



# On The Wing

Volume 44, Number 5

Boulder County Audubon Society Newsletter

Nov 2014-Jan 2015

## BCAS 4th Tuesday Program Series

**November 25: Holiday Sale 5:30, Program 7:30**

### **Perry Conway: Helping Wildlife Survive**

This multi-media presentation with original music, script and photography by W. Perry Conway, features the recovery of such endangered species as the bald eagle, whooping crane, peregrine falcon and black-footed ferret. It will also show how Audubon helped create the Chilkat River Bald Eagle Preserve just outside of Haines, Alaska....largest concentration of bald eagles anywhere. The second segment deals with the issue of habitat loss for polar bears in Canada and ends with a strong message regarding climate change worldwide.

Perry Conway is best described as a conservation educator with a camera. For over 30 years, he has devoted his technical, emotional and artistic energy to creating photographic images which make a visual statement about the value of wildlife and wild places.



**On the Wing changes!** For budgetary and environmental reasons, *On the Wing* will be issued four times a year, instead of five; three of these issues will be electronic only. You can expect electronic notice for it to be delivered in **Sept., Nov., Feb., and May**. Also, beginning with this issue, continued print mailings by U.S. Post will be made to **local members only, upon request**. Until further notice, the Sept. issue will also be distributed to the wider readership (including National members). Please send us your email address to make sure you get notification!

**January 27:** Take an entertaining look at the wild, wondrous, and often wacky world of "bug sex" with **Colorado Entomologist Dr. Mike Weissmann**. He will present a special Valentine's Season peek into the fascinating and bizarre sexual practices of insects and their relatives. [NOTICE: THIS PROGRAM INCLUDES TOPICS OF AN ADULT NATURE. DUE TO MATURE SUBJECT MATTER, PARENTAL DISCRETION IS ADVISED.]

**Michael J. Weissmann, Ph.D.** is a co-founder and former Curator of the Butterfly Pavilion and Insect Center in Westminster, Colorado. Dr. Weissmann has published a variety of technical articles about insect taxonomy, biology, and behavior; he has also co-authored popular guides to insects of regional parks and monuments. Current entomological research is focused on Colorado mosquitoes and their role as vectors of the West Nile Virus. He earned B.A. and M.A. degrees in Biology at the University of Colorado in Boulder, and is currently an Adjunct Curator at the University of Colorado Museum. He received his doctorate in Entomology from Colorado State University where he is an affiliate faculty member and is a research associate at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science in the Entomology Collection, working primarily with the fly (Diptera) collection.



*Program Meetings at Unitarian Universalist Church of Boulder, 5001 Pennsylvania Ave. (west off 55th St. between Arapahoe and Baseline)*

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For a look back at our 40th Anniversary Taking Wing Fête, see page 3.

## 115<sup>th</sup> National Christmas Bird Count Sunday Dec. 14

The Boulder Circle of the CBC will hold its 73<sup>rd</sup> count on Dec. 14th. Beginners are welcome to join teams on the CBC, following the leaders around and contributing their spotting skills, if not their identification skills. More experienced folks are urged to join and lead a small crew to cover an area within the circle. Anything can happen (both weather and wildlife) and it usually does. If you prefer, you can also stay at home and count at your feeder, while sipping mulled wine and munching toasties. Following a day in the field (for most of us), we celebrate together with a warm and jolly compilation supper provided by both BCAS and the counters, who are encouraged to bring a potluck dish to share.



Please contact Bill Schmoker (bill.schmoker@gmail.com) to put your name on the "interested" list.

## Winter Solstice Celebration Hike — Sunday Dec. 21, 7 AM

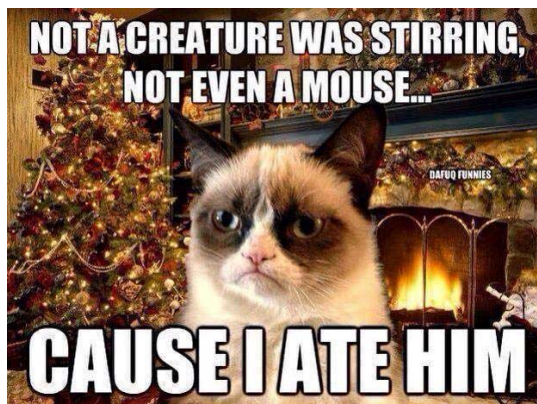
One of Audubon's most cherished chapter traditions is the annual Solstice Hike with Boulder County Nature Association. We gather at the White Rocks trailhead (on south side of Valmont east of 75<sup>th</sup> St.) and after greeting and

meeting in the frosty morning air, we walk down to the creek crossing to view the sunrise, admire whatever winter is bringing our way, and share readings, poetry and a song or two. Warm up afterwards with breakfast in Niwot, so let Steve know if you are coming in order to warn the restaurant. Steve Jones: 303-494-2468.

## Early Winter 2015 Field Trips

Please go to BoulderAudubon.org (Events/Field Trips) or watch for postings on Nature-net: [nature-net-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:nature-net-subscribe@yahoo.com)!

The winter roster of field trips will include outings for Ducks, Raptors and Seed-eaters, as well as an indoor class in E-bird participation. These trips are still in the planning stages and Pam Piombino apologizes for the delay in finalizing these field forays, as she works on getting together the very best in leaders and destinations. We look forward to meeting you as we flock together for winter activities.



## Boulder County Audubon Society

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*Linda A Georges, Sharon Daughterty*

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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)*

Crossbill email account

*Petrea Mah (303-484-4121)*

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Boulder County Audubon Society*

**Next issue deadline:**

**(Feb 2015 issue) Jan 16.**

Contact editor via link at:  
[www.boulderaudubon.org/newsletter.htm](http://www.boulderaudubon.org/newsletter.htm)

**Thanks to our Donors  
from Boulder County Audubon**

We have appreciated your support for our ongoing programs, some of which are described within these pages. You will find Colorado Gives to be an easy way to support our chapter and our programs.

Please mark your calendars now for December 9th. Giving on that day gives all your Boulder County donations extra oomph: You can donate using a credit card; we are entered in fund-boosting lotteries in several ways. All our County non-profits benefit from the news and internet coverage.

Think of the last wonderful field trip you had with our knowledgeable leaders; or about our Tuesday chapter programs which help you explore the natural world outside your backyard; about the Shortgrass Prairie Ecosystem show that helps people understand what a keystone species is, and why these things are important; about our outreach to youth, the ones who will take up the effort to seek sustainability for Planet Earth.

*Thank you, and come to meet us outdoors!*



**Boulder County Audubon’s 40<sup>th</sup> Birthday  
Celebrated in late August at the Lone Hawk Farm**

A golden big-West day with mild temperatures tempted an excited crowd to linger outdoors to admire auction items, line up for autographs from keynote speaker Scott Weidensaul, and taste tidbits while sipping wine. BCAS does not often take the time to indulge like this—we are more often scratching our heads over a grant-writing problem, or sneaking through tall grasses to count birds, or trembling with nerves at a local hearing about some wildlife issue.



The “big barn” at the Lone Hawk Farm (hosts Tom and Kris Lopez) was transformed by volunteer decorators and roadside wildflower-gatherers. Big enough to accommodate more than 150 people, but small enough for a chummy feeling during the program, the barn welcomed newcomers as well as the Elders among the BCAS crowd. Few remain from the very early days, but some were there; and there were new, younger faces as well.

Mr. Weidensaul’s impromptu-sounding discourse rambled across a wide-range of issues and birding spots, with the audience rapt and smiling.

The fundraising “arm” of the organization committee reports a take-home profit of over \$7,440. The Board thanks everyone who attended, and who bid at the auction.

We hope you’ll be with us for the 50<sup>th</sup>!



For more photos, please go to our website.

Speaker in action:



## Birds and Climate Change

(from *National Audubon distribution*)

Every bird species has adapted to the places it currently lives. But global warming is altering the availability of food and suitable nesting and wintering grounds, and if those shifts are too extreme, birds will be forced to seek out habitat and/or food supplies elsewhere. To determine how bird ranges will be affected, Audubon scientists used sophisticated climate models that combine decades of observations from the Audubon Christmas Bird Count and the North American Breeding Bird Survey, factoring in 17 climate variables, including temperature, precipitation, and seasonal changes. The models forecast the "climate envelopes," or ranges where future conditions are expected to support each species' historical climatic needs.

### Here are some important takeaways from the study:

The models predict the ranges of 588 North America bird species under future climate scenarios. It found that the majority — 314 species — will lose more than 50 percent of their current range by 2080.

Of the 314 species at risk from climate change, 126 of them, classified as "climate-endangered," are projected to lose more than 50 percent of their current range by 2050. The other 188 species are "climate-threatened," and expected to lose more than 50 percent of their current range by 2080.

While some species may be able to adapt, others will have nowhere to go. Many of our most cherished birds, including the Bald Eagle, Brown Pelican, and Common Loon, face an increased risk of extinction.

The findings may appear shocking and we know that a certain amount of change is already inevitable, but the study provides a roadmap for action. By identifying which birds are most at risk and the places they might inhabit in the future, we can prioritize protections for critical habitat.

To give birds a chance at a future, we need to continue supporting efforts to curb global warming by cutting greenhouse gases. These dire outcomes are inevitable only if we do not use this warning as an opportunity to take collective action. (<http://climate.audubon.org/article/audubon-report-glance>)



## Endangered Species — NYT, Aug 20

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service — the main agency for the conservation of species — recently announced a new interpretation of the Endangered Species Act that severely limits its reach and retreats from the conservation ethic that healthy landscapes depend on native plants and animals.

The law says that a species qualifies for protection if it is in danger of extinction "throughout all or a significant portion of its range." A species does not need to be at risk of extinction everywhere it lives if it is endangered in a significant portion of its range. But what is "significant"? And how is "range" defined?

Now, under a policy that took effect July 31, the agency has provided answers. The law's protections, for practical purposes, will be applied only if a species is at risk of extinction in a vital (read, significant) portion of its range where its loss would put the entire species at risk of extinction. And the concept of range no longer takes into account its historical distribution but defines the concept in terms of where the species is found now.

This means that as long as a small, geographically isolated population remains viable, it won't matter if the animal or plant in question has disappeared across the vast swath of its former habitat. It won't qualify for protection.

This interpretation threatens to reduce the Endangered Species Act to a mechanism that merely preserves representatives of a species, like curating rare pieces in a museum. Also likely to suffer are efforts to protect or repopulate areas where endangered species once lived.

Several years ago, the Fish and Wildlife Service and a sister agency, the National Marine Fisheries Service, began developing a uniform policy for interpreting that key phrase in the Endangered Species Act — the line that says that a species must be at risk "throughout all or a significant portion of its range" to qualify for protection. Uncertainty over the meaning of that phrase has led to controversy and litigation.

The two agencies call their reading of the law a "reasonable interpretation," although they acknowledge that "there is no single best interpretation." In fact, their reading is especially narrow and possibly contrary to Congress's intent when it passed one of the nation's most important conservation laws. A more appropriate interpretation of range would be those portions of a species' historical distribution that are suitable, or that can feasibly be made suitable, by mitigating or removing the threats that had caused the species' decline.

If the purpose of conservation is merely to preserve the fewest possible members of a species, then this new policy might be adequate.

*John A. Vucetich is an ecologist at Michigan Technological University. Michael Paul Nelson is an environmental ethicist at Oregon State University.*

### Marcel Such Wins Youth Essay Contest & New Bins in Birdwatching Daily Contest

[The magazine asked birders age 21 or younger to write an essay about a memorable birding experience with an adult mentor.]

#### Going on a Snipe Hunt

The telephone rings in the gathering darkness. It is our neighbor Raymond Davis inquiring if my younger brother Joel and I would like to embark on a “snipe hunt” at dawn. My mother looks confused, but after some conversation, an actual plan is in place. We had only met Davis the previous week, but he quickly drew a connection with us centered on birds. With my silent, bird-obsessed brother, the bond was instantaneous, and with me, the lover of all things wolves, he quickly hooked me into the avian world with tales of the raven and the wolf in Yellowstone.

As the sun breaks the horizon, we find ourselves scouring local alfalfa fields in pursuit of Bobolink and stalking roadside wetlands in search of the elusive snipe. Over the course of the morning, we see a plethora of birds and witness our new mentor’s seemingly miraculous bird-identification skills. From a mere glance, Davis identifies a sparrow and immediately begins tutoring us in the basics of field ornithology. Before the morning is complete, we find our snipe, perched just feet away atop a fence post.

Eleven years have passed since that original snipe hunt, and through the years, Davis challenged us to improve our knowledge and skill until he felt they surpassed his own self-proclaimed “grade-B” expertise. He introduced us to many of the leading field ornithologists in the state, who in turn joined in on the mentoring process. From this man with his own diagnostic field marks — mismatched Converse All-Star shoes and wide brimmed hat plastered in High Island patches — I learned to appreciate the varied aspects of birds and birding, all of which started with a snipe hunt that was not a practical joke.

– Marcel Such, 18, Lyons, Colorado



### Nestbox Newbie 1<sup>st</sup> Season Bluebird Monitoring

Oh, I was so excited! The opportunity to legitimately play peeping tom and witness a new generation of birds using the nest boxes on Bald Mountain was a real thrill for me. I didn’t know what to expect. I wondered if I could keep the records accurately. Would I damage something? Injure a baby bird? Break an egg?

The boxes at Bald Mountain are mounted on poles and are fairly easy to spot. Boulder County installed a collar at the entry holes intended to deter predators. From the first day it was fun to tramp up and down the slopes through the Ponderosa parklands where I would not encounter any other hikers.

At first the boxes were bare, unadorned and lonely. But by May the first small circles of woven grasses began to take shape. In mid-May I experienced my first breathless moment when I opened a box and a perfect Western Bluebird female looked me straight in the eye, steadfastly refusing to move. My heart sped up as though I was being pursued by the Highway Patrol. I apologized for disturbing her privacy and gently, quietly closed the box. From that moment on, I took ownership! These were MY birds, my eggs and my babies.

By the beginning of June pearly pink eggs in soft, feather-lined nests, slightly larger softly greenish-blue eggs, and tiny jelly-bean-sized pink eggs with maroon splotches materialized. It seemed like a miracle, these delicate drops of perfection, so vulnerable and so full of promise. By the end of June all seven boxes were in use. Three Western Bluebirds, three Violet-Green swallows, and one prolific White-breasted Nuthatch had chosen MY seven boxes.

When I first opened the box containing tiny pink, featherless babies, tears actually sprung into my eyes. The same experience of maternal emotion welled up when I opened the box a week or so later to see gaping yellow mouths, farcically oversized for their tiny, partially-feathered bodies, hopefully pointed up at me.

All of my nests fledged young, an outcome that fills me with wonder.

Though I ardently look forward to another season of nest peeping, nothing will feel quite like the very first time.

— Cindy Maynard



## Canada Thistle Bio-control at Dodd

The restoration plan at Dodd is to use the most environmentally conscious techniques that are possible in the restoration process. So, when John Kaltenbach notified us that a rust fungus (*Puccinia punctiformis*) had been approved by field studies as a bio-control agent for Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), we were excited about an herbicide-free Canada thistle control. This host-specific pathogen causes the early spring shoots of the thistle to be weak and leggy with undersides covered with spores. These gangly shoots fall over and infect nearby rust free plants. As with most bio-control agents, the host is not eradicated but able to be maintained with mechanical measures such as mowing, grazing or fire.

Colorado Department of Agriculture will follow the plot at Dodd for 2 years and will keep us informed about the research from the plots around the state.



John Kaltenbach and  
Canada Thistle rust.



## Boulder Rights of Nature Film Festival: unique perspectives on people and nature

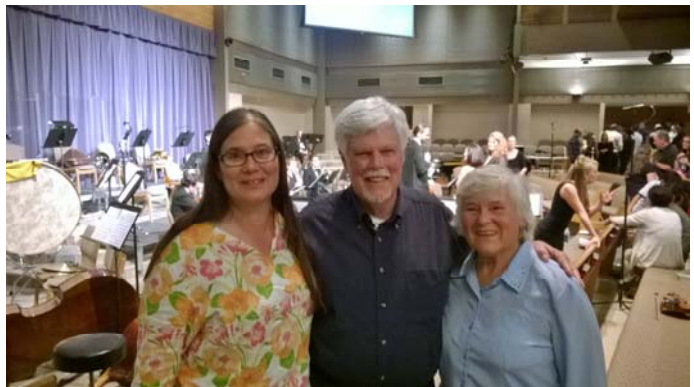
Many people from the various Boulder environmental communities—as well as others—attended the recent Boulder Rights of Nature Film Festival (500 tickets sold). A major theme of the festival was indigenous wisdom and viewpoints, often at odds with the EuroAmerican community at large. This made some of us cheer and some of us squirm: a healthy and enlightening combination!

Among the enthusiastic feedback comments was this one, from Chris Petrizzo:

“I wanted to send out a quick note of thanks and congratulations to BCAS, BCNA, and BRON for pulling together an engaging, enlightening, and inspiring series of films and discussions. Many thanks to all who helped make this happen, in particular Ava Hamilton, Cindy

## Boulder Audubon at the Symphony

Boulder County Audubon has created a collaboration with the Boulder Symphony. This cooperation between the arts community and our environmental organization will increase awareness of environmental issues and the importance of music in all of our lives. On September 20<sup>th</sup>, the symphony highlighted the world premiere of “What Trees May Speak” by Jonathan Sokal. BCAS’s Stephen Jones spoke at the pre-concert session, Petrea Mah led a hike for the 2 groups on October 18. Steve Jones will lead a breeding bird trip for both groups in the spring. Thanks to the Symphony and all the BCAS members who attended the concert.



Amy Chu, Larry Crawley and Jan Chu  
inspect the orchestra pit

— Continued from left column

Carlisle, Steve Jones, and Yan Chun Su. I was just so impressed with the quality and variety of the films, and the way they were woven together. This was a really great experience and I am grateful to those of you that worked to bring it to fruition. I hope this is indeed just the first of many more to come.”

--Quote from Horn, about the struggle not to let rhinoceroses slide into oblivion: “You have to remember, it’s not just about the rhino’s life, it’s about everyone’s life.” Note that Suni, one of the last 7 remaining Northern White Rhinoceroses in the world, died in a Kenyan sanctuary (natural death) during the festival weekend.

Our individual and group supporters contributed more than \$6500 to make the festival possible. Groups and businesses supporting the festival were Boulder County Nature Association, Boulder County Audubon, Boulder Rights of Nature, Boulder Wild Bird Center, The Dairy Center for the Arts, Gone Feral, Liquormart, Native American Rights Fund, Sierra Club Indian Peaks Group, and University Of Colorado Environmental Center.



## Gentle Summer Memory

It seems natural that bird songs would inspire classical music. As OSMP naturalist Dave Sutherland led the Wings and Songs Naturalist walk, the group strolled along South Boulder Creek in the October twilight. He shared many examples of this, played on his iPod. Birds that commonly inspire composers (and authors) include nightingales, cuckoos, European larks, swans and peacocks.

He played examples including Vaughn Williams's "Lark Ascending" and parts of Saint-Saens' "Carnival of the Animals." In conjunction with the Boulder Philharmonic October 11th concert three pieces inspired by birds were included. Most notable was a rousing performance of "The Firebird" by Stravinsky.

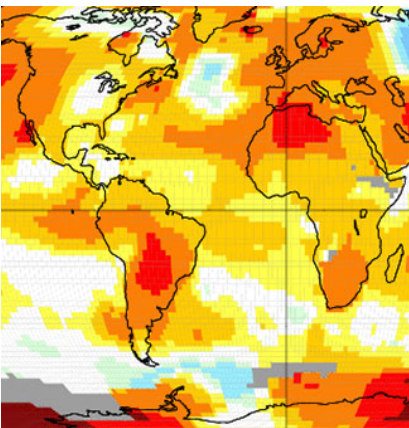
Dave's splendid mimicry of some calls of local birds such as flickers and chickadees reminded us that we can be inspired in the present. As if on cue, a black crowned night heron flew by in the twilight.

While the music wafted over our heads we watched the orange harvest moon rise above the Bobolink meadow. What a memorable evening.

— Marty Dick

## Global Warming Continues

Calculations by NASA and the Japan Meteorological Agency revealed that this September was the warmest worldwide since records began back in 1880.



The unusual heat also made the last six months, collectively, the warmest such period ever observed.

While July came in as the fourth-warmest on record, the rest of the months from April through September were the hottest of the climate record.

Atmospheric scientists pointed out that the period would have been even hotter had El Niño developed during the Northern Hemisphere summer months as was predicted earlier this year.

The Pacific Ocean warming is still expected to emerge during the next few weeks, but not with the intensity forecasters had earlier expected.

## Modern Pestilence: Leaf Blowers

(AlterNet.org — <http://tinyurl.com/l5eqn8p>)

The calm and quiet of suburban existence has always been interrupted by loud, dirty machines in the form of chainsaws, hedge trimmers, lawn mowers, and string trimmers. But none of the tools of modern landscaping inspires as much animus and contempt as the leaf blower, the four-season tool used by do-it-yourself groundskeepers and professional landscapers alike.

The mind-numbing roar of a typical gasoline-powered, two-stroke leaf blower, at 90 to 102 decibels (dB), is only a small part of the overall damage these machines do to a community. Blasting out air at hurricane-force speeds, leaf blowers disperse allergens, toxins, pollutants and pathogens into the air.

The two-stroke engine is used in leaf blowers because it's lightweight, inexpensive and relatively powerful. But this engine is an environmental nightmare. Because it doesn't have a separate lubrication system, like an automobile, the gasoline is combined with oil and the entire mixture is burned.

Some cities, like Los Angeles and Aspen, ban the use of gas-powered leaf blowers altogether. Fines vary from as low as \$50 to as high as \$5,000, depending on the community.

Landscapers are rarely mindful in their use of leaf blowers. Leaf blowers are often used alongside landscapers using chemical sprayers on lawns, potentially making herbicides and pesticides airborne.

Residents of Nyack, NY wondered whether it would be expensive to clean the village's tree-lined riverfront park with rakes rather than leaf blowers, possibly raising their taxes. But that probably wouldn't be the case. In a report to the California Air Resources Board, the Los Angeles Department of Power and Water once pitted a grandmother with a rake and a broom against a professional landscaper with electric and gas leaf blowers. In three test cycles, the grandmother cleaned the area faster than any of the battery-powered blowers and 80% as fast as the gas-powered leaf blowers. She also did a better job cleaning up the areas, says the report. When a landscaping company did its own tests, it found that it too could do the job faster using rakes.



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on Facebook:

<http://tiny.cc/ez7v6>

## Urbanization and Spiders

Researchers at the University of Sydney, Australia have found that female spiders in Sydney grow larger and reproduce more successfully than their peers that live in the countryside.

They examined the golden orb-weaving *Nephila plumipes* spider, since it is known to live in both urban and non-urban settings. Despite a much different landscape and not as much vegetation, the urban-bred female spiders grew bigger and had larger ovaries.



They suggest that two effects are probably responsible: First is the urban heat-island effect. Higher temperature is often associated with increased growth and size in invertebrates. Second, Urban lighting may contribute by attracting insects that provide more food for the spiders.

One finding that became apparent is that spiders like the city and are obviously benefitting from the heat and prey.

(<http://tinyurl.com/man72fr>)

- G. Oetzel

## Singed Birds

Many thousands of birds are said to have caught fire in midair above a massive solar-thermal power plant near the California-Nevada border since it began operating in February.

Workers at the Ivanpah Solar Electric Generating System call the dying birds “streamers,” because of the trail of smoke they leave behind after igniting.

Federal investigators say they counted an average of one bird catching fire every two minutes during their survey.

The \$2.2 billion plant consists of three towers surrounded by an array of more than 300,000 mirrors, which some pilots say nearly blinded them as they flew past.

The California chapter of the Audubon Society calls the deaths “alarming,” and one of the three companies behind the plant, NRG Solar, said it is taking the issue “very seriously.”



Federal wildlife officials call the plant a “mega-trap” because its bright light attracts insect-eating birds that get lured to a fiery death.

Plant operators say they are looking at ways to frighten the birds away or redirect them from the plant’s glaring danger.

<http://www.earthweek.com/> - Aug 22 (I can’t locate the piece online as of 10/25.— G.O.

## Birdwatching—Sports Illustrated

A gem from the *S.I.* Letters vault, July 1955 after an article on the art of birdwatching ran in the magazine [remember that the 1950s were pre-feminism]:

The only point over which girl-watchers and birdwatchers sometimes disagree is the place each holds in the hierarchy of hobbies. Naturally, or I should say personally, I contend that the unexpected observation and quiet contemplation of a Late-Rising Pubthrush (for example) is a more rewarding experience than the sight of a Blue-billed Barnswallow (if there is such a bird) rising from a thicket...

Bird watchers are concerned primarily with bird identification and only secondarily with the bird as a bird. The opposite is true of girl-watchers. Whether the species is an Argyle-ankled Classcutter or a Wide-eyed Culturebird is of less importance than whether she is beautiful. In other words... a girl-watcher will be both delighted and fulfilled by the vision of a beautiful redhead (even though he may not have the slightest idea whether she is a Carrot-topped Mink-miser or a Flame-tressed Tablehopper!)... *Issue of Aug 11, 2014, p 93, Collected by Linda Andes-Georges*

### Become a Supporting Member of Boulder Audubon

We get very little return from National Audubon dues and have to rely primarily on local funding to support Boulder County Audubon society activities. Supporting memberships are just \$20 annually. You can join online or download a printable form to send with your check. Visit <http://www.boulderaudubon.org/about.htm#membership>.

Paper copies of the Nov-Dec, Jan-Feb, and Mar-Apr issues of *On the Wing* are mailed only to BCAS Supporting Members who request them. The electronic edition, available online, has color pictures and usually includes extra articles.