



On The Wing

Volume 37, Number 2

Boulder County Audubon Society Newsletter

March-April 2007

BCAS 4th Tuesday Program Series

March 27, 7:30 p.m.

Making Nature: Our Front Range Lakes and Streams

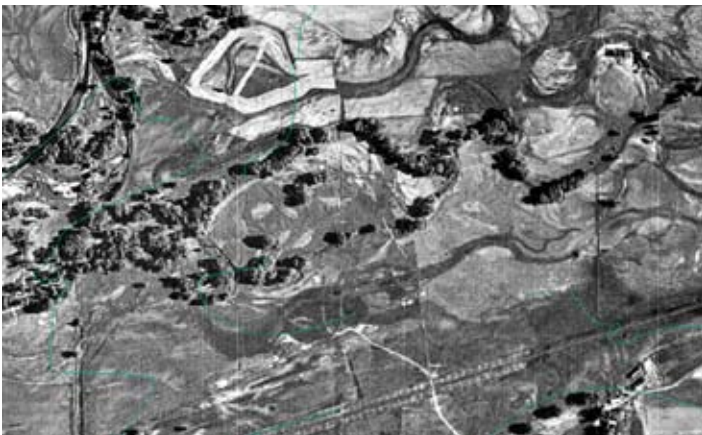
Robert R. Crifasi

City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks

Since the days of the fur trappers in the 1840's people have transformed Colorado's lakes and streams. Although "natural", and often very scenic, many of our freshwater ecosystems are affected by ongoing biological, hydrologic, chemical, and geomorphic changes produced by human activity. This talk will follow the landscape history of Front Range lakes and streams to trace the transformation or outright creation of new freshwater ecosystems. What we see on the Front Range are many lakes and streams that are simultaneously natural and social in origin. People and nature are active participants in the production of the lake and stream ecosystems that we strive so hard to conserve. These "hybrid" freshwater ecosystems are features of the humanized landscape and are derived from deliberate cultural activities, nonhuman physical and biological processes, and incidental human disturbance.

Our perceptions of what "natural" freshwater ecosystems are affect how we define them and in turn influence our approaches for conservation and management. Some of the themes covered in this talk are inspired by contemporary geographers and social scientists who are studying the interaction of people with the nonhuman world to find better ways to manage complex ecological systems. The talk will try to stimulate a discussion with the audience about the underlying social forces and cultural values that go into creating the lakes and streams that we all care so much about.

Sawhill Ponds area, 1937



April 24, 7:30 p.m.

Hummingbird Orchards

Steve and Debbie Bouricius

Hummingbirds are among the most recognizable of all birds, yet they are one of the least studied of all bird groups. Their small size, fast flight and soft vocalizations make it especially difficult to track and observe individual birds, and their complex lifestyle poses continuing challenges to researchers. Almost everything we know with certainty about bird distribution, migration, breeding biology and longevity comes from studies of individually banded and marked birds.

This program will examine the life cycle and status of Colorado's hummingbirds and offer an intimate view into the art and science of current hummingbird banding research. Please join Steve and Debbie to learn more about hummingbirds in Colorado and how you can contribute to the research effort.

*More about the speakers
and some great pictures, page 3*

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. (west off 55th St. between Arapahoe and Baseline)

Sawhill Ponds area, 2002



Spring Field Trips and Other Events

Sunday, March 18 – Ecosystem Stewardship Project. See article on page 6.

Tuesday, April 10, 7-8:30 p.m. – Valmont Power Plant Tour and Energy Forum with Dave Madonna.

The historic Valmont power plant east of Boulder has generated electricity continuously for 83 years. Attend a plant tour and energy presentation to see first hand where your electricity comes from and to discuss energy issues. An Energy ABC's presentation will cover our energy sources, where this energy is consumed, impacts of energy consumption and future energy supplies.

Senior plant engineer Dave Madonna installed the popular "owl cams" at the plant and has led birding tours on site for Boulder Audubon and other groups. We will meet at the main plant entrance off 63rd St. one block south of Arapahoe. Contact Steve Jones (stephen.jones@earthlink.net) to register for this special event.

Saturday, April 14, 9 a.m.-noon – Volunteer Training for Boulder Reservoir Species of Special Concern Monitoring.

Meet at Tom Watson Park, off North 63rd St. opposite Coot Lake. For the past three years, 15-20 volunteers have been keeping an eye on nesting birds of special concern on Boulder Parks and Recreation property near Boulder Reservoir. While providing us with data on nesting success of Osprey, Burrowing Owls, American Bitterns, and Northern Harriers, this monitoring project has strengthened nesting habitat protection for these rare and declining species.

We're asking for a commitment of at least one morning or evening per month, May-July. For more information or to volunteer, contact Mary Malley (malley@m@bouldercolorado.gov) or Steve Jones (stephen.jones@earthlink.net).

Sunday, April 15, 8 a.m.-noon – Early Blooms and Migrants.

Come out and look for signs of spring along the South Boulder Creek Trail. We'll search for early emerging wildflowers, butterflies, dragonflies, and any birds we might find. Be prepared for possible muddy trails. Meet at 8 a.m. at the northwest parking area of the East Boulder Rec. Center, off 55th St., south of Baseline. Return around noon. For details call Scott Severs at 303-684-6430.

Monday, April 16, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. – BCNA Ecosystem Symposium.

"Change Is Coming" is the theme of this year's Boulder County Ecosystem Symposium, in the Boulder Public Library auditorium. As always, the symposium is free and open to all. Registration begins at 10 a.m. at the Library's Canyon Blvd. entrance.

See article on page 6. Full program on the BCNA Web site, <http://www.bcna.org>, by early April.

Thursday, May 10, 6-10 a.m. – Breeding Bird Survey on Shanahan Ridge.

Everyone is invited to join Betty Naughton and Steve Jones on this early morning hike which also serves as a workshop for eco-stewards and Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas volunteers. Meet at 6 a.m. at Steve Jones's house, 3543 Smuggler Way (turn right off Greenbriar, 5 blocks past Fairview High School, and drive all the way to the end of SmugglerWay). Return around 10 a.m. stephen.jones@earthlink.net (303-494-2468).

Saturday, May 12 – International Migratory Bird Day.

Location, Time and Registration TBA. Hosted by Boulder Bird Club, Boulder County Audubon and the Wild Bird Center. (Watch for announcements on the Nature Net, or contact the Wild Bird Center at 303-442-1322 for details as they become available)

For more about IMBD, see page 6.

Boulder County Audubon Society

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Alex and Gillian Brown (303)494-3042

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

Next issue:

Deadline for materials for the May 2007 issue is Tue, April 17.

Email address for submissions:
otw@boulderaudubon.org

Color pictures in the Web
version of *On the Wing*:
www.boulderaudubon.org

April 24, 7:30 p.m.

Continued from page 1

Studying Colorado's Hummingbirds

Steve and Debbie Bouricius are licensed master banders engaged in a broad range of banding studies of breeding and migrant hummingbirds in Colorado. With banding stations on both sides of the Continental Divide, they have banded more than 5000 hummingbirds of nine species in the state since 1999. Some interesting new discoveries about hummingbirds have resulted from their work.



*A handfull of Buff-bellied Hummingbird
-- Steve Bouricius*



*A Buff-bellied Hummingbird gets a new band
-- Steve Bouricius*

Future Programs

*Sustaining and Restoring Native Ecosystems in the
Southern Rocky Mountain Region*

We have obtained a grant from the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District of Colorado to present this series of talks running through March 2008. Please join us in this exploration of concern and understanding on topics that are both broad and specialized, so that you may experience the joy of falling in love with the place you live and the community we have.



Scientific & Cultural
Facilities District

Making It Possible.

New BCNA Class: Gardening for Butterflies and Hummingbirds

Boulder County Nature Association is offering a new field class on gardening for butterflies and hummingbirds, taught by Jan Chu and Jean Morgan. An introduction to 'Water Wise' plants, this class will pay special attention to those that attract butterflies and hummingbirds. Visit two home gardens and a local nursery that specializes in native and xeric plants; and enjoy butterfly hikes in the foothills. Scholarships of up to \$50 are available for all participants in BCNA classes. For more information, visit <http://www.bcna.org>.

April 23, 6 p.m.-8:30 p.m.: field class, ending indoors

Saturday, April 28, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m.: field class

Saturday, August 18, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m.: field class

Tuition: \$65 (\$55 for BCNA members). Limited to 12 participants. To register call Jan at 303-494-1108 or email chuhouse@hotmail.com

May 22: Joyce Gellhorn, Colorado Native Plant Society: *White-tailed Ptarmigan, Ghost Birds of the Alpine Tundra.*

June 26: Jeffrey Lockwood, University of Wyoming: *Lessons learned from extinction of the Rocky Mountain locust*

Tentative schedule for fall and winter programs:

Sept 25: Rick Knight, CSU: *Wildlife Habitat Fragmentation*

Oct 23: Tom Veblen: *Fire History of the Front Range.*

Nov 27: Heather Swanson, Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks: *Restoring degraded bird habitats on Boulder's Open Space.*

Other speakers:

Carron Meaney (*Status and future of Preble's jumping mouse*), Alexander Cruz (*cowbird nest parasitism in forest ecosystems*).

BOULDER COUNTY WILDLIFE INVENTORY, OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 2006

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

November 2006 saw some rarities in the county that brought in birders from all over the state. A Yellow-billed Loon on Erie Reservoir delighted many birders with excellent views. Unfortunately, it was slowly realized that the bird was badly injured and would subsequently die. A second Yellow-billed Loon was reported at Union Reservoir. These were only the second and third reports of this species for the wildlife inventory; the previous sighting was on Union Reservoir in 1991. A Brown Pelican was first seen at Union Reservoir in October, then was seen a month later at McIntosh Lake near Longmont. This is thought to be the same bird that had spent the summer in Larimer County. This was only the second report of this species for the inventory; the last sighting being at Union Reservoir in June 1991. The mild weather through most of November may have contributed to lingering birds as American White Pelicans were also in the county until nearly the end of November. The third really unusual species was a possible Slaty-backed Gull at McIntosh Reservoir. If verified this would be a first record for Boulder County. However, the verdict was still undecided as to the identity of this unusual first-year gull.

Shorebird migration was still going strong through October and well into November. Lingering shorebirds included Black-bellied Plover, American Avocet and Greater Yellowlegs seen both months. Solitary Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper and Long-billed Dowitcher were seen in October while a Spotted Sandpiper was seen in November. With so many birders observing the lakes and ponds of Boulder County, gulls were well reported with less usual species being Mew Gull, Thayer's Gull and Lesser Black-backed Gull. Forster's Tern was a late sighting for October. Fall is traditionally the best time to see Bonaparte's Gull and in November there were at least 28 of these gulls present. Migrating Sandhill Cranes were seen and heard both months.

Other unusual species included a Short-eared Owl, a species last seen in 2002. Red-necked Grebe and Long-tailed Duck were reported both months. Black Scoter and Surf Scoter were both new birds for the year and are both birds that are not necessarily seen every year. In November both Trumpeter and Tundra Swans were reported; Tundra Swan was new for the year. Ross' Goose and Snow Goose were reported both months with Greater White-fronted Goose being reported in November. Eastern Bluebird was another new species for the year and a Chestnut-sided Warbler was seen after a gap of over a year. A single Chestnut-collared Longspur was reported at Boulder Reservoir; this is only the third record of this species for the wildlife inventory. Two Harris Sparrows were found in November having failed to be seen for over a year.

October saw a paucity of reports that left many common species unreported. However, November was very well covered, especially in the plains. Altogether 126 bird species were seen in October and 125 bird species in November. This makes November a record month beating the previous high of 118 species in 2001. Although most observers did not bother to count numbers of all the birds present, enough did to show some interesting trends. Little is known about the numbers of Cackling Geese that winter in the state. Several observers commented that they were seeing Cackling Geese in greater numbers than Canada Geese in November, and one observer at Union Reservoir estimated that there were 2275 Cackling Geese as opposed to just 5 Canada Geese. Also from the many reports on birds at Union Reservoir it was clear that the most abundant grebe was Eared Grebe (346), followed by Western Grebe (33), Horned Grebe (4), Pied-billed Grebe(2) and a single Clark's Grebe. On Valmont Reservoir Eared Grebe was far less common with far greater numbers of Pied-billed Grebe. Hooded Mergansers were the least common merganser with 21 birds being the most seen at a single location. Valmont Reservoir seemed to have more Red-breasted Mergansers than Common Mergansers with the number of Red-breasted Mergansers going up nearly daily through November to a peak of 305 birds. In contrast Union Reservoir reported 58 Red-breasted Mergansers as opposed to 608 Common Mergansers, while McIntosh Lake reported just 2 Red-breasted Mergansers as opposed to 1300 Common Mergansers.

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, Alex & Gillian Brown, Joanna Chan, Carol Cushman, Eric DeFonso, Todd Deiningner, Ted Floyd, Steve Frye, Peter Gent, Paula Hansley, Jack Harlan, Thomas Heinrich, Ann Hicks, Rachel Hopper, Steve Jones, Tina Jones, Bill Kaempfer, Loch Kilpatrick, Ellen Klaver, Chishun Kwong, Steve Larson, Sharon Leahy, Dave Leatherman, Tony Leukering, Gene & Lynn Monroe, George Oetzel, Laura Osborn, Beth Partin, Peter Plage, Bill and Inez Prather, Sue Riffe, Ira Sanders, Bill Schmoker, Bob Shade, Randy Siebert, Bob Spencer, Walter Szeliga, Oakleigh Thorne, Richard Trinkner, David J. Waltman, Tom Wilberding, Cole Wild, Wild Bird Center.

New Group Formed to Focus on Open Space

Friends of Boulder Open Space is a new Boulder County-based group organized to promote conservation-based enjoyment and use of city and county open space lands. Founders include Ray Bridge, Karen Hollweg, Linda Jourgensen, Deane Little, Larry MacDonnell, Mary McQuiston, Richard Reynolds, Edie Stevens, and Ruth Wright. The group intends to participate actively in processes seeking public input regarding acquisition and management of open space. We invite all those interested in conserving open space lands both for our use and for native species and future generations to join us.

The need for such a group emerged out of the now seven-year "visitor management" process on city Open Space. It took six years to finalize policies in what is called the Visitor Master Plan. For the past year the City Open Space Department has begun implementing the plan, using a "Trail Study Area" process. Two areas were completed in 2006: Marshall Mesa/Southern Grassland and Eldorado Mountain/Doudy Draw. Next on the agenda is the North Foothills TSA.

Individuals from the conservation community have committed enormous amounts of time and energy over the seven years to keep wildlife and habitat considerations involved. But conservation advocates are increasingly outnumbered.

Our open space lands are not protected from us. We love to use them for our various recreational pursuits. According to OSMP, there were more than five million "visits" to city open space lands between June 2004 and May 2005. Many of these visits were by people from outside the City of Boulder. Even in an area of more than 40,000 acres, that's a lot of human use.

FOBOS is committed to a policy of sustainable use that respects other people, the land, and its natural communities, now and in the future. Help us make this voice a strong one. It's easy to add your name to our growing list of members and show that you care about these values too!

For more information about FOBOS, go to <http://www.friendsofopenspace.org>.



Joe Harrison

Boulder County's bird populations lost one of their greatest advocates when Joe Harrison died this January just five months after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Joe was 68.

While working 38 years for United Airlines at Stapleton and Denver International airports, Joe devoted much of his free time to studying and caring for birds. He helped Sigrid Ueblacker establish the Birds of Prey Rehabilitation Foundation and supervised construction of its flight cages. As lead bander at the Allegra Collister preserve for 16 years, Joe oversaw the banding of 11,000 birds comprising more than 120 species. He instructed countless volunteers of all ages in bird banding techniques, aweing his students with his skilled and gentle hands.

Joe participated in numerous Christmas Bird Counts and was one of the stalwarts (and keenest observers) in the Boulder County Nature Association wintering raptor study. We had to come up with a new expression, "the Harrison effect," to describe a tendency for mean raptor numbers to skyrocket on any survey route covered by Joe's team. Joe also helped out with small owl studies. Along with Virginia Dionigi, his longtime bird banding partner at Allegra Collister, Joe walked three times, at night, from Lyons to Longmont, stopping every 300 meters to play eastern screech-owl calls on a boom box. Not surprisingly, Joe and Virginia found more screech-owls along their one transect than did 20 other volunteers combined along five other transects.

Joe was a gentle and compassionate man, much loved by his children, grandchildren, neighbors and many friends. We will miss him dearly and think of him often as we watch raptors soaring over the grasslands of Boulder County.

- Steve Jones



Back yard Cedar Waxwing - G. Oetzel (2/21/2007)

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Ecosystem Stewardship Project Takes off

Would you like to have a wild place all your own where you can commune with nature, become intimately acquainted with the resident birds, butterflies, and mammals; and contribute to their future well-being? That's the vision of the Ecosystem Stewardship Initiative, a new volunteer project sponsored by Boulder County Audubon and Boulder County Nature Association.

We're holding an organizational meeting March 18 to plan this year's activities. New volunteers and other interested tree-huggers are invited to join us. So far, about 25 volunteers have adopted wild areas and another 25 have helped out with bird, butterfly, and recreation-use surveys. Areas that have yet to be adopted include South Boulder Creek Trail west of Broadway, Bluebell Canyon, Skunk Canyon, Grand Gulch, Stearns Lake, and most of the Indian Peaks Wilderness.

Contact: Steve Jones (stephen.jones@earthlink.net).



Bluebird Nest Box Monitors Needed

We need a few new volunteers for the new season of monitoring nest boxes at Walker Ranch and possibly Betasso Preserve. We had a very successful season last year. 37 nests in the 47 boxes at Walker Ranch fledged 166 chicks of seven species.

Monitoring requires checking nesting progress in 10 to 13 boxes approximately weekly from late April to early July and recording the observations. Of course, it's also an opportunity for some birding and seeing the progression of wildflowers. Pictures from last season are on <http://www.boulderaudubon.org/bbwalker.htm>.

To sign up, or to learn more, contact Marti Oetzel. 303-543-3712 or marti@birdhike.com.

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Ecosystem Symposium Addresses Global Climate Change

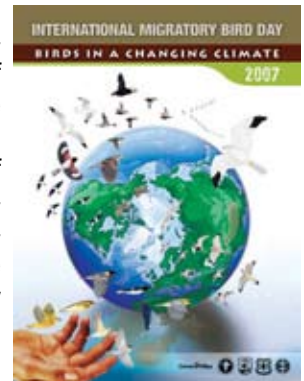
"Change Is Coming" is the theme of this year's Boulder County Ecosystem Symposium, scheduled for Monday, April 16, at the Boulder Public Library auditorium.

Robert Henson, author of the Rough Guide to Global Climate Change, will deliver the keynote talk on "Climate Change: What's Really Going on, and What Can We Do About It?" Dr. Rick Adams will discuss how drought and changing temperatures have impacted Colorado bat populations. Dr. Alex Cruz will address recent shifts in Front Range bird populations.

As always, the symposium is free and open to all. Registration begins at 10 a.m. at the Library's Canyon Blvd. entrance. For a complete schedule of speakers, visit the Boulder County Nature Association web site (www.bcna.org) after March 25. The symposium is also sponsored by Boulder County Audubon, Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks, Boulder County Parks and Open Space, and Colorado Native Plant Society.

International Migratory Bird Day

Birds have long been indicators of environmental change, sounding the alarm about the impacts of pesticides, polluted water, and the loss of native forest. While IMBD continues to promote the joy of birds, it will also tackle a challenging, yet pertinent topic in 2007 - climate change. Join us to examine these changes and explore how they might impact our local birds. We'll have information tables, field trips to see returning migrants, and other bird related activities.



Copyright Louise Zemaitis

IMBD was created in 1993 by visionaries at the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. Long under the direction of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, IMBD has a new focus this year through an organization based in Boulder. See <http://www.birdday.org>.

Today, IMBD is celebrated in Canada, the U.S., Mexico and Central America through bird festivals, bird walks, and education programs. We invite you to join us in Boulder County's part of this important celebration.

Location, Time and Registration for the local event TBA. Hosted by Boulder Bird Club, Boulder County Audubon and the Wild Bird Center. (Watch for announcements on the Nature Net, or contact the Wild Bird Center at 303-442-1322 for details as they become available)

Wildlife Restoration Volunteers

Since nurturing conservation is all about community partnerships, we are inviting all our members to participate in Wildlands Restoration Volunteers (WRV) work projects. Their mission is "to foster a community spirit of shared responsibility for the stewardship and restoration of public lands among residents of the Northern Colorado Front Range". Besides doing something pro-active for the environment, you'll be treated to some great food and camaraderie. There are tasks available to suit all levels of physical capacity. Take a look at the following projects and visit the web site - <http://www.wlr.org> - for more information or to sign up.

Saturday, April 14: Coot Pond Restoration – St. Vrain State Park, Longmont

The new 600 acre St. Vrain State Park is being created, offering a habitat oasis within a rapidly developing region. The park's master plan calls for extensive restoration with WRV already completing two large wetland revegetation projects. This year they'll restore 1800 feet of shoreline habitat with native plants.

Saturday, Apr 21: Dragonfly Pond Restoration – Pella Crossing Open Space, Longmont

WRV returns to the site of their first 1999 project at Pella Crossing Open Space. The willows planted are now over 8 feet tall and thriving! (to next column)

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 :
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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 adjacent order form.

This year's work will be on Dragon Fly Pond with volunteers stabilizing the bank with a variety of willow and wetland plantings. This project will improve water quality, enhance habitat for birds, fish and other wildlife.

Saturday, April 28: Boulder Prairie Restoration
Rain backup: May 12 Follow-Up Event: Wednesday, June 13, evening

WRV will continue the urgent quest to remove Mediterranean Sage from Boulder County. This Colorado A-listed weed aggressively invades grasslands, reduces native plant populations, and degrades wildlife habitat and prairie ecosystems. This multi-agency partnership targets removal at the highest priority sites in Boulder County, especially on Table Mountain.

Boulder Creek Restoration
Tuesday, May 15: Eurasian Watermilfoil Team Training session, 5-9pm

June – August: several dates to map and remove EWM at multiple locations along Boulder Creek

Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM), an aggressive aquatic weed is new to Colorado yet now lives in Boulder Creek. The plant spreads very easily, even a tiny piece of the plant can float downstream and root displacing native species. WRV will work with land managers to systematically survey and remove EWM from the Boulder Creek Watershed.

Sat-Sun, May 19-20: Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge River Restoration – near Walden, CO

The 25,000 acre Wildlife Refuge protects critical wildlife habitat along 27.4 miles of the Illinois River and hosts elk, moose, and neo-tropical migrating songbirds. In this year's third phase of a river restoration research project, volunteers will gather and plant thousands of willow cuttings to identify the most effective planting techniques that can be applied in future restoration efforts.

Ed Self – Wildlands Restoration Volunteers
303-543-1411 edself@wlr.org

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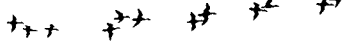
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Boulder County Audubon Society

On The Wing



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Tuesday Evening Programs

March 27, 730 p.m.

**Making Nature: Our Front Range
Lakes and Streams**

Robert R. Crifasi
City of Boulder OSMP

April 24, 7:30 p.m.

Hummingbird Orchards
Steve and Debbie Bouricius



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Boulder County Audubon Society Membership

Use this form to join, renew, or change address with Boulder County Audubon and/or the National Audubon Society (NAS). With membership in the NAS you receive *Audubon* magazine and become a member of BCAS as well. However, BCAS receives only a small amount of your dues from NAS to support local activities. We encourage you to join our local BCAS chapter to help support local activities. (NAS membership is not required.)

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

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To join or renew both BCAS and NAS, please duplicate the form and send separately.

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\$ _____ Additional contribution

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P.O. Box 2081 Boulder, CO 80306

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