



On The Wing

Volume 46 Number 1

Boulder County Audubon Society Newsletter

Feb. 2016-Mar. 2016

BCAS Programs and Events

February 23, 2016 7:15 PM

Duane Nelson: The Status of Piping Plovers and Least Terns in Colorado

Duane Nelson, a biologist, has worked for over 25-years in the study, management, and conservation of Least Terns and Piping Plovers in Colorado. In 2002, Duane began working as a contractor with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at John Martin Dam and Reservoir. Previously, Duane worked for the Colorado Division of Wildlife and the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO).

Among the many projects Duane is involved in, he designs sustainable ways to create and maintain nesting habitat, including island creation that reduces depredation as well as managing invasive plants to provide barren beach habitat needed by the birds.



Piping Plover by Duane Nelson

Duane is a very articulate and interesting speaker and will discuss his conservation work on behalf of these endangered birds with a beautiful and informative power-point, slides, and videos.

Saturday, Feb. 27

The annual Audubon/Sierra Club legislative forum is far more fun and stimulating than you may imagine. It is held in SE Denver (First Plymouth Church, 3501 S. Colorado Boulevard, Denver--SW corner of Colorado and Hampden), beginning at 8:30 a.m. and carrying on through a comradely lunch to 1:30 p.m. You will meet like-minded conservationists and activists both old and new (choose your own category).

Current hot environmental topics in this year's State legislature are briefly outlined. You will never get this depth of information from the newspaper. Expect both education and entertainment.

Participating legislators are invited to speak during lunch and stay for further discussions, which gives you a chance to meet and engage them. The elections in November 2014 have provided some new and interesting faces at the Capitol and a raft of new bills. We already have seen one on protecting birds and bats at wind farms; water will certainly be another major topic.

The cost of the Forum is \$12 in advance and \$15 at the door. You can register and pay online at <http://www.denveraudubon.org/conservation/>, or call the Audubon office at 303-973-9530, M-Thurs. 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. to use a credit card, or send your check to: Audubon of Greater Denver, 9308 S. Wadsworth Blvd., Littleton, CO 80128.

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.

2016 Workshops and Field Trips

Sat., March 12, 8 am to 5 pm: Landscaping with Colorado Native Plants—in-depth exploration of the colorful options!

Location: the Ranch Events Center/Larimer County Fairgrounds (Thomas M McKee 4H Community Bldg)

Cost: \$90 for adults, \$45 for students with ID; lunch, drinks, snacks provided.

Keynote speaker: Susan Tweit of Salida CO, author of "Meadow: How Gardens and Nature Restoration Revived a Neighborhood and Transformed a Town."

Additional workshop info and registration here:

<https://landscapingwithcoloradonativeplants.wordpress.com/registration/>

Field Trips

Sat. Feb. 13 or Sun. Feb. 14 (TBD per weather):

Shed those holiday calories and enjoy a breath of fresh air on the shoulder of snowy Niwot Ridge while listening for high-altitude birds and counting them for the Indian Peaks bird count. Rosy finches and various crossbills are possible. The hike can be done on snowshoes or cross-country skis, and will take place whenever the wind stops blowing (so we need to stay in touch the week preceding the event). We will provide hot tea and cinnamon rolls for the mid-morning snack. The hike is about 4 miles round-trip, and we go SLOWLY. Contact: Linda Andes-Georges 303 772 3239

Sunday, March 20, 7:30 a.m. – 11 a.m. Spring welcoming breakfast hike at Sawhill Ponds. Join Steve Jones for a slow-paced stroll back to the woods bordering Boulder Creek, where we will enjoy potluck breakfast accompanied by honking geese, flickering flickers, "sreeping" creepers, and maybe a yellow-rumped warbler or two. On the way back we'll admire the herons, raptors, and early spring ducks in and around the ponds. Bring your own plate and utensils, along with something sweet, savory, or serendipitous to share on this first day of spring. Limited to 25. To reserve, contact Steve at curlwsj@comcast.net.

Sat. Apr. 16: Relieve your spring fever and get out east to visit (or revisit) the infamous Rocky Mountain Arsenal. We expect to find some early migrants along the trails; we will also spend a bit of time learning about the exciting Black-footed ferret program (80 were originally released a couple of years ago, and are currently being monitored), as well as making a brief stop to admire the healthy bison herd up close & personal (they are far more massive than you remembered!). Paula Hansley will keep us listening for the birds, and Linda Andes-Georges may be able to organize a secondary visit to the USFS Repository; still TBD. Carpool meeting time and place to be determined. Call Linda at 303-772-3239 to reserve a spot. Trip limited to 8 people.

Sunday, May 22, 7 a.m. – 11 a.m. Bird and butterfly survey in upper Gregory and Long Canyons with Steve Jones. Enjoy two of the most diverse canyons in Boulder County while learning how you can adopt your own wild area as part of the Boulder County Ecosystem Stewardship Initiative. We'll walk about a mile up the canyon, counting birds on the way up and butterflies on the way down. Limited to 15. To reserve a spot, contact Steve at curlwsj@comcast.net.

Boulder County Audubon Society

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Mary Balzer (303-499-0662)

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Teen Naturalists

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Conservation Corner

by Ray Bridge, BCAS Conservation Chair

Most of the attention of BCAS in the last few months has been devoted to two issues: the Open Space and Mountain Parks North Trail Study Area (NTSA) and the proposed Expansion of Eldora Mountain Resort (EMR).

Eldora Expansion

BCAS has opposed the proposed expansion of the resort into the Middle Boulder Creek and Jenny Creek drainages, which had been prohibited under the adopted forest plan.

Through last September, the USFS appeared poised to approve expansion into both these riparian corridors. However, diligence paid off, and at the beginning of October, USFS issued a final record of decision that has given us at least a temporary victory, allowing EMR to construct all requested improvements within its current boundaries, but postponing any decision on the two expansion requests.

NTSA

The NTSA covers all the city open space properties north of Linden Avenue and Northwest of the Longmont Diagonal, including a number of county-owned properties. Most contentious has been the routing of the regional trail connection from the edge of Boulder to the Joder property. Several recreation groups have demanded a trail on the west side of US Highway 36. BCAS has supported a connection on the east side of the highway. The west side route would cut directly through the last large habitat block and the last foothills riparian drainages in the system that are unaffected by recreation pressures.

Unfortunately, at the OSBT study session this last week three of the five trustees supported the trail on the west side, fragmenting the habitat conservation area.

State Legislature

With Democratic control of the House and GOP control of the Senate, few important bills of concern to Audubon are likely to go anywhere this year. However, there will probably be progress on the State Water Plan, which makes progress on many important conservation goals.



Photo courtesy of Ray Bridge

It's Membership Renewal time!!!

It's membership season! You have probably received your renewal notice. This year will be full of great classes, activities, and programs. Every membership begins on January 1st and ends on December 31st. Please renew by March 31st so your membership does not lapse. In most cases, your membership to National Audubon Society does not include membership to our local chapter. The easiest way to renew is at:

<http://www.boulderaudubon.org/about-us/#membership>

Or you can use the form included in this newsletter. If you have any questions, please contact our Membership Chair at: cmaynardre@gmail.com

The Messenger: a metaphor-documentary about songbirds, our 21st century coal-mine canaries

Many folks in Boulder recently had a chance to view this outstanding nature documentary at the Dairy Center in January (about 400 people, we believe). All came away dazzled by the photography, pensive with thoughts of risks as well as hopeful ideas, and dreamy with the musical resonances accompanying the film.



The audiences contained many children. Bravo to the brave parents who brought them; no doubt the ensuing discussions would be more educational than two hours of class lecturing. Most of us were astonished that in spite of the quantity of very bad news contained in the film, we emerged more energized than depressed.

At present, good ideas for grass-roots activism on climate change and especially for bird conservation are bubbling up from scientists and citizen scientists in many countries. The film highlights some of these in a globally diverse context.

Look for the film on Netflix soon!!

Eco-steward Discoveries in 2015

By Steve Jones and Linda Andes-Georges



Cedar Waxwing. Photo © Woody Green

The program, initiated by Boulder County Nature Association, and now supported by their volunteers as well as many from BCAS, is currently monitoring seventeen areas. Other volunteers are welcome to select their own piece of the County that they wish to oversee and document (breeding birds; butterflies; plants; weeds; recreational use—as many of these as you feel able to assume). The data is collected by Steve Jones, who reports a selection of observations each year for our enjoyment (and maintains the data for use by our land management agencies). Here is a sampling from 2015—note that not all reports have been received at this time:

- ◆ **Boulder Reservoir and Coot Lake** (Jones et. al.). Nesting Northern Harriers (all the young were eaten by coyotes) and seven American Bittern nesting territories producing at least two fledged young. Cedar Waxwings feeding fledglings.
- ◆ **Crescent Meadows** (Jamison). Successfully nesting Dusky Grouse, Lewis's Woodpeckers (2 fledged young) and Red-naped Sapsuckers. Territorial Cooper's Hawk.
- ◆ **Long Canyon** (Jones). We've now documented 65 butterfly species along 0.7-miles of trail in upper Gregory and lower Long Canyon.
- ◆ **Shanahan** (Laursen, Naughton, Cullen, Kelly, Southard, VanWie). A male Ovenbird was singing high on the ridge for the sixth consecutive year. Cooper's Hawks fledged young.
- ◆ **South Mesa Trail** (Roberts). A Marmot was observed, along with 3 Peregrine Falcons, a calling Common Poorwill, and a Yellow-breasted Chat female feeding a fledgling.
- ◆ **Teller Lakes** (Cushman). A Mink observation here is the first one we've received within one of our adopted areas. Wood Ducks may nest somewhere in this area.



American Bittern.
Photo © Bill Schmoker

Bobcats in Boulder!!

There have been several sightings of bobcats in west Boulder over the past several weeks. Bobcats are common in our area and are sometimes confused with lynx, which are found in dense high altitude forests or willow-rich mountain stream habitats. Do you know how to tell the difference between lynx and bobcat?

Both animals have a black tuft of hair coming off the tip of each ear; however, bobcats have shorter tufts. The lynx stands taller, has longer legs and much larger feet, used to hunt their preferred prey of snowshoe hare. Bobcats can weigh 10 to 30 pounds, while the typical lynx weighs 20 to 40 pounds. Lynx and bobcat both have a gray base coat with some white underfur.

The lynx's tail is solid black and the bobcat's is black with some light color breaks and black stripes. Both animals have short tails, and they will look similar without a keen eye. Look hard for the stripes to determine the species. The lynx has some light spotting but the coat is overwhelmingly gray; bobcat mostly spotted. Tracks: The bobcat paw is a full inch smaller than the lynx's, which measures about 2 inches.



Bobcat in Boulder. Photo courtesy Peter Burke.

A Grousy (but not Grinchy) Decision

(excerpted from Audubon-Rockies emailed newsletter)

Recently the sage grouse have been much in the news. From a conservation perspective, the results have been mixed. While there is language in the "omnibus" funding bill—much ballyhooed by both parties—which prevents US Fish & Wildlife from funding any supportive efforts to list the Greater Sage Grouse as *endangered*, there is at the same time enough funding to enable the BLM collaborative plan that several agencies and environmental organizations have cobbled together to help the birds. (Perhaps we can think of them fondly as our backyard Greater Sage Grice).

Further good news, albeit temporary, is that there is now in place a three-year extension (and a one-time funding boost) for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which has been in politically conservative crosshairs for many years. The short-term extension also forces lawmakers to continue debating whether the 50-year-old LWCF is in need of structural reforms, as proposed by Bishop and other fiscal conservatives. But the bill still provides \$450 million for LWCF, a near 50 percent increase over current levels, and still allocates about half of the funding to federal land acquisitions that reform proponents have sought to curb.

And lastly, in a surprise to many, the omnibus also did not contain a rider mandating that FWS delist the gray wolf in Wyoming and the Great Lakes.

Look for more details on all of these issues in future Audubon Rockies newsletters. (To obtain their emailed copies, write to Daly Edmunds (dedmunds@audubon.org) or Lynn Tennefoss (ltennefoss@audubon.org).

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



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<http://tiny.cc/8s2b8x>

Jim McKee, September 27, 1932 – December 26, 2015

By Scott Severs

A longtime friend and board member of Boulder County Nature Association (BCNA), and Boulder County Open Space volunteer naturalist Jim McKee passed away recently. Many of you already know this and attended the recent memorial.

Jim and I served on the BCNA board around the same time. He was a strong voice for ecological based positions for conservation for local and especially state wildlife issues. Jim brought this voice for many years to the Colorado Wildlife Commission, a Governor appointed decision board often dominated by political or business interests. Jim's attendance was a valuable service to a group that often lacked a scientific or public perspective when making decisions for Colorado's wildlife. Jim did this difficult work with passion, and often without the recognition he truly deserved. His consistent civility was an endearing quality brought to challenging issues, often too rare in this day and age.

Jim was an incredible naturalist, whose knowledge of ecosystems, wildlife, plants, etc. he shared endlessly with and trained many a volunteer naturalist for Boulder County.

His full obituary can be found here:

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/dailycamera/obituary.aspx?n=Jim-McKee&pid=177091023>

Natural shorts:

Wave energy absorbed by Coral Reefs: 97%

(*Nature Communications*, confirming the importance of reefs in shielding coastlines from damaging storm energy)

Blowing in the wind: for every 500 miles of travel by rail, each train car of coal loses 500 lbs of carbon particles. Most trains travel over 1500 miles to their destinations.

Big predators, always the unloved:

In the fall of 2015 a federal court ruled that the USFWS violated the law by stripping Wyoming's wolves of protection under the Endangered Species Act. In December, another court restored federal protections to the Great Lakes population of wolves. Now the eternal enemies of the wolf are going to attempt to overturn restored protections by legislation giving wolf management to the states. Keep an eye out for opportunities to write to Congress on this matter.

Boulder Audubon Interludes with Nature 2016

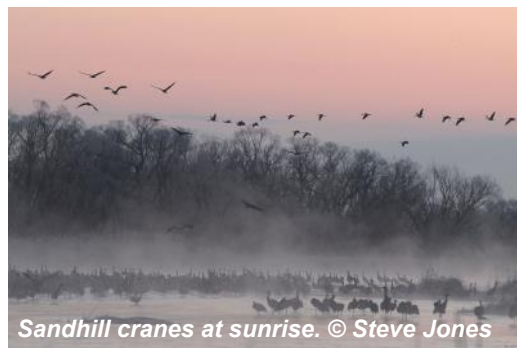
We are pleased to offer the following Interludes trips; four of the trips have sold out, but these are still available!!

Call of the Cranes: Sandhills Migration, Kearney, NE **Leader: Alison Holloran, Executive Director, Audubon Rockies.**

March 24-26, trip limited to 20

Cost: \$90 per person.

Join us to witness and be awed by the mass migration of over 600,000 magnificent Sandhill Cranes. We have reserved a private blind for our group at the Lillian Rowe Sanctuary on the Platte River in Kearney, NE for Friday morning, at the very height of this iconic bird's passage through their primary staging grounds. With some luck, we may also find one or more of the 300 Whooping Cranes that also migrate through Nebraska. The cost of \$90 includes a gourmet breakfast on Friday morning, blind fees, and a donation to Boulder Audubon. We will carpool from Boulder and stay at the Rodeway Inn in Kearney. To register and get complete info, contact Mary Balzer at marybalzer6@gmail.com



Sandhill cranes at sunrise. © Steve Jones

Ancient Natural History: Fossil Hunting in the Green River Formation in Western Colorado

Leader: Pam Piombino, President of Boulder County Audubon Society.

Friday-Saturday, June 3-4

Cost: \$35 per person, limited to 12.

Join us to explore a very different aspect of the natural sciences. This particular outcrop of the Green River Formation, located atop Douglas Pass in western Colorado, is internationally renowned for delicately preserved specimens of insects, leaves, branches, and seeds. Occasional feather imprints are also found.

The Green River Formation is Eocene in age and represents a series of three inter-mountain lakes that once covered portions of Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah approximately 50 million years ago. We will camp for free very close to the fossil area, where there is a large flat space that can accommodate the group. You will have to provide your own food and water. The top of Douglas Pass is an hour north of Loma, CO and a 6-6.5 hour drive from Boulder. To register and get complete info, contact Mary Balzer at marybalzer6@gmail.com

Back by Popular Demand: Ovenbirds, Golden Eagles, and Banded Hairstreaks: Breeding Birds and Butterflies of Roxborough State Park

Leader: Steve Jones, author and naturalist

Monday, June 20 6:15 a.m.-2 p.m.

Cost: \$50 per person, limited to 10 participants.

Roxborough State Park, one of the most spectacular protected areas in the Front Range foothills, supports over 80 breeding bird species and an equal number of butterflies. Listen for the rhythmic chants of ovenbirds while enjoying a gourmet picnic brunch among old-growth Douglas-fir/Gambel oak woodlands. We will search the sky for golden eagles, and take time to photograph the many butterflies in the park. We will hike to Carpenter Peak, a four mile hike with an elevation gain of about 800 feet.

Steve has completed a comprehensive breeding bird survey of the park for Colorado State Parks and Wildlife in 2009 and is co-author, with Jan Chu, of *Butterflies of the Colorado Front Range*. A \$7 state parks pass is required. To register and get complete info, contact Mary Balzer at marybalzer6@gmail.com

This is Not Your Grandparent's Zoo Anymore!

Leaders: Docents, Carol McCasland and Brinda Henley

Thursday, June 23

Cost: \$50 per person, limited to 20, with two groups of 10 each.

If you think zoos are just places to house animals, think again! Zoos today are focusing on helping animals that are endangered by breeding selectively, and by helping to conserve habitat in the field. Exhibit design is done with an approach of giving the visitor an 'immersive' experience as well as better meeting the animals' needs. We'll take a stroll through the zoo highlighting some critically endangered animals, and talk about how YOU can help them in the wild. A gourmet catered picnic lunch is included. To register and get complete info, contact Mary Balzer at marybalzer6@gmail.com

The Great Backyard Bird Count is coming up!! February 12-15, 2016 How many birds will you find?

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is a free, fun, and easy event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the four-day event and report their sightings online at birdcount.org. Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can participate from your backyard, or anywhere in the world.



More info here: <http://www.audubon.org/content/about-great-backyard-bird-count>

2016 Ecosystem Symposium

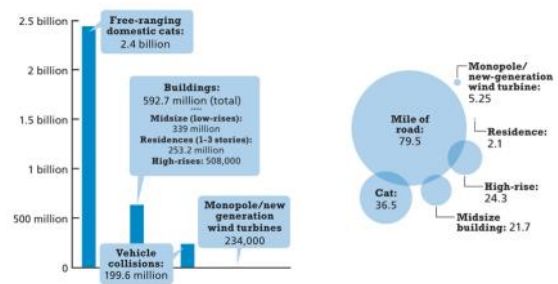
Boulder County Nature Association holds a yearly conference to present information and encourage discussion about a topic of current interest. In 2016, the symposium will be held on Saturday, March 14th. This year's topic is *Sustainable Agriculture: Food for Thought* and will focus on the connections between Boulder County's natural and agricultural resources. With a rich agricultural heritage, Boulder County's agricultural practices have done much to affect plant and wildlife populations—for the good and otherwise. We will also look at the role of agriculture in releasing and storing carbon.



Please see the BCNA website for complete info:
<http://bcna.org/ecosymposium.html>

Help Birds: Keep Cats Indoors!!

Did you know? Cats kill over one billion birds each year.



That's right: one *billion*!! In addition to the many threats to migratory bird populations—including habitat loss, window strikes, and collisions with cars—cats may well pose the biggest danger to birds of all, researchers say. America's cats, including housecats that are allowed outdoors and feral cats, kill between 1.3 billion and 4.0 billion birds in a year, says Peter Marra of the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute in Washington, D.C., who led the team that performed a recent analysis.

One of our local wildlife rehabilitators, Colorado Native Bird Care and Conservation, reports that nearly half the birds they treat are attacked by cats. "We've seen every type of bird attacked by cats: ground nesting birds, tree nesting birds, ledge nesting birds, and waterfowl," says Donna Nespole, licensed rehabilitator of CNBCC.

"Domestic cats are very adept predators and birds, having not evolved with this type of predator, are virtually defenseless."



Boulder Audubon takes the stance that "all cats should be kept indoors for the preservation of wildlife." Outdoor cats are also susceptible to many dangers, including cars, wild predators, disease, and injury from other free-roaming cats. So do wildlife and your kitties a favor: keep them inside!!

Information: <https://www.sciencenews.org/article/cats-kill-more-one-billion-birds-each-year>

Redstone Review http://issuu.com/sdcmc/docs/redstone_janfeb2016issuu

Discover: <http://discovermagazine.com/2014/nov/10-bye-bye-birdies>

Colorado Native Bird Care is a 501c3 nonprofit organization that rehabilitates birds, bats, and small mammals. To learn more about them and make a donation, go to: <http://www.coloradonativebird.org/>

2015 — Hottest Year Ever

Scientists reported Wednesday that 2015 was the hottest year in the historical record by far, breaking a mark set only the year before — a burst of heat that has continued into the new year and is roiling weather patterns all over the world.

In the contiguous United States, the year was the second-warmest on record, punctuated by a December that was both the hottest and the wettest since record-keeping began. One result has been a wave of unusual winter floods coursing down the Mississippi River watershed.

It will take a few more years to know for certain, but the back-to-back records of 2014 and 2015 may have put the world back onto a trajectory of rapid global warming, after a period of relatively slow warming dating to the last powerful El Niño, in 1998.

Extracted from:

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/21/science/earth/2015-hottest-year-global-warming.html?_r=0



Clockwise from top left: A family sleeping on the roof of a house in New Delhi last May; people navigating a flooded street in a canoe in Arnold, Mo., on Dec. 31; tourists in a haze-shrouded Singapore last September; the drought-stricken Molatedi Dam in South Africa in November. Credit Clockwise from top left; Tsering Topgyal/Associated Press, Jeff Roberson/Associated Press, Edgar Su/Reuters, Stuart Graham/Associated Press

Cameras Show New Highway 9 Wildlife Overpass Is An Early Success

Game cameras show animals like deer and a fox are using a first-of-its-kind wildlife overpass built on Highway 9 near Kremmling last year.

The multi-million dollar project aimed at reducing animal vs. car crashes on the notoriously dangerous stretch of busy roadway seems to be working, according to Colorado Parks and Wildlife officials.

“This is the first overpass built in Colorado but I think the Colorado Department of Transportation and Colorado Parks and Wildlife and even the public are looking at this and asking, ‘Why aren’t we doing more of these elsewhere in the state?’” asked Colorado Parks and Wildlife spokeswoman Michelle Cowardin.

“Within days of it being completed we started having evidence of deer using the overpass on a daily basis,” said Cowardin.

Complete article: <http://denver.cbslocal.com/2016/01/28/cameras-show-new-highway-9-wildlife-overpass-is-being-used-by-animals/>



Varied Thrush in Lyons, Colorado!!

At least two Varied Thrush have been seen in Larimer County above Lyons since mid-January.



Photo courtesy of Brent Daniel and Colorado Native Bird Care and Conservation.

More info: <http://www.coloradonativebird.org/>

Trumpeter Swans seen near Pella Crossing in Boulder

Photo courtesy of Kerrie Bryan



A Northern Goshawk hunting Columbiformes in Lyons, CO. Get out there and go birding! Photo © of Brent Daniel. All Rights Reserved.

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We get very little return from National Audubon dues and have to rely primarily on local funding to support Boulder County Audubon Society activities.

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