

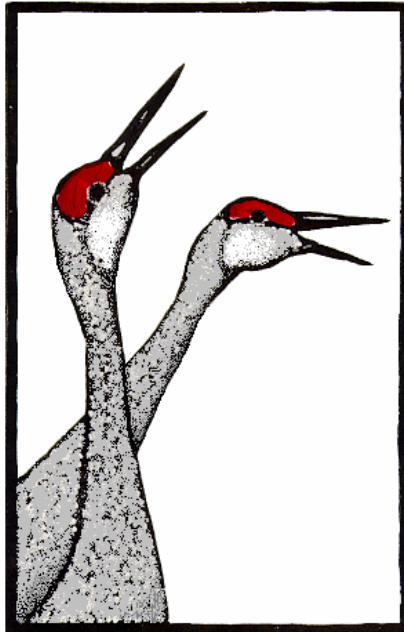


On The Wing

Volume 36, Number 2

Boulder County Audubon Society Newsletter

Mar-Apr 2006



BCAS 4th Tuesday Program Series

Tuesday, March 28, 7:30 PM Ken Strom

"Cranes of the World"

While directing Nebraska's Lillian Annette Rowe Audubon Sanctuary, Ken Strom helped save the critical Platte River wetlands and drew worldwide attention to the annual gathering of a half-million sandhill cranes along the river. He will show images of crane species from Africa, Eurasia, and North America and discuss their conservation status. A 25-year Audubon activist, Ken is currently director of Audubon Colorado's Bird Conservation Program.

Tuesday, April 25, 7:30 PM John Vanderpoel,

"Hummingbirds of Colorado"



John will regale us with stories about the making of his new DVD/video, "Hummingbirds of North America." The video contains three hours of amazing images, and he will show some of the best of these while also offering tips on how to identify Colorado hummingbirds. John is a longtime Colorado birder and Boulder Audubon field trip leader, an expert on gull identification, and creator of the Advanced Birding Video Series. Copies of John's extraordinary videos will be available for purchase.

Coming in May: Steve Jones, "Boulder County's Most Threatened Birds."

Inside:

Field trips	2
Water Birds Trends	3
Eco- Stewards	5
Oct-Nov Inventory	6
Volunteering with BCAS	7

**Refreshments and Socializing before the meetings at 7 PM
Program at 7:30**

Meetings are held at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Boulder, 5001 Pennsylvania Ave. (off 55th St. between Arapahoe and Baseline)

BCAS Spring Field Trips

Sunday, April 2, 4-9 p.m: Eco-steward rendezvous and boreal owl hunt at Eagle Mountain Ranch. New volunteers and interested Audubon members are welcome to join us for cross-country skiing and potluck dinner at Gregg and Genie Burch's cabin near Gold Lake, followed by a moonlight boreal owl search (wind permitting) near Red Rock Lake. Bring snowshoes or cross-country skis and dress warmly. Meet at the Lee Hill Road open space parking lot (just west of Broadway) at 3:30 p.m. Steve Jones (303-494-2468; stephen.jones@earthlink.net).

Saturday, April 29, 7:30 AM - Noon: Crossbills and other forest birds. Steve Jones (303-494-2468; stephen.jones@earthlink.net) will lead a leisurely hike on the Shanahan Ridge loop to look for forest birds and early migrants. There's a good ponderosa pine cone crop this year, so we should get into some flocks. Meet at the Fairview High School west parking lot (on Greenbrier 0.8 mi. west of Broadway) at 7:30 a.m. Return around 11.

Saturday, May 13, 7 AM - Noon: International Migratory Bird Day at Walden Ponds off 75th St. north of Valmont Road. Field Trips, "Big Sit" birding event, kids activities, refreshments and more. Details: call the Wild Bird Center at 303-442-1322. Co-hosted by Audubon and Boulder Bird Club.

Saturday May 20 6 AM - 6 PM: Pawnee National Grassland with John Tumasonis. This full-day excursion will target lark buntings, lark sparrows, McCowen's longspurs, Swainson's hawks, loggerhead shrikes, burrowing owls, mountain plovers, shorebirds, warblers, pronghorn, and coyotes. We will also be looking at animal signs, flowers, and herpetofauna. Expect moderate hiking and changing weather conditions. Carpool from Niwot Park and Ride at 6:00 a.m. Return to Boulder County about 6:00 p.m. Bring lunch, snacks, proper clothing including raingear, hiking boots, hat, sunscreen, and lots of water. Call John Tumasonis for more details: 303-926-8779

Ecosystem Symposium to Focus on Invasive Species

"Alien Invaders" is the theme of this year's Boulder County Ecosystem Symposium, **Monday, April 17, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**, at the Boulder Public Library auditorium. The annual symposium, which is free and open to all, is sponsored by Boulder County Nature Association, Boulder County Audubon, Colorado Native Plant Society, Boulder County Parks and Open Space, and Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks.

Topics addressed will include knapweed bio-control, tamarisk invasion, genetic adaptation of common sunflowers to disturbed habitats, strategies to eradicate the New Zealand mud snail, how plague spreads among mammals, and impacts of dogs on native wildlife. For a complete schedule of talks, visit the Boulder County Nature Association Web Site (www.BCNA.org) after March 20.

Free registration begins at 10 a.m. at the 9th and Canyon Street entrance to the Boulder Public Library. No pre-registration is required. To limit use of paper products, participants who are planning to stay for lunch can bring their own plates and cups.

Boulder County Audubon Society

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Boulder County Audubon Society.

On the Wing is published five times annually: Sept, Nov, Jan, March, and May.

Next issue:

Deadline for materials for the May 2006 issue is **Tue, Apr 18**.
Email address for submissions:

otw@boulderaudubon.org

More Fun with Wildlife Inventory Data: Water Birds, Reservoir Fatigue, and Global Warming

Steve Jones

In the January-February Issue of *On the Wing*, we looked at Boulder County Wildlife Inventory owl observations from 1979-2005. Since then, our team of seven volunteers has been hard at work entering data onto Excel spreadsheets, and the more data we enter, the more we learn about how to interpret the numbers. Table 1, below, lists total observations of loons, grebes, pelicans, and cormorants during the past 25 years.

Table 1. Numbers of Loons, Grebes, Pelicans, and Cormorants Reported to the Boulder County Monthly Wildlife Inventory, 1981-2005

Species	1981-85	1986-90	1991-95	1996-2000	2001-05*
Pacific Loon	0	0	1	16	16
Red-throated Loon	0	0	0	0	1
Common Loon	31	34	36	52	38
Yellow-billed Loon	0	0	1	0	0
Pied-billed Grebe	1138	1155	979	625	505
Horned Grebe	878	855	1213	580	456
Eared Grebe	288	106	216	417	148
Red-necked Grebe	1	0	3	6	4
Western Grebe	16,540	11,911	10,282	12,804	4662
Clark's Grebe	NA**	332	278	160	123
Brown Pelican	0	0	1	0	0
Am. White Pelican	505	3288	2871	1552	1502
D.-crested Cormorant	1128	1624	2227	1116	893
Total	20,490	19,106	18,108	17,326	8,350

*Does not include observations for October-December 2005.

**Newly designated as a separate species in 1986.

A quick glance at the table reveals:

1. Observers saw some amazing birds, including a yellow-billed loon, a red-throated loon, a seriously off-course brown pelican, and a bunch of pacific loons. And they reported a veritable boatload of all loons, grebes, pelicans, and cormorants--more than 80,000 individuals!

2. American white pelican and double-crested cormorant numbers increased sharply beginning around 1986. The increase corresponded with establishment of pelican rookeries on islands in three Colorado reservoirs during the 1980s and establishment of several new cormorant rookeries on the eastern plains.

3. During recent years there has been a decline in numbers of grebes, pelicans, and cormorants reported. However, these numbers are deceiving (read on).

I'm one of those birdwatchers who has long grown weary of scoping out water birds on enormous, sterile reservoirs. I wondered if this malaise had spread to other volunteers, affecting the overall amount of observer effort. So I leafed through the monthly wildlife inventory reports, and it became apparent that, during recent years, fewer volunteers reported sightings of any kind from large eastern Boulder County reservoirs.

Unfortunately, the wildlife inventory includes no quantitative measurement of observer effort in specific locations. But

(Continued on page 4)

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all is not lost. We may gain a clearer view of long-term trends for individual species by looking at their numbers as a proportion of total grebe-like birds counted (Table 2, below).

Table 2. Observations of individual species as a percent of all observations of Loons, Grebes, Pelicans, and Cormorants, 1981-2005.

Species	1981-5	1986-90	1991-95	1996-2000	2001-05*
Pacific Loon	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.2
Common Loon	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.5
Pied-billed Grebe	5.6	6.0	5.4	3.5	6.1
Horned Grebe	4.3	4.5	6.7	3.4	5.5
Eared Grebe	1.4	0.5	1.2	2.4	1.8
Western Grebe	80.7	62.3	56.8	73.9	55.8
Clark's Grebe	---	1.7	1.6	0.9	1.5
Am. White Pelican	2.5	17.1	15.8	8.9	17.9
D-crested Cormorant	5.5	8.4	12.3	6.4	10.7

Here the early jump in pelican and cormorant numbers appears even more dramatic, whereas the apparent decline in grebes, pelicans, and cormorants after 1990 pretty much evaporates. So we probably have to say that long-term Boulder County trends, up or down, are inconclusive for most of these species.

But there's a lot more we can do with these data. For example, many observers have noted that some water birds seem to be overwintering in Boulder County more frequently than they did 20 or 30 years ago. Table 3 lists the percent of annual observations that occurred during winter (December-February).

Table 3. Winter (December-February) Observations of Loons, Grebes, Pelicans, and Cormorants as a Percent of Annual Observations, 1981-2005.

Species	1981-5	1986-90	1991-95	1996-2000	2001-05*
Common Loon	10.0	5.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
Pied-billed Grebe	6.5	7.2	14.3	23.0	33.4
Horned Grebe	6.1	7.6	4.3	8.9	36.5
Eared Grebe	0.0	1.9	0.0	23.8	4.1
Western Grebe	1.2	0.9	0.8	1.3	2.7
Clark's Grebe	---	3.0	1.1	1.9	5.7
Am. White Pelican	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4
D-crested Cormorant	0.0	1.8	2.5	6.6	6.5
Temp. Depart. (°F)*	-0.8	+0.1	+1.2	+2.0	+1.7

*Mean daily December-February temperature departure from 1893-1993 Boulder average.

(Continued on page 5)

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Bingo! Well, maybe. Winter percentages of every species except common loon, a rare migrant, increased during the 25-year period. These increases corresponded with warmer mean winter temperatures during 1991-95, 1996-2000, and 2001-05. Warmer winter temperatures result in more open (ice-free) water, which keeps some water birds from migrating farther south.

Do these data prove that global warming is changing the composition of Boulder's winter bird populations? Twenty-five years in one location is too short a time to sort out dynamic, cyclical weather patterns from more gradual, long-term climate change. For example, Boulder's warmest decade on record was the 1950s, with mean daily temperatures 2.4° F higher than those recorded during the 1990s. But the numbers in Table 3 certainly suggest what we might expect over the next few decades as the earth continues to heat up.

Pelicans in December? Maybe the 106 species of birds reported on this year's Boulder Christmas Bird Count isn't something to celebrate.

Note: If you are familiar with Excel and would like to help out with this data entry project, please contact me at stephen.jones@earthlink.net; 303-494-2468. Big thanks to volunteers Alex and Gillian Brown, Elaine Hill, Suzy Price, Laura Stephenson, and Richard Stromp.

National Audubon Board of Directors Meeting

Vail, Colorado May 18-21, 2006

The Vail Cascade Resort

The Board of Directors meets three times a year in locations throughout the country in order to build our network of state offices, nature centers and local chapters. Board Meetings are open to the public. For more information, please contact Elizabeth Horsburgh, smackey@audubon.org

Colorado Wildscapes

Wildscaping in Boulder County is a fun and exciting way to truly bring conservation home. When you turn your yard into a wildscape, you're drawing on the wisdom of wild places. Check out the web site for our first Wildscaping Feature on Waxwings Winter Feeding by Stephen Jones which is part of our revamped "Audubon at Home through Wildscaping" section.

Join the growing list of wildscapers by welcoming birds, butterflies, toads and dragonflies into a healthy yard teeming with life! Share with us your own wildscape story and see your name on our web pages!

http://co.audubon.org/aah_COWildscapes.html

Eco-Steward Program Offers Field Trips and Workshops

Steve Jones

As the Boulder County ecosystem stewardship program enters its first full field season, we are offering a number of field trips and workshops open to new volunteers and interested Audubon members. Check out the field trip calendars in this newsletter and the May newsletter for details, dates, and times. Upcoming events include:

Sunday, April 2, 4-9 p.m. Rendezvous and boreal owl hunt at Eagle Peak Ranch. See this issue's field trip calendar for details.

Sunday, April 23, 4-6 p.m. Orientation for new volunteers and review of breeding bird survey protocol at Steve Jones's place, 3543 Smuggler Way, Boulder. 303-494-2468.

May-June: Breeding bird surveys at Shadow Canyon, Coulson Gulch, and Walker Ranch. Butterfly surveys in several foothills locations. Join us for a morning of field exploration and a chance to brush up on bird songs and butterfly field marks.

To date we have about 40 volunteers signed up for the ecosystem stewardship project. We would love to expand that to more than 100 so that we can cover a larger area of Boulder County. Areas open for adoption include Sawhill and Walden Ponds, Skunk Canyon, Gregory Canyon, Bluestem Trail, Todd Gulch Fen, Deadman Gulch, Eldorado Canyon, and numerous locations in the Indian Peaks Wilderness.

For more information, give me a call or e-mail stephen.jones@earthlink.net.

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BOULDER COUNTY WILDLIFE INVENTORY, OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 2005**Gillian and Alex Brown, 4560 Darley Avenue, Boulder, CO 80305**

October 2005 was an excellent month for birders with many fall migrants. By November most of the migrants had left. The 141 bird species reported in October is our second highest total for October, and only surpassed by the 149 species seen in October 2002. The 105 bird species reported in November is on the low side, mainly because of a lack of reports of some common birds such as **Great Blue Heron, Northern Shoveler, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk** and **Spotted Towhee**. As always, I expect that we will get many people who say, having read this article, "But I saw a in November"!

Four **Pacific Loons** were reported in October, seen on four different reservoirs. Two of these birds continued to linger for the first half of November, while **Common Loons** were even more widespread. All six of our regular species of grebe were seen both months, including the less common **Red-necked Grebe. American White Pelicans** were seen both months, although the flock seen in November was in flight and headed southward. The number of **Double-crested Cormorants** dropped from 61 in October to a single bird in November. Although we have a small wintering population, most of these birds migrate south.

Shorebird migration was still going strong in early October with the most unusual species being four **Black-bellied Plovers** (last seen in 2002) and a **Red Phalarope** (last seen in 2000). **Red Phalarope** is our least common phalarope. **Red-necked Phalarope** was reported in October, but **Wilson's Phalarope** was not reported either month. Small numbers of **Least** and **Baird's Sandpipers** were seen in early October, and some flocks of **Long-billed Dowitchers** were seen both months. **Virginia Rails** were seen both months at Walden Ponds, and one **Sora** was seen in early October. Several observers reported migrating **Sandhill Cranes**.

There were large numbers of gulls present on our reservoirs for both months. Patient observers managed to find the occasional oddity. Two **Sabine's Gulls** continued until mid-October at Boulder Reservoir. By mid-October all the **Franklin's Gulls** had departed. Two **Mew Gulls** and four **Bonaparte's Gulls** were reported in November. There were small numbers of **California** and **Herring Gulls** present among the thousands of **Ring-billed Gulls**. One **Common Tern**, the first for the year, was seen at Boulder Reservoir in October.

An **Empidonax** Flycatcher (species uncertain) was seen on 26 November which is the latest sighting for our records. By the end of the first week in October the last lingering swallows had disappeared. A **Varied Thrush** was seen at a feeder in a yard in Lafayette in November; this species was last seen in 2002. A few late warblers were seen in October including a **Nashville Warbler** and a **Blackpoll Warbler**. A **Sage Sparrow** reported in October was the most unusual sparrow sighting. October seems to be the only month in which both **Chipping** and **American Tree Sparrows** can commonly be seen, although there is usually little overlap with the **Chipping Sparrows** having migrated southward before the **American Tree Sparrows** have arrived. By the end of November, **Gray-crowned Rosy Finches** had returned to the feeders in Allenspark.

The complete listings for each month are available on the Audubon website at www.boulderaudubon.org/inventory.htm

CONTRIBUTORS TO THE OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER INVENTORIES

Linda Andes-Georges, Alan Bell, Andy Boyce, Alex & Gillian Brown, Lauren Burke, Sean Burns, Cindy Cornelius, Carol Cushman, Eric DeFonso, Todd Deininger, Chad Dorsey, Gene Ellis, Ted Floyd, Peter Gent, Randy Gietzen, Paula Hansley, Thomas Heinrich, Ann Hicks, Rachel Hopper, Wayne and Diane Johnston, Steve Jones, Bill Kaempfer, Loch Kilpatrick, Joanie Kleypas, Connie Kogler, Steve Larson, Tony Leukering, Sara McGimsey, Gene & Lynn Monroe, Chris Owens, Nathan Pieplow, Peter Plage, Bill Prather, John Prather, Scott Rashid, Peter Ruprecht, Ira Sanders, Bill Schmoker, Scott Severs, Randy Siebert, Dix Smith, Bob Spencer, Richard Trinkner, Joyce Takamine, Joan Timchak, John Tumasonis, David J. Waltman, Chris Warren, Larry Wilson, Jeff Yegian.



VOLUNTEER FUN WITH B.C.A.S.

Attending chapter meetings and field trips is only half the fun with your local Audubon chapter. To enjoy more local nature connections, call us about these opportunities:

--B.C.A.S. needs a **Field Trip organizer**. The willing guides are out there waiting to be asked: we have a list. And... most people are flattered to be asked to lead. (Note that the organizer does not have to do the leading!) we typically offer a couple of field trips a month, but the schedule can depend entirely on what leaders would like to do, and on the season. Call Steve Jones (303 494 2468) or Linda Georges (303 772 3239) to say that you'd like to try this. It's a friendly job.

--Do you enjoy meeting families and people from all over the nation? Sign up to help us in our chapter booth at the **Boulder Creek festival**. We need people to be present for two-hour shifts. This is going to be stimulating and enjoyable: we will be handing out our brand-new chapter brochures, encouraging children to participate in small nature-related games, sending folks out to watch birds along the creek with our volunteer guides, and selling our sparkly glass bird window ornaments. Go to our website (boulderaudubon.org) and send an email to us to offer help during the Memorial Day weekend celebration.

--A most pleasant and low-key way to help your chapter, get better acquainted with other dedicated nature-protectors and feel extremely useful is to serve on our **Board of Directors**. Meetings are infrequent (once a month), short (one hour is our record; two is most typical), and fun. You can tackle as much or as little as you wish in choosing chapter tasks (examples: greeting those who attend our chapter meetings, attending or leading field trips, helping to promote the chapter when we have a booth at festivals, helping to sell grocery coupons... or Invent a New Job—whatever is your passion). Call anyone on the Board to help us out here!

--One of the most important jobs this chapter has offered, historically, is that of **Education Chairperson**. The task is not complicated but simply requires the willingness of someone to contact local teachers (list of teachers and schools, and job description available) to offer the wonderful Audubon school kits for classroom use (at no cost to the teacher or school! A deal that dozens of classrooms have accepted over the years). Call Linda Georges (303 772 3239) if this fulfilling occupation appeals to you.

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GROCERY COUPONS SUPPORT BCAS



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

Call your coupon salespeople today, and ask how to regularly buy and use these coupons *without any cost to you* as you get provisions for your family. Cards and certificates are used exactly like cash. You are whisked through the check-out line as though you were handing over greenbacks. Every \$100 you spend puts \$5 or \$10 into the BCAS piggybank for our local chapter needs.

Our friendly coupon sales contacts :

Maureen Lawry, tel. 303 499 3833, Bev Sears, tel. 303 499 4751, or Linda Andes-Georges, tel. 303 772 3239

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

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

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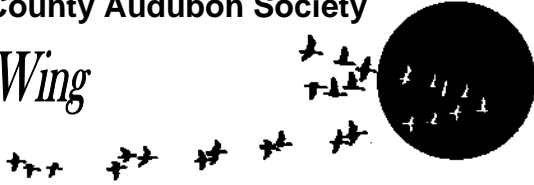
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Boulder County Audubon Society Membership

When you join the National Audubon Society (NAS), you automatically become a member of the Boulder County Audubon Society (BCAS) as well. Joint membership in the NAS and BCAS includes the NAS quarterly *Audubon* and the BCAS newsletter *On the Wing* (5 issues annually), as well as participation in all BCAS activities.

However, BCAS receives only a small amount of your dues from NAS to support local activities. We encourage you to join BCAS to help support local activities.

Name _____ Phone _____

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- \$20 Annual BCAS membership
- \$ _____ Additional contribution

Make check payable to *Boulder County Audubon Society*

Mail to: Boulder County Audubon Society
P.O. Box 2081 Boulder, CO 80306

If you would like to join or donate to the National Audubon Society and receive *Audubon* magazine, or to make changes to your NAS membership:
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