



On The Wing

Volume 41, Number 1

Boulder County Audubon Society Newsletter

Jan-Feb 2011

BCAS 4th Tuesday Program Series

January 25, 7:30 p.m.

February 22, 7:30 p.m.

History of the Boulder Christmas Bird Count

Bill Schmoker

When Norman Betts sallied forth alone on Boulder's first Christmas bird count on a December morning in 1909, he saw only 12 species, including no Canada Geese and only four mallards. Join Boulder CBC compiler Bill Schmoker for a look back at the history of the count. The count has grown to be one of the largest in terms of participation in the world, 18th in North America in 2009. Count dates are announced far in advance, so counts have been held under a wide variety of conditions—from dry and balmy 50 deg to subzero and lots of snow. Expect some interesting stories and learn about some of the impacts of urbanization and global warming.

In addition to compiling the Boulder CBC, Bill is a busy bird photographer, author, trip leader, and speaker and a member of Nikon's Birding ProStaff. He also teaches middle school science in Boulder and was proud to be selected as a PolarTREC teacher on board an Ice-breaker-based Arctic Ocean oceanographic research cruise last summer.



CBC team at Valmont Reservoir — Bill Schmoker



Giant Pandas: Born Survivors

Sarah Bexell

Giant pandas are many things to many people: a living toy, an evolutionary cul-de-sac, a political pawn, a universal symbol of love. As the poster animal of the World-wide Fund for Nature, the panda represents the ongoing battle to save the world's threatened species, the habitats they rely on, and Earth as we know it.

Bexell will take us behind the adorable, black and white exterior to explode the myths that plague panda conservation professionals. As we learn more about these dignified, wild animals, their behavior, and their struggle for survival in the modern world, we will be challenged to look beyond what is cute and examine our own responsibilities concerning the existence of vulnerable species.

Sarah Bexell is the Director of Conservation Education at the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding, Sichuan Province, China. She is also a research scholar in the Institute for Human-Animal Connection at the University of Denver. She has been working in endangered species conservation and research for 18 years.



Just munchin' in a tree – Sarah Bexell

Socializing: 7 p.m., Program: 7:30
Unitarian Universalist Church of Boulder, 5001
Pennsylvania Ave. (west off 55th St. between
Arapahoe and Baseline)
(No refreshments, new church carpet)

Field Trips

Saturday, January 22—Winter Waterbirds: Meet leaders Dave Madonna (plant manager) and Mark Ponsor (m.ponsor@comcast.net) at Valmont Power Plant main (west) parking lot on 63rd Street north of Arapahoe, 8:00am. We will be done by around noon. Join us for a unique opportunity to tour Valmont Reservoir. Many species of waterfowl, gulls, and grebes find the cooling ponds at the plant a balmy place to spend the winter. We'll also look for eagles, owls, and other birds of prey drawn in by the masses of birds.

Saturday, February 19—Winter Raptors Tour in Weld County led by Mark Ponsor. We'll be joined by Gary Lefko ("The Nunn Guy") and look for raptors harder to see in Boulder County: ferruginous hawk, merlin, rough-legged hawk, prairie falcon, etc. Leave 7:00am returning around 3pm. Bring lunch. Email or call for meeting location. m.ponsor@comcast.net or leave a message at 303-530-2229.

Saturday, March 12—Spring Welcoming Hike at Sawhill Ponds, 7:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.: Join leader Steve Jones for the annual spring welcoming breakfast hike. Bring something sweet, exotic, passionate, or healthy to pass around at a potluck breakfast back by the creek. Meet at Sawhill Ponds main parking area, west of 75th St between Valmont and Jay Roads.

Special Program Wed, March 9, 6:30 p.m.

REI Community Meeting Room,
28th St. between Canyon and Walnut.

Lynn Wickersham, "Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas II Results"

Several dozen Boulder County birders have participated in this ambitious project, which is a 20-year follow-up of the first statewide breeding bird atlas completed west of the Mississippi River. Lynn will update us on trends revealed so far, including new species breeding in Colorado and birds of special concern.

Lynn Wickersham has 15 years of experience as an avian ecologist and is the statewide coordinator for the Second Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas. Prior to taking on the Atlas, Lynn worked for 5 years as an environmental consultant at Ecosphere Environmental Services (Durango, CO) and one year as the Songbird Monitoring Coordinator for Hawks Aloft, Inc. (Albuquerque, NM). In addition to COBBA II, Lynn is also co-owner (with her husband) and senior avian ecologist for Animas Biological Studies, a small business conducting wildlife research and monitoring projects in Colorado and New Mexico.

Grocery Certificates

Certificates are available at the monthly meetings. BCAS receives a 5% donation from the sale of King Soopers certificates and 10% from sale of Liquormart certificates. Bring your checkbook to the meeting. Denominations:

King Soopers, \$100; Liquormart, \$25

Boulder County Audubon Society

— Officers —

President

Petrea Mah (303)494-4121

Vice President

Steve Jones (303)494-2468

Secretary

Joan Dawson (303)494-8252

Treasurer

Chris Abrahamson (303)565-9742

— Other Board of Directors —

Linda Andes-Georges, Mary Balzer

Ray Bridge, Sharon Daugherty

Maddy Goldhawk, J.D. Birchmeier

Nancy Neupert, George Oetzel

— Standing Committees —

Conservation/Legislation

Linda Andes-Georges (303)772-3239

Programs

Steve Jones, Petrea Mah

Hospitality

Neal & Elain Thielen

Field Trips

Andrew Cowell (303)543-7504

Sue & Mark Ponsor

(s.ponsor @ comcast.net)

Scott Severs (303)684-6430

Education

Maureen Lawry (303)499-3833

Mary Balzer (303)499-0662

Publicity

J.D. Birchmeier (303)748-1894

Bluebird Trail Coordinator

Marti Oetzel (303)543-3712

Membership

Carol McCasland (303)635-6433

Newsletter

George Oetzel (303)543-3712

Web Site

Amy Schlotthauer (303)402-0905

Audubon of Colorado Liaison

Bob Turner (303)499-2669

Christmas Bird Count Coordinator

Bill Schmoker (303)702-9589

Wildlife Inventory

Alex and Gillian Brown (303)494-3042

On the Wing © 2010 Boulder County Audubon Society

Next issue deadline: (Mar 2011 issue) Feb 13.

Contact editor via link at: www.boulderaudubon.org/newsletter.htm

2010: Globally Warmest Year Ever

A report recently released by the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York City shows that 2010 was the warmest in NASA's 130-year record. Also, in spite of frigid temperatures in some areas of Europe, the warmest November ever recorded was in 2010, about 1.7 °F above the average for 1951-1980. A major influence on the global average was ice-free Hudson Bay, where temperatures were 18 °F above normal for the month. Water devoid of ice absorbs much more solar radiation than water covered with ice, which reflects much of the radiation back toward space.

Estimating global temperature change since 1880 is a complicated process that has been refined through a number of studies since the late 1970s. For the early period, researchers determined that the number of Southern Hemisphere stations was sufficient for a meaningful estimate of global temperature change, because temperature anomalies and trends are highly correlated over substantial geographical distances.

As there are other potential sources of error, such as urban warming near meteorological stations, etc., many other methods have been used to verify the approximate magnitude of inferred global warming. These methods include inference of surface temperature change from vertical temperature profiles in the ground (bore holes) at many sites around the world, rate of glacier retreat at many locations, and studies by several groups of the effect of urban and other local human influences on the global temperature record. All of these yield consistent estimates of the approximate magnitude of global warming. Still further affirmation of the reality of the warming is its spatial distribution, which shows largest values at locations remote from any local human influence, with a global pattern consistent with that expected for response to global climate forcing factors (larger in the Northern Hemisphere than the Southern Hemisphere, larger at high latitudes than low latitudes, larger over land than over ocean).

The adjacent graph was made from a large data table downloaded from GISS. Temperatures have been converted from Celsius in the references to Fahrenheit for this article.

<http://data.giss.nasa.gov/gistemp/> includes an article in HTML and links to download the 29-page report in PDF format and the data table. Publication reference:

Hansen, J., R. Ruedy, Mki. Sato, and K. Lo, 2010: Global surface temperature change. *Rev. Geophys.*, **48**, RG4004, doi:10.1029/2010RG000345.

**Boulder Audubon
On Facebook**



Boulder County Nature Association Winter-Spring Field Classes

For complete class descriptions and information about scholarships, [download the PDF schedule](#).

Joyce Gellhorn, "Ptarmigan." Learn about these elusive "ghosts of the tundra" and track them on Niwot Ridge and Guanella Pass.

Thursday, February 24, 7-9 p.m.; Saturday, February 26, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. \$80. Contact Joyce at 303-442-8123 (jggellhorn@mac.com).

Joyce Gellhorn, "Wildflower Identification, Part I." Enjoy some of Boulder County's most colorful wildflowers as you learn how to key them out.

Wednesday, April 13, 6:30-9:30 p.m.; Wednesday, April 20, 6:30-9:30 p.m.; Saturday, April 23, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. \$90. Contact Joyce at 303-442-8123 (jggellhorn@mac.com).

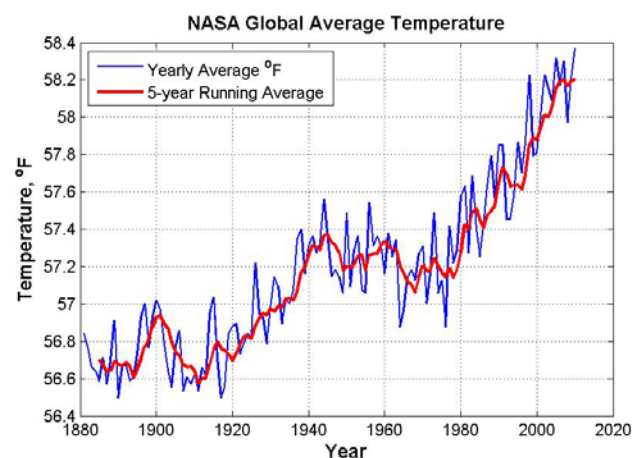
Steve Jones, "Owls". Observe nesting great horned, barn, and burrowing owls; and search for calling flammulated owls by moonlight in a remote foothills canyon.

Thursday, April 14, 7-9 p.m.; Sunday, April 17, 4-9 p.m.; Sunday, June 12, 6-11 p.m.; Sunday, June 26, 4-9 p.m. \$110. Contact Steve at 303-494-2468 (curlwsj@comcast.net).

David Buckner, "The World of Grasses." Learn to identify grasses through practical observation in the field and by studying their exquisite flowering parts.

Thursday, May 5, 7-9 p.m.; Saturday, May 7, 8 a.m. to noon; Saturday, June 11, 8 a.m. to noon. \$80. Contact Dave at 303-499-4277 (buckner6fam@gmail.com).

May-June classes will include "**Mysterious Lichens**," with Ann Henson; "**Watching Warblers**," with Christian Nunes; and "**Bird Song**," with Steve Jones.



From data in <http://data.giss.nasa.gov/gistemp/tabledata/GLB.Ts+dSST.txt>

BOULDER COUNTY WILDLIFE INVENTORY, MARCH AND APRIL 2010**Gillian and Alex Brown, 4560 Darley Avenue, Boulder, CO 80305.**

March 2010 was a poorly reported month with nothing unusual bringing birders out into the field. The most exciting report was of a **Northern River Otter** in Peaceful Valley. This is only the third report of this mammal to the wildlife inventory with the first report in 1990 and the second in 2000. There were many new spring arrivals. **Cinnamon Teal** was almost a month later than recent years with a first sighting on March 28th. **American White Pelican** was early with a bird seen at Union Reservoir on March 17th. Two **Greater Scaup** at Walden Ponds were a nice addition for the year. **Turkey Vulture, Osprey** and **Peregrine Falcon** were all reported in March. One flyover of **Sandhill Cranes** was observed. The first **Franklin's Gull** had returned. **White-winged Doves** again appear to be settling into the Gunbarrel neighborhood. By the end of March both **Common Grackle** and **Great-tailed Grackle** had been reported. Four **Harris' Sparrows** were reported in Lafayette. Altogether 87 bird species were reported in March reflecting a lackluster month.

Shorebird migration seemed late this year, having barely begun in March with just a couple of **Killdeer** and three **American Avocet** reported. Most of our smaller shorebirds did not arrive until the last few days of April when all four of our common "peeps", **Semipalmated, Western, Least** and **Baird's Sandpipers**, were reported as well as **Black-bellied Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Spotted Sandpiper, Willet** and **Marbled Godwit**. **American Avocets** were seen throughout April and a **Black-necked Stilt** was seen on the 17th. Both **Greater** and **Lesser Yellowlegs** were first reported on April 4th. A **Glossy Ibis** was reported at Union Reservoir among a group of **White-faced Ibis**. **Great Egrets** had returned to the county by the middle of April, and the first **Green Heron** of the year was reported at Walden Ponds on the 17th.

The only warblers to be reported in April were **Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler** and **Wilson's Warbler**. An **Eastern Phoebe** was an unusual sighting, as were **McCown's Longspur** and **Sage Sparrow**. A **Black-chinned Hummingbird** was seen on the 27th, the first sighting of this species that we have had in April. The **Cinnamon X Blue-winged Teal** returned to Walden Ponds; this bird was first seen in 2002. At least three **Broad-winged Hawks** were reported at the end of April. Altogether 144 bird species were reported in April. This is slightly below average, and a long way below the record 179 species seen in April 2008. Surprisingly, although there were some rarities, there were no birds that had not been reported in 2009.

March 2010 was the first month of entering and compiling the wildlife inventory as an electronic database. In order to do this, some adjustments have had to be made. Data will be split between the past paper records, and the new data in electronic form. Until at least a year's data has been entered, such information as first arrival dates must be checked manually. Noticeable changes to the inventory are that the monthly summaries are now given in spreadsheet form, and that some area numbers (those that were formerly designated with a letter such as Union Reservoir) have been altered. Union Reservoir is now designated Area 50 rather than U. If you are wondering why Union Reservoir in Weld County should be part of the Boulder County Wildlife Inventory, let me just say that ever since the wildlife inventory began in 1979 we have recorded birds seen at Union, and we have decided to continue doing so. Please bear with us as we play catch up with the existing backlog, and work out any glitches in the new system. Help us by submitting future data electronically in the required format. The forms should be available shortly on a Boulder County Audubon Web page. We expect this new system to benefit all of us.

**CONTRIBUTORS TO THE
MARCH AND APRIL 2010 INVENTORY**

David Alcock, Linda Andes-Georges, Gary Baxley, J D Birchmeier, Mike Blatchley, Ron Bolton, Julia Bond, Steve Bouricius, Alex & Gillian Brown, Mark Chavez, Carol Cushman, Todd Deininger, Ted Floyd, Lonny Frye, Steve Frye, Martin Gerra, Paula Hansley, Steve Jones, Tina Jones, Bill Kaempfer, Joanie Kleypas, Cindy L, James Lamoureux, Gene and Lynn Monroe, Kayleen Niyo, Sharon Norfleet, Christian Nunes, Laura Osborn, Nathan Pieplow, Bill and Inez Prather, Scott Severs, Bob Spencer, Joel Such, Walter Szeliga, Oakleigh Thorne, Knut Waagan, David J Waltman, Don Wells, Tom Wilberding, Tony Wilk, Wild Bird Center.



"Jing Jing Smile" – Sarah Bexell

Many thanks to our supporting members. [\[Click for online renewal or new membership\]](#)

BOULDER COUNTY WILDLIFE INVENTORY, MAY AND JUNE 2010**Gillian and Alex Brown, 4560 Darley Avenue, Boulder, CO 80305.**

May is the peak time of spring migration and is probably the most exciting month for birders in Boulder County, a fact reflected by the large number of reports. This year a new species for the wildlife inventory was reported: **Acorn Woodpecker**. This bird was seen in Niwot for a couple of days. The total number of 216 bird species reported does not reflect how outstanding May 2010 was with its high number of unusual species. It was the lack of reporting of more common species such as **Clark's Nutcracker**, **American Dipper**, **Brewer's Blackbird** and **Pine Grosbeak** that lowered the total.

May 2010 saw a strong shorebird migration which lasted well into the month. A cool wet spring meant that many of our traditional shorebird sites had no shore. Clover Valley Basin Reservoir had been drained, and was one of the few places with excellent shorebird habitat causing the birds to be unusually concentrated there. We received reports daily (and sometimes more than one per day) which gave a great record of the continual turnover of birds. There were several rarities. A **Piping Plover** was reported for the first time since 1979; this is only the second report of this species for the wildlife inventory. An **American Golden Plover** was reported here, a first report for Boulder County as the previous two reports in 1993 and 1994 were both at Union Reservoir. Other unusual species included **Whimbrel**, **Long-billed Curlew**, **Sanderling**, **White-rumped Sandpiper**, **Pectoral Sandpiper** and **Stilt Sandpiper**. It is also worth noting that both **Black-bellied** and **Semipalmated Plovers** appeared in greater numbers than the more normal **Killdeer**.

Every year there seems to be a different "hotspot" for migratory species and this year it undoubtedly was Twin Lakes in Gunbarrel. Again we received many reports from this one area, possibly to the detriment of finding other unusual species. Certainly, those who ventured elsewhere were also finding many migrants. Twin Lakes seemed particularly good for flycatchers with a **Black Phoebe**, two **Least Flycatchers** and a **Gray Flycatcher** being reported there. Other unusual flycatchers included **Ash-throated Flycatcher** and **Cassin's Kingbird**. The most unusual warbler was a **Connecticut Warbler** seen in North Boulder; this is only the second report of this species for the wildlife inventory and was last reported in 1979. Other notable warblers included two **Northern Parula**, at least nine **Black-poll Warblers**, a **Townsend's Warbler** (unusual in spring), an **Ovenbird** and a **Worm-eating Warbler**. At least three separate **Carolina Wrens** were reported. Both **Hepatic Tanager** (the third record for the wildlife inventory and last seen in 1993) and **Summer Tanager** were reported but birders failed to find a **Scarlet Tanager**, a species which summered in Gregory Canyon for the last few years.

Other unusual species seen in May were a **Least Bittern** and two **Little Blue Herons** seen at Walden Ponds, a **Red-headed Woodpecker** and a **Veery** both seen in the Twin Lakes area, a **Bell's Vireo** in Gregory Canyon and a **Gray-cheeked Thrush** seen in Longmont.

June always seems a bit of a let-down after May, and many birders seem ready to take a break. This year was no exception. Several observers complained about mosquitoes in June making birding unattractive. However, there were good birds to be found for those who looked. Two **Carolina Wrens** continued in Boulder from May. **Black-chinned Hummingbird** is likely to be breeding in the plains, but that still needs to be confirmed. **Eastern Bluebirds** were found to be nesting; this is one of our most marginal breeding birds. **Ash-throated Flycatcher** was an unusual sighting in the mountains. **Cassin's Sparrow** and **Dickcissel** are both grassland birds that seem to be on the increase. **Orchard Orioles** were seen in two locations with a family of five seen at White Rocks. A single **Black Swift** was seen in its traditional breeding habitat in Wild Basin. A **Philadelphia Vireo** was an unusual species last seen in 2008. Altogether 145 species were reported in June with many commoner species missed.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THE MAY AND JUNE 2010 INVENTORY

Bob Andrews, Linda Andes-Georges, Gary Baxley, Alan Bell, J D Birchmeier, Jeff Birek, Mike Blatchley, Bloom, Alex & Gillian Brown, John Cobb, Raymond E Davis, Todd Deininger, John Dillon, Ted Floyd, Fern Ford, Lonny Frye, Steve Frye, Bryan Guarente, Anne Guthrie, Paula Hansley, Thomas Heinrich, Rolf Hertenstein, Ann Hicks, Steve Jones, Bill Kaempfer, Ben Kemena, Elena Klaver, Joanie Kleypas, Chishun Kwong, Joanna Kwong, Cindy L, James Lamoureux, Lark Latch, Steve Larson, Sandra Laursen, Tony Leukering, Eliot Miller, Mark Miller, Gene and Lynn Monroe, Sharon Norfleet, Christian Nunes, Jessica Oberbeck, George Oetzel, Sue A Olmsted, Laura Osborn, Beth Partin, Bryan Patrick, Nathan Pieplow, Peter Plage, Suzi Plooster, Sue Riffe, Peter Ruprecht, Bill and Inez Prather, Ira Sanders, Bill Schmoker, Scott Severs, Randy Siebert, Debra Sparn, Bob Spencer, Cara Stiles, Joel Such, Walter Szeliga, Joyce Takamine, Richard Trinkner, John Tumasonis, Sarah Wagner, Emily Walker, David J Waltman, Don Wells, Tom Wilberding, Wild Bird Center, Bob Zilly, Dan Zmolek.

Book Reviews: Eternal Gifts and Precious Connections Revealed through Birds

Gilfillan, Merrill. 2010. *The Warbler Road*. Flood Press, Chicago. 169 pages. \$15.95.

Boulder County Audubon's most celebrated nature writer (PEN-Martha Award for *Magpie Rising* and Western Book Award for *Chokecherry Places*) spent six years composing these "alfresco" essays about warblers and warbler destinations. As in his previous collections, each essay is a poetic meditation on the natural and cultural threads that bind a small piece of the landscape into an exquisite whole.

Gilfillan characterizes his state of mind when venturing out to look for warblers as similar to that of "the fly fisherman in Yeats's poem...We are both out to discover and authenticate the morning, to break the glaze of habitude and mark, for an hour or so, the weave and fine points of the season and its day-in-place."

Along a quiet byway in western Virginia known to birders as "The Warbler Road," Gilfillan's descriptions of a dozen colorful warbler species flitting through the foliage awaken us to the textures of the eastern deciduous forest, from Blue Ridge to Piedmont Valley. "The lacy oak blossoms shone bright, and the enormous wealth and latency of the southern Appalachians rose up, the soft greens, creams, light plum, and russets of buoyant new foliage and flower."

While searching for warblers along an industrial stretch of the South Platte River in Denver, Gilfillan spies three "river people" huddled around his car in the same parking spot where he'd lost his hubcaps a couple of years before. When he confronts them, a young Choctaw man notes, "You've got sage in your car...and a flicker feather." What follows is one of the most poignant descriptions of post-modern intercultural connection ever put to paper.

In the final chapter Gilfillan spends several mornings watching warblers and trogons along Cave Creek, in Arizona's Chiricahua Mountains. Seeing the same neotropical migrants return to the same trees day after day, he realizes this jewel of a canyon is as precious to the birds as it appears to him, and he imagines their crossing miles of deserts and mountain ranges to alight in this favored spot.

"So the warblers, and perhaps the trogon and the blue-throated hummer, find the Chiricahuas, choose them, year after year out of what might be called affectionate knowledge. The hermits and their allies pick out the range and its promise of greenery and cool liquids as a commendable place clearly recollected, and follow its convenient crescent-bend off toward Oregon when they are ready."

As I savored these essays, I longed to experience the Chiricahuas and their elegant trogons, walk the "Warbler Road" on a frosty May morning, or perch on a lonely plank bridge straddling the Calamus in June--to visit each of these quiet places and immerse myself in the hum of spring life accented by warbler song and spirit.

Foster, Mike F. 2010. *The Ties That Bind: Birds, Nature, and Us*. AuthorHouse, Bloomington IN. 152 pages. \$13.99

Denver Audubon's Mike Foster admits that he didn't fully understand his place and responsibilities in the natural world until he started seriously observing birds. He describes a unique encounter with two broad-tailed hummingbirds in a remote canyon in western Colorado, when the hummers hovered within inches of his face, gazing into his eyes and at each other:

"I believe those hummers were reminding me that all life is connected, and that all life intuitively knows it is connected. That essential insight has been with me ever since I watched hummingbirds nest from my perch atop a toilet seat, and conversed with robins from the branches of an apple tree. I didn't know where I belonged then, but I sensed that birds might be my mentors. After following them a while, I learned that birds conjoin in a ring of life and that I belonged to a human fellowship with ties to that ring."

Using his love of birds and his seasonal hikes up South Table Mountain as jumping off points, Foster leads us on an engaging and carefully researched exploration of such topics as energy conservation, climate change, voodoo economics, and social responsibility. He demonstrates how our thoughtful actions as stewards of a sacred Earth can heal us internally and socially:

"To save birds and to preserve the planet we must first heal ourselves, because as intolerance and selfishness demonstrate every day, humanity is in trouble with itself. We can begin to save ourselves by realizing that our fate is inextricably linked to that of the natural world. We can begin to heal our natural environment by relearning cooperation, mutual respect, and generosity of spirit--virtues which will reinforce our intimate and infinite ties to Mother Nature."

In this sense the "ties that bind" become a network for healing. And this collection of sometimes rambling but compelling essays becomes a useful roadmap for engaging with the natural world and addressing the myriad problems that threaten its survival and ours.

- Steve Jones

Fuels Reduction: Cutting Old-Growth Stands on Taylor Mountain

Since the middle of November 2010, the U.S. Forest Service has been implementing a Fuels Reduction Project on the Taylor Mountain Unit near Allenspark, CO, as part of the St. Vrain Fuel Reduction Project, Boulder Ranger District, Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests. The stated purposes of this project are to protect old-growth forests and reduce wildfire hazard.

According to a Forest Service report* on old-growth ponderosa pines, "*Old trees were historically a major component of montane forests in the Colorado Front Range. They were an integral part of the ecosystem. Now they are relatively scarce.*" The Forest Plan states that ponderosa pine represents less than one percent of the old-growth forests found on the ARNF. Old-growth ponderosa pine forests are valued for their biological diversity and provide key habitat for many species of wildlife, including Abert's squirrels, Pygmy Nuthatches, Northern Goshawks, Red Crossbills, Western Bluebirds, Williamson's Sapsuckers, and others.

The rarity and biodiversity of these forests speak to the necessity of managing them with the utmost care. Indeed, the ARNF Forest Plan has a goal of increasing the acreage of old-growth and late successional forest areas through its forest management efforts. The Environmental Assessment for the St. Vrain Fuel Reduction Project states that "Treatments would be designed to maintain or develop old growth characteristics and help to ensure the presence of these stands into the future."

In apparent contradiction of the Environmental Assessment and other planning documents, a large percentage of the largest trees in the old-growth and developing old-growth ponderosa pine stands on the Taylor Mountain Unit have been cut. As a result old-growth and mature forest stands have been diminished or eliminated.

Steve Jones sat in on an afternoon meeting Dec 17 that was primarily between District Ranger Christine Walsh of the Forest Service and a half dozen Allenspark-area residents, concerning the cutting of dozens of old trees on Taylor Mountain during a recent "fuels reduction" maneuver. Here are his comments on that meeting:

1. Forest Service representatives say they are satisfied with the results of the Taylor Mountain fuels reduction project. The cutting down of some (we would say "many") large trees is consistent with their goals of reducing fuels, especially those contributing to crown fires, and reducing the risk of pine beetle infestation.

2. It's true that the Task Orders given to the private company doing the thinning didn't match all the specifics in the Environmental Assessment, but the Forest Service doesn't feel bound to follow all the specifics so long as they achieve the main target of reducing forest density

by about 40%.

3. There's clearly been a change in policy, brought on by fear of catastrophic fires and beetle infestations. A main goal of forest thinning projects now seems to be to reduce the threat of canopy fire, and one good way to do this is to remove large trees.

In a much more conciliatory December 22 letter to Boulder County Audubon and other interested parties, District Ranger Christine Walsh said she shared our concerns over possible inconsistencies between the original plan and the task orders given to the forestry contractors. She promised to initiate an interagency study to look at the task orders and see where they may have strayed from the intended goals of the forest thinning project.

Article text from contributions by
Dianne Andrews and Steve Jones

*Huckaby, L. S., et al. 2003. **Field guide to old ponderosa pines in the Colorado Front Range.** Gen. Tech. Rep. RMRS-GTR-109. Fort Collins, CO: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station. 43 p.
(http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs_gtr109.html)



One large tree cut during the Fuels Reduction Project on the Taylor Mountain Unit. – Photo by Tom Andrews

CBC Record: 114 Species

Bill Schmoker

Final total for count day, including late submissions, is 114 species. This is a new record for the Boulder Count, and our first time to break 110.

Birds seen on just 2 or fewer previous counts:

Bonaparte's Gull, Palm Warbler, Mandarin Duck*, Red-necked Grebe, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Black Scoter, White-winged Dove (count-week only previously), & Pacific Wren (new to count after AOU split.)

Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act Expiring

The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA) — a major source of bird conservation funding — apparently will expire at the end of 2010. Without reauthorization, the well-being of many migrant songbirds could fall victim to federal spending cuts.

According to Law, NMBCA is the only federal U.S. grants program specifically dedicated to the conservation of migrant birds that is available throughout the Americas.

The NMBCA grant program has been a catalyst for bird conservation and partnership development throughout the Western Hemisphere, actively promoting the long-term conservation of neotropical migratory birds and their habitats.

Since 2002, NMBCA partnerships have received more than \$35 million in grant funds to support 333 projects. Partners have brought in another \$150 million in matching funds, a partner-to-grant dollar match of more than 4:1. To date, about two million acres of migratory bird habitat have been positively affected.

NMBCA projects focus on priority areas and threats to neotropical migratory birds, funding activities that will protect habitat and energize local conservation initiatives. For example, the conversion of grassland habitat to agriculture is a major reason the number of grassland birds such as the Long-billed Curlew, is rapidly declining. Consequently, the conservation of this important ecosystem throughout the hemisphere is a high priority for the NMBCA grant program, which has supported two large scale conservation efforts aimed at conserving grassland habitats.

Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD) spearheaded an effort to include reauthorization in an omnibus package of wildlife, lands, and water bills. However, the bill did not have the necessary 60 votes to pass before the end of the 2010 session of congress.



Flight speed of birds during migration. This and the adjacent figure are from a National Audubon Society PowerPoint slide show about migration.



Lewis's Woodpecker

Photo by [Bill Schmoker](#)

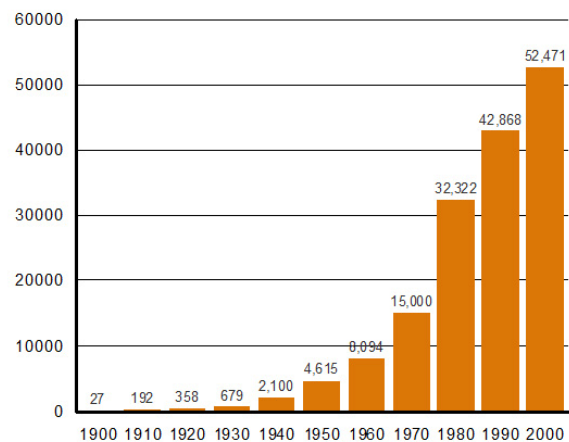
Lewis's Woodpecker Conservation

The Columbia Land Trust and American Bird Conservancy (ABC) have announced the purchase of 338 acres of land in Klickitat County, Washington that will provide high quality habitat for a variety of migratory land birds, including the high-priority Lewis's Woodpecker. (Lewis's Woodpecker is "rare and declining" in Boulder County.)

"Columbia Land Trust could not buy this exceptional habitat without our partnership with ABC. They help bring funding for upland bird habitat, a very rare thing in itself. But more importantly, we're excited to be a part of an international conservation strategy ABC is coordinating that links Washington State habitat to Central America for migrating songbirds," said Glenn Lamb, Columbia Land Trust executive director.

The purchased land is in the south-central part of Washington State and contains Oregon white oak and ponderosa pine woodland and mixed conifer forest, along with meadows and riparian habitat along Bowman Creek, a tributary of Canyon Creek and the Little Klickitat River. Additionally, seasonal and perennial streams and a few isolated wet meadow/prairie-like micro sites are located within the property, providing habitat for water-loving plants and animals in this otherwise relatively arid landscape.

<http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/releases/101022.html>



Worldwide number of participants in the Christmas Bird Count since its inception.