



# On The Wing

Volume 34, Number 2

Boulder County Audubon Society Newsletter

February 2004

## President's Message

For many of us, our backyards are a personal haven we can retreat to when we want to get away from it all. For wildlife, our backyards can be a haven they can retreat to as more and more of their habitat disappears. With the right tools and information, we can make our yards a healthier place to live for our families, communities, birds, plants and other wildlife.

With this in mind, Audubon has created the Audubon At Home program which promotes personal conservation action at the home level to improve the environmental health and habitat quality of our yards and neighborhoods. They've identified five simple actions that can make a world of difference.

**Reduce pesticide use.** Nearly 3/4 of all U.S. households use some type of pesticide or herbicide, often unnecessarily. There are alternatives to this, which include pulling weeds yourself or bringing in beneficial insects to control destructive insects.

**Conserve Water.** We in Colorado understand this only too well, having just experienced a drought where severe water restrictions were instituted. Xeriscape is a beautiful and successful alternative.

**Protect Water Quality.** Stormwater runoff is a leading cause of pollution of our nation's waterways and water bodies. Never pour anything harmful into gutters and storm drains.

**Remove Exotic Plants.** It is actually illegal in Colorado to plant some invasive exotic plants. Know what you're planting before you plant it and remove any invasive exotic plants you already have.

**Plant Native Species.** Planting native species in your yard both conserves water and provides natural habitat that is used by wildlife.

Audubon of Colorado is currently putting together a guide for Colorado residents based on the Audubon at Home principles which will explain gardening techniques that promote stewardship practices and help connect people with nature. One component will be the "local garden hero," which is a gardener who uses stewardship practices such as xeriscape principles, native plants, and little or no pesticides to create a habitat that nourishes and protects wildlife. More information on the guide will be passed on to you as it develops.

The Audubon at Home program is an easy way to turn environmental awareness into action. Together we can make our backyards a healthier and more inviting place to live for people and wildlife. For more information on the Audubon at Home program check out the National Audubon website at [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org).

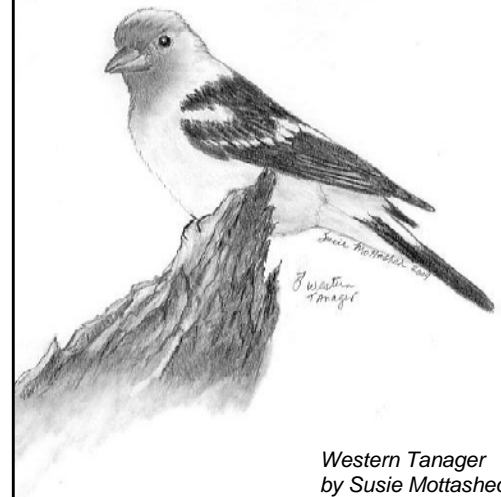
Sincerely, Barb Beall  
President

## BCAS 4th Tuesday Program Series

Feb. 24 - 7:30 PM

### Birds of the Ponderosa Forests - Heather Swanson

Heather is completing a 6-year doctoral study of the wildlife of our ponderosa forests with an emphasis on trail use, fragmentation and management policies



Western Tanager  
by Susie Mottashed

Mar. 23 - Rocky Mountain Storms, Soaring, and Avian Encounters - Phil Ecklund

April 27 - Rediscovering the North American Prairie - Steve Jones

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

## Forest Service Closes Areas in Boulder Canyon to Protect Wildlife

To protect nesting birds of prey, certain climbing areas on National Forest System lands in Boulder Canyon will be closed to all users beginning February 1. The areas commonly known as "Eagle Rock," "Blob Rock," "Bitty But-tress," and the "Security Risk Area" will be closed to climbing and other activities. These areas are located along State Highway 119 and within approximately one and one-half miles east of Boulder Falls.

Signs will be posted at key access points into the closed areas. Closures are effective through July 31. Volunteers and wildlife officers will monitor the areas, and closure status could change prior to July 31. For the most current closure information, check signs in the areas, or visit the Boulder Ranger District web site at <http://www.fs.fed.us/arnf/districts/brd/index.htm>



### BCNA Class: Owls of Boulder County

#### Instructor: Steve Jones

Nine owl species nest in Boulder County, ranging from the fist-sized flammulated to the ubiquitous great horned. We'll search for some of these owls and discuss their roles in Boulder County ecosystems. Field class destinations will include eastern Boulder County, Green Mountain or North St. Vrain Canyon, and Barr Lake State Park.

Thursday, April 15, 7-9 PM indoor class

Saturday field classes: April 17, 4-8:30 PM, June 5, 6-10:30 PM, June 26, 4-10 PM

**Tuition:** \$85 (\$75 for BCNA members); there is a \$5/car entrance fee at Barr Lake State Park.

Class limited to 12 participants



## We're Looking for:

### BCAS Heroes

BCAS currently has several board positions open, including:

Program Chair, Education Chair, and Board Member.

If you're interested in getting more involved and in making a difference in your community, call Barb Beall at 303-665-6044.

### Local Garden Heroes

*Do you know of a gardener who has created a magical space in their yard using the principles described on page 1, which is beloved by people and wildlife alike? Audubon of Colorado is looking for local garden heroes, especially seasoned gardeners, who can share their expertise. If you know of anyone who should be considered for local garden hero status, or if that person is you, please contact Barb Beall at 303-665-6044*

## Boulder County Audubon Society 2004

### Officers

President **Barbara Beall** (303)665-6044  
Recording Secretary **Beverly Baker** (303)666-1972  
Treasurer **Curtis Williams** (303)494-5071

### Standing Committees

Membership Chairs **Bob & Gail Turner** (303)499-2669  
Newsletter Editors **George & Marti Oetzel** (303)543-3712  
Conservation/Legislation Chair **Linda Tipton** (303)823-0926  
Programs **New chair needed**  
Field Trips **Wes Sears** (303)499-4751  
Education: **New chair needed**  
Bird-A-Thon Team Coordinator **Bill Kaempfer** (303)443-3175

### Board of Directors

**Linda Tipton** (303)823-0926  
**Bob Turner** (303)499-1579  
**Scott Severs** (303)541-0784  
**Tom Van Zandt (Emeritus)** (303)443-9418

*On The Wing* E-mail: [nature@birdhike.com](mailto:nature@birdhike.com)

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☺ New! ☺

Look for *On the Wing* in PDF format  
on: <http://www.boulderaudubon.org>

**BOULDER COUNTY WILDLIFE INVENTORY, OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 2003**

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

E-mail [gillianbro@yahoo.com](mailto:gillianbro@yahoo.com)

October and November 2003 were rather unusual fall months. October was unusually mild with many days reaching well into the 80Fs, a seeming continuation of summer. It was not until the 29<sup>th</sup> of October that there was an abrupt turn around to winter. This was the storm that so fortuitously put out the Overland Fire. November then remained cool. It seemed as if this sudden change might have also taken the birds by surprise as we had a large number of late migrant sightings. Reports of everyday birds were few, making the 102 bird species seen in October unusually low. The only year fewer species were reported was in 1995, when the total was only 99. Last year we had a record high for October of 149 bird species emphasizing the contrast. Bad misses included **Pied-billed Grebe**, **Great Blue Heron** and **Wilson's Snipe**. However, November was another story. Even though we only got a few reports including the common birds, there were reports of unusual sightings from all over the county bringing the total of bird species seen to a very respectable 113.

We will begin with the most unusual sightings. Two **McCown's Longspurs** seen at Lagerman Reservoir among a flock of at least 75 **Lapland Longspurs** were a first record for the county. The **Lapland Longspurs** were themselves most unusual; before February 2003 they had last been seen in the county in November and December of 1979. These are an irregular winter species, most commonly seen on the northeastern plains of Colorado (Andrews and Righter, 1992). The **McCown's Longspurs** breed in short grass prairie, but with a lack of suitable habitat their numbers have sharply decreased. Winter records are very rare; these birds may have been migrating.

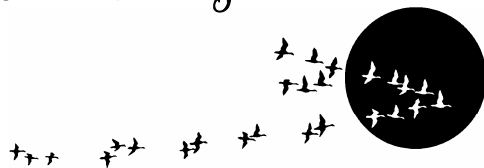
Lagerman Reservoir was definitely one of the best spots for unusual birds during both months. Several observers commented that it initially seemed very quiet there, but that the birds found all tended to be unusual. Late shorebird sightings at Lagerman included **American Avocet**, **Lesser Yellowlegs**, **Sanderling**, **Dunlin** and **Long-billed Dowitcher**. A **Short-billed Dowitcher** seen at Walden Ponds was a first sighting for the year. It should be noted that all these shorebirds except the **American Avocet** were seen within a six day period between 29 October and 3 November. **Thayer's Gull** and **Lesser Black-backed Gull** were both seen at Lagerman, as well as at other reservoirs in the county. A **Mew Gull** was seen at Union Reservoir, and **Bonaparte's Gulls** were seen in the county at two locations.

Many observers reported seeing both **Trumpeter** and **Tundra Swans** in November. It was hard to reckon exactly how many of these birds were present as they moved around. The first swan sightings were of five birds at Barker Reservoir near Nederland on November 25 and 26; these birds were thought to all be **Trumpeter Swans**. The next sighting was of seven swans at Boulder Reservoir on November 27; these were identified as four **Trumpeter Swans** (three adult and one immature) and three **Tundra Swans**. The **Tundra Swans** and two **Trumpeter Swans** were later seen at Lagerman Reservoir. There was also an unidentified swan sighting at Walden Ponds. **Tundra Swans** had not been reported to the inventory since 2001. Unusual geese were present too. **Greater White-fronted Geese** were reported both months. Two **Snow Geese** were reported in November as well as an unidentified flock of 150 white geese. Interestingly enough, there had been a report of a flock of 150 **Ross' Geese** at Barr Lake, east of Denver, a week previously. November also produced a selection of other less usual water birds. A **Pacific Loon** was seen on Baseline Reservoir and two **Red-necked Grebes** (last seen in 2000) on Valmont Reservoir. A **Long-tailed Duck** and two **Surf Scoters** were also new for the year. A **White-winged Scoter** and two **Barrow's Goldeneye** added to the unusual ducks. All these birds are possible winter sightings. However, a **Great Egret** at Walden Ponds between November 8 and 11 was definitely out of season.

**Yellow-billed Cuckoo** was seen by many observers at Walden Ponds in October. This species seems to be declining in numbers and was last seen in 1999. **Winter Wren** was new for the year. A **Magnolia Warbler**, as well as the more common **Townsend's Warbler**, was seen in October and a **Nashville Warbler** in November. Both **Lazuli Bunting** and **Indigo Bunting** were reported in late October. **Swamp Sparrows** and **White-throated Sparrows** were found both months. For those that went looking, birding seemed to be productive. The complete listings for each month are available on the Audubon website at [www.boulderaudubon.org/inventory.html](http://www.boulderaudubon.org/inventory.html).

**Work Cited:** Andrews, Robert and Righter, Robert. (1992). *Colorado Birds*. Denver: Denver Museum of Natural History.

*See next page for contributors.*



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**Program February 24**

7:30 PM

Heather Swanson  
Birds of the Ponderosa Forests

*Field Trips & Events*

*Feb-April 2004*

Feb. 21 - Saturday. "Wings over the Platte" with Fern Ford. Part of the Platte north of Denver stays open all year. An amazing number of ducks can be found up close and active. The colder the weather the more ducks. Meet at Scott Carpenter parking lot at 8:30 a.m. Back about 1:00. For information, call Fern at 303-449-0118.

Mar. 13 - Saturday. "Spring Welcoming Walk at Sawhill Ponds" with Steve Jones. Steve is organizing his annual breakfast hike at Sawhill Ponds. Bring something tropical, sunny, delicious, or passionate to share at a potluck breakfast by Boulder Creek. Meet at Sawhill Ponds Wildlife Area parking lot (west of 75th between Valmont and Jay Roads) at 7:00 AM. For more information, call Steve at 303-494-2468 or email [stephen.jones@earthlink.net](mailto:stephen.jones@earthlink.net)

Apr. 21 - Saturday. "Returning Wetland Birds" with Barb Beall. Barb, Boulder County Audubon Society President, is an excellent birder, and April is the prime month for wetland birds. Meet at Cottonwood Marsh parking lot at Walden Ponds which is off 75th St. near Jay Road at 7:30 AM. See you there. For more information, call Barb at 303-665-6044.



**CONTRIBUTORS TO THE OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER INVENTORIES**

Maggie Boswell, Alex & Gillian Brown, Carol Cushman, Gene Ellis, Libby Ellis, Dorothy Emerling, Ted Floyd, Steve Frye, Peter Gent, Brian Gibbons, Greg Goodrich, Paula Hansley, Jack Harlan, Ann Hicks, Steve Jones, Bill Kaempfer, Ellen Klaver, Steve Kennedy, Linda Mahoney, Bill Miller, Gene & Lynn Monroe, Nathan Pieplow, Peter Plage, Suzi and Myron Plooster, Bill Prather, Jeff Price, Joan Redman, Joe Roller, Ira Sanders, Bill Schmoker, Scott Severs, Randy Siebert, Debra Sparn, Andrew Spencer, Bob Spencer, Joyce Takamine, John Vanderpoel, David J. Waltman, Chris Wood, Eric Zorawowicz.