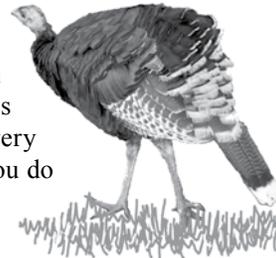




It's Turkey Time

There are turkeys, and then there are *turkeys*. One dictionary's definitions include: "A person considered inept or undesirable," and "A failure, especially a failed theatrical production or movie." Then there's "talking turkey," "cold turkey," and "turkey trot." Of course, we think of turkeys as yet another species to be found while out birding. But even this avian sort of turkey comes in two varieties. The birds we commonly consume at Thanksgiving have little in common with their noble ancestors.

Wild Turkeys are well adapted to life in North America. They have dark plumage that blends perfectly with the oranges and browns of autumn leaves. This makes them hard to spot as they forage for seeds and grubs in the underbrush. Additionally, their hearing and eyesight are both very sharp, alerting flocks to potential predators—and birders. Finally, if you do manage to spot a turkey, don't scare it. When alarmed, they can flee at 25 mph, leaving birders in the dust.



Even with their remarkable survival abilities, by 1930, hunters had reduced the American population to fewer than 30,000 birds. Conservation practices were begun, and the turkey eventually was reintroduced into areas where it had been hunted to extinction. Today, there are plenty of turkeys for both hunters and birders.

Like other so-called "game birds," turkeys put on elaborate courtship displays. "A wild turkey can change his whole head from red to blue in minutes. For the pièce de résistance, he fans out his tail and puffs up his body feathers to look huge and round—and there's your classic Thanksgiving icon.

Continued on back page

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Redwing Sanctuary experienced a grass fire on Saturday, October 6. This 18+ acre parcel of land owned by Aiken Audubon lies at the southwest corner of Pikes Peak and Academy Boulevard. As reported in *The Gazette*, the fire began around 9:00am, burned a little more than four acres and was extinguished by the Colorado Springs fire department by early afternoon.

The following Sunday afternoon I walked the burned area to see the damage and was surprised by what I found. Initially the blackened grass and scorched Russian Olive trees looked terrible. But as I walked the edge of the burn area, I heard and saw a large amount of bird and pocket gopher activity. That afternoon I saw the greatest variety and highest number of birds I've ever seen at Redwing Sanctuary and the pocket gophers had already made many new dirt mounds.

The fire could have damaged the businesses adjacent to our property; the winds that Saturday morning were powerful and unpredictable. Thankfully the fire department responded quickly and was able to suppress the 15 foot tall flames. On a positive note—in essence, the accidental fire was a controlled burn. Grass is already sprouting. Next spring this section will be green and thriving. Wildflowers and native grasses will have a better chance with many of the weeds burned away. Redwing Sanctuary is now an example that even though fire can be dangerous, it does have a place in nature.

Keep on birding,

Risë

• **RISË FOSTER-BRUDER**
PRESIDENT, AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

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DATES TO REMEMBER

November 21

Program: ABCs of Beekeeping,
with Todd Marts

December 15

(No program this month)
Christmas Bird Count

January 22 (note new date)

Raptor ID, with Steve Vaughan

February 20

Volunteer Opportunities for
Retirees, with Roger Ratcliff

Newsletter Articles

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

Deadline for the January/February 2008 issue is Wednesday, December 19.

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

November 21 The A, Bee, Cs of Beekeeping

Take a fascinating glimpse into the natural world through a honeybee hive. Join a naturalist from Bear Creek Nature Center to learn about the complex relationships within a hive and discover some of the intricate social aspects of a colony.

Todd Marts, local beekeeper and Leisure Services Division Manager for El Paso County Parks, has been an interpreter at the Bear Creek Nature Center for twelve years. After incorporating a new observation beehive exhibit at the nature center in 2002, Todd developed and taught numerous honeybee programs for visitors of all ages. Mr. Marts continues to teach "Bee Biology" at the annual Pikes Peak Beekeeping School, and "The A, Bee, C's of Honeybees" at elementary schools.



Aiken Audubon programs are free and open to the public. They are held at the Colorado State 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.

IN LIEU OF A DECEMBER PROGRAM...

Saturday, December 15 Audubon Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, the 15th of December is the day for the Colorado Springs Christmas Bird Count. This will be the 57th year that Aiken, as either a chapter or as an affiliate (Aiken Ornithological Society) of National Audubon Society, will have taken part. Our count is one of some 2,000+ count areas that will be surveyed from dawn to dusk this year throughout Central and North America. Some of the Caribbean islands, Hawaii, and several other Pacific islands are also included in the count.

Each count circle has a diameter of 15 miles (177 square miles). Our count circle is centered at Colorado Springs Psychiatric Center. Roughly, the area extends from Pulpit Rock on the north to Fort Carson on the south, and Ruxton Ave. on the west, eastward to Marksheffel Rd.

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 birds that are not commonly seen during the week leading up to December 15, please contact Sally or Ben 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 count fee will receive this special issue.

Kent Borges and Stephanie DeCenzo will again host an after-the-count pot luck gathering at their home at 975 Terrace Circle. If you like, bring a food dish to share and join us at 5:00 pm or before as we share the first results of the day's count.

BEN & SALLY SORENSEN
719.635.1716

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AIKEN AUDUBON FIELD TRIPS

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.aikenaudubon.com.

At the time we went to print, no Aiken field trips were scheduled during November or December. Check the website: aikenaudubon.com for late-breaking news and updates.

Don't miss your chance to participate in this year's Christmas Bird Count!

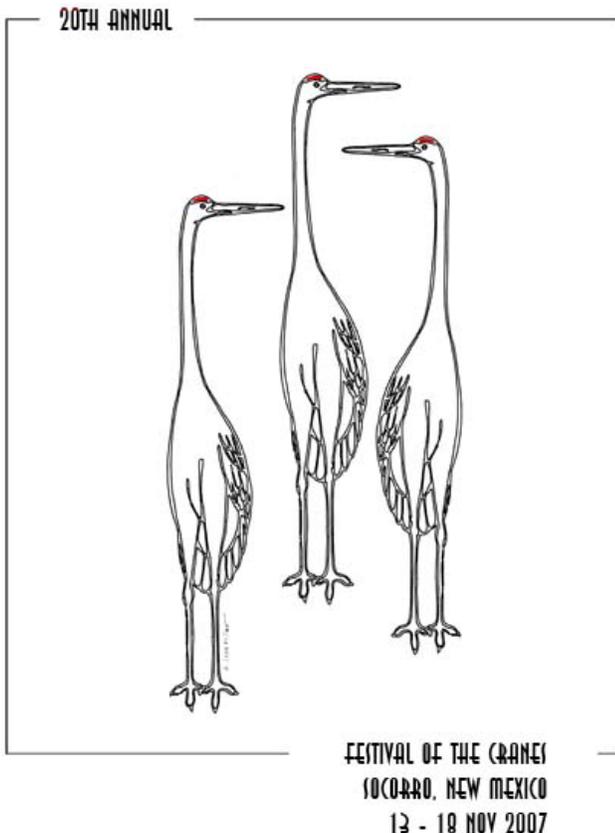
ARKANSAS VALLEY AUDUBON FIELD TRIP

The following trip is hosted by the Arkansas Valley Audubon Society. They graciously welcome you to come along. Contact trip leader(s) for more information and to let them know you are coming.

Saturday, Nov. 17, 8am - 3pm Pueblo Reservoir & Area

Brandon Percival leads his annual November trip to the Reservoir and surrounding area. Past rarities include: Red-throated and Pacific Loon, Red-necked Grebe, Barrow's Goldeneye, Black Brant, Little Gull, Lesser and Greater Black-backed Gulls. Meet at the South Shore Marina HQ building. A State Parks Pass is required or a day pass may be purchased for \$6.00.

Trip leaders: Brandon Percival, bkpercival@yahoo.com, 719.547.3722 and Donna Emmons, emmons7@yahoo.com, 719.369.9704 or 719.676.5666



UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST



Sandhill Crane, heading for the hills.

Bosque is definitely worth a visit!

You simply have to go to Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) during November, either for the Festival of the Cranes (Nov. 13 - 18), or after the crowds are gone. The refuge provides an unparalleled opportunity to get amazingly close to over 50,000 Snow Geese and 17,000 Sandhill Cranes. Photo opportunities are endless. It's worth getting up before dawn to watch the roosting birds stretch their wings, then take off en masse for their feeding fields, just as the sun edges over the surrounding mountains.

The refuge is an hour south of Albuquerque next to I-25. It would be an easy 6-hour drive, except for all the *other* great birding spots along the way. Allow a bit of extra time for Rosy Finches at Sandia Peak, desert birds at Sevilleta NWR, or waterfowl at Las Vegas and Maxwell NWRs.

Meals and lodging are available in nearby Socorro. Make your reservations early if you want to be there during the festival.

More information: www.friendsofthebosque.org
www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/newmex/bosque
Festival Registrar: Kit Owens, registrar@sdco.org or 505-835-2077



Snow Geese flight at dawn, Bosque del Apache.

PHOTOS: PETE & LESLIE HOLZMANN

The End of “Vampire” Energy Leaks

Since it's just after Halloween, it's time to get rid of the Vampires. Vampires (or Phantoms) are hidden, draining energy uses that you probably don't realize are sucking up bird habitat by creating an entirely wasteful need for oil and gas, coal mining, etc. They are also sucking away your energy dollars.

Happily, Vampires are among the easiest of energy problems to fix. And it costs you nothing to fix them. Here are some quick hints:

Unplug most appliances when not using. A TV, VCR, DVD, computer monitor, computer speakers, component stereo or video game console that features a clock or a digital timer or a remote control or a stand-by mode is still using some phantom or vampire electricity when you turn it to “off.” It's not actually completely off. One sure sign of a vampire? A little light glowing anywhere in your system.

Why do this? This use unnecessarily destroys lots of habitat. For example, new drilling could soon affect birds in Colorado's San Luis Valley. And vampire TV and VCR usage in the U.S. alone wastes \$1 billion in energy annually. Phantom waste in all industrialized countries from all sources accounts for more billions of dollars – and 75 million tons of carbon dioxide.

It's easiest if you can plug one system of appliances into one power strip.

It's easiest if you can plug one system of appliances (TV, DVD, and VCR perhaps, or all your computer gadgets) into one power strip. Then you can simply turn that off when not in use. I unplug my surge protector strips. And try not to leave TVs, etc. on just for “background noise.” That uses even more energy.

Another vampire to avoid: Don't leave your cell phone charger plugged in while you aren't actually using it to charge. This vampire wastes 95% of its energy when you only need the other 5% in actual charge time.

As we approach the winter holiday season, you'll give your world a reason to give thanks—and yourself the gift of birds and energy saved if you commit to getting rid of at least one Vampire in your life.

• BY SANDRA MCNEW

Sources: CSU Utilities 9/20/07
Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratories, Sierra,
July/August 2007
www.Energystar.gov

For further information or questions contact
Sandra McNew, Master Conservationist and
Aiken Conservation Chair, at 719.632.4374,
or email sandramcnew@aol.com.

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.

• BY SANDRA MCNEW

President Bush Offers Needed Bird Conservation Proposals

NEW YORK, NY, OCTOBER 20, 2007: While much beloved, America's birds are in great peril from multiple environmental threats. Research shows shrinking habitats, poor land practices, pollution and global warming are putting common and endangered birds alike at more risk than ever before. Their decline indicates growing threats to our own well being.

President Bush's proposals to boost bird conservation measures at home and abroad address some of the urgently needed assistance for which Audubon scientists have long advocated. While much needs to be done, we welcome the President's leadership. We look forward to working with him on these important bird conservation proposals. We also need to continue work to strengthen the Clean Water Act, restore and expand wildlife refuges, recover endangered species, invest in ecosystem restoration and end our dependence on fossil fuels.

While the situation is grave, there is reason for optimism. Our national symbol, the bald eagle, was once faced with what seemed like certain extinction but now serves as a beacon of hope. The story of the recovered bald eagle is indicative of broader trends for bird populations. When Americans make a concerted effort at conservation the sky is the limit.

We are especially gratified that the administration recognizes the value of Audubon's longstanding State of the Birds reports. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the administration to extend and enhance the public's understanding of bird health in America. Science based research—like Audubon's 100-years of data from the Christmas Bird Count, and the Breeding Bird Survey—can point the way for informed policy decisions that protect birds and their habitat.

Audubon has long known the power of birds to connect people with nature. We look forward to working with the President to ensure that the connection yields real and lasting results for birds and the habitats on which they and all of us depend.

• BY BOB PERCIASEPE, CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER,
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

A fact sheet issued by the White House can be found at www.white-house.gov/news/releases/2007/10/20071019-18.html

Kettle Creek Lakes

SEPTEMBER 29, 2007: On a beautiful fall day—not too warm, not too cold—four intrepid birders hiked through the Kettle Creek Lakes area near the south entrance to the USAFA. We had a good variety of birds and plenty of activity to keep us occupied.

Birds seen: Black-billed Magpie, White-breasted Nuthatch, Pied-billed Grebe, Mallard, American Crow, Downy Woodpecker (M & F), Belted Kingfisher, Northern Flicker, Bluejay, American Robin, Black-capped Chickadee, American Kestrel, Great Blue Heron, White-crowned Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Western Scrub Jay, Lesser Goldfinch (Green-backed), Pine Siskin, House Finch, Lesser Goldfinch (Black-backed), Mourning Dove, Mountain Bluebird, Western Tanager (Female), Chipping Sparrow, Double-crested Cormorant, Osprey, Common Grackle, Red-tailed Hawk, European Starling, Merlin (?), Spotted Sandpiper, Northern Harrier, Steller's Jay, Virginia Rail, Black-crowned Night-Heron (Immature), Red-winged Blackbird, Raptor, unidentified, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Common Raven, Western Bluebird, Warbler species, American Tree Sparrow (?)

• BY RISÉ FOSTER-BRUDER

aikorns

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"In the midwestern United States in the mid to late 1800s, domestic turkeys were actually herded across the range in a manner similar to herding cattle." —Wikipedia



Making binos (above) and Great Blue Herons.



PHOTOS: PETE & LESLIE HOLZMANN

September Program: “Birding with Kids” was Lots of Fun

Birder and interpretive specialist Ken Pals led everyone in a delightful evening of fun and games that had kids and parents alike on the edges of their seats... or out of them completely. Highlights included creating toilet-paper-roll binoculars, assembling construction paper Great Blue Herons, and playing several rounds of a wild game involving trying to gather variously shaped “foods” with an assortment of beak styles. I’m sure many parents are now being besieged with cries of “Let’s go birding!”

• BY LESLIE HOLZMANN

Playing the beak and prey game.



Ken is a very talented story-teller!



Aiken Audubon Society
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SUBSCRIPTION IS EXPIRING!

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www.aikenaudubon.com

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

TURKEY: CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

But only wild male turkeys look like this, and then only when they're in the mood for love.”*

The Aztecs were the first to raise turkeys. By the time the conquistadores arrived, most indigenous Americans ate turkey as a staple part of their diets. Columbus was so impressed by the meat he sampled that he brought several specimens home with him to Spain. There, the nobility preferred turkey to the stringier meat of pheasants and peacocks, and turkey popularity spread. Europeans selected for turkeys having traits desirable to market growers, such as large size, quick growth, and tender meat. The pilgrims brought some of these domesticated turkeys with them on the Mayflower, completing the circle.

Contrast these untamed birds with their pathetic, commercially-raised, counterparts. Today's farm industry delivers a product that bears little resemblance to the turkey in our field guides. The most common domesticated turkey breed is the Broad-breasted White, developed in the 1950s. Their white feathers provide no camouflage, but they do result in a skin color more appealing to consumers. While wild turkeys may weigh as much as 24 lbs., the largest domestic turkey on record topped the scales at 75 lbs.! Even when smaller, they are too large to fly, or even to run.

The males no longer perform elaborate courtship displays. Maybe they know it's hopeless. The tom's barrel chest gets in the way, and they are physically unable to get close enough to mate with the females. Now it's all about artificial insemination.

During the selection process, turkeys were bred for passivity rather than brains. When it became apparent around 1900 that wild turkeys were becoming endangered, some domestic turkeys were released into the care of Mother Nature, in hopes that they would shore up the native stock. “But the domestic birds simply stood wherever they had been released, waiting to be fed. If a predator didn't get them, they just starved to death.”* According to the book *Wild Turkey, Tame Turkey*, by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent, “...tame turkeys have been known to die in a downpour.”

I don't know about you, but I feel somewhat better knowing the bird I'm dining on really didn't have much of a brain to begin with.

• BY LESLIE HOLZMANN

* Quotes taken from “Meat on Legs: The Story of the Turkey,” by Tamim Ansary. Website: Encarta.msn.com