



On The Wing

Volume 35, Number 4

Boulder County Audubon Society Newsletter

Sept-Oct 2005

A HUMMER SUMMER With COLORADO WILDSCAPES

Connie Holsinger

Picture yourself sitting outside on your deck in the early evening watching Calliope, Rufous and Broad-tailed Hummingbirds perform aerial displays and feed from various penstemons, agastaches, monardas, salvias, plus a few sugar-water feeders. Sound like a birder's dream come true? This thrilling avian drama occurred on the plains in early August, just two miles northeast of Niwot.

Where once there was Kentucky blue grass, my increased wildscaping efforts have been handsomely rewarded with my first-ever male Calliope Hummingbird! A good many Broad-tailed and a few feisty Rufous were around last summer so my goal this year was to increase the hummer plants in the hopes of luring a Calliope...**and it worked!** I not only had a male but a female showed up a week later – and all three species have gladdened my spirits since early July.

All these hummers are proof positive that wildscaping works. In case you're wondering, wildscaping is a part of Audubon Colorado's new Audubon at Home program (AAH). This exciting National Audubon outreach initiative focuses on improving neighborhood wildlife habitats by encouraging each of us to take personal action to improve the environmental health and habitat quality of our neighborhoods, one yard at a time.

All you have to do is evolve your traditional gardens into welcoming wildscapes by incorporating these few suggestions: select plants that provide year-round food and shelter for wildlife; conserve our limited water supplies by choosing water-wise plant selections; create a healthy yard - a refuge for people as well as wildlife - by reducing pesticide usage; and select native plants that are adapted to our climatic vagaries.

My own wildscape habitat is always in motion, from all the birds and butterflies I've attracted to the plants I keep transplanting to better locations. At the recent nursery sales, I bought more penstemons and agastaches to attract even more hummers next year. A non-gardener like my husband is amazed how I can wax on about next year's garden imagery while standing knee deep in this year's gardens. He can't quite grasp that wildscapers are creatures of hope in believing we can grow more colorful gardens each year, especially to bring even more birds into our daily lives.

(Continued on page 2)

BCAS 4th Tuesday Program Series

September 27, 7:30

**Colorado Wildscapes:
Bringing Conservation Home**

Connie Holsinger

See the adjacent article. Colorado Wildscapes, priced at only \$12.95 and in full color, will be available at the meeting. Proceeds will benefit Boulder County Audubon.

Wes Sears Memorial Garden Dedication, 6:30

Please join us before the meeting Sept 27 as we formally dedicate the Audubon-at-Home wildlife garden that we planted in May in memory of Wes Sears. (Garden is in front of the church.)

October 25, 7:30

**Birds and Birdnames
in the Culture of the Plains Indians**

Andy Cowell

Andy will address the role and importance of birds among several Native American cultures, including Arapaho, Cheyenne, Blackfoot, and Gros Ventre. He will talk about the symbolic importance of birds in the cultures, as well as their use in everyday life, ceremony and religion. He will also talk about bird names in the various languages (most of which are descriptive of the bird or its characteristic behaviors), and stories about birds told by Native Americans.

Andy is a longtime Boulder County Audubon activist and an associate professor of linguistics at the University of Colorado. He has worked with the Northern Arapaho Tribe for several years

**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)

(Hummer Summer, Continued from page 1)

Wildscaping and Audubon At Home focus on how you can make a difference in your part of the world. Here in Colorado, we now have a statewide habitat gardening guide, in full color, entitled *Colorado Wildscapes: Bringing Conservation Home*. It's a hands-on and easy-to-use guide that takes you step-by-step into the wilds of wildscaping. *Colorado Wildscapes* is available directly from the Boulder County Audubon Chapter web site at www.boulderaudubon.org or you may purchase a copy at our monthly programs. The retail price is \$12.95 plus sales tax and shipping, when applicable. Proceeds provide a new fund raising tool to support the Chapter's community outreach programs.

Colorado Wildscapes has also been expanded to the state web site so check out www.auduboncolorado.org for AAH wildscaping updates on Habitat Happenings, Wildlife Gardening and the Writer's Corner. Join us in creating your own wildscape so that we can sustain and nourish all the hummers as they migrate up and down the Front Range.

Food Coupon Raffle – Sept 27 Meeting

Our first ever Food Coupon Raffle will be held on September 27th at the Chapter Program Meeting. Purchase a \$5.00 raffle ticket and test your luck in winning a \$100 Safeway Food Card.



**FROGS AND SNAKES OF THE AMAZON BASIN.
HOW FAR FROM GREEN CAN A FROG GET?**

George Coffee (303-449-0082)

Thursday, Sept. 15, 7:00 PM. George Reynolds Branch Library community room. (BCNA Program of general interest)

How far from green can a frog get? From the trail, our tour group looked at the Amazon Leaf Frog with its bright orange-yellow ventral surface, posing this way and that; and at the several Poison Dart Frogs, rich with pattern and color, popping out from under the brown duff. There was little doubt that frogs could draw us to step back and shake our heads in surprise and pleasure. As to snakes there were surprises in the new forms. We saw the three species of boa, stolid and wrapped around tree limbs, Coral Snakes, and the stiffly posing Green Striped Vine Snake. New shapes, patterns, and habits were all a part of a trip last December searching out frogs and snakes in the Amazon Basin. The slides to be shown are a sampling of the extravagance we found.

Boulder County Audubon Society

— **Officers** —

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Linda Andes-Georges (303)772-3239
- Vice President
Steve Jones (303-494-2468)
- Secretary
Connie Holsinger
- Treasurer
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— **Other Board of Directors** —

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- Susie Mottashed, George Oetzel**
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— **Standing Committees** —

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- Programs
Steve Jones (303-494-2468)
- Hospitality
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- Field Trips
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- Education
Susie Mottashed (303)499-0984
- Membership
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- Newsletter
George Oetzel (303)543-3712
- Web Site
Amy Schlotthauer (303)402-0905
- Birdathon Coordinator
OPEN
- Christmas Bird Count Coordinator
Bill Schmoker (303)702-9589
- Wildlife Inventory
Alex and Gillian Brown (303)494-3042

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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 Nov. 2005 issue is **Sun, Oct 16**. Email address for submissions:

otw@boulderaudubon.org

Field Trips: September—November

BCAS field trips are also announced (and sometimes updated) on the BCNA-Audubon Nature-Net.

To subscribe, send a blank message to nature-net-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

Saturday, September 10: Join Steve Jones (stephen.jones@earthlink.net; 303-494-2468) for a leisurely 3-mile hike in lower Shadow Canyon to look for signs of fall, including migrating songbirds and raptors. Meet at 7 AM, South Mesa Trailhead, Eldorado Springs Dr. 2 miles west of State Highway 93. Return around 11.

Saturday, October 1, 6:30-10 AM: Tour the Allegra Collister Nature Preserve bird-banding station in Lykins Gulch. Come see what banding is all about or just observe fall migrants up close and personal. This special trip, led by Joe Harrison and Deanna Williams, is limited to 10 participants. Call Deanna (303-903-4155) to register. Bring snacks and water (no facilities are available).

Saturday, October 8, 8 AM-3 PM: A full day hiking, elk watching, and nature observation in and near Moraine Meadows. We will go at a slow pace looking at plants, animals, and birds. Participants should be in reasonable shape for hiking up to 800 feet elevation gain and about 5 or 6 hours on the trail. Call or email John T for details. j.electus@worldnet.att.net 303-926-8779

Sunday, October 9: Eastern Boulder County lakes and Sandstone Ranch, with Scott Severs. Join us for a tour of some eastern county lakes, followed by a visit to historic Sandstone Ranch east of Longmont. We'll be looking for waterfowl and late season migrant songbirds. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Niwot Park and Ride (Diagonal Highway and Niwot Road) to carpool. Return around 2. For info call Scott at 303-684-6430.

Saturday, November 19: Diana and Wayne Johnston (303-682-5662) will lead a driving tour of eastern Boulder County to spot wintering raptors, including bald eagles, golden eagles, ferruginous hawks, and prairie falcons. Meet at 9 a.m. at the Niwot Park and Ride (Diagonal Highway and Niwot Road). Bring lunch and plan to return around 3.

BIRDATHON 2005, THE BIG DAYS

This year's Birdathon included a span of days rather than a single day for counting, and several types of activity, instead of just a competitive count. Species counts this year for regular birding ranged from 72 to 135. The final team conducted a breeding-bird count. The typical reaction of first-timers was, "I didn't know that this could be so much fun!" A delightful sense of discovery, both of birds and of secret little corners of the County, was common.

Memorable experiences:

- Stearns Lake (Rock Creek Farm), 10:00: an earnest osprey, looking for breakfast; three kinds of swallows perched overhead for easy comparison; a big crowd (30) of yellow-headed blackbirds on the fence, all "retching" together (that's the sound they make).
- Gregory Canyon, 11:00: floating on the fragrance of plum blossoms, the melodies of canyon wrens and Virginia's warblers. Background of hummingbird whistles and the cries of swifts.
- Lyons (town & St Vrain Rd): a family of dippers, dancing together on a rock between plunges; three or four lazuli buntings, singing their "come-hithers" most charmingly while we ate our picnic.
- Big Miss at Betasso Preserve: Debra, the one who still hasn't seen a goshawk in the County, ducks into the bathroom. Cries of fellow team members from outside: Accipiter! A goshawk flies overhead and out of sight before the unlucky one emerges to view it.

The total raised this year was \$3,079, which is the lowest amount for several years.

Thanks to Randy Gietzen for his big organizational effort. Thanks also to Wild Birds Unlimited and the Wild Bird Center for contributing lovely prizes to the celebration party and thanks to these individual donors:

Matthew Applebaum, Beverly Baker, Kathy Beatty, Jamie Bolane, George and Elizabeth Bramhall, Curtis & Karen Brown, Brian Burns, Sean Burns, Violanda Burns, Janet Chu, Roger and Norma Cichorz, Susan Coffee, Jack Collom, Cathy Comstock, Norma Connors, Christopher Conway, Ann Cooper, Elen Crone, Carol & Glenn Cushman, David and Johnna Danner, Raymond and Nina Davis, Nancy Dawson, Peter & Joan Dawson, Holly Devaul, Martha Dick, Michael and Anne Fenerty, John Fitch, Joyce Gellhorn, Leonard Goldberg, Maddie Goldhawk, Gregg and Temar Goodrich, Paula Hansley, Gerald Hickman, David and Elaine Hill, Robert & Rolene Hinsberger, Richard Holmes, Connie Holsinger, Francesca Howell, Barbara Hume, Clyde Jolie-Ashe, Steve Jones, Barbara and Tom Kipp, Charles and Barbara Kipp, Joseph and Judy Kurtz, Sandra Laursen, Maureen Lawry, Dominica Lee, Holly Lewis, Sherri Marie, Richard Mendez, Leo and Judith Moir, Susie Mottashed, Bernard Newman, T. Nielsen, Kathleen and Michael Noe, Susan Norris, Margaret Oakes, George Oetzel, Madeline Oliverio, Laura Osborn, Christie Owens, Sandra Parker, Pam Piombino, Susan and Robert Root, Amy Schlotthauer, Bev Sears, Keith Sears, Randy Seibert, Louise Skyles, Helga and Jay Sproul, Linda Stonerock, Richard Stomp, Donna Sueper, Joyce Takamine, Tribble Stone, Christopher Walther, David Waltman, Curtis Williams, Larry and Ronalee Wilson.

Wild Birds Unlimited



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**Boutique Wine Tasting & Sparrow Pishing:
The Prairies and Potholes Birding Festival**

Steve Jones

Here Richard Holmes and I were, standing in the living room of an old Victorian in Carrington (population 2200), nibbling on aged cheeses and sipping from \$150 bottles of Napa Valley wine. Bird Watchers' Digest editor Bill Thompson and wildlife illustrator Julie Zickefoose were settled on the couch, belting out verses of "Truck Driving Man" and "Mamas Don't Let Your Babies Grow up to be Cowbirds." It was a perfect, if somewhat delirious wrapup to a long weekend of birding and socializing in the Missouri Coteau (glaciated hill) country of eastern North Dakota.

No one will ever complain of not having enough to do at the annual Prairies and Potholes Birding Festival. In addition to daily 7-hour and 9-hour field trips to places like Arrowwood and Chase Lake national wildlife refuges, the sponsors offered daily seminars, a banquet, a farm picnic and hoedown, and the wine tasting. By Sunday afternoon a sizable portion of the group had been felled by the dreaded "stomach flu," no doubt brought on by close proximity and all those 5 a.m. departures and late-night curtain calls. I succumbed a day later while camped out in a raging thunderstorm in the Little Missouri National Grassland.

For many of the participants, the "big birds" were a Henslow's Sparrow and a Burrowing Owl (both very rare in eastern North Dakota), but for two high plains drifters from Colorado, the grebes and grassland sparrows stole the show. At Horsehead Lake, Richard and other field trip participants saw all six species of nesting grebe, along with nesting Nelson's Sharp-tailed, Baird's, LeConte's, Clay-colored, Grasshopper, and Savannah sparrows. I led a short field trip at Chase, where we saw more than 10,000 nesting white pelicans and found eggs of Chestnut-collared Longspur and Grasshopper Sparrow. I loved hearing the buzzy songs of the Clay-colored Sparrows, the lilting notes of the Baird's Sparrows, and the rich cadenzas of the longspurs in the verdant prairies above the lake.

(next column)

(Boutique Wine Tasting, continued)

The cost for the four-day festival, including three field trips, three sack lunches, two dinners, numerous seminars, and the wine tasting (among other activities) was \$150. It's slated to go up slightly next year, but still has to be one of the best deals around. The bad news is that Carrington is 900 miles from Boulder. The other good news is that to get there, you have to drive through the Nebraska Sandhills, the South and North Dakota Badlands, or the Missouri River bluff country made famous by Lewis and Clark.

If you do go, don't sign up for all the field trips. They are bus affairs with 25 or more participants, and the pothole country is so interesting you'll want to get out and explore some on your own. Be prepared for wood ticks, flat topography, and soggy conditions. The festival is held the first weekend in June at rotating venues in and around Jamestown. For information, visit the "Birding Drives Dakota" web site: <http://www.birdingdrives.com/>.

AUDUBON COLORADO'S RENDEZVOUS 2005

October 14th - 16th 2005

Audubon Colorado will hold its second fall Rendezvous in October—an exciting statewide gathering for all Audubon members and their families. This will be an opportunity to interact with colleagues from all around the state and to share ideas about conservation, environmental education and other activities that you and/or your chapter are involved in. It will also be a great time to get outdoors together for birding and nature walks in the mountains and valleys near Buena Vista.

The planned program focuses on chapter-led workshops for chapter leadership and membership development, with opportunities for chapters and members to share ideas from their own experiences, including activities like adopting an IBA, conducting a birding class (with Hugh & Urling Kingery) and bioblitzes, and wildscaping workshops. A special highlight will be our keynote speaker on Saturday night: Tim Gallagher, author of *The Grail Bird: Hot on the Trail of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker*, Editor-in-chief of the *Living Bird Magazine* and director of publications at Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. Jessica Young from the Division of Wildlife will speak on the Gunnison Sage Grouse.

The setting for our Rendezvous is the historic Mt. Princeton Hot Springs Resort, centrally located near Buena Vista, in the shadow of the Collegiate Peaks. The magnificent surrounding landscapes include wilderness areas and a variety of habitats to explore for a diversity of birds, wildlife and scenery.

See www.auduboncolorado.org for more information and a registration form.

On the Wing—Online

Each issue of OTW is converted to PDF (Acrobat) format and placed on the Boulder Audubon website (www.boulderaudubon.org) as soon as it goes to the printer. You can see OTW online and in color about a week before it arrives in mailboxes.

You can sign up to read only the online edition, and save BCAS some postage. Send an email request to otw@boulderaudubon.org. If you'd like, we'll email you when the online edition is posted.

MONEY IS FOR THE BIRDS

This old cliché is the theme of the year for Boulder County Audubon. Our annual Birdathon was successful on several levels, but was not the shining fundraiser this year that it has been in the past. In order to continue to function (send out newsletters, support our speaker program, expand our school education program and other outreach, and advertise our field trips) we need a modest but steady cash flow. And if we have greater ambitions—AND WE DO!—we need more funds to achieve them.

This year we would like to have a more active outreach program, attending local festivals with our display board, our banner, our new brochure, and our Wildscapes book (locally authored and illustrated; now on sale statewide). Our Audubon Adventures school program could be expanded, with more classroom kits and perhaps even with binoculars for each teacher. The Audubon at Home backyard habitat program could include workshops and the establishment of a demonstration garden. And the Important Bird Areas program may very well include the wild heart of Boulder County (the Valmont/Sawhill/Walden area) and will need our energy and our support to increase its protection.

All of these dreams depend on you: on your personal membership in the local chapter, on your use of the grocery coupons to buy your daily bread, and on your participation in fundraisers like the Birdathon. If none of these is possible for you, can we count on you to do a small job to make the chapter "go?" See our wish list below for the options!

Thanks for your support, and keep it up.

BCAS WISHLIST

Ongoing chapter needs:

- people who are willing to help sell or deliver grocery coupons, or to make reminder calls;
- people who are willing to learn how to apply for a grant: we have the required information, but we need people to put it into the "packages" that different foundations require before they give out money;
- people who will sit at our booths at festivals and grocery store fundraising days; all that is required is that you be pleasant and welcoming, as informative as you can be about chapter activities, and that you invite folks to join;
- people who will follow a conservation issue for the chapter and speak up for "wild things and wild places." This can depend on your own interests and on current hot topics.

- people with a "scrapbook turn of mind" who can put together some display boards for us with photos and information, presentable for public displays.

Call Linda Andes-Georges, 303 772 3239, (or any other board member) to get more information about any of these interesting jobs.

BCAS Education Update

Susie Mottashed

This summer BCAS members Susie Mottashed and Deb Henson taught "Audubon Adventures: Sketching and Exploring Nature". This class was inspired by the nationally acclaimed Audubon Adventures curriculum. We had six young girls 8-12 years old participate in class. We spent two mornings at Chautauqua Park and two mornings at Viele Lake. Each day a new nature topic was explored. We studied birds and their nests, butterflies, bees and sketching techniques. Each child received their own blank nature journal and recorded their sketches and observations in it. A young doe stopped by for a visit while we were on the trail at Chautauqua Park. The songs of the towhees and chickadees serenaded us as well. We did sketches of the geese and young goslings at Viele Lake. Studying and sketching from life was a wonderful experience for both the students and teachers!

To date I have signed up 19 classrooms for Audubon Adventures for the 2005/2006 school year. The orders are still coming in.

Thank you again to everyone who helped with the grants. I feel especially grateful to Lauren Townsend's family for setting up her foundation. They generously granted to the BCAS the money we requested. I did not know Lauren, who lost her life at Columbine. However, I'll bet it would make her smile knowing that many youngsters are learning about birds and nature because of her family's generosity.



The Wild Bird Center of Boulder

On 28th Street, South of Canyon.

(303)442-1322

www.wildbird.com/bld

*"Your Backyard Birding
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BOULDER COUNTY WILDLIFE INVENTORY, APRIL - MAY 2005**Gillian and Alex Brown, 4560 Darley Avenue, Boulder, CO 80305.***Note: The Feb-Mar inventory will be included in an expanded online PDF On the Wing (www.boulderaudubon.org).*

April and May 2005 were far from typical spring months. It is well known that cool fronts and precipitation tend to bring in unusual birds. There were few such days in May, and birders struggled to find unusual migrants. The total number of warbler species was low (fifteen) and many birders commented on how few warblers they had seen. The most notable finds were a **Black-throated Green Warbler** (last seen in 2002), a **Black-throated Gray Warbler** that lingered at Doudy Draw, **Blackpoll Warbler**, **American Redstart** and **Ovenbird**. On the other hand, six species of **vireos** were seen: **White-eyed**, **Yellow-throated**, **Philadelphia** (last seen in 2002), **Plumbeous**, **Warbling** and several **Red-eyed**. A **Gray Flycatcher** was a species that had not been seen for a couple of years.

The most unusual sighting was a male **Painted Bunting** that frequented the feeder of a house in Erie. Fortunately, many birders were able to see this colorful visitor. This was a first record for the wildlife inventory. Another spectacular visitor was a **Scott's Oriole** that lingered for several days in a South Boulder neighborhood. This was a species last seen in Boulder County in 1995, and only the third record for the inventory. Birders from all over the state came to see this obliging bird. The third bird of note was only seen by one observer, but he saw thirty five of them! This was a flock of **Chestnut-collared Longspur**; only one bird had ever been recorded in the county previously in May 1996.

Shorebird migration was strong throughout April and in the early part of May. However, nothing highly unusual was reported. **Long-billed Curlew** were seen for the first time since 2003. Peeps were somewhat lacking. Duck sightings, and in particular diving ducks, were seen in low numbers or absent altogether. Two **Glossy Ibis** were seen at Union Reservoir; these were last reported to the inventory in 2003.

Several observers reported seeing **Broad-winged Hawks**. An Audubon Field trip to Mount Sanitas saw four such birds in two hours. It is hard to tell whether these birds are really becoming more common, or are just being better observed. **Bald Eagles** continue to be seen in fair numbers, and hopefully will continue their trend of breeding in the county. Numbers of **Osprey** seem to be on the increase each year.

Altogether 159 bird species were reported to the inventory in April, and 201 species in May. This is a very respectable total for April, but on the low side for May. For a complete list of sightings please go to www.boulderaudubon.org/inventory.html

CONTRIBUTORS TO THE APRIL & MAY INVENTORY

Linda Andes-Georges, Jamie Barringer, Karen Beeman, Alan Bell, Maggie Boswell, Andy Boyce, Alex & Gillian Brown, Cliff & Marlene Bruning, Carol Cushman, Raymond E. Davis, Joan Dawson, Christof Demont-Heinrich, Gene Ellis, Ted Floyd, Steve Frye, Peter Gent, Nancy Gobris, Jane Griffin, Paula Hansley, Jack Harlan, Ann Hicks, Steve Jones, Bill Kaempfer, Diana King, D.W. King, Joan Kleypas, Steve Larson, Tony Leukering, Dave Madonna, Gary Matthews, Gene and Lynn Monroe, Susie Mottashed, Sharon Norfleet, George and Marti Oetzel, Laura Osborn, Dee Patterson, Nathan Pieplow, Peter Plage, Suzi & Myron Plooster, Harry Price, Scott and Beth Schaum, Bill Schmoker, Scott Severs, Randy Siebert, Debra Sparn, Joyce Takamine, Pamela Tarral, Scott Taylor, Richard Trinkner, John Tumasonis, David J. Waltman, Jeff Weber, Larry Wilson, Eric Zorawowicz

**Gregory Canyon and Lower Ranger Canyon**

Steve Jones

Nearly 30 participants enjoyed the coolness of Boulder Mountain Park canyons on a warm July 9 morning. We saw a distant Golden Eagle; heard a wailing juvenile Cooper's Hawk; got quite close to McGillivray's Warblers, Black-headed Grosbeaks, and Gray Catbirds; and glimpsed a rare, but not identifiable, warbler in lower Gregory. Everyone enjoyed watching Myrtle, the friendly red fox, amble up the Flagstaff Trail.

However, the butterflies stole the show. We got dazzling looks at Two-tailed Swallowtail, Atlantis Fritillary, Aphrodite Fritillary, Weidemeyer's Admiral, and Hoary Comma (see list, below). We saw several dozen fritillaries and

lots of crescents and blues along the creek below Green Mountain Lodge.

Butterflies: Western Tiger Swallowtail, Two-tailed Swallowtail, Pale Tiger Swallowtail, Cabbage White, Sulfur species, Silvery Blue, Buckwheat Blue species, Aphrodite Fritillary, Atlantis Fritillary, Speyeria Fritillary species, Field Crescent, Northern Checkerspot, Hoary Comma, Painted Lady, Weidemeyer's Admiral, Common Ringlet, Common Alpine, Dark Skipper species, Duskywing Skipper species, Taxiles Skipper.

Participants: Cathy Comstock, Marty Dick, Eric Fontenot, Audrey Goodell, Scott Goodman, Lois Holle, Karen Hollweg, Josephine, Steve Jones, Helene Kent, Barb Masoner, Sara Michl, Trevor Muñoz, George and Marti Oetzel, Linda and Chris Paris, Lisa Penaloza, Iris Sherman, Rebekka Struik, Jerry Todd, Kirby and Mary Eve Williams, Bob Wing.

BOULDER COUNTY WILDLIFE INVENTORY, FEBRUARY - MARCH 2005

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

February is usually one of the slowest months of the year for birders. Not only is it a short month, but also it does not usually produce many rarities. February 2005 was a real exception to this norm. A record number of 112 bird species was seen; this is only the second time that numbers have topped one hundred for this month. By comparison March was lackluster with few reports. The rather poor total of 105 bird species missed such common species as **Cedar Waxwing, Cassin's Finch** and **Pine Siskin**. However, the only bird that had not been reported for over a year was a **Sage Sparrow** that was seen at Walden Ponds in March.

So what was so unusual about February? First the weather was very moderate with only one day that failed to go above freezing, and only small amounts of snow that melted very quickly. Secondly, this mild weather meant that birds which had been seen on the Christmas count were still around; in this category were **Turkey Vulture, Virginia Rail, White-winged Dove, Gray Catbird, Northern Mockingbird** and **Lesser Goldfinch**. Third there were signs of an early spring migration even by the end of February. Both **Eastern** and **Mountain Bluebirds** were seen both months. A **Common Poorwill** and an **Indigo Bunting** seen in March were both very early sightings. Last, but probably most importantly, coverage was excellent with few common species missed. Some of the less usual species included **Common Barn Owl** and **Long-eared Owl**.

Rosy Finches of all three types continued to be seen both months at the Fawnbrook Inn in Allenspark. By the end of March the number of these birds had dropped significantly. **Bohemian Waxwings** were also seen in huge flocks; at least one observer said that the numbers were the greatest that she had ever seen in Boulder County. There were also huge flocks of gulls present in the county. The majority were **Ring-billed Gulls**, with decent numbers of **California Gulls** among them. A few oddities such as **Thayer's Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull**, and **Great Black-backed Gull** rewarded the patient observer.

Eurasian Collared Dove arrived in the county in March, having been known to winter in Weld County. This is a bird that gives every sign of being here to stay. How it will impact our **Mourning Dove** population remains to be seen. Five species of dove were seen over the two months.

For the full listing of sighted species go to www.boulderaudubon.org/inventory.html.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THE FEBRUARY AND MARCH 2005 INVENTORY

Linda Andes-Georges, Jamie Barringer, Julie Bartlett, Alan Bell, Maggie Boswell, Andy Boyce, John Breitsch, Alex & Gillian Brown, Carol Cushman, Raymond E. Davis, Ted Floyd, Steve Frye, Peter Gent, Larry Griffin, Paula Hansley, Susan Harris, Ann Hicks, Steve Jones, D.W. King, Roger Linfield, Dave Madonna, Richard Mendez, Gene and Lynn Monroe, Jean Morgan, Betty Naughton, George and Marti Oetzel, Sue A. Olmsted, Chris Owens, Nathan Pieplow, Peter Plage, Suzi and Myron Plooster, Scott Roederer, Peter Ruprecht, Bill Schmoker, Scott Severs, Randy Siebert, Debra Sparr, Bob Spencer, Richard Stanley, Scott Taylor, John Tumasonis, David J. Waltman, Larry Wilson, Jeff Yegian.

This page does not appear in the print edition of On the Wing, which is constrained to an even number of pages.



Mountain Bluebird — © Bill Schmoker

Successful Walker Ranch Nestbox Season

Marti Oetzel

After a hiatus of a few years, BCAS organized and conducted nest box monitoring at Walker Ranch this year, in support of Boulder County Parks and Open Space (BCPOS).

Ten intrepid BCAS members monitored 48 next boxes weekly from mid-April through late July. We had the thrill of witnessing the entire nesting cycle, from birds near boxes, to nest starts and completed nests, the first eggs, hens bravely staying on nests when we checked boxes briefly, seeing sleeping, breathing hatchlings; seeing parents take food into the boxes, culminating in empty nests following fledging. Of course, not every story was so neat and orderly. We each found some dead nestlings, and unhatched or damaged eggs. By monitoring, we were able to correct some problems and make recommendations for improvements for next season.

| | |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Total boxes | 48 |
| Boxes with nests | 37 |
| Fledglings | |
| • Mountain Bluebirds | 100 |
| • Western Bluebirds | 28 |
| • Tree Swallows | 9 |
| • Mountain Chickadees | 5 |
| • House Wrens | 38 |
| | <hr/> |
| Total Fledglings | 180 |

Seeing the wildflowers that were blooming each week was part of the fun, as was seeing many birds in addition to those using the boxes. Other sightings of interest included a bobcat and a herd of about 100 elk.

To quote Gene Ellis speaking for all of us, "We enjoyed our monitoring duties. We bid our small feathered charges a fond farewell. May the wind be under their wings."

Thanks to dedicated monitors Eric Albright, Cathy Comstock, Nancy Consolloy, Gene Ellis, Shirley Kurc, George Oetzel, Laura Osborn, Fi Rust, and Joyce Takamine. Special thanks to Denny Morris with BCPOS who laid out and mapped the trails and supported us.

WHY GROCERY COUPONS?

This is the biggest fundraiser we are sure we can count on in the coming year. When you attend chapter programs, please bring your checkbook; visit the coupon/card table and stock up on these handy cash-equivalents to help us out.

You can use the cards (Safeway or Wild Oats) like a credit card, except that you'll never get a bill. You can spend the coupons (King Soopers, Liquormart) like dollars; they go (alas) just as fast. If you are spending as much as \$200 a person per month to eat, and you use this method of paying for your food, then Audubon will receive \$10 to \$20 *from you* without a cent coming out of your pocket. Multiply by 12: in a year you can contribute \$120 to \$240 at no cost to yourself. Your local chapter could flourish with these funds.

Please buy coupons. Call or mail order them as below.

ORDER GROCERY COUPONS BY MAIL

We have a new option for you to obtain grocery coupons, an important source of BCAS income. 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.

The mail method entails some risk: anyone who finds or steals the coupons (or a gift card) can "spend" them like cash. The risk is fairly low, but if you are ready to assume it, mail orders can be a easy way to keep in stock.

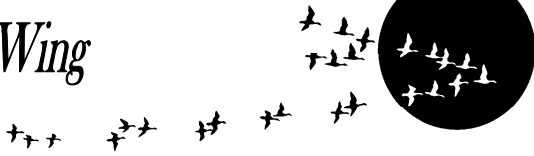
We are still happy to deliver your order to your door if you prefer. Call Linda Andes-Georges (303.772.3239) to make arrangements.

We encourage you to try using the plastic "gift cards." They are used exactly like credit cards—but simpler because you do not have to sign anything—and the cashier can always tell you how much money you have remaining on your card.

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| <p>GROCERY OR LIQUOR COUPON ORDER FORM</p> <p>Name: _____</p> <p>Address: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Telephone: _____</p> <p>King Sooper: # at \$10 ____ ;# at \$25 ____</p> <p>Safeway: at \$100 _____; Wild Oats: # at \$100 _____</p> <p>Liquormart: # at \$25 _____</p> <p>Make checks payable to Boulder County Audubon Society and mail to BCAS, POBox 2081, Boulder, CO 80306</p> |
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Boulder County Audubon Society

On The Wing



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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 in addition 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:
please call 1-800-274-4201 or
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