



# On The Wing

Volume 42, Number 4 **Boulder County Audubon Society Newsletter**

Sept-Oct 2012

## ***BCAS 4th Tuesday Program Series***



Steppe Eagle—Rick Harness

### **Raptors of India: Power Line Mitigation**

Tuesday September 25, 2012.

Rick Harness will share intriguing photos of how power line pole perches or nesting areas can be made safe for raptors. His work in India, like his work in the US and Mongolia will be highlighted with stories and pictures.

In December 2011 the team visited distribution pole lines in the Thar Desert in western India to assess their risks to raptors. The survey areas included power lines near two areas supporting an estimated 250 bird species. Survey areas were also selected due to their proximity to Jorbeer, a dumping site for cattle carcasses which attracts numerous wintering raptors including four eagle species and six vulture species.

Despite a wealth of information on avian interactions with power lines, problems persist throughout the world and this study was initiated to determine if 11 kV distribution power lines in rural India are contributing to avian electrocutions, and if so, at what level. A secondary goal was to identify if any power line configurations and more problematic than others.

**Grand Holiday Sale - Cookie Treats Evening,**  
 Tues. Nov. 27, sale at 6 p.m., program 7:15, with special guest presenter and Big Year participant and videographer, John Vanderpoel, who will entertain and educate us with his insights on the future Olympic Sport, competitive birding.

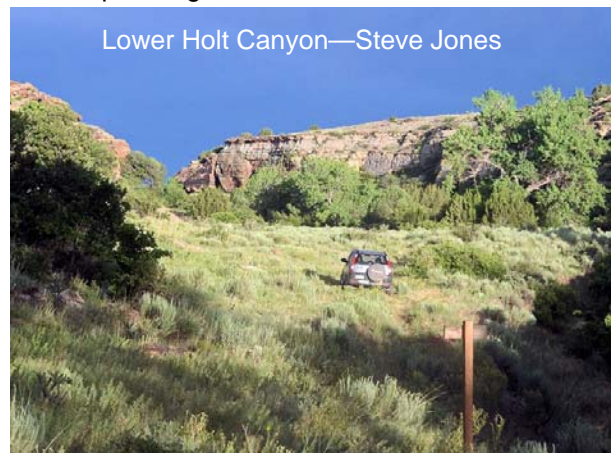
### **Rising from the Dust Bowl:**

**Sacred Springs and Enchanted Canyons of South-eastern Colorado,** presented by Steve Jones

**Tuesday October 23, 2012 7:15**

Baca County, Colorado, lay in the heart of the fabled Dust Bowl where 1930s howlers scoured 850 million tons of topsoil from the prairie, depositing layers of grit as far east as New York and Washington, D.C. Today Baca County is carpeted with native prairie, and 90% of local income derives from environmentally sustainable ranching. Comanche National Grassland, encompassing nearly a half-million acres of lands acquired during the Great Depression, now supports thriving herds of pronghorn, elk, and even bighorn sheep. Mississippi kites, roadrunners, ladder-backed woodpeckers, eastern phoebes, scissor-tailed flycatchers, and painted buntings nest in spring-fed, rimrock canyons, where ancient pictographs adorn countless sacred sites.

Teen Naturalist Skye Lewis will also be with us this evening to present a short PowerPoint on her experience at nature camp in Hog Island ME.



Lower Holt Canyon—Steve Jones

Steve Jones is author of *The Last Prairie*, a *Sandhills Journal*, and co-author of *The Shortgrass Prairie*, the *Peterson Field Guide to the North American Prairie*, and other nature books.

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

## September-October Field Trips



Sunrise flight of  
Sandhill Cranes  
in Nebraska

-Steve Jones

### Sandhill Cranes: Fascinating Facts and Stunning Photos

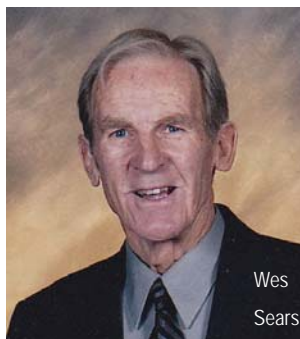
September 5, 7 p.m. at the Erie Library 400 Powers Street, Erie, CO 80516

Join two experts on Lesser and Greater Sandhill Cranes for an informative and entertaining evening. You will leave with a new appreciation for this ancient bird and a desire to experience at least part of their life cycle as they migrate. Ken Strom, Executive Director of Colorado Audubon and Stephen Jones, author and 2012 President of Boulder County Audubon Society are the presenters.

Ken Strom is the Deputy Director of Audubon Rockies, the recently merged Colorado and Wyoming programs of the National Audubon Society. A graduate of Cornell University, Ken is an ecologist who has specialized in the management and restoration of wetland habitats of waterbirds and other wildlife. In the 1980's Ken was Manager of Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary for Sandhill Cranes and Whooping Cranes on the Platte River in Nebraska.

### Honoring Wes Sears, weedpuller and bird-spotter extraordinaire.

Sept. 25 at 5:30 p.m. The Wes Sears Memorial Gardens are in need of attention before winter sets in. Join us for work in the xeriscape gardens on the border of the Unitarian Universalist Church. We will then share a simple catered meal at about 6:15, followed by the evening's program. Wes was the backbone and engine of Boulder County Audubon for many years and keeping the gardens lovely is our honoring of that work. Bev Sears will be on hand for moral support and management.



### Can't beat Rocky Mountain National Park for autumn beauty.

Last weekend of Sept. or first weekend in Oct.; call Mark & Sue Ponsor for specifics. These enthusiastic leaders will help you rediscover part of our most treasured mountain back yard. Sign up if you wish to go: s.ponsor@comcast.net or (303) 530-2229.

### Multi-day Kansas trip, end of October:

Mark and Sue Ponsor will be organizing a late fall trip—the usual fantastic show of thousands upon thousands of migrating waterfowl, including cranes. These folks are our tour organizing aces: please let them know of your interest so that when dates are firmed up by the Cheyenne Bottoms staff, they can let you know all the details. These will be paying trips, given the logistics (rented van, motel rooms etc) but they are worth every cent.



Photo: Mark Ponsor

### Boulder County Audubon Society

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Open—2 positions

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Newsletter

George Oetzel (303-543-3712)

Web Site

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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County Audubon Society

**Next issue deadline:**  
**(Nov 2012 issue) Oct 15.**

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

## Lifetime Achievement Award: Joyce Gellhorn

Audubon member Maddy Goldhawk began her heartfelt tribute to Joyce Gellhorn at our May chapter meeting by remembering, "My earliest memory of Joyce is a ladies backpack trip into the mountains in the 1980s. High on an alpine mountainside, four of us were crawling along the ground, carefully examining tiny flowers...looking, learning, and laughing together." Maddy is one of hundreds of students and fellow-hikers of Joyce who have, through the years, followed her over hill and dale, wondering and marveling and panting, as she trekked the globe. Her specialty was combining serene nature encounters with cardio-challenging exploration in the high country. This past year, Joyce Gellhorn reached the 77<sup>th</sup> and final year of her marvelous adventures. To savour her life of joyful learning and teaching, she finished a book of memoirs which will no doubt be ready for purchase soon after you read these words: *Aspen Dreams*, her last written legacy.

Joyce began her serious pursuit of environmental learning with a PhD in ecology in 1971 from the University of Colorado, studying under legendary alpine ecologist Dr. John Marr. Her thesis focused on regeneration of aspen groves, a topic she had become interested in when she was a small girl staying in her family's summer cabin in the Rockies. She taught high school biology at Boulder High for 20 years. After that, as an adjunct professor, she taught Plant Ecology for the University of Denver and evening courses for C.U. in Boulder. Working with Carol McLaren, she established a science teacher education program sponsored by the National Center for Atmospheric Research during the 1990s. She helped establish the Boulder County Nature Association field ecology classes and taught within the program from 1998-2011. She wrote three books: *Song of the Alpine*, *White-tailed Ptarmigan*: and her memoir, *Aspen Dreams*. Her two living (of three) sons were able to help her through her final health challenges.

Steve Jones, longtime friend of Joyce, naturalist, author, and BCAS president, penned the Foreword to *Aspen Dreams*. In it he notes, "I realized then what makes Joyce uniquely Joyce. She doesn't love nature, she revels in it. And she's always moving forward, always eager to find whatever natural wonder lies beyond the next bend in the trail. Her students tell, lovingly, of field trips extending far beyond the appointed hour and of hearing the expression "just a little farther" way too many times.

Joyce Gellhorn hiked out of our realm peacefully and painlessly, surrounded by her family, on July 27. She must have the final word in this abridgement of her life:

"Death, the uncompromising timekeeper of life, knocks—reminding me, my time has come. I don't feel cheated; instead, I feel blessed. I've had a good run.



Photo by Cal Whitehall

Joyce and White-tailed  
Ptarmigan friend

I've climbed in the [...] Rockies, the Himalayas, and the Andes. I've enjoyed visiting Asia and have had many fine trips, from Antarctica to the equator, to north of the Arctic Circle. I've breathed in the solitude of nature from the Brooks Range in Alaska's arctic to the remote island of Svalbard, Norway. I've been enchanted by large African mammals... stared eye to eye with marine iguanas [and] once, in the Galapagos, I swam with both penguins and sea turtles.

Not too bad, I'd say. In fact, if my biography were compressed to a single sentence, it would read: Joyce Gellhorn skis from October to June, backpacks from June to October, and, in between, travels the globe to any destination where mountains are found."



White-tailed Ptarmigan in winter plumage  
(photo by Bill Schmoker)

## Environmental Conservation Champion: Ray Bridge

Once a humble worker-bee in the computer and software industry, Ray Bridge has metamorphosed into a much more magnificent butterfly—excuse the mixed-species metaphors.

A Boulder resident for more than 40 years, Ray eventually left software behind and became a writer. Along the way he had a conservation-minded wife and two worker-bee daughters. But a common thread of his story throughout his life has been his dedication to conservation, not only as a writer, but as a researcher specializing in local geology and natural history; as a willing testifier at hearings, and as an energetic weed-slayer and hole-digger in the name of restoration.

Indeed, in the past he has served the environmental community in so many ways that we must abbreviate here to save space. We will mention only the most recent activities for which we wish to honor him this year.

Surely serving on the Community Collaborative Group in the past two years, ending with adoption of the Open Space/Mountain Parks West-TSA plan, could earn anyone a knighthood. The hours were long; the stress high, and the results not perfect. But without the efforts of Ray and the CCG, our Open Space would be far poorer and less sustainable. Indeed, Ray shared credit for this last year with our previous award winners.

In addition, he has been active for years in helping to shape major policy documents like the Grasslands Management Plan and trail study area plans. He is on standby to provide information on almost any issue, from bison herds to reservoir expansion. He monitors falcons in our steep canyons; he serves as tool-manager for the notoriously challenging Wildlands Restoration projects; he serves on the PLAN Boulder board—and ours—and he likes to lead field trips. He must be one of Boulder's most carbon-light citizens.



## Community Connections Award: Topher Downham

Topher is one of the friendliest faces in Boulder, and a fixture among the Open Space and Mountain Parks volunteers... So much so that in 2001 he went "pro" for the department, and assumed the title of Education and Outreach Specialist.

But in the early 1990s he was just getting started with all this--and he started with a bang: He wrote 2 guides for mobility access to Boulder County: both are handsome *and* handy little volumes. Since that time these probably have become collectors' items.

Gaining confidence and momentum, he began to diversify: he coordinated fishing programs for people with disabilities, acquired an increasing repertoire of knowledge about local natural history and ecosystems, and began to lead photography and "roll & stroll" birdhikes, as well as an adaptive mountain bike class. Somewhere in the middle of all this he squeezed in a year or two as chair of the Board of the Center for People with Disabilities. He has supervised interns from Naropa, and made numerous presentations to various local organizations and agencies, often about expanding access to nature for people with disabilities.

Having done all this, he began to do it again with higher ambitions: it was time to re-assess the trails system for accessibility; and this time he developed a comprehensive matrix for such assessments, looking at such things as grade, smoothness, rocks on surface, and parking spaces. In fact, after creating video sequences of himself riding his wheelchair steed on actual trails in the OSMP system, and putting them on YouTube, Topher now finds himself getting national and international interest from cities wanting to know how they too can create the guides, the matrix and the videos for accessibility in their cities.

There is no better ambassador for encouraging all kinds and ages of people to plunge into the great outdoors and enjoy it, for the sake of the earth and their own health.



### Grocery Certificates

Certificates are available at the monthly meetings. BCAS receives a 5% donation from the sale of King Soopers certificates; 10% from sale of Liquormart certificates. Bring your checkbook to the meeting. Denominations: King Soopers, \$100; Liquormart, \$25



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on Facebook:

<http://tiny.cc/ez7v6>

## TEEN NATURALISTS

Thanks to the Boulder County Audubon donors who made the teen scholarships to nature camp possible, and to the committee which worked on the project. Here is a little feedback from one of our recipients:

### Experiencing Maine

By Francis Commerçon  
(winner of a 2012 BCAS nature camp scholarship)

The Audubon Summer Camp at Hog Island in Maine took me on a journey through a world so immaculate that it could only have been a dream. There, many worlds collided along a common axis: the insatiable love of birds. There, campers were invited to indulge in a communal pool of knowledge vastly augmented by some of the field's most respected experts. My week this summer at Hog Island was a single, indelible moment of pure gaiety.

The program took birding seriously. The majority of each day was spent soaking in spectacular birds on field trips, assimilating fascinating details of ornithology during daily lectures, and absorbing all aspects of the living world. We experienced countless birds of several different habitats representative of Maine: Puffins in the Atlantic, Canada Warblers and Golden-Crowned Kinglets in deciduous and coniferous forests, Savannah Sparrows in blueberry barrens, and Little Blue Herons in salt marshes. I enjoyed an immensely satisfying taste of birding.

I integrated into a uniquely bonded family of teens, together representing the young spirits from around the nation who become excited about avifauna. On a forest road we all listened intently to a Northern Waterthrush; in Muscongus Bay we all locked on a pair

of Razorbills. The friends I made in Maine completely changed my image of birders.

The most valuable part of the experience was the opportunity to interact on a personal level with incredible experts of various ornithological realms. Steve Kress—the conservation hero who established a breeding Puffin colony on Eastern Egg Rock—introduced me to potential Maine birds on the first day. We were treated to several hours with birdsong specialist Don Kroodsma, who shared with us the complexity and variation within the wonderful world of avian acoustics. I chased a Fork-Tailed Flycatcher with world-class birder Tom Johnson. Author of *Living on the Wind*, Scott Weidensaul, amiably invited me to extract a Myrtle Warbler from a mist net, and Professor of Ornithology, Sara Morris, guided me through banding my first bird. All these individuals gave intriguing lectures in the evenings and were eager to share their knowledge throughout the day with any inquisitive mind.

Seldom have I had the opportunity to meet more wonderful birds and people. Seldom have I felt more at home away from home. Seldom have I consumed higher quality food at a summer camp. I understand how fortunate I was to visit this location. I want to thank the Boulder County Audubon Society for providing me with the scholarship and my parents for acquiescing to such a voyage. I wish everybody had the chance to bird a week away at Hog Island.

### COUNTY AND CITY OPEN SPACES: RAPTOR NURSERIES

Our fierce city falcons have made a headline already this year, just for successfully having lots of babies, but the overall picture on all city and county raptors in 2012 has been quite good. For this we can thank ourselves (for buying and protecting open space), the staffs that have set up monitoring programs and restrictions, the climbers who respect the restrictions, and the volunteer monitors who hike long, hard and frequently to keep watch over the nests and young.

With the fires limiting observations in Mountain Parks, some of the numbers may be a bit fuzzy, as they were inferred from observations before and after the trail closures. However it appears that four peregrine pairs produced about 12 fledglings; an equal number of prairie falcons produced an amazing 17 fledglings; four pairs of golden eagle fledged three handsome chicks; and two bald eagles (not in the foothills) fledged three successfully. Look out, bunnies, mice, prairie dogs—and big bugs.

*Continued on next page at bottom*



Wilson's Warbler by Anne Angelopolous, graduate of the BCAS beginning birder class.

## Help Wanted: No Pay but Great Benefits !

Despite significant contributions from more than 200 volunteers, BCAS perennially finds itself with lots of great projects and not quite enough people to keep them all going. Please look over the list below and see if there's something that appeals. You'll enjoy the company of easy-going but dedicated volunteers who are making a huge difference for Boulder County wildlife. Friendly contact people are listed – thanks so much for jumping in.

### 1. Bluebird Nestbox Monitoring coordinator (A citizen-science project)

**Need:** Primary need is for two people to each coordinate monitoring of nest boxes on five trails in open space areas. This includes arranging for training of new monitors, keeping track of status on the various trails during the season, and preferably monitoring a trail as well. A few additional monitors are needed as well.

**Hours:** 50-100 hours per year for coordinators, spread over March-Aug. Contact: Steve Jones: [curlwsj@comcast.net](mailto:curlwsj@comcast.net); 303-494-2468

### 2. Boulder County Audubon Board of Directors.

**Need:** Two or three thoughtful tree-huggers to attend meetings and contribute to one of our committees: education, programs, conservation, field trips, wildlife inventory, others. **Benefits:** Making a major contribution to keeping our organization of 1400 members thriving and continuing our work of conserving wildlife populations and habitat throughout the County.

**Hours:** 10-12 evenings or afternoons per year. Contact: Steve Jones: [curlwsj@comcast.net](mailto:curlwsj@comcast.net); 303-494-2468

### 3. Dodd Reservoir Restoration

**Need:** Volunteers to help us with our ongoing restoration of approximately 8 acres from a smooth brome-dominated grassland to native prairie. Can include wildlife monitoring, periodic weeding, and planting of native shrubs and grasses. **Benefits:** Participating in the first successful transformation of an old pasture to native prairie ever completed in Boulder County. Chance to get acquainted with lots of great wildlife, including bald eagles, herons, egrets, and diverse waterfowl. Lots of fun weeding parties and potlucks at the preserve. **Hours:** 5-10 weekend mornings or weekday evenings per year. Contact: Petrea Mah: [petreamah@comcast.net](mailto:petreamah@comcast.net) or 303 303 494 4121

### 4. Boulder County Wildlife Inventory

**Need:** Naturalists to contribute monthly sightings of birds and other wildlife in Boulder County. **Benefits:** Contributing to the longest-running wildlife inventory in Colorado while seeing lots of cool species. **Hours:** Whatever you have time to put in each month. Contact: Gillian Brown: [sightings@boulderadubon.org](mailto:sightings@boulderadubon.org) to list birds.

### 5. Newsletter

**Need:** Volunteers to help with our bi-monthly newsletters. **Benefits:** on-the-job training in a nurturing environment; multiple publishing credits for your resume; the opportunity to write and be creative within our mission parameters. **Hours:** 2– 40 depending on the month. Contact: George Oetzel: [nature@birdhike.com](mailto:nature@birdhike.com)

## Raptor Nurseries (continued from page 5)

In the County, the north (Hall, Heil, Rabbit) golden eagle pairs, traditionally good at this, produced five eager eaglets; on other widespread County properties, an additional pair of golden eaglets has fledged; and bald eagles, trying very hard with mixed success, produced nine fledged young. As for the prairie falcons, it looks like 3 of the known 4 pairs from previous years took the breeding season off and went to Las Vegas; the other pair, suffering from the poor economy, stayed home and fledged three. That won't help their family finances much.

**Jolly collection of weeds from a half-day of work at Dodd Reservoir — whacking the heads off our enemies !**



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

**BOULDER COUNTY WILDLIFE INVENTORY, JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2012**

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

The beginning of a new year always brings out birders anxious to start a yearly list. January 2012 was no exception, and rewarded birders with some unusual sightings. Altogether 102 bird species were reported in January 2012. Although, some common species were not reported, this is a respectable total for the time of year. Probably the most exciting observation of the month was of a **Snow Bunting** seen on the Indian Peaks Winter Bird Count (IP). This species was last seen in December 2010, but this is only the fifth record of this species in Boulder County since the wildlife inventory began in 1979.

There was more open water than normal. A Red-necked Grebe seen on Valmont Reservoir in both January and February was a good sighting. Both **Tundra** and **Trumpeter Swans** were reported. There seems to have been some confusion between **Trumpeter** and **Tundra Swans** so it is unclear how many swans have really been sighted. **Tundra Swan** was historically our most usual swan, but in recent years **Trumpeter Swan** has been at least as common. **Wood Ducks** have not usually wintered in the county, but were reported in both January (three birds were reported in two locations) and February. **Greater Scaup** are often difficult to differentiate from **Lesser Scaup**; the bold white stripe along the back of the wing of **Greater Scaup** as well as the rounder head and broader bill are the most reliable identifying features. Several possible **Greater Scaup** were reported with a single definitive identification each month. All four of our commonest goose species were reported in January. Among the ubiquitous **Canada Geese** and slightly less common **Cackling Geese** were one **Snow Goose** and one **Ross's Goose**. Gulls were reported in great numbers with the most unusual species being a **Glaucous-winged Gull** in January and two **Glaucous Gulls** in February.

Three owl species were reported in January with one **Eastern Screech Owl**, one **Northern Pygmy Owl** and one **Long-eared Owl**. However, our resident **Great-horned Owls** were not reported until February, although they must have been busy hooting at the start of their breeding season. The **Golden-crowned Sparrow** continued to linger at the Teller Lake feedlot. Six hundred (!) **Great-tailed Grackles** were reported in the east of the county in January and 120 in February. The numbers of this species are spectacularly rising, and this is now a more common winter sighting than **Common Grackle**. A **White-winged Crossbill** was seen on the Indian Peaks count. Other good January sightings include a **Pinyon Jay** in the mountains, **Bushtits** in two locations, a **Western Bluebird** in the foothills and a **Lesser Goldfinch** in Boulder. Birds that have become increasingly hard to find but were seen this month include **Rough-legged Hawk** (two individuals) and **Northern Shrike**. **Bighorn Sheep** was a nice addition to the mammal list.

February is often a slow month for birders so the total 101 bird species seen was fairly respectable. **Ruddy Duck** was among the less usual ducks reported. The first **Cinnamon Teal** had returned to Walden Ponds by the 25<sup>th</sup>. A **Turkey Vulture** seen on the 21<sup>st</sup> was an unusual sighting; perhaps we are seeing the first signs of overwintering in the county. **Black-crowned Night Herons** continue to winter on the (relatively) warm water of Valmont Reservoir, as do **Double-crested Cormorants**. Other good sightings in February include **Virginia Rail**, **Winter Wren**, **Marsh Wren**, **Brown Thrasher** and the continuing **Golden-crowned Sparrow**. The first **Mountain Bluebird** appeared in the county on the 21<sup>st</sup> – a sure sign of spring coming. A trip to Allenspark rewarded observers with such mountain birds as **Gray-crowned Rosy Finch**, **Brown-capped Rosy Finch** and **Pine Grosbeak**. **Evening Grosbeaks** continue to be seen in fair numbers; it is good to see them back in the county after an absence of nearly two years.

### **Contributors to the Jan/Feb. Inventories**

Dale Ball, Bill Blackburn, Ron Bolton, Kat Bradley-Bennett, Skyler Bol, Kitty Brigham, Alex & Gillian Brown, Ted Floyd, Steve Frye, Barry Gingrich, Bryan Guarente, Paula Hansley, Jack Harlan, Thomas Heinrich, Dave Hyde, Indian Peaks Bird Count, Steve Jones, Bill Kaempfer, Elena Klaver, David Mendosa, Mark Miller, Steve Miodinow, Gene and Lynn Monroe, Christian Nunes, Laura Osborn, Pam Piombino, Peter Plage, Suzi Plooster, Bob Shade, Bob Spencer, Joel Such, Marcel Such, David J Waltman, Tom Wilberding, Wild Bird Center, Bob Zilly, Eric Zorawowicz.

### **About the BCAS Facebook Page**

There are two options to view the BCAS Facebook page. To see photos and comments without joining Facebook, go to <http://tiny.cc/ez7v6>. To share your photos and make comments to our page, you will need to create a basic account with Facebook—all you need is a username and password. After you have an account, search for Boulder County Audubon Society under the search tab at the top of the homepage, and click the “Like” button next to our name. When you do this, you’ll receive all posts created by us in your news feed on your personal page. To create a new post on our page, type a comment into the “write something” box and click the “Share” button. To add a photo or video, click the “Photo/Video” button, select “upload” and the “choose file” button, pick your photo, hit the “post” button, and voila! ) We’d love to include photos of flora and fauna seen on your nature outings, and welcome feedback for improving our community page. Hope to see you online!

## Boulder Rights of Nature Group Takes Off

In March, partly in response to concerns about hydrofracturing ("fracking"), GMOs, and recent threats to native wildlife populations in Boulder County, several of us organized a new voice for nature called BORN: Boulder Rights of Nature group. In the coming months we'll be talking to various local organizations, including Boulder County Audubon, about passing a Rights of Nature ordinance in Boulder County.

The rights of nature movement has taken off around the world since Ecuador recognized nature's rights in its constitution in 2008. Under current structures of law around the world--including in the United States--nature is treated as property: it's been commodified. As a result, our environmental regulatory laws, such as the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act, regulate our use of nature. That is, they regulate how much it can be exploited and by whom.

In the United States and in Colorado, the result has been that after nearly four decades since these major environmental laws were enacted, the natural world is much worse off than before. Here in Boulder County we designated clear protections for native ecosystems and native wildlife species in the County comprehensive plan. But the plan has no legal clout, and recently, local officials have ignored its goals in favor of expediency. As a result, we're on the verge of losing much of our native prairie ecosystem, including species like American badger, white-tailed jackrabbit, ferruginous hawk, and burrowing owl. In the mountains, a proliferation of trails, along with expansion plans for the Eldora Mountain Ski Resort, threaten critical habitat for boreal owls, Canada lynx, and other species.

Here are a few excerpts from the ordinance we have drafted:

### Section 2. Preamble and Purpose.

We the People of the County of Boulder declare that all human and non-human beings are part of nature and that living in balance and harmony with nature is essential for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness – both for people and for the ecological systems that give life to all species. We further declare that we have the duty to secure and enforce the inalienable Rights of Nature, upon which all life depends.

We the People recognize that the species and ecosystems of the earth have been degraded by human use to the point where many will not recover.



We recognize that human activity is causing changes to climate systems which are accelerating species' extinction and destroying ecosystems and natural habitat.

### Section 4. Statement of Law: Rights.

Natural communities and ecosystems possess inalienable and fundamental rights within the County of Boulder, Colorado. These rights include:

- The right to exist, flourish, and evolve;
- The right to habitat in order to exist, flourish and evolve in harmony with the ecosystem;
- The right to maintain their identity and integrity as distinct, self-regulating beings;
- The right to be free from degradation, pollution, and contamination of their natural genetic systems;
- The right of each species and natural community to play its particular role in the natural ecosystem;
- River systems have the right to flow and have water quality necessary to provide habitat for native plants and animals, and to provide clean drinking water;
- Aquifers and ground water resources have the right to sustainable recharge, flow, and water quality; and have the right to be protected from harmful contamination;

Species naturally occurring in Boulder County, Colorado prior to 1850, excepting pathogens and other organisms posing a direct threat to human health, have the right to exist, flourish and evolve in their natural environment.

Will you join us in helping to ensure legal protection for all natural communities in Boulder County? Our group meets monthly at rotating locations. Give me a call if you'd like to get involved.

Steve Jones, 303-494-2468; [curlwjsj@comcast.net](mailto:curlwjsj@comcast.net)





## ***Eaarth*, by Bill McKibben**

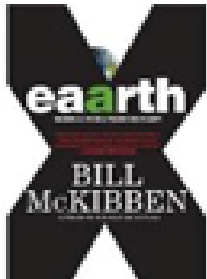
Times Books, Henry Holt & Co, New York, 2010

*Book review by G. Oetzel*

McKibben's central thesis is "The earth that we knew—the only earth that we ever knew—is gone." (page 27) Hence, it deserves a new name, "Eaarth". The first part of the book is bleak, and it needs to be. He emphasizes that global warming is not our grandchildren's problem. Statistics and references (26 pages) show that important changes in our environment are happening now

McKibben encourages us to recognize that we can't restore the old Planet Earth. Thinking that driving hybrid cars and taking shorter showers will restore the ice caps in the Arctic is unrealistic. We need a major overhaul of our infrastructure and our logic to even adapt to this New Eaarth we created. It's no longer enough to admit that global warming is real and to want to adjust a few things in our daily lives — we must realize that our daily lives will change greatly from the way we've known them.

With a publication date in 2010, the book was mostly or entirely written before the magnitude of the current gas bonanza became apparent. He imagines that we will



voluntarily choose to make a gradual change to a different way of life, but to imagine that the U.S. (and the world) society as a whole is going to turn smoothly and peacefully away from consumerism and economic growth and urban life is simply ludicrous.

*"We lack the vocabulary and the metaphors we need for life on a different scale. We're so used to growth that we can't imagine alternatives; at best we embrace the squishy sustainable, with its implied claim that we can keep on as before." (p. 102)*

As if to emphasize this point, the July 14-20 issue of *The Economist* devotes 14 pages to the gas bonanza and the prospect of cheap hydrocarbons for many years. In contrast, an article by 20 scientists in *Nature*, June 6, says that evidence indicates that we are approaching, or may have passed, a "tipping point" that will bring dramatic changes to the entire biosphere.

In the last half of the book, McKibben presents some projects that are already underway to help us and our progeny survive on this strange new world.

**Worried now?** You can do something! Ask your legislators questions about water, air and habitat protection. Send them thanks when they vote for any environmentally-friendly laws. Stroke their feathers: Make a donation to their campaign!



## **DICKCISSEL IRRUPTION IN BOULDER COUNTY and beyond**

The summer of 2012 has seen one of the greatest northward movements of Dickcissels in recent memory. The irruption stretches from North Dakota eastward through Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, and into eastern Ohio and western Pennsylvania. There are even records from southern portions of Manitoba, Ontario, and western New York.

The Dickcissel is an iconic species of mid-continent prairie grasslands. While the core breeding range is typically occupied, in some years this species irrupts in large numbers outside the typical breeding range -- 2012 is one of those years. [Note that the story of the Midwestern drought and stunted crops has made national headlines this summer]. The shift northward



this summer is likely correlated with climatic conditions and food availability in the core breeding ranges.... Drought conditions in the core range have been identified as a key component for previous massive irruptions (Emlen and Wiens 1965, Sealy 1976).

**Local story:** in Boulder County large numbers of dickcissels were being reported from many unusual locations, and were extremely easy to hear and find in hay fields of the eastern part of the County; even near the Boulder Reservoir. Alas, mowing activities usually disrupt the breeding of the species, and we have no records of successful breeding in our County—yet. Note that the bird does not say "dick-cissel!" Instead it speaks thus: "Tik tik CHERP CHERP CHERP." Your ear and brain may perceive this interesting song differently. Listen for it next year and report your findings to the **Wildlife Inventory** (see page 7).

[Content chiefly derived from Ebird.org. See also an excellent history at : <http://pbba.cei.psu.edu/?q=node/2396> ]



## Agriculture Goes Local New Business Model

Bill McKibben describes in *Eaarth* the growth of small-scale farming in various places and suggests that it provides a model for the future. Indeed, farmers' markets are a part of life in cities across the U.S. as the peak of the summer harvest approaches. (Boulder example above) A [July 1 article](#) in the New York Times expands on this theme with current U.S. examples.

“But beyond the familiar mantras about nutrition or reduced fossil fuel use, the movement toward **local food** is creating a vibrant new economic laboratory for American agriculture. The result, with its growing army of small-scale local farmers, is as much about dollars as dinner: a reworking of old models about how food gets sold and farms get financed, and who gets dirt under their fingernails doing the work.”

There are a number of reasons for the growth of the new model. A major one is the looming shortage of migrant workers. Fewer Mexicans have been coming north in recent years, and many who were working here have been driven away by anti-immigrant laws in a number of agricultural states. As a result, mass-production farms that depend on cheap labor are losing some of their price advantage over locally-grown food, which tends to be more expensive.

At the same time, the “slow money” movement has provided a way to channel money into small-scale and organic food operations, overcoming some of the steep barriers for young farmers who can't afford the land for traditional rural agriculture.

A [study last fall](#) by the Department of Agriculture found that local revenues had been radically undercounted in previous analyses that mainly focused on road stands and markets. When sales to restaurants and stores were factored in, the study said, the local food industry was four times bigger than in any previous count, upward of

\$4.8 billion annually.

“A byproduct of local food is that local hands are more likely to be producing, harvesting, packing and marketing it, especially for new farmers on small-scale farms,” said Dawn Thilmany McFadden, an agricultural economist at Colorado State University who is part of a leadership team for a training program for beginning farmers.”

Hispanics who had worked as low-wage laborers are now becoming entrepreneurs. A three-year-old nonprofit group north of Seattle, Viva Farms, specifically aims to help Hispanic farmers get started, with assistance in language training and in understanding the vagaries of the marketplace. Viva Farms' director of business and organizational development, Ethan Schaffer, said former wage workers are often surprised when they realize the prices and profit margins that local organic produce can fetch — something, he said, that rarely penetrates down to the daily life of a migrant picker. “They get the ag part, and once they realize how the market works, they're off and running,” Mr. Schaffer said.

## Wildlife Inventory beginning its 34th year

The BCAS Wildlife Inventories are a compilation of data from many birders over three decades, with the species and numbers noted in particular areas (#26 is the Marshall Mesa area, for example). Because of this unusual longevity and specificity, it is very valuable to researchers — and the curious birder.

You can learn more about the inventories and the way to contribute your observations from the [BCAS website](#). There you'll find a link to the data entry form (Excel spreadsheet) and instructions for using it. There are also links to a Boulder County map, a key to area designations, and a Boulder County checklist. There are also links to spring data arrival dates and other past data summaries.

We need YOU to submit your sightings--even if it is only one lonely (but very special) sparrow. Questions? Need help? Contact Kitty Brigham [brighamk@peak.org](mailto:brighamk@peak.org).



## 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.