



On The Wing

Volume 42, Number 3 Boulder County Audubon Society Newsletter

May-Aug 2012

Dodd Reservoir Restoration Plans

Phil Andrews and his wife greatly valued the birds and other creatures that they often saw using the lake and its environs. When they sold their farm in 1973, they donated 6 acres to our chapter, and asked



Audubon to preserve the wild values of the area. IBM completed this land donation with an additional 4 acres a short time later. We are now engaged in a plan to restore the area to native habitat, a process that will take a few years.

Boulder County has offered to burn the north brome slope and the wetlands for us. Burning rather than grazing reduces long closures and potential damage to the wetlands and shoreline from heavy cow traffic. The burning plan also reduces fencing cost that would have been required for grazing. The county has burned a small test plot near the parking area that will provide a demonstration for a full property restoration in 2013. Meanwhile all the other restoration activities will continue. We will need help with those activities this summer.

Other plans include:

- Plant native fruit bushes on the southern shore
- Create native bee habitat in standing posts and created habitat
- Monitor water quality
- Create informational signs
- Collect animal/plant data along up to 5 transects on the property
- Create bat habitat with bat boxes

We will need lots of hands & energy

Email Petrea Mah (petreamah@comcast.net) to sign up to visit Dodd for weed control, watering, or trash pickup one or two times over this summer and fall.

The Audubon youth naturalists have agreed to set up the transects, do bird, butterfly and dragonfly counts, identify shoreline tracks, sample water quality & pick up barbed wire & other discarded junk. They will also help with the tree planting & prairie dog fencing.

BCAS 4th Tuesday Program Series

May 22, 7:15 p.m.

Panama Canopy Tower and Lodge, A Birding and Wildlife Adventure

Becky and Bill Eeds, Dianna and Wayne Johnston

The Panama Canopy Tower is considered one of the top birding spots in Central America. Located along the Canal Zone about an hour out of Panama City, the Canopy Tower is an old U.S. Army radar installation turned into an eco-lodge. It is situated in Soberania National Park, which stretches from just outside Panama City to the Caribbean coast. The tower rises up to the top of the surrounding canopy with rooftop 360 degree views of the canal area. The top floor is a comfortable sitting and dining area with windows all around that provide perfect views of the animals and birds of the area. From this perch and the surrounding trails, we photographed Three-toed Sloths, Mantled Howlers, Geoffroys Tamarins, Green Iguanas, Red-eyed Green Tree Frogs, Capuchin monkeys, Collared Aracaris, Keel-billed Toucans, Palm Tanagers, Flame-rumped Caciques, Rufescent Tiger Herons, all five trogons, Rufous Motmots... and much much more. What a trip!



Join the Eeds and Johnstons as they recount their trip to Panama and present beautiful photos of the wildlife and birds of the area.

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

Spring-Summer Field Trips

Saturday, May 5, 7:00 AM until about 11:00 "Pella Crossing & Marlett Trails" Easy trails around six ponds. Meet at the Pella Crossing parking lot on 75th just south of Hygiene. Leader: Neal Thielen, contact gnthielen@comcast.net.

Nesting Raptors in Boulder County, Sat, May 12 8:00 AM – 1:00 PM

A driving tour with leader Mark Ponsor to observe nests and young of Bald eagles, Golden eagles, Great Horned owls, Red-tailed hawks, Swainson's Hawks, Osprey, Northern Harriers, and whatever we find along the way.

Email for meeting location: s.ponsor@comcast.net

Birding the Hills and Waterways of Lyons with Davis and friends

Sunday, May 13, 8:30 AM to 3:00 PM – Bring Your Mom!!!

Meet at the Lyons Park'n'Ride (4th and Main) at 8:30 and bird Old South Road for breeding Canyon Wren, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Black-headed Grosbeak, Western Wood-Pewee, etc. Possible side trips to Pella Crossing and other local bodies of water. Great trip for young birders to enjoy. Then head up to the Davis porch for your own sack lunch and observation of his feeders and 3 dozen nesting boxes. Bring your lunch and water and be prepared for an easy walk and a nice morning with some great birders. Usually get great looks at about 48 species, and glimpse/hear another 10. Davis at 303-823-5332 or davis@greenspeedisp.net (Joint with BBC and DFO)

Saturday, May 19 – "Walk on the Wild Side" (Int'l Migratory Bird Day)

Join BCAS for a morning of family-friendly, nature-related activities and support local wildlife habitat conservation at the same time! Walk On the Wild Side, sponsored by Environment For The Americas, will take place at Walden Ponds from 8:00 a.m. to noon. You can also participate in the Walkathon as a BCAS Team member to help raise money for habitat restoration at Walden Ponds for the many resident and migratory birds who depend on the Ponds. Choose from a 1k or 3k walk that winds through a variety of habitats that Walden Ponds provides and spot some birds along the way! Consider volunteering at the BCAS education table—we'd love the company. Contact Dale Ball (Boulderbirdgirl@gmail.com) to join us in the walk or volunteer at the table.

Sunday, May 20, 7:30-11 AM. Eco-steward Bird and Butterfly Survey in Upper Gregory and Long Canyons.

Everyone is welcome on this slow-paced walk through one of Boulder's most peaceful canyon areas. We'll survey birds by sight and song on the way out and count butterflies on the way back. Leader Steve Jones will update the group on Boulder County Audubon's Ecosystem Stewardship Initiative and explain how you can adopt your own wild area. Limited to to 15 participants. To sign up, contact Steve: curlwsj@comcast.net; 303-494-2468.

—**Field trips continued on next page (page 3)**

Boulder Bird Club trips—page 7

Boulder County Audubon Society

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Amy Schlotthauer (303-402-0905)

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)



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<http://tiny.cc/ez7v6>

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Next issue deadline: (Sep 2012 issue) Aug 17.

Contact editor via link at: www.boulderaudubon.org/newsletter.htm

Adopt a Species and Enjoy a Gourmet Interlude with Nature

We had great fun wining and dining while searching for sensitive species last year during our third Species of Concern -a-thon. We hope you can join us this year. Pledges support Boulder County Audubon conservation programs, including our teen scholarships, bluebird trails, and monthly programs. Board members provide gourmet food and refreshments. Participants receive updates on nesting status of tracked species. Thanks for your support!!

Burrowing Owl (isolated and restricted) with **Petrea Mah**. June 23, 4-9 p.m. We'll explore three or four Burrowing Owl colonies in Weld and Adams counties. Last year we saw more than 40 Burrowing Owls on this trip. This year's juvenile owls should be visible as they begin their fledging antics. After the owls we'll enjoy a picnic dinner at Barr Lake State Park, followed by a sunset boardwalk ramble to view songbirds, waterfowl, and raptors: 303-494-4121; petreamah@comcast.net. Suggested pledge: \$45. Limited to 10.

Flammulated Owl (isolated and restricted) search with **Steve Jones, Sharon Daugherty, and Maureen Lawry**. Thursday, June 7, 5:30-11 p.m. After a gourmet picnic at dusk, we'll stroll down a secluded foothills canyon to listen for poorwills, nighthawks, and reclusive flammulated owls. We have a 65% chance of hearing or seeing these little owls. We're sure to see lots of wildflowers, including shooting stars and sugarbowls. 303-494-2468; curlewsj@comcast.net. Suggested pledge: \$40. Limited to 12.

Barn Owl (isolated & restricted), and **bobolinks** (?) with Linda Andes-Georges and Pam Piombino. Saturday, July 7, 4:30-9:30 p.m. Enjoy a gourmet catered supper during a trip to observe the ricebird (bobolinks) and the ghosts of the avian world (and their young) in at least two locations where they are nesting. Dress like Harry or Hermione for a special prize. Family-friendly trip, if children are old enough to be very quiet and sneaky for 20 minutes at a time. Limit: 12. Suggested pledge: \$45, children \$25. 303-772-3239; andesgeorges@comcast.net.

Butterfly Photography Workshop with **Steve Jones** and **John Barr**. Saturday, July 21, 7:30 a.m. to noon. Get close to fritillaries, blues, and other butterflies and learn how to get striking images. Bring a digital or film camera with a macro (close-up) or telephoto lens. Bagel and fruit brunch provided. 303-494-2468; curlewsj@comcast.net. Limited to 8. Suggested pledge: \$35.

Download and print the sign-up form:
<http://tiny.cc/7erddw>

Field Trips continued from page 2

Roll and Stroll, Sunday, July 15th, 6:00 pm

Join The Boulder County Audubon Society and OSMP on a bird-watching field trip at Cottonwood Trail. Boulder Audubon birders team up with Topher Downham to provide this fun bird-watching experience to people who use walkers, wheelchairs, strollers, young legs, or older legs. Birdwatching begins at the Cottonwood Trail trailhead at 6:00 pm, located on Independence Rd, just east of Foothills Pkwy (Hwy 157) between Valmont Rd and 28th St in Boulder. Bring hats, sunscreen, water, assistance if necessary, and binoculars if you have them, though some will be available to share. Extra wheelchairs available for assistance or just to experience "rolling". Contact: marybalzer@qwest.net

Sunday, August 19, 7:30-11 AM. Tallgrass Prairie, with Steve Jones. The big bluestem and Indian grass should be in full bloom for this walk through Boulder's tallgrass prairie. Bring a hand lens and binoculars and expect to see crab spiders, milkweed beetles, soldier beetles, dragonflies, and perhaps a monarch caterpillar or two. Meet at the South Boulder Creek trailhead on the west side of South Broadway 1 mile south of the Greenbrier light. Limited to 15 participants. To sign up, contact Steve (curlewsj@comcast.net; 303-494-2468).

Birds and Beans Coffee

Available from BCAS this Fall!

We are excited to announce that BCAS will begin selling Birds and Beans Bird-Friendly® coffee at our membership meetings beginning in September. This coffee is certified by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, which ensures the coffee beans are completely shade-grown, organic, and farmed sustainably, thus preserving habitat required by migrant birds (such as tanagers, warblers, orioles, and flycatchers—many of our summertime visitors!). Coffees sold with SMBC certification must use only 100 percent certified beans, (whereas other shade grown coffee may have little as 30 percent shade grown beans).

For more information about the coffee and sustainable farming and harvesting, please see <http://www.birdsandbeans.com/index.html>. BCAS will sell 12 oz bags for \$12.00 each. Stay tuned!

***On the Wing* online has added features in every issue.**

In this issue, see page 8 for an added article.

BOULDER COUNTY WILDLIFE INVENTORY, NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 2011

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

November 2011 recorded 108 bird species, a respectable total for a month that often has low numbers of species. Four new species for the year were reported: **Long-tailed Duck**, **Red-throated Loon**, **Pinyon Jay** and **Eastern Towhee**. Other diving ducks of note, apart from the **Long-tailed Duck** or **Oldsquaw** as it once was called, included a **White-winged Scoter**, a **Barrow's Goldeneye** and several late sightings of **Ruddy Duck**. November is the peak month for viewing loons; three **Pacific Loons** and one **Common Loon** were also reported. However, we suspect that **Common Loons**, which should be our commonest loon, were under-reported. It is somewhat surprising that this was our first report of **Pinyon Jay** for the year. This is an irruptive species that can occasionally be found in large numbers, but is usually reported in small numbers in the mountains and foothills. **Eastern Towhee** was reported for the third time since the wildlife inventory began; previous reports were in 1999 and 2006. **Eastern Towhee** and **Spotted Towhee** were formerly sub-species of **Rufous-sided Towhee**.

Both **Ross's Goose** and **Snow Goose** were reported in more than one location in November. Two **Tundra Swans** were seen on Lagerman Reservoir, but did not linger. Grebes were reported in fair numbers with a **Red-necked Grebe** being a nice addition to our more normal species. **American Pelicans** lingered well into the month with the last sighting on the 24th. A **Say's Phoebe** on the 27th November was a very late sighting for this flycatcher, and the sighting on 17th December was extraordinarily late. It seems amazing that a **Say's Phoebe** was able to survive this long. **Sedge Wren** is a most unusual wren species for Boulder County; surprisingly this was the second report of this species for this year. Only one bluebird species was reported in both November and December and that was **Eastern Bluebird**. This is another species that is on the increase in the county; any winter bluebirds have to be considered carefully as they could be any of our three species: **Eastern**, **Western** or **Mountain Bluebirds**. **Palm Warbler** is an unusual species that is most frequently found in the winter. Three **Brown-headed Cowbirds** on the 27th November were another very late sighting. **Common Redpoll** is always a good sighting.

December is usually a well reported month because of the Christmas bird count. Two counts take place in the county with one centered on Boulder and the other on Longmont. Each count covers a circle of fifteen miles diameter. This means that the Boulder Christmas Bird Count covers a range of habitats from the mountains to the plains. It also gives a more realistic estimate of actual numbers of birds; in most months the common species are hugely under-reported. Interestingly, of the five new species for the year reported in December, only one was seen on the Christmas Count. This was a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, an unusual winter species that was split some years ago from our breeding **Red-naped Sapsuckers**.

The rarest bird in December was probably a **Little Gull** seen on Union Reservoir on the 1st. Fortunately it stayed around for a few days allowing several birders to observe it. This is the third report of this species since the wildlife inventory began in 1979. The previous sightings were in 1994 and 1999, also on Union Reservoir. Other new species for the year were **Trumpeter Swan**, **Ring-necked Pheasant** and **Lapland Longspur**. **Ring-necked Pheasants** have become increasingly difficult to find, although they are known to breed in the county.

December 2011 was also notable for a number of summer migrants lingering in the county. The **Say's Phoebe** has already been mentioned. **Turkey Vultures** were observed in three separate sightings. **Common Grackles** were obviously wintering at a feedlot on Valmont. Other seasonally unusual sighting included a **Williamson's Sapsucker** and a **Hermit Thrush**. It should also be mentioned that Boulder County is unusual in having a wintering population of **Double-crested Cormorants** and **Black-crowned Night Herons** sustained by the (relatively) warm water of Valmont Reservoir.

Other good sightings for December included **Virginia Rail**, **Barn Owl**, **Northern Saw-whet Owl** and **Golden-crowned Sparrow**. Altogether the December 2011 inventory recorded 127 bird species, of which 112 species were reported on the Boulder Christmas Bird Count. Although this does not come close to the whopping 138 bird species reported in December 2010, this is actually the second highest total recorded for December.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THE NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 2011 INVENTORIES

Alan Bell, J.D. Birchmeier, Maureen Blackford, Boulder Christmas Bird Count, Kitty Brigham, Alex & Gillian Brown, Mark Chavez, Cathy Cook, Todd Deininger, William L Ellis, Ted Floyd, Peter Gent, Tom Hall, Paula Hansley, Jack Harlan, Thomas Heinrich, Rachel Hopper, Adam Jack, Steve Jones, Bill Kaempfer, Nick Komar, Dave Leatherman, Petrea Mah, Carol McCasland, Steve Miodinow, Gene and Lynn Monroe, Nick Moore, Christian Nunes, Laura Osborn, Nathan Pieplow, Pam Piombino, Bill Prather, Bill Schmoker, Scott Severs, Bob Shade, Cara Stiles, Joel Such, Tom Thomson, John Tumasonis, David J Waltman, Cole Wild, Wild Bird Center, Dan Zmolek.

2011: An Overview of the Boulder County Wildlife Inventory

2011 was a record year with 319 bird species reported, surpassing our previous high of 312 species. It seems that records are only made to be broken, and it is never until the figures are finally added up that one can report on the year as a whole. Alder Flycatcher and Canyon Towhee were both new additions to the wildlife inventory. Neither Lewis's Woodpecker nor Black Rosy Finch was among the expected species reported in 2011. June was a record month for the number of species reported.

Reported in 2011 but not in 2010

Trumpeter Swan
Tufted Duck
Red-throated Loon
Cattle Egret
Yellow-crowned Night Heron
Mississippi Kite
Mountain Plover
Hudsonian Godwit
Little Gull
Mew Gull
Glaucous Gull
Great Black-backed Gull
Least Tern
Arctic Tern
Boreal Owl
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Alder Flycatcher
White-eyed Vireo
Yellow-throated Vireo
Blue-headed Vireo
Purple Martin
Sedge Wren

Reported in 2011 but not in 2010

Lapland Longspur
Tennessee Warbler
Nashville Warbler
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Black-throated Gray Warbler
Blackburnian Warbler
Yellow-throated Warbler
Eastern Towhee
Canyon Towhee
Field Sparrow
Black-throated Sparrow
Baltimore Oriole
Scott's Oriole
Reported in 2010 but not in 2011
Least Bittern
Little Blue Heron
Glossy Ibis
American Golden Plover
Piping Plover
Black-necked Stilt
White-rumped Sandpiper

Reported in 2010 but not in 2011

Pectoral Sandpiper
Buff-breasted Sandpiper
Iceland Gull
Black-legged Kittiwake
Lewis's Woodpecker
Acorn Woodpecker
Black Phoebe
Bell's Vireo
Cassin's Vireo
Philadelphia Vireo
Gray-cheeked Thrush
Wood Thrush
Snow Bunting
Magnolia Warbler
Black-throated Blue Warbler
Prothonotary Warbler
Worm-eating Warbler
Connecticut Warbler
Hepatic Tanager
Northern Cardinal
Black Rosy Finch

Month-by-Month Avian Species Totals

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
January	89	98	103	108	122	99	101	99	101	100	103
February	91	89	95	106	112	98	96	90	89	90	96
March	97	115	100	116	105	118	98	112	96	87	108
April	155	170	150	136	159	154	147	179	164	143	164
May	203	243	211	214	201	218	170	236	215	216	218
June	153	159	155	168	161	147	164	177	172	145	185
July	132	173	113	147	137	152	153	166	171	129	118
August	125	177	111	144	152	156	151	152	129	136	122
September	146	172	145	175	154	166	164	171	164	156	158
October	124	149	102	107	141	126	126	119	130	112	112
November	118	112	113	111	105	125	121	111	108	104	108
December	118	125	115	122	123	121	123	117	125	138	127
Year Total	276	308	290	298	286	302	302	312	310	312	319

Bird Ranges Shift Northward, But Not as Fast as Climate

*Distributed via email by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology
March 27 – “Exploring and Conserving Nature” series*

As warmer winter temperatures become more common, one way for some animals to adjust is to shift their ranges northward. But a new study of 59 North American bird species indicates that doing so is not easy or quick—it took about 35 years for many birds to move far enough north for winter temperatures to match where they historically lived.

“This is a problem, because birds are among the most mobile of animals and yet they take decades to respond to warming,” said Frank La Sorte, a postdoctoral researcher at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and lead author of the study, which was published online by the *Journal of Animal Ecology* this month. “Climatic conditions are steadily moving northward, whether particular animals come along or not. As conservation biologists we need to know how well animals are keeping up.”

Earlier studies of responses to climate change examined shifts in species’ geographic ranges. “Our work adds important realism and a temporal dimension to these models for a critical aspect of climate: minimum winter temperature,” said coauthor Walter Jetz of Yale University, where the research was conducted.

The researchers used 35 years of data from the North American Christmas Bird Count to match winter temperatures to where birds were seen. They tested 59 bird species individually and found that they responded differently to climate change. When summarized across bird species, there was evidence for a strong delay lasting about 35 years.

For example, Black Vultures have spread northward in the last 35 years and now winter as far north as Massachusetts, where minimum winter temperature is similar to what it was in BaltimoreMaryland, in 1975. On the other hand, the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker did not alter its range at all despite the warming trend, possibly because its very specific habitat requirements precluded a range shift.

Both of these scenarios could represent problems for birds, La Sorte said. Species that do not track changes in climate may wind up at the limits of their physiological tolerance, or they may lose important habitat qualities, such as favored food types, as those species pass them by. But they also can’t move their ranges too fast if the habitat conditions they depend on also tend to lag behind climate.

When you think about it, it makes sense that species move slower than the rate at which climate is changing,”

La Sorte said. “They’re not just tracking temperature—many of them need to follow a prey base, a type of vegetation, or they need certain kinds of habitat that will create corridors for movement.”

Variability in climate warming is likely to affect how species respond, too, La Sorte said. If warming trends weaken, as they did over the past few years, birds may be able to catch up. But accelerated warming, which is likely as global carbon emissions continue to increase, may put additional strain on birds. The study highlights these challenges and the high potential climate change has for disrupting natural systems. It also underscores the challenges ecologists face in predicting the long-term consequences of climate change for many species simultaneously.

The study was supported by National Science Foundation awards DEB 1026764 and DBI 0960550 to Walter Jetz of Yale University.



*The Black Vulture has expanded its range northward and now occurs in parts of Massachusetts where the minimum winter temperature is similar to that in Baltimore, Maryland in 1975.
Photo by Liz Malyszek*

The Great Warm Wave

The March “warm wave,” which covered much of the U.S and some of Canada, was exceptional in many ways. It was long-lasting, widespread, and extreme—that is, extreme in terms of how far it strayed from seasonal norms. According to the invaluable U.S. Records page—the NOAA site that compiles records set at official U.S. weather stations—there were 6,477 daily record highs set or tied from March 1 to 22, 2012. That compares to a paltry 345 daily record lows.

The BCAS bluebird nestbox program observed warm weather impacts in the form of very early nest starts—in mid-March. We had to scramble to make a number of repairs that usually could have been delayed into April. As of April 20, there are several boxes with eggs, and at least one with very young chicks.

—George Oetzel

BCAS Board for fiscal 2013

Officers: Vote for one in each category

President:

___ Steve Jones

Vice-President:

___ Petrea Mah

Secretary:

Treasurer:

___ Kitty Brigham

Directors: Vote for up to eight

___ Linda Andes-Georges

___ Dale Ball

___ J.D. Birchmeier

___ Raymond Bridge

___ Sharon Daugherty

___ Martin Gerra

___ Chris Petruzzo

___ (Write-in) _____

Note: No secretary candidate has yet been identified.

Cut out and fill in the ballot and mail to BCAS, P.O. Box 2081, Boulder, CO 80306. Ballots will also be available at the May 22 program meeting.

Boulder Bird Club field trips:

Please join the Boulder Bird Club for the following field trips. For details, consult the spring newsletter, available online at <http://www.boulderbirdclub.org/calendar.html>

Sunday, May 6th, 8am - 11am: First Sunday Birding at Walden Ponds. Led by Pete Plage.

Saturday, May 12th, 5:30am - 5:30pm: Chico Basin. Led by Joyce Takamine.

Saturday, June 2nd, 6:00am - 6:00pm: The Birds of Pawnee Grasslands. Led by Bill Kaempfer.

Sunday, June 3rd, 8am - 11am: First Sunday Birding at Walden Ponds. Led by Joel Such and Marcel Such.

Saturday, June 16th, 8:30am - 1:30pm: Cal-Wood. Led by Jan Chu.

Friday, June 29th, 7:00am - 1:00pm: Birding Golden Gate Park. Led by Paula Hansley..

Federal Guidelines a Step Forward for Bird-Friendly Wind Development*

"These first-ever federal guidelines are a game-changer and big win for both wildlife and clean energy," said David Yarnold, President & CEO of Audubon. "By collaborating with conservationists instead of slugging it out, the wind power industry gains vital support to expand and create jobs, and wildlife gets the protection crucial for survival."

Background: The guidelines were developed with the assistance of a 22-member Wind Turbine Guidelines Advisory Committee which included experts from The National Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, Defenders of Wildlife, Massachusetts Audubon and Bat Conservation International. The committee, created under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) in 2009, worked with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to recommend guidelines to avoid or minimize impacts to birds and their habitats by land-based wind energy facilities.

Audubon was instrumental in making sure the guidelines address habitat fragmentation, one of the biggest potential impacts of wind development on birds. As a result, wind developers who cooperate with the guidelines will be expected to avoid approaches that cut up and divide important habitats like forests and grasslands and make them less suitable for wildlife.

From the Audubon Policy FAQ:

Acknowledging the important potential of wind power (as well as other renewable energy sources) to combat the threat of global warming to the survival of bird species throughout the western hemisphere does not mean we are providing a blanket endorsement. Every wind power proposal demands thorough case-by-case analysis of both its benefits and impact, and how that lines up against the potential widespread harm from climate change.

Audubon Press Release, March 23, 2012:
<http://tinyurl.com/88c5u8j>

Federal guidelines: <http://www.fws.gov/windenergy/>

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, and there is no extra cost for your purchases.

Bring your checkbook to the next meeting. Denominations: King Soopers, \$100; Liquormart, \$25

Where Have All the Prairie Dogs Gone?

By Ruby Bowman

The Colorado Parks and Wildlife Division has approved Boulder County's permit application for the Rabbit Mountain Open Space prairie dog relocation. Starting on July 1st, black-tailed prairie dogs will be live-trapped at the Alexander Dawson county property near Boulder Creek and released to their new home at Rabbit Mountain Open Space in north Boulder County. The prairie dog relocation is necessary because the Army Corps of Engineers and Boulder County Parks and Open Space will be doing major stream re-alignment work in the area and the prairie dogs in question would be impacted by earth-moving operations.

I applaud Boulder County's effort to preserve prairie dogs at the Alexander Dawson property. The black-tailed prairie dog is a keystone species and a Colorado species of special concern and deserves this type of protection. While the county should be commended for its conservation effort, the Rabbit Mountain relocation is certainly way overdue. It has been 10 years since the county conducted its last prairie dog relocation. During that time, Boulder County has been relying exclusively on lethal control to manage prairie dogs on Parks and Open Space (POS) properties. I define lethal control as wildlife control that results in the eventual death of wildlife, including trapping and donation of prairie dogs to wildlife recovery centers.

According to county wildlife data, over 15,000 prairie dogs have been trapped on POS properties and donated to wildlife recovery centers to become food for black-footed ferrets and raptors since 2002. An unknown number of prairie dogs have been fumigated on county properties. The county does not provide an estimate of the number of prairie dogs they poisoned: it only gives the number of properties fumigated.

Lethal control has primarily occurred on Multiple Objective Areas (MOA), where prairie dogs can supposedly coexist with other uses, and No Prairie Dog (NPD) areas. The prairie dog populations on the Habitat Conservation Areas (HCAs), which according to the Boulder County's prairie dog management plan "form the foundation of the prairie dog conservation strategy," have been

in recent years due to outbreaks of sylvatic plague. In 2004, there were 1581 acres occupied by prairie dogs on HCAs. After 2005, prairie dog acreage on habitat conservation areas decreased to 418 acres in 2011, or 7.76% of the total acreage designated as habitat conservation areas. This small percentage of prairie dog habitat on HCAs is not sufficient to implement a prairie dog conservation strategy for Boulder County; nor is it adequate to support associated wildlife species that depend on prairie dog habitat as a food and shelter source in wildlife conservation areas.

In 1999, I attended the commissioners' public hearing for the adoption of the county prairie dog management plan. At the hearing, Boulder county residents spoke up in favor of the plan, believing that prairie dog conservation would be its primary objective. For several years Parks and Open Space staff made a concerted effort to preserve prairie dogs by relocating them. In 2002, at staff's recommendation, the plan was amended to include the management option of trapping and donating prairie dogs to wildlife recovery centers. Thereafter, wild-to-wild relocation was abandoned by the county even though its own management plan states "non-lethal controls are the preferred methods of removing prairie dogs from inappropriate locations." For the past ten years Boulder County has ignored this important language and instead has managed prairie dogs in the "Old Wild West" tradition, as a pest instead of as the keystone species that it rightfully is.

The Rabbit Mountain relocation has been a long time coming. For many people, the relocation is a step in the right direction in fulfilling the county's promise to its citizens that non-lethal methods will be the preferred management option for our prairie dogs. This is clearly evident in the nearly 1500 comments Boulder County received in response to the Rabbit Mountain relocation, which "show broad community support for relocation as an alternative to lethal control in Boulder County," according to a county document. Looking beyond 2012, it still remains to be seen whether Boulder County will expand its prairie dog conservation efforts in a meaningful way. Let's hope the Rabbit Mountain relocation is not just a token conservation effort that will have to do for another ten years.

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