under attack from warmer ocean water. The base of the ice sheet sits below sea level, which makes it especially vulnerable to the ocean warming. Scientists say that a breakup of the ice sheet, over a period that would presumably last several hundred years, could raise global sea level by 10 feet and possibly more.

### References:

Nature Geoscience: <http://tinyurl.com/c3tokxb>

New York Times: <http://tinyurl.com/bpe629w>

Boulder Daily Camera: <http://tinyurl.com/cduwhz9>

## 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. Supporting memberships are just \$20 annually. You can join online or download a printable form to send with your check. Visit <http://www.boulderaudubon.org/about.htm#membership>.

Paper copies of the Nov-Dec, Jan-Feb, and Mar-Apr issues of *On the Wing* are mailed only to BCAS Supporting Members who request them. The electronic edition, available online, has color pictures and usually includes extra articles.