



On The Wing

Volume 36, Number 5

Boulder County Audubon Society Newsletter

Nov-Dec 2006

BCAS 4th Tuesday Program Series November 28, 2006 - 7:30 p.m.



Coal Creek Scene from the video

Coal Creek Riparian Restoration City of Boulder Open Space & Mountain Parks Presented by John Vanderpoel and Don D'Amico

Join us for a first-time preview of John's video documenting the restoration work completed at Coal Creek.

In 1999, the City teamed up with the Terra Foundation to protect and restore the riparian habitat of Coal Creek in southern Boulder County. The main goal of the project was to protect and improve the native riparian plant and animal communities of Coal Creek and the ecological processes that sustain them. The project was multi-faceted, involving fencing the riparian corridor, restoring channelized sections of the creek and recreating historic riparian wetlands. Extensive re-vegetation efforts also took place where native riparian trees, shrubs and grasses were planted and seeded. The responses of vegetation and birds to these restoration efforts have been documented by extensive field monitoring.

After the restoration, plant species surveys have shown a marked decrease in non-native grasses and forbs such as cheatgrass and bindweed and an expansion of riparian shrubs including chokecherry, hawthorn and willows. Results from the bird surveys were equally encouraging with record-high numbers reflected in the 79 bird species observed. Many of the increasers were common shrub-nesters including spotted towhees, common yellowthroats, yellow-breasted chats, song sparrows, and blue grosbeaks. Other increasers are insectivores that commonly forage in shrubby areas such as house wrens and blue-gray gnatcatchers or those that nest in the tree canopy, such as western and eastern kingbirds, yellow warblers and bullock's orioles.

NEXT PROGRAM: JAN 23, 2007

Treasures of the Greater Southern Rockies
Jacob Smith and Erin Robertson

Christmas Bird Count, December 17

Come out and enjoy the Christmas Bird Count this year. Boulder has long had strong participation in the CBC, often among the top 50 in the nation. In the 2005 count, there were 81 participants in spite of very cold weather. The birds were out in the cold, too. We logged 106 species, a record for the Boulder count circle. It would be terrific if the number of participants in 2006 could equal or surpass the number of species reported.

Beginners are always welcome (we need all the eyes we can get). Potluck dinner follows. Call leader Bill Schmoker. 303-702-9589 (bill@schmoker.org) to volunteer for this all-day event.

More than 50,000 observers participate each year in this all-day census of early-winter bird populations. The results of their efforts are compiled into the longest running database in ornithology, representing over a century of unbroken data on trends of early-winter bird populations across the Americas. Simply put, the Christmas Bird Count, or "CBC", is citizen science in action.

Viewed along with other long-term, continent-wide, monitoring programs CBC data give us an understanding of the dynamics of bird populations across North America during the early winter. We are also gaining an understanding of the status of bird populations in Latin America, the Caribbean, and US Minor Outlying Islands.

You can do your own statistical studies by downloading data for any count circle and all 106 years of CBC records from <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/hr/index.html>.

Refreshments and Socializing before the meeting 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)

*Field Trips, Nov-Dec 2006***Wintering Raptor Field Trip: Saturday, November 18, 9 a.m. to mid-afternoon.**

Join Boulder County Audubon field trip leaders Wayne and Dianna Johnston for a driving tour of local raptor hotspots. Meet at the Niwot Park and Ride on the Boulder-Longmont Diagonal Highway. Free and open to all. Information: 303-682-5662; wjohnston@att.net Watch Nature-Net and/or www.boulderaudubon.org for a possible change of leaders or schedule.

Thursday, December 21, 7-10:30 a.m.: Annual Winter Solstice sunrise hike on White Rocks Trail (which skirts, but does not enter, the White Rocks Natural Area). Expect to see bald eagles, white-tailed deer, waterfowl, and a misty sunrise. Feel free to bring a thought, poem, or song to share at a short sunrise ceremony at the Boulder Creek bridge. Breakfast afterward at the Garden Gate Cafe in Niwot. Call Steve Jones (303-494-2468) to secure a place at the breakfast table. (Joint BCNA – BCAS field trip)

Sunday, Dec. 17— Annual Boulder Christmas Bird Count: Beginners are always welcome (we need all the eyes we can get). Potluck dinner follows. Leader: Bill Schmoker Call: 303-702-9589 (bill@schmoker.org) to volunteer for this all-day event.

BCAS Membership Please renew or join

We maintain local chapter memberships on a calendar-year basis. So, if it's been about a year, or a bit more, your address label will have a "please renew" line added to the address. If you're not already a member, please join.

Why should you join the local chapter if you're already given full membership benefits with your National Audubon Society (NAS) membership? Simply, very little of your NAS membership dues returns to help Boulder Audubon. NAS does return a portion of your dues to BCAS, but then Audubon Colorado requests that we donate almost 80% of that to their support. While support for Audubon Colorado is certainly a worthy cause, the net effect is that BCAS receives about 60¢ from each NAS membership.

We have to raise about \$11,000 from local sources to support the newsletter, monthly programs, education, insurance, and lesser expenses. Our SCFD grant for FY 2007 approximately equals grants received for FY 2006, leaving more than \$8,000 to be raised from other sources. Local memberships, individual donations, and food-coupon sales are the most important parts of that fund raising.

Use the form on page 8 to join or renew, or visit our Web site at <http://www.boulderaudubon.org/about.htm#membership>.

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George Oetzel (303)543-3712

Web Site

Amy Schlotthauer (303)402-0905

Christmas Bird Count Coordinator

Bill Schmoker (303)702-9589

Wildlife Inventory

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 Jan 2007 issue is Tue, Dec 26.
Email address for submissions:
otw@boulderaudubon.org

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

Book Review

Ruth Carol Cushman

Exchanges of Earth & Sky (Fish Drum Inc., New York City, 2006), a book of bird poems by Jack Collom, is a treasure trove of word jewels, snippets from ornithological works, cryptic allusions, newspaper accounts, humor, quotes from Thoreau, Burroughs, and much more. Sometimes the words on the page form drawings, like Lewis Carroll's mouse. Open it at random and you will be charmed. For me, reading the poems feels like a just-awakening dream of fantastical birds that fly away before I can catch them.

Jack describes his book as "a collage of materials (like a magpie's nest). Typically, the words in the 'bird' portions, the upper parts of most pages, have been extracted and rearranged from the excellent book given me as a birthday present when I was thirteen.. These portions have been juxtaposed and mingled with poems and poetic fragments of mine." Steve Jones says Jack's book "has replaced Sibley as my standard field guide."

Jack is a passionate birder as well as a passionate poet and teacher. You may have seen him busking his poetry on the mall this summer. He takes an idea or a phrase from a passerby and turns it into poetry, adeptly drawing the passerby into the process. Eventually he hopes to turn this experience into a booklet, which will join his many other poetry books.

Be sure to look closely at the cover; there's a sly joke there!

Ptarmigan Quest

George Oetzel

Seeing Ptarmigan in their white winter plumage can be a challenge. On a very cold January (2005) morning, ten well-bundled hikers set out on snowshoes from the Brainard Lake trailhead for Left Hand Reservoir. Leader Joyce Gellhorn told us that the birds are there quite consistently, but that it was by no means certain that we would discover them. She also told us about their winter habits, feeding on willows and often burrowing in the snow for shelter.

Not only was it cold at almost 11,000 feet, but the approach to the reservoir was directly into a biting wind of 30-40 mph that blasted our faces with sharp crystals of snow. We detoured into the trees for some relief from the wind to skirt the reservoir to the willow area where the ptarmigans feed. Sharp eyes spotted three of the birds in the trees, where they were also sheltering from the wind. Ptarmigans were life birds for a couple of the hikers, and first view of white plumage for others. The quest was successful. We'd found the "grail bird" for the day, a fine reward for the five hours we spent in the cold.

Joyce Gellhorn and Calvin Whitehall will be teaching a BCNA class, *Ptarmigan of Boulder County*, with a classroom session on Feb. 22 and snowshoeing field trip on Feb 24, 2007.

With Jack's permission, here is one of my favorites from the *Exchanges of Earth & Sky*:

CHICKADEE

Penthestes atricapillus

"in the bitterest weather

he frolics"

Mr. Burroughs say "voice full of unspeakable

tenderness and fidelity"

whistled

take food

even from between the lips

I'm coming back to you (Yakahula)

Upside-down

far and near

chickadee

chick-a-dee-dee-dee

Chick-a-dee-dee-dee



Photo from the trip by Calvin Whitehall.

Full winter-spring BCNA class schedule:

<http://www.BCNA.org>

An Audubon Intern's View

Laura Stephenson served as an intern for BCAS and BCNA during the 2005-2006 school year as part of her International/National Service-learning Training (INVST) at the University of Colorado. With guidance from Steve Jones, she did a terrific job for both organizations. Most notable is her contribution to our successful application for a grant from the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) for \$2750 to improve our programs and other educational outreach. The article below is her story. Following that (next page) is an outline of some of the programs that will be supported by the grant.

Audubon in Mexico (and Colorado)

By Laura Stephenson

"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe."-John Muir (1838-1914)

We took an overnight bus late on Sunday last July from Denver, arriving in El Paso, Texas early the next morning. The air was dry, and already too hot for comfort at 7AM. I was filled with the excitement of possibilities-- experience, theory and service learning are all parts of my comprehensive education on this International/National Service-learning Training (INVST) trip. Our destination was Ciudad Juarez, where for two weeks I and thirteen other University of Colorado students were going to live and serve with the poorest in Mexico. We were here to learn what the North American Free Trade Agreement means to the lives of millions south of the United States border. We would spend the following two weeks in Cuernavaca, Mexico with the Center for Global Education and our host families to learn how international politics affects indigenous people and local culture. We met with artists, activists, scientists, elders, holy-men, farmers, midwives, priests, nuns, politicians, and social organizers. These individuals see the possibility of stronger communities in the face of homogenizing influences, and are working towards a better world despite local and international contamination, and are in aggressive pursuit of these goals in the face of apathy. In school I had already read some of the academic theories and understood political stances. I wanted to explore what I could learn from people experiencing these realities. In the process, asking questions and serving specific community needs have transformed my understanding of global systems.

I came to Boulder and the University of Colorado because I want an education that supplies me with the skills to transform injustice in our world. I want to integrate my ecological education through the university with the realities of a globalized world and the gentle teachings of Jesus and the Prophets into compassionate courageous actions.

I believe I am not alone. The appreciation of nature and the recognition of its decline have sounded alarms in civilization beginning with the agricultural revolution thousands of years ago. Humans recognized their survival is tied to the survival of the earth because crops cannot be grown in sterile ground. In my travels, I have fallen in love with hummingbirds in the mountains outside of Mexico City, the call of the Saw-whet owl outside of Boulder, and the coo of Mourning Doves in the mountains of the Southwest. But I have also seen despair overtake my friends in the face of absolute poverty and have myself experienced the pain of what Aldo Leopold calls an ecological education.

In the month following my arrival in the barren desert of El Paso, I became keenly aware of a deeper connection between human and nature, earth and society, injustice and instability.

"That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics."- Aldo Leopold

Environmental degradation is inextricably tied with each person changing his or her beliefs about where we live and where we can afford to live on the earth. According to early writers in the Judeo-Christian traditions we are not consumers of the earth's products but rather stewards of God's creation. Today with the rise of secular ethics we have noted a movement toward understanding the value of the earth in terms of the products produced. I assert these two perspectives are not the only ways to think about our world but are tied together into what Michael E. Zimmerman, professor of philosophy and director of the Center of Humanities and Arts, called in his recent lecture "Integrated Ecology", which is also the title of his upcoming book. Environmentalism is not a movement isolated in an obscure backwards hideout, but is tied with social justice movements. As we find in Native American traditions, it is not a reasonable expectation for only one generation to live, we must think of our actions for seven generations. Environmentalism is an expression of concern for the poor and the oppressed among us; it is a choice we make every day to live a life of freedom and compassion.

Starting in September 2005, I volunteered six hours a week with the Boulder County Audubon Society and the Boulder County Nature Association as part of the INVST Community Leadership Program through the University of Colorado for the entire academic year. Until May, 2007 I have the opportunity to work and serve the environment by designing, implementing, and evaluating a service project (again six hours a week). With the support of local environmentalists and activists, Steve Jones

and Connie Holsinger, the Boulder County Audubon Society board, Deonne Vanderwouded from Open Space/Mountain parks, Naropa University, and other wonderful volunteers, I am pleased to announce that we have obtained a grant from the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District of Colorado to present a series of talks: "Sustaining and Restoring Native Ecosystems in the Southern Rocky Mountain Region" starting in January 2007 and running through March 2008. The speaker series will constitute the BCAS programs during those months. 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.

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

Boulder County Audubon Society 2007-08 Monthly Program Series

January: Jacob Smith and Erin Robertson, Center for Native Ecosystems. "Treasures of the Greater Southern Rockies: A photographic tour and status report on our region's endangered species and ecosystems."

February: Jeffry Mitton, University of Colorado. "Global Warming Comes to the Southern Rockies."

March: Bob Crifasi, Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks. "Making Nature; Thinking about Our Front Range Riparian Ecosystems."

April: Steve Bouricius, Colorado Field Ornithologists. "Colorado Hummingbirds, Their Status and Future."

Earth Day: Special presentation by Anne Park, Naropa University.

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

September 2007-March 2008: Heather Swanson, Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks, Tom Veblen, University of Colorado (Fire history of the northern Front Range), Jeffrey Lockwood, University of Wyoming (Lessons learned from extinction of the Rocky Mountain locust), Carron Meaney (Status and future of Preble's jumping mouse), Alexander Cruz (cowbird nest parasitism in forest ecosystems).



Scientific & Cultural
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Making It Possible.

Colorado Rendezvous, 2006

Audubon Colorado

Twenty-three representatives from eight of the eleven chapters in Colorado plus Audubon Colorado staff gathered at the Mt. Princeton Hot Springs Resort near Buena Vista on Saturday August 26th for Rendezvous 2006. This year's theme was Achieving Audubon Chapter Conservation Goals. The variety of speakers was well received, and everyone enjoyed the birding activities.

The event began in the evening of Friday, August 25, with a talk by Tony Leukering of the Rocky Mt. Bird Observatory on the upcoming breeding bird atlas. This will be the second edition, and Tony is looking for volunteers to count birds and collect data for this comprehensive project. There were numerous presentations from national staff Saturday. Rob Fergus from the science office straightened out the facts on avian flu, Richard Stromp from the state office gave a report on a training workshop in Maine, Lynn Teneffoss from chapter services showed the group new web tools for chapters, and Sean Saville from the policy office in DC talked about mobilizing our grassroots efforts. In addition, SeEtta Moss of Arkansas Valley Audubon Society, gave a thorough account of Colorado's challenging water issues.

The afternoon focused on conservation of the Gunnison Sage-Grouse, an effort made possible by all eleven chapters' decision to use funding from the national office to help this imperiled bird. Leigh Robertson, Gunnison Sage-Grouse Coordinator for the San Miguel

basin, provided the group with insight on the population of the bird and its threats. Cheryl Day from Black Canyon Audubon Society talked about what the chapters can do to help and Steve Smith from the Wilderness Society discussed the effects of oil and gas development. The effort to conserve Gunnison Sage-Grouse was such a hot topic that the attendees proposed holding Rendezvous 2007 in June in the Gunnison area. John Vanderpoel, a hummingbird photographer, gave the keynote speech in the evening to end a fantastic day.



Gunnison Sage-Grouse - Louis Swift
www.western.edu/bio/young/gunnsg/gunnsg.htm

BOULDER COUNTY WILDLIFE INVENTORY, JUNE - JULY 2006

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

June and July 2006 were unusual in that more birds (152 species) were seen in July than in June (147 species). This was partly because of very poor overall coverage in June although there were plenty of reports of unusual species. Also early July was unusually wet and cold, perhaps tempting both birds and birders to be more active than usual. June saw the first sightings for the year of a few late spring migrants such as Red-eyed Vireo, and Black-throated Blue Warbler (last seen in 2004) and July saw the return of a few fall migrants such as Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs.

The most unusual sighting was a Swallow-tailed Kite seen in July near Longmont. This was a new species for the Boulder County wildlife inventory. Unfortunately, it did not stay around for long so most county birders did not manage to add it to their list. Andrews and Righter describe Swallow-tailed Kite as "accidental in spring and summer on eastern plains (six records in Colorado) and in mountains (three records)." Another unusual sighting was a Yellow-crowned Night Heron seen at Sawhill Ponds in July; this was only the third record for the county and a bird that had not been seen since 1999. Also a third record for the inventory was a very obliging Curve-billed Thrasher (last seen in 1997) that hopped around the edges of the parking lot at the East Boulder Recreation Center delighting many birders. Other species that had not been seen for at least a year included Black-throated Sparrow and Dickcissel, both last seen in 2004. There was a terrific influx of Dickcissel in suitable grassland habitat in the plains with a total of at least 25 birds being reported in four different areas. Bobolink seemed to often share that same habitat.

An Eastern Wood-Pewee stayed in the Boulder Mountain Parks for both months. Willow Flycatcher and Ash-throated Flycatcher were both seen for the first time this year in July. Rufous Hummingbirds arrived back in Boulder County on 8 July. They are normally seen on their return journey from their breeding grounds with an average arrival date of June 29. Calliope Hummingbirds also arrived in many locations on July 8. Ten years ago these were fairly unusual in Boulder County but now, for many people on the plains, they are one of the commonest hummingbirds of late summer. These are among the smallest of all our birds and are a delight to watch at feeders. Other unusual sightings included a Flammulated Owl. Barn Owls have successfully nested at several locations, as have Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon. Unusual shorebird sightings for June were nineteen Marbled Godwit seen at two different locations. These were surely too late (or early) to be migrating but could have been non-breeding adults.

For a complete listing of sighted species please go to www.boulderaudubon.org/inventory.htm

Reference:

Andrews, Robert and Robert Righter, Colorado Birds: A Reference to their Distribution and Habitat Denver Museum of Natural History: 1992.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THE JUNE & JULY INVENTORIES

Linda Andes-Georges, Julie Bartlett, Alan Bell, Andy Boyce, John Breitsch, Alex & Gillian Brown, Nancy Consolloy, Raymond E Davis, Todd Deininger, Marty Dick, Lisa Dierauf, Bill Eeds, Gene Ellis, Jim Fischer, Ted Floyd, Mike Freiberg, Paula Hansley, Jack Harlan, Barbara Hawke, Thomas Heinrich, Ann Hicks, Rachel Hopper, Steve Jones, Bill Kaempfer, Shirley Kurc, Joe LaFleur, Chuck Lowrie, Gene & Lynn Monroe, Sharon Norfleet, George and Marti Oetzel, Sue A Olmsted, Laura Osborn, Pam Piombino, Peter Plage, Suzi and Myron Plooster, Bill and Inez Prather, Ernest Pund, Peter Ruprecht, Bill Schmoker, Scott Severs, Debra Sparn, Bob Spencer, Wendy Stuart, Walt Szeliga, Joyce Takamine, Richard Trinkner, John Tumasonis, David J. Waltman, Wild Bird Center, Eric Zorawowicz.

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It's not too late to join Project Feederwatch for the 2006-07 season. Like the Christmas Bird Count, it's a source of data on the movements of birds in the winter months in the U.S. and Canada. Annual fee is \$15. More information and signup at <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/>

Was it hot this summer?

George Oetzel

In two recent messages to Nature-Net, Steve Jones pointed out that one could conclude that the past summer was among the hottest on record, or cooler than average, depending on the choice of statistical measure. Both of those measures were based on daily average temperatures; only the time period differed. Surely, any 90-degree day qualifies as hot, another viewpoint. The accompanying graph shows the number of those days for all the years since 1930.

Boulder certainly is not the place to check weather records for long-term trends. The weather station has been moved too many times. There have been four measurement locations during the time since 1930, so comparisons reflect the changes of location as much as climate variations. Before 1946, the measuring site was on the CU campus. During 1947-1958, the official measurement was made on the roof of the fire station. As the graph shows, that was a hot environment, presumably affected by heat rising from a solar-heated roof. From 1958 through 1989, the official thermometer was on the grounds of the fire station, rather than on the roof. In 1990, a new location on the NIST grounds was established.

When Steve checked average temperatures for the months June-August, he found that 2006 was the 13th hottest summer in the 110 years of weather records. Selecting just the official summer period, June 21-Sept 21, he found that 2006 was cooler than average.

Any proper comparison should omit the years when the measurements were made on the fire station roof. I've done my own calculations for the years beginning 1931 and omitting the "roof" years. The averages are nearly the same, 70.1 for June-August and 70.0 for official summer.

The table (next column) gives the rankings for the top seven for each type of calculation. Steve and I have slightly different ordering, because of the different selection of years. We see that 2002 and 1960 were very hot years by any measure, and the only ones on all three lists.

Here are the statistics for three views of hot summers.

June-Aug		Summer		90-deg days	
1933	72.2	1966	72.2	1931	44
1966	72.3	1969	72.2	1978	44
1963	72.3	1936	72.3	2006	44
2006	72.5	1931	72.5	1983	45
2002	72.9	2002	72.6	2000	51
1960	73.2	1963	73.0	1960	53
1934	73.2	1960	73.0	2002	53

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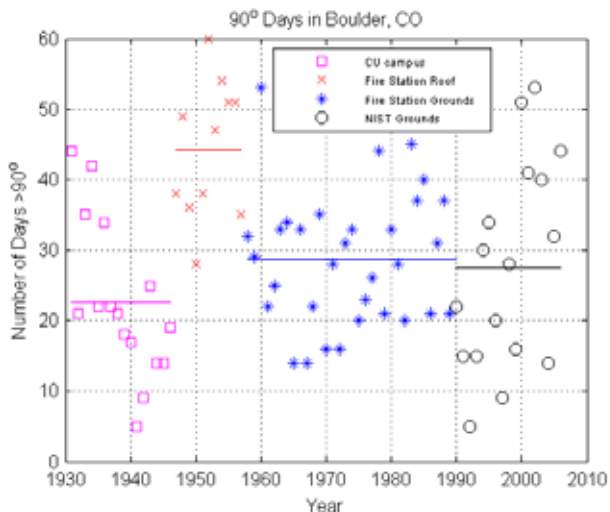
Every time you buy food (or wine or beer), you could be supporting this chapter and its goals of backyard habitat creation, schoolroom programs for kids, and protection of important bird areas in our own county.

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Nov 28, 7:30 p.m.

Coal Creek Riparian Restoration

City of Boulder Open Space
& Mountain Parks

John Vanderpoel and Don D'Amico



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Printing *On the Wing* since Jan. 2004

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.

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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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