



# On The Wing

Volume 47 Number 4

Boulder County Audubon Society Newsletter

Nov-Dec 2017

## BCAS 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday Program Series

**Holiday Sale and Program!! November 28, 2017, 5:00 PM to 9:00 PM.**

**With featured presenter Scott Rashid: “The Barn Owl Project”**

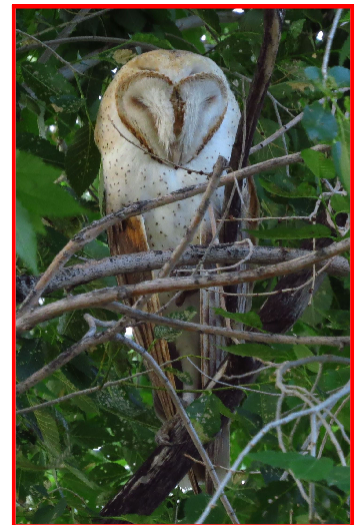
Please join Boulder County Audubon on November 28<sup>th</sup> for Scott’s presentation and one of our major yearly fundraisers. As always, we will be serving mulled cider and holiday treats.



Scott Rashid, founder of the Colorado Avian Research and Rehabilitation Institute, will present a program on the enigmatic Barn Owl. Scott, in partnership with Boulder County Audubon, has installed Barn Owl boxes on private land from northern and eastern Boulder County all the way to Berthoud. The results have been astounding with dozens of Barn Owl babies banded and fledged.

Find out where Scott has discovered they disperse, what they eat and how the parents manage to raise large broods. The program begins at 7:15.

Come early and do your holiday shopping in a way that benefits BCAS and nature lovers. We will have another stellar line-up of local artists and authors, as well as triple certified (organic, fair trade and shade grown) coffees from Caffe Ibis, delightful vegan cookies by master vegan chef, Dale Ball, and a large selection of rare and collectible books, along with other wonderful books on all topics avian and nature.



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

**BOULDER'S 76TH ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT****Sunday Dec. 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

Coordinator: Bill Schmoker

Free, and open to all ability levels...

The Boulder Circle of the CBC, sponsored by Boulder County Audubon, will begin early on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Specific start time depends on whether you go out really early for owls! (Ask your team leader—or BE a team leader.)

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) and it usually does. If you prefer, you can also stay at home and count at your feeder, while sipping mulled wine and munching snacks.

Following a full day in the field (for many of us), we celebrate together with the social event of the season, the compilation supper at the clubhouse at the **Villa del Prado, 635 Mohawk Dr., Boulder**, starting at 4:30pm. Boulder County Audubon will provide a main dish and salad. We ask participants to bring potluck appetizers, salads, and desserts as well as YOUR OWN PLATE, CUP, AND SILVERWARE. This year we will ask you to DONATE \$1 IF BCAS PROVIDES THESE ITEMS.

Please contact Bill Schmoker ([bill.schmoker@gmail.com](mailto:bill.schmoker@gmail.com)) to lead or join a team. This is THE social event of the Holiday Season!



*Wood Duck photo by Bill Schmoker*

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**(Jan 2018 issue) Dec 12.**

Contact editor via link at:  
<http://www.boulderaudubon.org/on-the-wing-newsletter/>



**Colorado Gives Day: Dec. 5, 2017**

*\$145 million for state non-profits since 2010 – continue the momentum*

Once again, BCAS will be included in the 2000+ participating 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! Proceeds from this event fund a “fat FOURTH” of our annual budget. So we can say that this is our “mardi gras!”

The website offers a fast and easy way to give to your favorite non-profits in one falcon swoop: join as a new donor, or use last year’s password.

The additional advantages we derive from donations on Colorado Gives Day (December 5<sup>th</sup> – or scheduled before that day by you, ahead of the crush) are these:

We’ll be given additional funds (a percentage of the total--an augmentation thanks to sponsors Community First, and First Bank). The additional sum is based upon the amount of funding our chapter receives from all of our friends; this holiday plum is called the Incentive Fund boost.

Special drawings make other prizes from the sponsors available to us —with a little luck.

Our donors can donate at any time, but to benefit from the perks above, you can participate in advance, starting on Nov. 1. 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, but 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!



**Spare the poor Turkeys, domestic and wild**

Yeah, yeah, we’ve all heard about sparing the Earth by eating vegetarian. Agriculture “accounts for 70% of freshwater use worldwide and 14% of the planet’s greenhouse gas emissions.” But can’t we get a break and go crazy on our Big Meal day? You can do both. Try spiced nuts and vegan cream cheese for openers; mushroom-cheese-spinach strudel or lasagna (with pea-protein spicy sausage filling); sweet potato soufflé, or mashed celery root and potatoes; and a palate-refresher of crunchy greens, dried cranberry and pear salad with a few little mandarin slices. Is your mouth watering already?

## “Self-Drive Safari in South Africa: Making Your Dream a Reality”

with Chris “Boomer” Petrizzo

Tuesday, January 23, 2018 at 7:15 p.m.

Have you dreamed of going on an African safari, but been intimidated by the prices posted by the tour companies, or overwhelmed with decisions about locations, accommodations, and getting around?

You can have your own grand adventure that is a rewarding, enjoyable experience, and a lot cheaper than you might think, and Chris will show you how!

South Africa has a well-developed infrastructure and some of the best bird and wildlife viewing on the continent.

Chris’ photos will take you to Kruger, Kgalagadi, the Garden Route and many other national parks and reserves, as he covers the practicalities of flights, local transport, sightseeing, and lodging.



Chris Petrizzo has photographed wildlife around the world, and probably has (he says) “a little too much experience” arranging his own travel – especially in South Africa. Chris pays for his wildlife habit by helping organizations develop and deliver great training.

### **Call for General Submissions!**

-- Have you recently taken a trip where the natural environment was the “main event”? Do you have expertise in some area of natural history or birds that you’d like to share with our members? Did you just read a wonderful book about the environment and want to share what you’ve learned by writing a book review? We are always looking for interesting, well-written pieces, usually from 250 to 500 words, and any illustrations or graphics you supply would be a bonus for us. Call one of us to talk about it!

## How to be prepared for your 1st (or 71st) Christmas Bird Count

By Laura Steadman

The great Christmas Bird Count is an honored tradition among birders. What birder doesn't love an excuse to spend all day ~~outside in the cold and wind~~ birding with friends? By participating in CBCs, we meet new birding pals, contribute to the longest running citizen science project in the nation, and have some fun while learning about birds. CBCs can be a great time for all ages and experience levels. Whether this season finds you participating in your 1st or 71st count, here are five tips on being prepared and making the most of the day!

### **Be prepared for the weather.**

Participating in a CBC often means spending much of the day outside in cold and sometimes windy weather. Layers are key, especially if you'll be getting in and out of a car a lot. It is better to have too many layers than not enough. If you will be out birding on a cold day, hand warmers can make holding those cold binoculars much more tolerable. Don't forget your sunblock if it will be sunny.

### **Pack appropriate food.**

Some CBCs will find you cruising slowly in a car all day, perhaps getting out occasionally. Others will find you walking and hiking. Both can be hunger-inducing work! Eat a good breakfast and pack plenty of food, snacks, and water for the day. If it's going to be cold out, a thermos of hot soup, some tea, or even hot cocoa is the perfect lunchtime treat.

### **Bring your patience.**

Participating in a CBC means helping take a census of the birds in an area. That means that every individual counts. The five-thousandth junco of the day is just as important as the first. You might get tired in the afternoon (I know I do!), but it's worth it to keep birding. You never know when that Merlin will swoop by!

### **Don't skip the compilation dinner.**

Many CBCs, including Boulder, have a compilation dinner after the big day of birding. Folks get together for a meal, relive the highlights of the day, and hang out with other birders. There's usually an exciting rundown of what birds were seen and how it compares to previous years. Don't miss the conclusion to all your hard work.

### **Most importantly -- have fun!**

Christmas Bird Counts are a time for bird lovers to come together and share their hobby with each other. It can be an exciting time of year to bird with others and shake off that cabin fever. If you're anything like me, you'll look forward to the count every year. Happy Birding!

## News on our precious NW Tree Giants

2012 research by Humboldt State scientist Steve Sillett shows that the mighty *Sequoiadendron giganteum* have more to teach us. The famous "President" Sequoia, not as tall as the tallest Eucalyptus in Australia, is however far more massive than any redwood or eucalypt. Its crown is fuller than "General Sherman's." It holds nearly two billion leaves. Sillett's accurate measurement findings "contradict a long-held premise in forest ecology—that wood production decreases during the old age of a tree. That premise, which has justified countless management decisions in favor of short-rotation forestry, may hold true for some kinds of trees... but not for giant sequoias or other tall species." The older ones continue to grow quickly, inhaling great breaths of CO<sub>2</sub>...

-- from the December 2012 National Geographic Magazine

## Field Trips & Events, Nov 2017-Jan 2018

### Birds and Brews, Walden Ponds and Avery Brewing with Eric DeFonso

**Sunday, November 19, 2017, 3 p.m. to about 6:30 p.m.**

Free, RSVP at <https://www.meetup.com/Boulder-Birds-and-Brew/events/244605216/>

Bring binoculars (and we will have some extras) and a scope if you have one. We'll look for waterfowl in their breeding plumage, raptors, and tough winter birds in the area. Beer and socializing later at Avery. Meet at the Cottonwood Marsh parking lot, north of Valmont Rd. and just west off of 75th St. at 3:00pm. Avery is at 4910 Nautilus Ct. North, just east off of 63rd Street. Boulder County Audubon Society will provide delicious snacks and you purchase your own drinks. Eric DeFonso will be our excellent guide again. Please join us and RSVP soon!

### Great Boulder Caper with Ted Floyd

**Friday, November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016, 7:30 a.m.-Sundown**

Free: No limit, no reservations necessary.

Work off some of that holiday turkey dinner on this annual outing with the ever energetic Ted Floyd, the erudite editor of American Birding Magazine. Here is Ted's uniquely Floydian invitation:

"Hard to say where we'll go or what we'll see, but our very broad objective will be to visit various lakes and ponds in eastern Boulder County. Maybe we'll see Bonaparte's Gulls, a Swamp Sparrow or two, Harlan's Hawks and Cassiar Juncos, diverse geese and gulls, problematic goldeneyes, a rare grebe or loon...or maybe, probably, something entirely unexpected."

No experience necessary. Children and non-birding companions welcome. Carpooling helpful. Bring binoculars if you have 'em. Bring a scope to share. Or not. Bring leftover tofurkey (this is the Great BOULDER Caper, after all) and orange slices and such. Feel free to email lead caperer, Yours Truly, with any questions: tedfloyd57 "at" hotmail "dot" com. Meet at 7:30 at Cottonwood Marsh at Walden Ponds, off of 75<sup>th</sup> Street.

## Field Trips & Events, Nov 2017-Jan 2018 (cont'd)

### 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Winter Solstice Hike with Steve Jones

**Thursday, December 21, 2017, 7 a.m.**

Leader: Steve Jones

Free: Limited to 20, register: [curlewsj@comcast.net](mailto:curlewsj@comcast.net)

This annual homage to the beginning of lengthening days at the Winter Solstice, will meet at the North Teller/White Rocks Trail on the south side of Valmont, between 75<sup>th</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup> Streets. It is traditional to bring prose, poems or serene thoughts to share in heartfelt fellowship. This area, with its varied habitats is sure to fill your senses with the joy that waterfowl, passerines and raptors can bring.

Breakfast at the Garden Gate Café in Niwot follows at 9. When you register with Steve, please let him know if you plan on joining the group for breakfast.

### A Rosie Outlook for Rosy Finches Redux

**Saturday, January 13, 2018, 10 a.m-1-2p.m. depending on wind and weather**

Leader: Carl Starace

Free: Limited to 11 in 3 cars, reservations: [castarace@gmail.com](mailto:castarace@gmail.com)

Back by popular demand! Join Carl for this frosty search for the various seed eaters that weather Colorado's high country winters. This will be both a car tour of mountain feeders and a hike along Ski Road, so dress appropriately and be prepared for cold and wind. The target species are hopefully all 3 Rosy-Finches (Gray-crowned, Black and Brown-capped), Evening and Pine Grosbeaks, and Red Crossbills. White-winged Crossbills would ice the cake!

Meet along Railroad Avenue in Lyons, by the public toilets at Sandstone Park to car pool. Snacks and warm drinks advised!

### **CALL FOR EDITOR(S)!**

-- Are you a person who spots the errors in everyone's writing? Maybe you have the makings of a **copy editor**. Our long-time newsletter editor has retired. We'll provide guidance and encouragement. You provide the skill and dedication. Boulder County Audubon needs you!

-- Have you worked with Microsoft Publisher? It's fun -- like putting together a jigsaw puzzle. We are looking for a bright, helpful person who can put those jigsaw pieces together for our newsletter. The newsletter comes out only four times per year. The articles and content for the newsletter will be provided by others. Put your Publisher skills to work for a very good cause! We need you as our **layout editor**.

## Wildlife Short Tails

### from past BCAS members

How many of us have stories that begin, “Something was trying to get in the tent?” Some past BCAS members once began a Retreat by sharing a few of their favorite wildlife encounters:

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Four of us were setting up camp on the gravel bar next to a stream. Food, tents, sleeping bags, etc. were all spread out. I walked over to the stream and looked upstream, instantly perceiving a large bear coming downstream at 20 mph or so... My hollered warning caused a lot of noisy confusion among the campers, upon which the bear soon burst. Leaving skid tracks in the gravel, the bear made a rapid about-face and disappeared in the brush. – *George Oetzel*

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While hiking alone in the Organ Mountains of New Mexico, I almost stepped on a huge rattlesnake. I froze as it faced me, coiled and rattling, until I had the idea that I ought to back up very very slowly—and then I ran like hell. – *Mary Balzer*

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My partner and I were camped at Crater Lake, west of Arapaho Pass, in August. During the night, my partner woke me up to say, “Something’s trying to get in the tent!” Drowsily, I told my friend that it was just the wind... or something, and to go back to sleep. When we awoke the next morning, the couple who had camped nearby came rushing up to us. “Did you see that badger trying to dig its way into your tent last night?” I slinked off into the woods. – *Steve Jones*

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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. Supporting memberships are just \$25 annually. You can join online or download a printable form to send with your check.

**Visit:** <http://www.boulderaudubon.org/about-us/#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 includes extra articles.



## Wildlife Short Tails (cont'd)

As I was sitting by the last line of trees upon Niwot Ridge, a young snowshoe hare burst out of the bushes, followed by another and then another... and another... until five bunnies were chasing each other around. Dodging and weaving, jumping straight up in the air—they looked like they were on stilts, their legs seeming too long for their bodies! They sometimes disappeared into the alpine foliage and a few moments later would come popping out from another spot like some sort of slapstick comedy routine. The show lasted for several minutes, but they never seemed to notice their audience, so busy were they at their game of tag. – *Nancy Neupert*

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Out of 400 rabid birders at a festival, only one was lucky enough to see a Cerulean Warbler, and that was me! – *J.D. Birchmeier* (may he rest in peace in a birdy spot somewhere warm.)

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Four of us were backpacking in a rugged, remote canyon of western Colorado: two men, two women, and an 8 month-old baby (who was IN a backpack). On day 2, P. went ahead to scout the route. A large cougar appeared and lunged toward him. He managed a desperate face-kick with his boot, and shouted for help. The cougar was undeterred. Two of us ran towards the sound of his shout, not knowing the situation. Suddenly there was the fierce, piercing cry of the cougar as it turned toward the sound of our approach. The men saw the cougar run past us in tall grass, and in the direction of the mother in child remaining in camp. Three of us now ran back in that direction as well. With five of us grouped together beneath a great pine tree, the men threw rocks at the animal crouching in the grass. I handed them rocks and K held her baby. Finally the cougar vanished toward the stream. The humans, holding rocks and large sticks stood our ground like cave men and women. We decided to hike out hard and never return there. – *Maddie Goldhawk*

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While searching for birds in a southern swamp, I leaped over a large log, and in mid-air, I noticed that I was going to land on a cottonmouth snake coiled on the other side. Somehow, in mid-leap, I went through the gyrations of a cat, and landed back where I started from. Apparently my air dance was entertaining enough that my companion, observing me, was rolling on the ground laughing. My heart was pounding. The snake—perhaps a humorless one--never moved. – *Ken Strom*

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Every morning I take a walk in Open Space. There are occasionally coyotes, but one morning there was an exceptional incident. Not far away from me, a coyote was wailing with her nose uplifted in the air, like a wolf. In front of the coyote, sitting quietly with his head down, was a second one, listening to the first with a sad demeanor. It seemed to me that the sad one was compassionate with the anguish of the first. They remained like that as long as I waited there. – *Maureen Lawry*

## National Eagle and Wildlife Property Repository

by Carol Kampert

Tigers, lions, and elephants, oh my! These are just some of the threatened and endangered wildlife species represented at the National Wildlife Property Repository near Denver. During a two-hour guided tour organized by BCAS Board member **Carol McCasland**, fifteen of us were able to visit this unique facility in early September. Located on the grounds of the Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Refuge, the Repository – which serves the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) – receives and stores more than 1.3 million wildlife specimens and wildlife products. These items are seized and confiscated by special OLE agents and wildlife inspectors throughout the United States and U.S. Territories. The facility also accepts donated or abandoned wildlife property from the public, such as family heirlooms, trophies, or artifacts obtained legally prior to bans.

No live wildlife is stored at the facility, but in the Repository's cavernous 22,000 square-foot warehouse we were amazed - and dismayed - to see row upon row of floor-to-ceiling shelves stacked with polar bear rugs, carved ivory "curios", stuffed parrots, crocodile skin boots, tiger heads, and other products derived from threatened or endangered species. It was especially disconcerting to learn about the extent of unlawful animal trafficking in the U.S. and that the large inventory of items at the Repository represents only a fraction of the volume of items involved in the trade.

One of the most interesting items in the warehouse was a huge crate of crushed elephant ivory. In 2012, six tons of ivory – including whole tusks and carved statues – were crushed at the Refuge by an industrial rock crusher. The purpose of the "ivory crush" was to raise awareness of the illegal trafficking of elephant ivory and the poaching of elephants that supports the trade.

As part of its education mission, many of the Repository's items are donated to educational facilities, non-profit organizations, and conservation agencies where they are used to teach about endangered species. Some items are sent to scientific institutions where they are used in research to better identify and/or protect endangered wildlife.

In the Eagle Repository, which is housed in the same facility as the Wildlife Repository, we watched in fascination as several volunteers in lab coats inspected Bald and Golden Eagle carcasses sent to the Repository from all over the U.S. Feathers, talons, tails, wings, and even whole birds which are in good shape are stored and then shipped to Native American tribal members who can legally request them for traditional ceremonies.

After the tour, we were free to explore the Refuge on designated trails and roads. Close to the Refuge Interpretive Center, we were thrilled to see a couple of black-footed ferrets in an outdoor enclosure. They are part of a group of 50 captive-bred ferrets released on the Refuge in 2016, most of whom are doing well in prairie dog colonies on the property. But the two ferrets we saw are an older breeding pair who can't survive on their own and are being cared for by Refuge personnel and volunteers. Endangered species recovering from near-extinction due to the efforts of dedicated wildlife folks is certainly something to cheer about!