



April 25 – 27, 2008

## Karval Hosts 2nd Annual Mountain Plover Festival

### Ranching hospitality steals the show



Once again a group of expectant birders will descend on this tiny town in Lincoln County, far out on the eastern plains. Everyone will be hoping to see the rare Mountain Plover on its nesting grounds. Will the birds be there?

If last year was any indication, Yes! Plovers were plentiful, with some even putting on a show. One pair disputed ownership of a piece of prairie, while another pair initiated a mating display. Two intense half-days of birding on previously inaccessible private ranches yielded 45 species of birds, including Burrowing Owls and an immature Golden Eagle. A cross-section of plains amphibians, reptiles, and mammals added to the nature experience.

As exciting as the birding was, the Karval hosts were even more impressive. The whole community pitched in for the festival, welcoming visitors with open arms. Local artisans set up booths offering crafts including homemade quilts, nature-themed woodworking, and jewelry. Community groups took turns providing delicious homemade meals, with plenty of food available for seconds and thirds. Hosting ranchers, many descended from the original homesteading families of 100 years ago, told stories about the area's fascinating history.

Continued on back page

#### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

For Valentines Day this year I got some new birding software. My husband installed it in my laptop and started experimenting with its many options. I was reading the newspaper and after hearing a number of different bird songs, I realized how strange it was hearing an Eastern Phoebe singing in my dining room in February. I looked over at my two cats and their ears were busily twitching trying to figure out where that bird was; wondering why was it in their house. I had to chuckle because usually the bird calls come from the television, not from the dining room table.

Listening to the new software reminded me that spring is right around the corner. I need to get my ears prepped and begin getting ready for spring migration. It's been a long, colder than usual winter so I am definitely looking forward to warmer birding weather. Even in cold February, hopefully many of you participated in the recent Great Backyard Bird Count. I even saw Martha

Stewart on "The View" a day or two before the count and I was surprised to hear her say she would be counting the birds on her property in support of the bird count. Of course the hosts had no idea what she was talking about but it was still great publicity for this fun annual event.

I urge you to get out and bird this spring. Aiken is sponsoring a number of upcoming field trips and the Fountain Creek spring bird count is happening on Migratory Bird Day – May 10th. Mark your calendars now for these fun days. There are also many bird festivals; please check the Aiken website for dates and connections to upcoming nearby and regional festivals. Whatever you do, just get out and bird.

Keep on birding,

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

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#### DATES TO REMEMBER

##### March 19

West Coast Pelagic Trips,  
with Deborah Barnes

##### April 16

Colorado Sparrows,  
with David Leatherman

##### May 21

Snakes Alive!  
with Richard Holliday

## Newsletter Articles

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

Deadline for the May/Summer 2008 issue is Wednesday, April 16.

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

March 19

## West Coast Pelagic Trips • Debbie Barnes

Test the waters of a different kind of birding experience, through visual imagery and tales from a few West Coast excursions. Pelagic birding is an exciting adventure and a different type of birding experience, offering opportunities to see birds that only come to land for breeding purposes. Experience up close encounters with these birds and other wildlife.

This program will discuss what pelagic birding is and what one needs to know to do it successfully:

- Dressing appropriately
- Preparing for anything, with no guarantees
- Seasickness
- Identification skills
- Equipment to bring
- Having fun

Debbie Barnes is an intermediate birder and is learning to band birds. She has helped with the presentation of Susan Craig's Shrike program. Debbie is also an amateur photographer. In her non-birding life she makes digital maps for a local engineering/architecture firm.

PHOTO: DEBBIE BARNES



Black-Footed Albatross

April 16

## Colorado Sparrows • David Leatherman

Sparrows usually get no respect from the general public, and little from many birders. Dismissed merely as "LBJs" (little brown jobs), they go about life in the undergrowth longing for attention. Gulls and hawks, arguably more difficult to figure out, have their champions. Not too many birders claim sparrows as their favorites. Even the American Ornithological Union sticks them near the rear of the checklist. In reality, this diverse group in the family Emberizidae deserves our effort and attention.

Colorado boasts 35 species, some abundant, some quite rare. This program will discuss taxonomic relationships, ID strategies, and biology of our sparrows. Photographs will be used extensively. Attendees should leave with a newfound appreciation and understanding of this group, and the confidence to at least attempt identification in the field.

David Leatherman, PhD, is a recently retired entomologist from Colorado State University. He now has more time available to devote to birding.

PHOTO: DAVID LEATHERMAN



The Green-Tailed Towhee is an easy-to-ID member of the sparrow family, especially when seen in full color.

**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 6:30 p.m. and programs begin at 7:00 p.m. 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.**

As migration approached, two elderly vultures doubted they could make the trip south, so they decided to go by airplane.

When they checked their baggage, the attendant noticed that they were carrying two dead raccoons. "Do you wish to check the raccoons through as luggage?" she asked.

"No, thanks," replied the vultures. "They're carrion."

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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.aikenaudubon.com](http://www.aikenaudubon.com).

**Saturday, March 1**

## Bald Eagles at Pueblo Reservoir

We'll take the back road to Pueblo looking for hawks, falcons and any raptors. We'll check the State Wildlife Area on the northwest end of the reservoir for eagles. We will also cruise around the reservoir looking for gulls and water birds. This is a great trip for beginners or anyone suffering from cabin fever after our long winter.

Meet at 8 am in front of AAA at Sears Southgate to carpool. We plan to return to the Springs about 2:00 p.m., so bring a sack lunch.

Contact Gary Conover at 719. 635.2505

**Saturday, March 15**

## Northeastern El Paso County

Search for winter residents of the plains. Investigate some of the wetlands around Falcon before encroaching development eliminates them forever. Be sure to bring your 2008 Habitat Stamp, as Ramah SWA is one of the intended stops. Meet at the east end of the Falcon Safeway parking lot at 8 a.m. to carpool.

Contact Jean Mitchell at 719.494.1977

**Saturday, April 12**

## Fountain Creek Nature Center

The first spring migrants should be arriving by this time, but the trees don't yet have all their leaves. What a great opportunity to look for warblers! Fountain Creeks varied habitat always produces a wide assortment of interesting birds. Meet at Sears Southgate at 7:30 a.m. to carpool.

Contact Risë Foster-Bruder at 719. 282.7877

**Saturday, April 26**

## Cañon City Riverwalk & Brush Hollow

Join expert birder Allen Burns for a trip that is sure to yield interesting results. Meet at Sears Southgate at 7:30 a.m. to carpool.

Contact Allen Burns at 719.632.2081

### ARKANSAS VALLEY AUDUBON FIELD TRIPS

Pueblo's Arkansas Valley Audubon Society graciously invites you to join their field trips as well. Check their website for current opportunities: <http://www.socobirds.org>. Then contact the trip leader(s) for more information and to let them know you are coming.

**March 29 – April 20**

## Greater Prairie Chicken Viewing Tours Planned for Early Spring

**Mark your calendar; space is limited and reservations are required!**

Watching the courtship dance of the greater prairie chicken is a real treat—especially in Colorado where most of these birds live on private property. For a few weeks in spring, you can enjoy a unique opportunity to see these birds by participating in special tours offered by



the Colorado Division of Wildlife in partnership with the Wray Chamber of Commerce, the Wray Museum, and the East Yuma County Historical Society. Tours are provided weekends from March 29th through April 20th and are by registration only, with limited space per trip. Two tour options are available.

The “basic” trip includes an evening program hosted by the Division of Wildlife (DOW) on Friday evening, lodging at the Sandhillier Motel, transportation to and from the lek on Saturday morning, and a homemade breakfast at the ranch— all for \$120 per person. The “special” (extended) tour begins Saturday afternoon and includes dinner and entertainment on Saturday evening, an orientation/educational program provided by the DOW, Saturday evening lodging, the lek viewing trip on Sunday morning, and a breakfast. This extended tour is \$135 per person.

To register, go on-line to [www.wraychamber.net](http://www.wraychamber.net) and follow the links to Greater Prairie Chicken tours, or call 970-332-3484.

For questions about the tours, please contact the Wray Chamber of Commerce at 970-332-3484 or [wraychambercomm@centurytel.net](mailto:wraychambercomm@centurytel.net).

**April 17 – May 17**

## Beginning Birding Classes

Once again, Ken Pals is teaching his excellent Birding for Beginners – 101 Course at Fountain Creek Nature Center. Classroom sessions are Thursday evenings from 6:30 - 8:30, April 17, May 1 and May 15. Saturday morning field trips to reinforce that week's lessons are scheduled April 19, May 3 and May 17, from 8:00 a.m. – Noon.

This series is designed to teach beginning bird watchers the basics; to develop and improve skills in identifying birds by sight and sound.

\$50.00 per person, reservations required, 719.520.6745

**May 16 – 18**

## CFO Meeting in Canon City

Colorado Field Ornithologists will host their 2008 Convention in Cañon City. Richard Crossley, one of the authors of The Shorebird Guide, will give the keynote address “Past, Present, and Future.”

A full brochure and on-line registration is available at [www.cfo-link.org](http://www.cfo-link.org).



# Audubon WatchList Focuses Attention on At-Risk Species

**A**udubon WatchList 2002 identifies U.S. bird species that need our help. WatchList species are those facing population declines and/or threats such as habitat loss on their breeding and wintering grounds, or with limited geographic ranges. A centerpiece of conservation at Audubon, the WatchList is a science-based system that focuses attention on at-risk bird species so that limited resources are spent where they are most needed.

Because the list is science-based, the Audubon WatchList includes an assessment of all species regardless of whether or not they are already considered Endangered or Threatened under the Federal Endangered Species Act.

## Colorado's WatchList Birds

At least 39 National WatchList species occur in Colorado as breeders, winterers, or migrants. The coniferous forests of Colorado's Rocky Mountains harbor Flammulated Owls and Lewis's Woodpeckers. Low-lying valleys in western Colorado are characterized by sagebrush shrubland and shrub steppe habitat where the ultra-rare Gunnison Sage-Grouse occurs as well as Greater Sage-Grouse and Brewer's Sparrows. Virginia's Warbler can be found in montane shrub habitats. Piñon-juniper forests of western Colorado support significant populations of Gray Vireos. The shortgrass prairies of eastern Colorado harbor breeding Lesser Prairie-Chickens, Mountain Plovers, Long-billed Curlews, Ferruginous Hawks, and McCown's Longspurs.

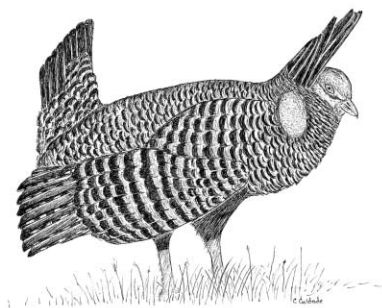
## Audubon Colorado WatchList Conservation Success

Audubon Colorado has provided grants to various state chapters for surveys of WatchList species on Colorado Important Bird Areas. Funding for these grants comes from Canon USA through a partnership between The Nature Conservancy and Audubon for Avian Inventory and Monitoring (AIM) projects.

Six of Colorado's 11 chapters submitted nine proposals—a terrific show of enthusiasm for this pilot project. Proposals that resulted in grant awards were those submitted by Black Canyon, Evergreen Naturalists, Grand Valley, and Platte & Prairie Audubon chapters.

Exciting and encouraging results of this project included: surveys conducted in a variety of important Colorado habitat types—shortgrass prairie, sagebrush steppe, lowland riparian, and alpine to foothills riparian, participation of more than 75 Audubon members and potential members. All four chapters ran surveys over two days instead of the required one. Results of this work included nearly 4300 birds detected representing more than 80 species. Congratulations to all chapters that submitted proposals and thanks to the recipients for their hard work!!

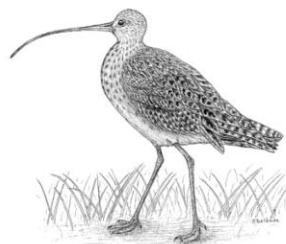
To learn more about the AIM Team Program and Pilot Projects visit: <http://www.audubon.org/bird/aim>



Lesser Prairie-Chicken



McCown's Longspur



Long-Billed Curlew

ARTWORK: USGS

## Want up-to-the-minute conservation news?

**W**ant 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](mailto: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

For further information or questions contact Sandra McNew, Master Conservationist and Aiken Conservation Chair, at 719.632.4374, or email [sandramcnew@aol.com](mailto:sandramcnew@aol.com).

## TRIP REPORT

## 2007 Mountain Plover Festival Bird List

KARVAL, CO, APRIL 28 – 29, 2007: Last year's festival produced a large assortment of birds, commensurate to the wide variety of habitats visited. Hopefully, this year will attract even more experienced participants, and the bird list will grow.

Canada Goose, Gadwall, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Ruddy Duck, Eared Grebe, Swainson's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Golden Eagle (juv.), American Kestrel, American Coot, Killdeer, Mountain Plover, American Avocet, Wilson's Snipe, Wilson's Phalarope, Mourning Dove, Great Horned Owl, Burrowing Owl, Northern Flicker, Say's Phoebe, Western Kingbird, Loggerhead Shrike, Horned Lark, House Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Hermit Thrush, Wood Thrush, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Green-tailed Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Lark Bunting, White-crowned Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Western Meadowlark, Brown-headed Cowbird, Bullock's Oriole—45 species total.

## Get Involved:

## CO Breeding Bird Atlas

Ownership of the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas is now in the hands of the San Juan Institute of Natural and Cultural Resources at Fort Lewis College, Durango. The new project manager is Lynn E. Wickersham. See the website at [www.cobreedingbirdatlasii.org](http://www.cobreedingbirdatlasii.org) for all the details.

Cornell's data entry website is also now available for you to enter last season's observations. It isn't perfect; please be patient with the occasional hang-up. The website is available at <http://bird.atlasing.org/Atlas/CO/>.

## What to do?

1. Register.
2. Find your block and claim it.
3. Wait for confirmation (by email from me, John Drummond) that you own the block.
4. Enter your data.

If you just have casual observations and do not want to own a block, you can enter the data direct after registering, but let me know as it helps me keep track of the situation.

You can also still claim blocks for this summer. The map section is pretty good.

Contact me if you have questions or difficulties entering your data.

• BY JOHN DRUMMOND  
REGION 24 COORDINATOR

Contact: 719.488.3700 or  
[jxdrummo@aol.com](mailto:jxdrummo@aol.com)

## It's Time for Bluebirds

Did you know that bluebirds are among the first songbirds to migrate? They start to check out cavities and nesting boxes in early March. Now is the time to build and install bird houses in appropriate habitat for bluebirds and many other cavity nesters in the Pikes Peak Region. Each species has its own preference for nest box size and entrance hole, so be sure to build to suit. Look for plans online, or call Fountain Creek Nature Center (719.520.6745) for nest box plans and/or to determine what birds to build for.

Northern Goshawk visits  
Bear Creek

A Northern Goshawk made a rare appearance in the cottonwoods along Bear Creek on February 9. This bird is the largest member of genus *Accipiter*, measuring nearly two feet tall and weighing in at over two pounds. Goshawks ambush smaller birds in the dense cover of mixed or coniferous forests.



ARTWORK: WASHINGTON DEPT. OF FISH & WILDLIFE

## aikorns

Aiken Audubon Society  
Membership/Subscription

## Sign Up For:

☐ One Year \$10.00

☐ Two Years \$18.00

☐ Donation

Total \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

## Mail Check To:

Aiken Audubon Society  
6660 Delmonico Dr. D-195,  
Colorado Springs, CO 80919

## BIRD HUMOR

## You might be a birder if...

- Someone yells "Duck!", and you look up and shout "Where?"
- Vacations are planned to maximize the number of life birds.
- Your kids are named Buteo and Accipiter.
- People stop and stare when you pish at the shrubbery at the local mall.
- Your spouse says, "It's either me or the birds," and you have to think about it.
- You try to talk your kid into going to college in Belize so that you have an excuse to go and bird there.
- It's a northeaster, the rain is horizontal, a small craft advisory has been issued, but it's birdathon and you need to up the day's list.
- A machine squeaks at work and you describe it to maintenance as sounding like a black-and-white warbler.
- The first time you meet your future in-laws you demonstrate the courtship dance of the woodcock, replete with sound effects.
- You spend fifteen minutes preparing dinner for your family, and thirty minutes mixing and placing seed for the wild birds.
- You wake up your spouse at 5:30am and exclaim, "Is that a phoebe I'm hearing outside the window?"
- You identify calls of birds in the soundtracks of television shows and movies.

FOUND ONLINE AT [WWW-PERSONAL.UMICH.EDU/~BBOWMAN/BIRDS/HUMOR](http://WWW-PERSONAL.UMICH.EDU/~BBOWMAN/BIRDS/HUMOR). USED WITH PERMISSION.

Can you think of more ways to know if "You might be a birder"?  
Send them in and we'll print them in a future issue of Aikorns!



**Aiken Audubon Society**  
6660 Delmonico Dr. D-195  
Colorado Springs, CO 80919

CHECK YOUR MAILING  
LABEL TO SEE IF YOUR  
SUBSCRIPTION IS EXPIRING!

President Risë Foster-Bruder  
719.282.7877

[www.aikenaudubon.com](http://www.aikenaudubon.com)

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

#### MOUNTAIN PLOVERS: CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

Transportation to the birding sites was provided by school bus and a ranch-style hayride. (Every convenience was considered and provided for—a truck pulling a pair of “outdoor portable toilets” faithfully followed the bus!) Some hiking was required, but nothing strenuous, especially since bird sightings mandated frequent stops. Plenty of bottled water and high-energy snacks kept everyone going.

Visitors were escorted to a variety of habitats typical of the short-grass prairie ecosystem, including seasonal ponds and playas, a series of small, man-made reservoirs, and a cottonwood riparian area. Three experts on Mountain Plovers from the Colorado Department of



Wildlife and Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory accompanied the group, providing insight as they helped with species identification, discussed what is currently known about plovers, and explained their ongoing field studies. It was fascinating to learn about a ground-breaking

partnership among cattle ranchers, wheat farmers, the DOW and ornithologists—a partnership that seeks to preserve plover habitat

while providing economic stability and growth to this rural area. The success of this program is inspiring similar collaborative conservation efforts in other parts of the country.

After a long day in the field, everyone gathered 'round the campfire for a barbecue and prize-winning cowboy poetry. With no motels in town, lodging was at nearby campsites, or 40 miles away in Limon or La Junta. Bedtime came early, as there were more birds to see in the morning.

This year's festival is planned to be even bigger and better. Mark your calendars for April 25 – 27, 2008. Don't miss this opportunity to learn more about a significant but often overlooked part of Colorado, and add a rare bird to your life list.

•BY LESLIE HOLZMANN

More information on pricing and itinerary: [www.Karval.org](http://www.Karval.org)

