



# On The Wing

Volume 45, Number 4

Boulder County Audubon Society Newsletter

Nov 2015-Jan 2016

## BCAS 4th Tuesday Program Series

**Holiday Sale and program!! November 24, 5:30 PM to 9:00PM**

**With featured speaker Rob Palmer: "Owls and Other Raptors I Have Known"**

*Boulder Audubon's  
Annual Holiday Sale*

*With Robert Palmer, Photographer & Naturalist  
-Presenting his multimedia show-  
"Owls and Other Raptors I Have Known"*

**November 24, 2015 5:30 pm**

**5001 Pennsylvania Ave. Boulder, CO**

*Books, Nature DVDs, and Birdsong CDs  
Bird and Nature-themed gifts  
Jewelry and Glass ornaments  
Photographic Art and Cards  
Solar Bird Baths  
Sweet nibbles and cider  
Raffle Prizes!*

*-Proceeds benefit our Scholarship Program-*

Birds and Nature Photography

Our annual holiday sale features one-of-a-kind jewelry and glass ornaments; photographic arts and cards from local artists; books, nature DVD and birdsong CDs; solar bird baths, Interludes nature trips, and much more! Our featured speaker, Rob Palmer, is a renowned naturalist and photographer. His talk, "Owls and Other Raptors I Have Known," will enchant you with beautiful photos and incredible stories. We will also have sweet nibbles and cider for you to enjoy while you shop and cool raffle prize giveaways! **Cash and check only, please!**

Shop from 5:30 to 7:15pm; our program begins at 7:30pm. All proceeds benefits our youth scholarship programs!

**Rob Palmer** is a nationally awarded wildlife photographer living in Colorado and is the co-author of "Sky Hunters, the Passion of Falconry." His wildlife photos have appeared in *Audubon Magazine*, *Nature's Best*, *National Wildlife*, *Wild Bird*, *Birders World*, *BBC Wildlife*, *Living Bird*, and *Defenders of Wildlife*. His intimate photos of burrowing owl families are the most stunning we've ever seen. Copies of his wildlife photography books will be available for purchase during the holiday sale and after the program. More info at his website: <http://www.falconphotos.com>



Snowy owls. © Rob Palmer

*Program Meetings are held at Unitarian Universalist Church of Boulder, 5001 Pennsylvania Ave. (west off 55th St. between Arapahoe and Baseline). Join us at 7:00 pm for socializing; programs begin at 7:15 pm.*

**January 26, 2016 7:15 PM**

### **Karen Hollweg: Experience Mongolia**

Karen Hollweg spent the month of August 2014 exploring Mongolia's diverse natural areas, learning about the lives of herders and other citizens, and discovering one of the world's last intact grassland ecosystems. Karen will present a slide-illustrated talk to familiarize you with the vast landscapes, picturesque wildlife, fascinating petroglyphs, rich history, and colorful cultures of this beautiful country.

Karen has relished her times exploring grasslands since she first discovered the Pawnee Grasslands in the early 1970s. After dreaming of going to Mongolia for 15 years, she finally made it there in 2014, spending 5 weeks independently traveling in southern, eastern, and northern parts of the country. A lifelong traveler, nature lover, and person who can strike up a conversation with anyone, Karen is looking forward to sharing her experiences in this amazing country with you.



*Photo © Karen Hollweg*

### **BCAS Scholarship Program**

#### **2016 SUMMER CAMP FOR TEENS, HOG ISLAND, ME**

National Audubon's Coastal Maine Bird Studies on Hog Island, ME is for teens ages 14 to 17 (by June 11) who have an avid interest in birds. This intensive 6-day, 5-night program on Hog Island allows enthusiastic young birders to work with some of the country's best-known birders and ornithologists on field identification, bird ecology and conservation; plus, they get to study puffins up close!

BCAS has reserved 2 spots for 2016, and requires an application for and an essay on why the student wants to attend the camp, along with two letters of recommendation. Final acceptance in the program is contingent upon our Education Committee review of application materials. Scholarship includes: Meals, housing, instruction and all boat trips, and possibly air transportation to Maine, based on need.

Please contact Steve Jones, BCAS Ed Committee: [curlwsj@comcast.net](mailto:curlwsj@comcast.net) if you or someone you know is interested.



**Follow  
Boulder County Audubon  
on Facebook:**

<http://tiny.cc/ez7v6>

#### **Boulder County Audubon Society**

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##### **BCAS Wildlife Sanctuary (Dodd)**

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##### **Conservation contact**

*Ray Bridge (303-499-8496), and any*

*Board member*

##### **Crossbill email account**

*Cindy Maynard*

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*Mary Balzer (303-499-0662)*

##### **Field Trips**

*Pam Piombino (303-776-1939)*

##### **Membership and Mailing List**

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*Ray Bridge, Ru Wing*

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*Sharon Daugherty (720-236-5683)*

##### **Teen Naturalists**

*Steve Jones*

##### **Wildlife Inventory**

*Alex & Gillian Brown (303-494-3042)*



### 2015 Christmas Bird Count, Sunday, Dec. 20

Free/Start time depends on if you go out early for owls.

The Boulder Circle of the CBC, sponsored by Boulder County Audubon, will hold its 74th count on Dec. 20. All skill levels are welcome to join teams and help the leaders by contributing their spotting and identification skills. More experienced folks are urged to lead a small group to cover a specific area within the count circle. Anything can happen (both weather and wildlife). If you prefer, you can also stay at home and count at your feeder, while sipping mulled wine and munching toasties.

Following a full day in the field, we celebrate together with a warm and jolly compilation supper at the clubhouse at the Villa del Prado, 635 Mohawk Dr., Boulder, starting at 4:30pm. BCAS will provide vegetarian chili, corn bread, and wine. We ask participants to bring potluck appetizers, salads, and desserts. **Please bring your own dish-ware to use; otherwise, we ask that you donate \$1, which will go to Boulder Audubon.** Contact Bill Schmoker ([bill.schmoker@gmail.com](mailto:bill.schmoker@gmail.com)), the coordinator of this event, to sign up. This is always a fun and convivial outing, despite any weather mayhem!

### 2015-2016 Fall/Winter Field Trips

#### BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE CU MUSEUM ORNITHOLOGY COLLECTION

Thursday, December 3, 2015 10 a.m. Free/**ONLY TWO SPOTS REMAIN!!**

Limited to 12. Reservations: Sharon Daugherty, [sharona\\_974@yahoo.com](mailto:sharona_974@yahoo.com)

Leader: CU Collections Manager **Emily Baker**

The CU Museum Ornithology Collection maintains more than 12,000 preserved bird skins, taxidermy mounts, and skeletal specimens, as well as over 2,250 egg sets and nests. The collection is global in scope, housing avifauna from 38 countries with particular emphasis on North American and Colorado species. Several iconic extinct species such as Passenger Pigeons and Carolina Parakeets as well as extirpated, threatened, endangered, and Type specimens can be found in the cabinets. Assembled beginning in the mid-nineteenth century by pioneer naturalists Charles E. Aiken and Denis Gale and growing annually, the collection has served as an invaluable resource for students, community members, and researchers past and present.

#### WINTER SOLSTICE SUNRISE HIKE

Tuesday, December 22, 7 AM, Free, limited to 25

Join us for our 29th annual Winter Solstice sunrise hike on the White Rocks Trail, featuring glistening hoarfrost, exuberant flocks of waterfowl, soaring raptors, and soul-stirring fellowship. If you'd like, bring a poem or small thought to share during a short solstice ceremony on the Boulder Creek footbridge. Breakfast at Garden Gate Café in Niwot follows at 9. Limited to 25 participants. To register contact Steve Jones, and please specify whether you are planning to stay for breakfast:

[curlwsj@comcast.net](mailto:curlwsj@comcast.net)

#### WHEAT RIDGE GREENBELT

Saturday, January 23, 7:30-11:30 AM, Free, no limit

Leader, Steve Jones: In winter, the hike/bike trail along Clear Creek east of Golden offers a unique opportunity to see native duck species in their winter habitats (thanks to the Coors Brewing Company and the productive citizens of Golden). Bring your binoculars and/or cameras and meet at the Eldorado Springs "park and ride" (the gravel parking lot on the northeast corner of the South Broadway and Eldorado Springs Drive intersection) at 7:30 a.m. Dress warmly, as it can be foggy and frigid along the creek.

Reservations: Steve ([curlwsj@comcast.net](mailto:curlwsj@comcast.net); 303-579-3620)



2013 Solstice gathering. Photo by Steve Jones.



**Colorado Gives Day, Dec. 8, 2015 Think of BCAS !!**

Once again, BCAS will be included in the 1000+ Colorado non-profits, and we hope you will think of us during the giving season. Many of you have thought of us at other times this year—and we thank you!

The additional advantages we derive from donations on Colorado Gives Day (December 8th) are these:

- ◆ We'll be given an additional sum (a percentage of the total: an augmentation thanks to one sponsor, the Colorado Health Foundation). The additional sum is based upon the amount of funding our chapter receives from all of our friends; this financial plum is called the Incentive Fund boost.
- ◆ Special drawings make other prizes (from Bank One and other sponsors) available to us.
- ◆ Our donors can donate at any time, but to benefit from the perks above, you can participate in advance, starting on Nov. 1, and schedule your donations for Colorado Gives Day. It is easy to book all your local and regional gifting for that day by spending only a short time on the website, and filling in your financial information only once. Smooth!

Our programs and projects will benefit from your support. Watch for news of these programs in the pages of *On the Wing* or on our BCAS website. Meanwhile, rendezvous for the holidays at [www.ColoradoGives.org](http://www.ColoradoGives.org) Thank you!!



**A Fourth of our Budget Arrives in October**

**Carol McCasland**, center; and **Linda Andes-Georges**, right, receive the generous check to BCAS from the County interface (here: ML Robles) of the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (a special regional tax district). Since 1989, the SCFD has distributed funds from a 1/10 of 1% sales and use tax to many non-profits throughout the Denver-Colorado metropolitan area. The funds support cultural (and scientific) facilities whose primary purpose is to enlighten and entertain the public through the production, presentation, exhibition, advancement and preservation

of art, music, theatre, dance, zoology, botany, natural history, and cultural history. If you are observant, you will notice the famous little icon (oddly, a polar bear) on most of the literature you receive from any non-profit, from our BCAS to the Boulder Bach Festival, the Boulder Museum of Art, the Denver Zoo, and 300 others.

Boulder Audubon would like to thank the SCFD for their ongoing support and generosity!



Scientific & Cultural  
Facilities District

*Making It Possible.*

## Boulder Rights of Nature Film Festival returns!

Nov. 5-8, Dairy Center for the Performing Arts

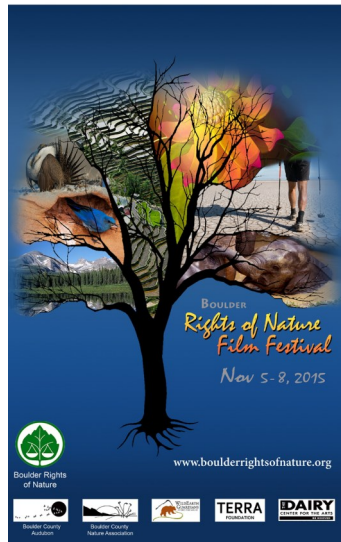
The second annual Boulder Rights of Nature Film Festival features the best new films about our evolving partnership with nature, including documentaries on permaculture, wild elephants, the sagebrush sea, Thomas Berry, and the energy and beauty of the world's dwindling water systems. This year's festival will include post-film discussions with filmmakers and activists along with free weekend workshops on prairie dog ecology, honeybees, and greater sage grouse. Proceeds and donations from the festival will support wildlife conservation and protection in Boulder County and throughout Colorado.

Supporter packages (\$100) include admission to all showings, an invitation to the welcoming reception, and a local field guide. We are also offering festival ticket packages (for all four evening sessions) for \$30 general/\$20 student. Admission to individual sessions is \$12 general/\$8 students, with discount vouchers available at the festival welcome desk at the Dairy Center. Festival workshops are free and open to all.

Purchase tickets in advance through the Dairy Center's website: <https://tickets.thedairy.org>

More info and complete schedule on BRON's website: <http://boulderrightsofnature.org>

### Boulder Rights of Nature 2015 Film Festival



#### Dairy Center For the Arts—November 5-8

The second Boulder Rights of Nature Film Festival features the best new films about our evolving partnership with nature, including documentaries on permaculture, wild elephants, the sagebrush sea, Thomas Berry, and the complexity of the world's dwindling water systems. This year's festival will include post-film discussions with filmmakers and activists along with free weekend workshops on prairie dog ecology, honey bees and Native American performers with interpretive dances of sage grouse. Proceeds and donations from the festival will support wildlife conservation and protection in Boulder County and beyond.

##### Tickets:

Individual sessions - \$12.00, \$8.00 students. All four film sessions-\$30.00 adults, \$20.00 students.

##### Thursday, November 5

6:30pm: "Thomas Berry, The Great Story", Nancy Stetson and Penny Morrell. Intimate profile of the "father" of the modern North American rights of nature movement. Local filmmaker 49 minutes.

7:30pm: "The Sagebrush Sea". Beautiful film produced by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology explores the amazing world of the Greater Sage Grouse, its ecosystem and the uncertainty of its future. 54 minutes.

Friday, November 6th

6:00pm: "Commoner". Stunning geometry in all its beauty and wonder. 15 minutes.

6:30pm: "Inhabit". Costa Boutsikaris and Emma Brennan. Enhancing our ecological footprint and healing damaged ecosystems through permaculture. 85 minutes.

##### Saturday, November 7th

6:00pm: "Sticky". Animated film about rediscovery of an "extinct" species. 20 minutes.

6:30pm: "Chasing Water", Peter McBride. Following the Colorado River to the sea. Local filmmaker 19 minutes.

7:00pm: "When Giants Fall". Leslie Griffith, Greg Nelson and Gary Lundgren. Intelligent, compassionate elephants fight for survival. 85 minutes.

##### Sunday, November 8th

6:00pm: "Stillness". Esther Komejor and Rutger Zuydewelt. Cinematic landscape depicting Antarctic and Arctic ice floes. 30 minutes.

7:00pm: "Watermark". Jennifer Baichwal, Victor de Pencier, and Edward Burtynsky. The spirit, energy, and the history of the water in the Earth's ecosystems. 92 minutes.

##### Free Workshops at Alfalfa's Market Community Room, 1651 Broadway, Boulder.

Saturday, Nov 7th, 10:00am: Honeybee and pollinator ecology and conservation.

Sunday, Nov 8th, 10:00am, Prairie Dog Saga puppet show and activities for school age children and adults.

Sunday, Nov 8th, 2:00pm, Native American Grass Dancers perform.



## Boulder County Audubon Society joins the Carbon Offset Bird Project

Bird-watching is a hobby and passion many of us share, and increasing numbers of folks are taking up this activity yearly. Many of us travel extensively to visit birdy destinations, and lots of us think about the carbon footprint we leave behind.

The Carbon Offset Bird Project (COBP) allows BCAS to voluntarily contribute money to offset our birding-related carbon emissions—those that come directly from our birding activities. The funds will be used to acquire, conserve, and restore quality bird habitat in our local area—often places we go birding. This COBP project is modeled loosely after other carbon offset programs involving

air or vehicle travel, but it is specifically tailored to local birders and local birds—a perfect example of *Think Globally, Act Locally*. Participation is encouraged but is completely voluntary. We have a full explanation about how this initiative works and links to distance and travel calculators on our [website](http://www.boulderrightsofnature.org). If you'd like to donate to this fund, please send it to BCAS, P.O. Box 2081, Boulder, CO 80306.

Thank you for continuing to support Boulder Audubon!

*Boulder County Audubon Society is a voice for birds and wildlife conservation through habitat protection, advocacy, and nature education.*

# King Coal and the queen of subsidies

The window for fossil fuel subsidy reform is closing fast.

In Boulder County, we have devoted a lot of energy to trying to reduce the use of coal as a major source of energy. That’s not the case in much of the world, as a recent article in Science observes. A particular problem is that the use of coal is subsidized in many places. Below is the lead paragraph from the “King Coal...” article.

Coal is the most important energy source for the Chinese economy. Other rapidly growing economies in Asia and Africa also increasingly rely on coal to satisfy their growing appetite for energy. This renaissance of coal is expected to continue in the coming years and is one of the reasons that global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are increasing despite the undisputed worldwide technological progress and expansion of renewable technologies. The implications for long-term GHG emissions are serious because, once installed, a coal power plant will emit for decades. Fossil fuel subsidies support investments in coal capacities around the globe and thereby threaten the achievement of climate change mitigation goals. Targeted reform of these subsidies could yield benefits for climate change mitigation as well as other development objectives.

From: <http://www.sciencemag.org/content/349/6254/1286.full>

## 2015 Likely to Be Hottest Year Ever Recorded

From *The New York Times*, article by Justin Gillis, Oct. 21, 2015

Global temperatures are running far above last year’s record-setting level, all but guaranteeing that 2015 will be the hottest year in the historical record— and undermining political claims that global warming had somehow stopped.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the American agency that tracks worldwide temperatures, announced Wednesday that last month had been the hottest September on record, and in fact took the biggest leap above the previous September that any month has displayed since 1880, when tracking began at a global scale. The agency also announced that the January-to-September period had been the hottest such span on the books.

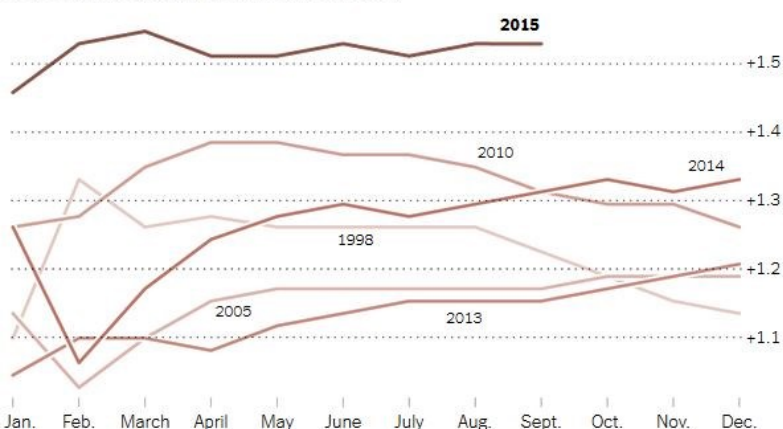
The immediate cause of the record-breaking warmth is a strong El Niño weather pattern, in which the ocean releases immense amounts of heat into the atmosphere.

But temperatures are running so far ahead of those during the last strong El Niño, in 1997 and 1998, that scientists said the records would not be occurring without an underlying trend caused by human emissions of greenhouse gases.

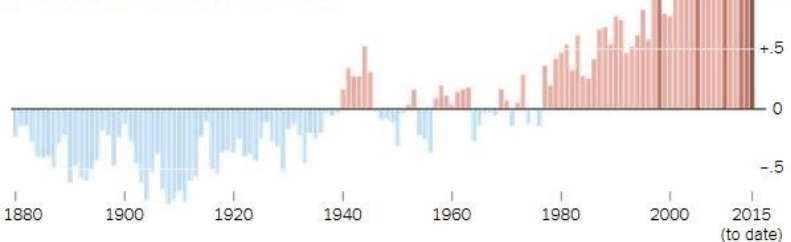
The extreme heat and related climate disturbances mean that delegates to a global climate conference scheduled for Paris in early December will almost certainly be convening as weather-related disasters are unfolding around the world, putting them under greater political pressure to reach an ambitious deal to limit future emissions and slow the temperature increase.

Complete article: [New York Times](#)

How 2015 compares to five of the hottest years



Average global temperatures since 1880



Temperatures relative to the 20th century average.  
Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
By The New York Times



## Love on a Lek; an April Affair

By Pam Piombino

On April 10, twelve participants joined the Boulder County Audubon Society (BCAS) in Craig, Colorado as part of our "Interludes With Nature" series of special fundraising field trips. Conservation Colorado organized this outing to a private ranch, whose owner has been an incredible steward for Greater Sage Grouse conservation in what is now the biggest remaining lek left in Colorado. Conservation Colorado has been a strong and active voice for the protection of this very special species, now under threat from myriad external forces.

The Executive Director of Audubon Rockies, Alison Holloran, and Conservation Colorado representative, Sasha Nelson, shared their vast knowledge of this species after the Friday night dinner provided by BCAS. On Saturday morning, an excited group of attendees boarded transportation to the lek at a very early hour. Arriving in the dark, they quietly climbed into a large truck trailer, specially outfitted with benches and a long opening for unobtrusive viewing of the birds.

The rugged folks sitting in the cold were well rewarded with an intimate experience of Love on a Lek. Over 160 male Greater Sage Grouse were displaying their courtship rituals: strutting, inflating their yellow air sacs to produce pops, whistles, and haunting moaning sounds while fanning their pointed tail feathers and occasionally fighting. There were just a few females present, as most had previously bred and were already sitting on eggs.

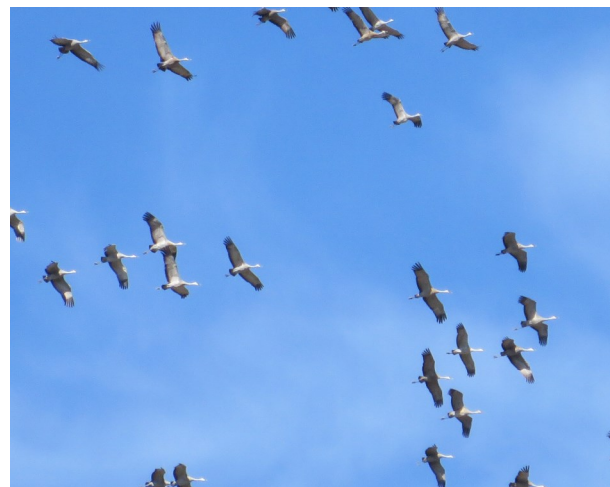
Greater Sage Grouse have experienced a precipitous population decline of up to 98%, but were recently rejected for listing under the Endangered Species act. It is the hope of BCAS that the participants will become activists for the long-term conservation of this denizen of sagebrush habitat.

Restoration of the Audubon (Dodd) Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary continues into a new phase, as Wildlife Restoration Volunteers removed most non-native trees and shrubs in



2.5 acres where native grasses are slowly making a comeback.

Photo from the Oct. 24 work day—courtesy of Steve Jones.



Sandhill cranes soar over Larimer County. Photo © Michael Anthony

## Sandhill Cranes fall migration over Boulder and the Front Range

Between Oct. 16-20, over 3000 Sandhill cranes migrated through the front range corridor, wowing us with their ancient trilling calls and silvery silhouettes against the bright blue sky. Per local naturalist Steve Jones, “the greatest number seems to have been on the 18th, when one observer near Table Mountain in the central County area counted 3080 in 4 hours.”

Lesser Sandhill cranes nest primarily from Minnesota, Wisconsin, and eastern Canada north to the Arctic and Siberia, but also in Florida. Greater Sandhill cranes nest from Colorado, Wyoming, and California northward to British Columbia and Alaska, at least. But during migration the lessers tend to bottleneck for a month or so along the South Platte River in central Nebraska—hence the half-million that people go to see at Rowe Sanctuary. During March, many of the greaters tend to bottleneck along a 10 mile stretch of river upstream from Lake McConaghy, near Lewellen, NE. Most of the cranes we are seeing and hearing now should be greaters.

—Steve Jones et al.



Sandhill cranes in Boulder. Photo courtesy Dr. Kerrie Bryan.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

—Ann Tagawa

There is now substantial evidence that raising livestock for meat and dairy products plunders global resources and devastates our water supply. It wastes energy, resources, and the lives of animals. Consider the following:

- ◆ 700 million acres—seven times the size of California—are devoted to animal grazing in the U.S. Grazing animals erode soil, often pollute nearby streams with manure, and constantly release methane, a greenhouse gas 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide (Environmental Working Group).
- ◆ Each year the U.S. livestock industry uses 34 trillion gallons of fresh water.
- ◆ In California it takes over 4,000 gallons of water to produce one pound of beef and 1,000 gallons to produce one gallon of milk. One pound of vegetables requires only 6 to 30 gallons of water to produce.
- ◆ Feed crops, such as corn and even wheat grown in the U.S., are irrigated with water from rapidly depleted aquifers to feed livestock grown in China and elsewhere.
- ◆ Roughly 48,000 miles of rivers and streams and 400,000 acres of lakes and reservoirs are fouled by grazing (Environmental Protection Agency).



Photo: www.cif.org

Producing meat is one of the most destructive things we do to our planet. A truly sustainable, Earth-friendly diet means reconsidering our impact on wildlife. Wild animals suffer not only the collateral damage of meat-related deforestation, drought, pollution, and climate change, but also direct targeting by the meat industry. Native species are frequently killed to protect meat-production profits. Grass-eating species such as elk, deer, and pronghorn have been killed en masse to reserve more feed for cattle. Important habitat-creating animals, such as beavers and prairie dogs, have been decimated because they disrupt the homogenous landscapes desired by the livestock industry (Center for Biological Diversity).

Dr. Jane Goodall, speaking recently in Boulder, cited the detrimental effects on the environment of eating meat; in particular, forests removed to grow grain to feed billions of animals who will be slaughtered for food; water wasted; and huge amounts of fossil fuels used in transporting animals, feed, and meat/dairy products. She asks us to think about the consequences for the environment of what we eat and buy.

As we continue irreversibly damaging the environment that supports us and all other life on Earth and begin running out of fresh water, topsoil, arable land, fish in our oceans, and tropical rainforests, creating extinctions of other species and loss of biodiversity, we will come to accept that sustainability of our own species is contingent upon the choices we make (Dr. Richard Oppenlander, *Food Choice and Sustainability*, 2013).

Since awareness and action are keys to being better global citizens, the BCAS Board of Directors respectfully asks our members to try preparing plant-based (no animal products) dishes for our potluck gatherings and other events. Let's act in harmony with our mission statement:

*The BCAS is a voice for birds and wildlife conservation through habitat protection, advocacy, and nature education.*



Honeybee gathering nectar from Indian blanket flower. Dodd Reservoir Prairie Wildlife Sanctuary, October.

*Photo courtesy of Steve Jones.*



## Greater Sage-Grouse: No Protection Granted Under the Endangered Species Act

On Sept. 22, 2015, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service declared that the Greater Sage-Grouse was no longer in need of Endangered Species Act protections, provoking deep apprehension among conservation scientists.

In 2010, the agency had declined to list the bird, not because it didn't need protection—listing was warranted, it declared—but because other creatures needed it more. Instead, the agency promised to make a final call on sage grouse by Sept. 30 of this year. That court-ordered deadline has been a galvanizing force for grouse conservation like no other. The federal government and the states have partnered with industry, landowners, and environmental nonprofits to protect habitat in several Western states.

Note that before European settlement, sagebrush covered more than 500,000 square miles; today, oil and gas development, renewable energy projects, subdivisions, wildfire, invasive species, and poorly managed grazing have whittled it down to about 250,000 square miles scattered across 11 states. Perhaps 400,000 grouse survive, down from as many as 16 million.



It remains to be seen whether the relationships forged in creating a vast protection effort will survive once this crisis mode has passed, or whether the feel-good collaboration will be enough to save the long-suffering grouse. Important conservation organizations like the National Audubon Society are expressing grave concerns.

—Linda Andes-Georges

Reference articles: [High Country News](#) [National Audubon Society](#)

*Photo from Cornell Lab of Ornithology's **The Sagebrush Sea**, which will be shown during the [Boulder Rights of Nature](#) film festival Nov. 5, 7:30 pm. Free showing.*

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## 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.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\$25/year for \_\_\_\_ years, \_\_\_\_\_ Additional contribution. Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Life Membership, \$300 \_\_\_\_\_

### Options for receiving *On the Wing*: (check one)

Paperless option—provide email

Paper copies of all issues

**BOULDER COUNTY WILDLIFE INVENTORY, JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 2015**

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

Altogether 99 bird species were seen in January. This is a respectable but not outstanding total. We seem to have had fewer reports than often. The **Tundra Swan** on Valmont, the **Golden-crowned Sparrow** near Teller Lakes feed lot, and the **Northern Cardinal** in the foothills of north Boulder were all continuing unusual species. A flock of about thirty **Bohemian Waxwings** were seen in Longmont; this is an irruptive species which are occasionally seen in their hundreds, but are more normally either not present at all or in very small numbers. Other unusual January sightings included **Long-eared Owl**, and **Chihuahuan Raven** (a notoriously difficult bird to identify). **Greater White-fronted Goose**, **Snow Goose**, **Northern Goshawk**, **Winter Wren**, **Marsh Wren**, **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**, **American Pipit**, **Yellow-rumped Warbler**, **White-throated Sparrow** and **Common Redpoll** are all good finds for January, although not outstandingly unusual. All three species of **Rosy Finch** were reported in Allenspark. **Pine Grosbeaks** were seen in Boulder at a lower elevation than usual.

Ninety nine bird species were also seen in February making this an average month as to total number of species. February is often a very slow month for both birds and birders, although there are signs of spring for those who know where to look. However, February 2015 was noteworthy for the number of early sightings of returning migrants. **Cinnamon Teal** is often one of the first migrants to return, and February reports are not unusual, but the 12<sup>th</sup> seems an early date for even this species. A **Say's Phoebe** seen on the 1<sup>st</sup> is at least six weeks earlier than normal. A **Williamson's Sapsucker** on the 28<sup>th</sup> is also very early; it is not unusual for the first sighting of this species to be in June. A **Turkey Vulture** on the 13<sup>th</sup> was an unusual February sighting. Two **Greater Yellowlegs** seen on the 7<sup>th</sup> were also many weeks earlier than usual. A **Virginia Rail** seen on the 21<sup>st</sup> may have been wintering. **Lesser Goldfinches** are also known to occasionally winter in Boulder County, so the two seen in Lyons may not have been returning migrants. In spite of all these early sightings, we did not have reports of any **Mountain Bluebirds**, which are usually one of the first harbingers of spring. There were also a few good sightings which would be notable at any time of year: **Red-necked Grebe**, **Lapland Longspur**, the continuing **Golden-crowned Sparrow** and the continuing **Northern Cardinal**. Five species of gulls were reported: **Ring-billed**, **California**, **Herring**, **Thayer's** and **Lesser Black-backed**. **Great-horned Owls** already had young, and **Eastern Screech Owl** and **Northern Pygmy Owl** were nice finds.



Photo of a Golden-Crowned Sparrow from the Cornell Lab *All About Birds* website.

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Please see the **Boulder County Audubon Society** website for [monthly and yearly wildlife inventories](#). We are profoundly thankful for the many years of dedication and significant amount of time that Gillian and Alex have invested to regularly compile and collect the wildlife inventory data.

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