



Saturday, December 16 Audubon Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, the 16th of December is the day for the Colorado Springs Christmas Bird Count. This will be the 56th year that Aiken will have taken part, either as a chapter or affiliate (Aiken Ornithological Society) of the National Audubon Society. Our count area is a 15-mile diameter circle, about 177 square miles, centered at Colorado Springs Psychiatric Center. It is one of some 2,000 plus count areas throughout Central and North America that will be surveyed from dawn to dusk this year. Some of the Caribbean islands, Hawaii, and several Pacific islands are also included in the count.

Sally and I are coordinating the count again this year, and will be compiling the results for entering into National Audubon's Christmas Count data base.

We need your help! Experience is not a requirement, only your willingness to participate. You may take part in the field counting for the full day or just in the morning or afternoon. Those of you who would like to count birds at your feeders on this day can also make an important contribution. In either case, call us at the phone number listed below.

Sightings of unusual birds are also important. If you see any uncommon birds during the week leading up to December 16, please contact Sally or I so we can pass this information along to the appropriate area count leader.

The results of all the Christmas Bird Counts across the country will be published by the National Audubon Society in a special issue of *American Birds*. Those field counters who pay a \$5.00 count fee will receive this special issue.

Kent Borges and Stephanie DiCenzo will again host an after-the-count potluck gathering at their home. If you like, bring a food dish to share and join us as we compare the first results of the day's count.

• BEN SORENSEN

For more information and to sign up:
Ben & Sally Sorensen
719.635.1716

After-Count Potluck at 5pm
Kent Borges & Stephanie DiCenzo
975 Terrace Circle, Colorado Springs, CO 80904

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to another issue of *Aikorns*. As a former teacher with students who would often say there are no new things to be discovered in the world, I am always encouraged when a new species is announced. A few months ago it was a new coral found around Indonesia. In October came the announcement of a beautiful brush-finch discovered in a previously unexplored cloud forest in the Andes. I hope everyone saw the Yariques Brush-finch photo in the Gazette recently. And although the Little Blue Heron is not a newly discovered species, it is a very uncommon bird to our area. I hope you went to Fountain Creek Regional Park to see our recent visitor. The Little Blue Heron* is just another example of an opportunity to see the unusual.

I recently received a memo announcing the upcoming National Audubon board election for the Southwest Region. The new Southwest Region will encompass the states of Arizona, Colorado, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Texas. If anyone is interested in serving on the National Audubon Board of Directors, contact me and I will give you a position description, procedure directions and other paperwork. January 31, 2007 is the deadline for nominations; elections and voting occurs April – June 30, 2007. This is an opportunity to have greater impact and possible influence on Audubon issues.

Finally, I would like to encourage everyone to participate and support the upcoming annual

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DATES TO REMEMBER

November 15
Program: Bird Coloration

December 16
Christmas Bird Count

January 17
Program: Raptor ID

February 21
Program: Flammulated Owls

Newsletter Articles

Items and announcements of special interest to Aiken Audubon members are welcomed for publication in this newsletter.

Deadline for the January-February 2007 issue is December 20.

Contact the editor, Leslie Holzmänn
leslie@icta.net, 719.495.8889

November 15 • Bill Schmoker Bird Coloration and the Fascinating Case of Whitey, the Steller's Jay

Join bird photographer and science teacher, Bill Schmoker for a slide show illustrating the mechanisms of bird coloration and plumage aberrations, including a study of a unique Steller's Jay documented in the Boulder foothills.

Bill's photographs have appeared in many publications including *Birding*, *WildBird*, *National Wildlife*, *British Birds*, *Bird Conservation*, *North American Birds*, and *Winging It*. His photos also appear in many photographic field guides, web pages, interpretive signs, and advertisements. Bill is the vice president of the Colorado Field Ornithologists, an outgoing editor of *North American Birds*, a digiscoping consultant for Leica Sport Optics, and frequently presents digital bird photography workshops.

Whitey, the Steller's Jay



PHOTO © BILL SCHMOKER USED WITH PERMISSION.

Meetings are held at the Division of Wildlife building located at 4255 Sinton Road. Coffee and socializing is at 6:30pm and programs begin at 7:00pm. Please use the back entrance. *Note:* Sinton Road runs parallel to I-25 on the east side, between Garden of the Gods Road and Fillmore Street.

COLORADO AUDUBON NEWS

Audubon Colorado Dedicates its 54th Important Bird Area



View of the reservoir through the chain link fence. See any birds?

BOULDER, CO, SEPTEMBER 28, 2006—Audubon Colorado officially dedicated its 54th Important Bird Area in Boulder, Colorado at Xcel Energy's Valmont Generating Station reservoir.

The site was designated as an Important Bird Area because of the large concentrations of waterfowl species that frequent the area, primarily as a wintering habitat and rest stop during spring and fall migration. The reservoirs and adjacent uplands provide important habitat for the survival of select species and populations of Colorado's wild birds, including eagles and other raptors, waterfowl, gulls and other waterbirds.

An important feature of the Valmont Reservoir IBA is that it is owned by a major corporation and exemplifies how businesses can work to ensure protection of Important Bird Areas. This is the first Colorado IBA to be owned entirely by a private corporation and the first IBA to be designated in Boulder County.

To learn more about the IBA program in Colorado, visit www.auduboncolorado.org. Valmont reservoir is not generally open to the public.

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Everyone is welcome on Aiken field trips, regardless of experience level or membership in Audubon. Please contact trip leader for more information and to let them know you are coming. *Current field trip information is available online at www.aikenaudubonsociety.org.*

Saturday, November 18

Fountain Creek Regional Park

Meet 8am at Sears, Southgate, to carpool to Fountain Creek Nature Center. Bring lunch for this half-day trip.

TRIP LEADER

Nancy Smith 719.634.1265

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

November 14-19, 2006

Festival of the Cranes

Bosque del Apache NWR, near Socorro, New Mexico, hosts tens of thousands of Sandhill Cranes, Snow Geese and ducks every winter. The annual festival includes tours and field trips, exhibits, demonstrations, lectures, and workshops in photography, bird identification and wildlife painting.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

505.835.2077 friends@sdcc.org www.friendsofthebosque.org/crane

TRIP REPORT

Manitou Lake

Here is the bird list from the Manitou Lakes field trip on September 23, 2006. There were five of us in attendance and we had the lake all to ourselves. There was a touch of snow everywhere; we were hoping to get a "good" bird because the weather was so-so.

Allan Burns led another excellent trip. We watched an osprey eat "on the wing," wondering why it didn't land to eat on its perch. When we found the bird again, it appeared that the bird had an injured leg, so it could not eat while perched. The bird looked to be in good condition. We did see it catch a fish, so hopefully it will continue to thrive.

We saw: Lesser Goldfinch, Common Raven, Black-billed Magpie, European Starling, Pygmy Nuthatch, Canada Goose, Osprey, Pied-billed Grebe, Chipping Sparrow, American Coot, Red Crossbill, immature Western Bluebird, Mountain Bluebird, Belted Kingfisher, Black-capped Chickadee, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Stellar's Jay, White-crowned Sparrow, Wilson's Warbler, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Harrier, Brown Creeper (heard), Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's), Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Flicker, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, White-breasted Nuthatch, American Robin, American Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-winged Blackbird, Gadwall, Mallard, Turkey Vulture, Red-naped Sapsucker, and House Wren.

• RISÉ FOSTER-BRUDER

Garden of the Gods

With the summer tourists gone, November and December are great times to bird those places in town that would otherwise be too crowded. Take advantage of some great weather this time of year, and head over to Garden of the Gods. Don't laugh; the park is more than a place to bring out-of-town visitors. In fact, 131 species of birds have been seen there.

While you won't see summer's White Throated Swifts, there are plenty of winter visitors and residents to take their place. Scrub and Pinyon Jays perch on the treetops. Chickadees flit through the junipers while robins compete with Townsend's Solitaires in gobbling down the ripe juniper berries. Rock Pigeons are constantly overhead—you might want to wear your hat!

Don't limit your exploration to the popular Central Garden area. Many miles of mostly level trails wind through the hillsides, far away from the joggers and rock climbers. Look for lingering migrants along the stream bed near Rock Ledge Ranch. A three-mile trail that circles most of the park takes you along the brushy hillsides above the road, sufficiently far from the traffic that you hardly notice it's there. You can pick up a complete trail map at the Visitor's Center.

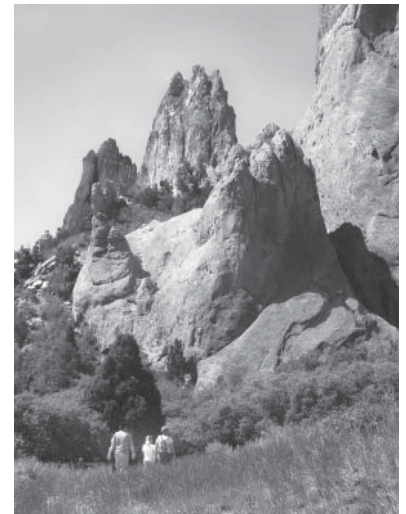


PHOTO © LESLIE HOLZMANN

Some of the best birding is in Spring Canyon, on the western edge of the park. The trails here are steeper, so be prepared for a workout. Hillsides covered with junipers, pinyon pine, scrub oak, and ponderosas provide cover for accipiters, juncos, Pine Siskins and various jays. Winter sightings have included Golden-crowned Kinglet, Northern Shrike, Cassin's Finch (look on the Mountain Mahogany), Juniper Titmouse and Evening Grosbeak.

In the midst of the search for birds, it's easy to overlook the geology and history of this amazing city park. No matter how many birds you see, Garden of the Gods is a beautiful place to explore!

The park is open from 5am to 9pm in winter.

• LESLIE HOLZMANN

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

Christmas Bird Count on December 16th. Ben and Sally Sorensen are our coordinators. Please read Ben's article in this Aikorns and contact him with your information.

• RISÉ FOSTER-BRUDER
PRESIDENT, AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

*Since this was written, the "Little Blue Heron" was re-identified as a Snowy Egret. However, other unusual birds are still out there waiting to be discovered!

Seasonal Tips on Saving Energy: Good for Birds, Good for YOU!

Here are ten cold weather tips on saving energy around your home. Choose those that are most practical and appealing and try one out. Then, if you can, add one tip a month for each of the winter months. This makes conserving more fun. Savings add up too!

No 1 When you need to replace your outdoor porch lighting, get a motion-detector equipped bulb or fixture. Outdoor lights left on for long periods disturb birds and other wildlife, waste energy, and cost you money. Lights that are activated by a motion sensor or timer reduce your energy bill. Or just turn them off when you don't absolutely need them.



No 2 Since more than 10% of your energy bill goes to heating water, cut energy use by lowering your hot water heater to 120 degrees. (Do not overdo and go below 120 degrees, however. That's the best temperature to keep water free of bacteria.) If your hot water heater feels warm to the touch, you need better insulation. Insulation saves 9% in heating costs and costs only \$10 or so. Also, drain some water from your hot water heater a few times a year to reduce sediment and increase efficiency.

No 3 Clean your furnace filters at least once a month and/or replace filters at least once every two months. A dirty filter makes your furnace work harder to push air through it. Heating is a major expense and energy consumer.

No 4 When replacing old appliances get an energy-efficient model. Look for the Energy Star label as a minimum and check for models that are most efficient. Rebates on some items are available through Colorado Springs Utilities (www.csu.org). Click "Residential", then "Rebates".

No 5 Compact fluorescent lights take two-thirds less energy and last up to ten times longer than regular bulbs. Look for Energy Star/Energy Saver at the grocery or hardware store) Although they cost more initially, you actually save \$44 over the life of every 75 watt bulb. If every American home replaced one burned out standard light fixture with an Energy Star we could save the equivalent of emissions from 1.6 million vehicles. Also, Colorado Springs Utilities (www.csu.org) now offers \$5 to \$10 rebates on \$25 to \$50 worth of compact fluorescents, so you'll save even more. (Note: These bulbs do contain mercury, as do all light bulbs, so at the end of their 5-year lifespan, you should recycle them at our hazardous waste dump, as you would any hazardous items—leftover paint, batteries, etc.. (Call El Paso County HCWCF at 520-7878 for more information on disposing of fluorescent bulbs and ballast.) Of course, turn off any lights not actually in use.



No 6 Most washing machines clean clothes very efficiently in cold water. Save the energy it takes to heat the water. (Try to do full loads for greatest efficiency, but do not overload, since that leads to less efficient cleaning.)

No 7 Always do full loads in your dishwasher as well. This saves on both water and energy.

No 8 Turn your thermostat down from 72° to 65° at night for the eight hours you sleep. This will save you as much as 10% on your heating bill!

No 9 Close drapes (or, even better, energy-saving blinds) when the outside temperature is cooler than the inner or when the sun isn't shining directly on windows, warming them etc. You'll feel much toastier. Place furniture away from drafts for additional comfort, and/or caulk cracks.

No 10 Turn your computer and other appliances off when they are not actually in use. Even better, unplug them. TVs, computers, VCRs, DVDs, etc often have a continuous feed of energy any time they are plugged in. If an indicator light or clock is on, energy is in use. These devices reset when you plug them back in. Note: Today's computers are designed to handle over 20,000 on/off cycles, so it's fine to turn your computer on and off seven times a day for eight years!

The average household could save \$2,000 a year by being more energy efficient—reducing oil and gas consumption and the consequent emissions. I've tried many of these, and little by little, it's kind of exciting to see what you can do for very little money to improve your own household and the world. Conserve, Preserve, Enjoy!

For further information or how-to's, email me at sandramcnew@aol.com or call and leave a message with your question at 632-4374.

• SANDRA MCNEW
AIKEN CONSERVATION CHAIR

Want up-to-the-minute conservation news?

Want to do something for the birds? Since environmental issues usually come up quickly and call for a rapid response, we find it's not always helpful to put specifics in a bi-monthly newsletter. There's too long a lag time! So, if you'd like a more timely guide to bird conservation issues, please subscribe to our e-conservation tree: Send a message to Sandra McNew, Conservation Chair, at sandramcnew@aol.com. Put "e-conservation tree" in the subject line, and we'll get conservation information to you quickly enough to do the most good for the birds and the environment. Thanks.

• SANDRA MCNEW

Beginning Birding: Listing

Once you have started finding and identifying birds, the natural next step is to keep a record of what you have seen. While not all birders keep lists, most do. Many keep more than one list. It all depends on your personality.

A “Life List” is a list of bird species seen during a person’s lifetime. It usually includes information about the first time they saw (or perhaps heard), and positively identified, a bird of a given species. Most American birders keep a list of birds they’ve seen in North America. Typically they mean the American Birding Association (ABA) region, which includes everything north of the Mexican border. (The American Ornithologists’ Union (AOU) considers the North American area to include everything from Panama to the North Pole, including Hawaii.) Many birders keep country, state, county and/or yard lists. Some keep track of which birds they see in a particular month or year, or on a specific trip. The goal of listing should be to record and organize your sightings, demonstrate your growing expertise, and perhaps reveal trends in bird populations and ranges. And, there can be some friendly competition with your fellow birders.

Lists vary in complexity from a simple tick mark in the field guide to a journal or spreadsheet that records date, location, habitat, conditions, interesting behavior, sex (of the bird), who you were with when you saw the bird, and anything else of conceivable

interest. There are several computer software programs designed just for this purpose. At www.ebird.org you can keep your list online while contributing your sightings to a scientific database maintained by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

For some birders, listing itself becomes the goal. They might tackle a “Big Day,” “Big Month,” or “Big Year, in which they try to see as many bird species as possible in a given time period. The current ABA record for a North American “Big Year” is 745 species, set by Sandy Komito in 1998. “Big Listers” have international lists that may number upwards of 5,000 species.

Birding can even be a sport. In “World Series of Birding” events organized around the country, groups of enthusiastic birders compete at finding as many different species as possible in a specific area and time period, usually 24 to 72 hours.

Keeping lists can add to the enjoyment of finding and identifying birds. Beware, however, if listing takes over your life. Addictive listing has been known to destroy common sense, finances and families. Maybe the time is right for “Listers Anonymous”?

For more details on official ABA listing rules, and for the current ABA checklist of North American birds, go to <http://americanbirding.org/resources>. For the AOU checklist of North American birds, go to www.aou.org/checklist.

• LESLIE HOLZMANN

WHERE DO THESE NAMES COME FROM?

Who was Aiken?

The Aiken Audubon chapter with its logo, the Aiken (a.k.a. Western) Screech Owl. Aiken Canyon. Just who was this Aiken that we commemorate in so many ways?



Charles Edward Howard Aiken himself says it best, “Most of the early information concerning Colorado birds developed from my investigations.”

Born in Vermont, on September 7, 1850, Charles was the oldest of five surviving children born to James Edward and Harriet Ann Howard Aiken. They relocated to Chicago when he was a young boy. At the age of 18, he began to study birds according to the methods of that time—by shooting and collecting them.

When the Chicago fire of 1871 destroyed his father’s business, the family moved to Colorado Springs. Charles took up residence on a ranch his father purchased in Turkey Creek Valley, the present site of Aiken Canyon. He eventually owned his own taxidermy business, and a house at Weber and Huerfano Streets in Colorado Springs.

In 1871, little was known about the birds of the West. Over the next 65 years Aiken contributed greatly to western ornithology through his repeated journeys through Colorado, Utah, Arizona and New Mexico, making notes and collecting and mounting bird and other animal skins.

Aiken was a skilled naturalist. “His hearing was keen, and he could not only recognize the notes of birds when heard, but could imitate them closely by whistling. He was well acquainted with the habits of birds and various other animals. He had a sharp eye for the variations in plumage and other characteristics of birds.”*

An article that appeared after his death in 1936 includes a description of a May, 1878 trip to Horse Creek, about 75 miles east of Colorado Springs: “He mentions Skylarks (Horned Larks), Grass Finches (Vesper Sparrows), Meadowlarks, White-winged Blackbirds (Lark Buntings), these in large flocks. Mountain Plover were not seen the first 15 miles but became common as they proceeded eastward. Small flocks of Brewer Blackbirds haunted all the ranches. Pond Creek and Horse Creek were each the home of two or three pairs of Whitenecked Ravens. Other species were observed wherever there were trees or bushes. Along Horse Creek were water holes and marshy places, where shore birds of several species were seen.”*

Continued on back page



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YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BE A MEMBER TO PARTICIPATE IN AIKEN'S ACTIVITIES

AIKEN (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

In 1907, Aiken's collection of bird skins was sold to Colorado College. By the time of his death, the collection numbered over 5,700 skins, in addition to a number of mounted specimens, as well as nests and eggs. The collection includes an exceptionally complete series of Juncos subspecies. Junco aikenii was named after him.

Aiken joined the AOU in 1898, but eventually allowed his membership to lapse. However, in 1926, at the age of 76, he was made an Honorary Life Associate, a gesture which meant a great deal to him. It's clear why he means a great deal to Colorado birders today.

*Quotes from The Condor, Volume 38, Number 6, November-December, 1936
Journal of the Cooper Ornithological Society

Photo: Special Collections, Tutt Library, Colorado College, Colorado Springs, CO

• LESLIE HOLZMANN

aikorns

Aiken Audubon Society Membership/Subscription

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☐ One Year \$10.00

☐ Two Years \$18.00

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