



Wildlife Gardening:

Plant One for the Birds

While wandering around Colorado Springs one recent afternoon, I was struck by the amount of new building going on, even with the present flagging economy. Vast tracts of land, previously short-grass prairie or scrub oak hillsides, continue to be bulldozed to make way for roads, housing developments, and businesses. It's unlikely that we are going to convince outsiders that this is a terrible place to move to—after all, we certainly enjoy living here. So what can we do to “atone” for the tremendous loss of native habitat happening under our noses?

Those of us who own a plot of land, however small, have an opportunity to give something back to the birds. Don't settle for a sterile landscape of mowed lawn and clipped junipers, or a “zero-scape” of paving, gravel and boulders. These offer very little for feeding or sheltering wildlife. Instead, consider a reforestation project in your own yard.

A little research will tell you what used to grow on your corner of the county, back in the days before development. Most of us live on what was once short-grass prairie. Others may be in the scrub oak and pinion hillsides, or the ponderosa forest. Consider what habitat was destroyed in the construction of your home, and think about recreating it to some degree.

Start with an appraisal of your soil. It is likely that the developer removed all the top soil during grading and construction. This is a good time to add compost or other organic amendments to restore fertility and provide a healthy foundation for your garden.

All wildlife share similar needs: water, food, shelter, and a suitable place to raise a family. Keep this list in mind when designing your renovation. A water feature can be both beautiful and time-consuming, but

Continued on back page

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Summer will soon be here; eventually the snow has to go away. Aiken Audubon does not meet in June, July or August so everyone can travel, relax and enjoy the weather. We already have field trips planned for June. Check the website for more birding opportunities later in the summer.

As a totally volunteer organization, Aiken is always in need of interested people willing to give some time. Our current secretary, Pam Wickerd, has decided to accept a job opportunity in another state. I would like to thank Pam for her time and excellent minute taking skills the past two years and wish her success in her new location. I know there are many “lifers” in her future.

With Pam's departure, we have an opening on the Aiken Audubon Board. Though you will be receiving this newsletter after the board meets on May 7, please consider joining the board in the

fall. Our next election occurs in May 2009. We need a new slate of officers willing to run. Please consider taking on a leadership position.

I would like to thank everyone who has helped Aiken Audubon in some capacity this past season. There are too many to list individually but you know who you are. It takes a group effort to put together the monthly programs, newsletters, field trips, meetings and more in which Aiken Audubon is involved. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Enjoy your summer off, go birding and make sure to join us September 17 for “Owls” with Steve Vaughan.

Keep on birding,

Risë

• RISE FOSTER-BRUDER
PRESIDENT, AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Upcoming Meetings	2
Audubon Colorado News	2
Field Trips	3
Events of Interest	3
Conservation Corner: Chico Basin Fundraiser, Atlasing Training	4
Book Review: Outwitting Squirrels	4
Field Trip Report: FCNC	5
Subscription Form	5

COMING PROGRAMS

May 21

“Snakes Alive!”
presented by Richard Holliday

Summer

No programs June – August

September 17

“Owls”
presented by Steve Vaughan

Newsletter Articles

Items and announcements of special interest to Aiken Audubon members are welcomed for consideration. We'd love to hear from you!

Deadline for the Sept./Oct. 2008 issue of Aikorns is Wednesday, August 20.

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

UPCOMING AIKEN PROGRAM

May 21 • Richard Holliday Snakes Alive!



PHOTO: STEPHEN VAUGHAN

Birdwatchers have a notorious reputation for looking up most of the time, whereas, in actuality, an occasional glance at the ground can be most beneficial... especially in rattlesnake country! Spring has arrived, and snakes are vacating their winter dens.

Richard Holliday will present a program on snakes of the Pikes Peak region. Using live venomous and nonvenomous snakes displayed in safe viewing cages, he explores the myths and realities of snakes, with a particular focus on rattlesnakes. Their identification, habits, physical makeup, venom, hunting and killing capabilities, distribution and habitat are discussed in detail.

Don't miss this opportunity to sharpen your snake-ID skills. Learn how to prevent snake bites, and what to do in case you are bitten.

This is also an excellent program for older children, approximately 4 - 6th grades. Bring your children and grandchildren, nieces, nephews and neighbors.

Richard Holliday is a naturalist and former professional teacher with over twenty years experience in the Colorado Springs Public Schools. He earned his Master's Degree in teaching from Colorado College, and has studied extensively in the biological sciences. Richard has been presenting his reptile and other nature programs to various groups in the community since 1961.

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.

AUDUBON COLORADO UPDATE

Audubon At Home

Audubon at Home (AAH) is a new and exciting Audubon outreach program focused on improving neighborhood wildlife habitats. It focuses on taking personal conservation action to improve the environmental health and habitat quality of our yards and neighborhoods. Established by a partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the National Audubon Society, it is a unique collaborative effort to bring conservation home for the benefit of birds and other wildlife.

Creation of an outdoor space that is healthy for birds and wildlife, for you and your family, and for the environment is the goal of AAH. The program will focus on how you can make a difference in your part of the world. For instance, you can create healthier diverse habitat landscapes by integrating waterwise and wildlife principles into your yard. By grouping together plants of similar water needs, attracting charismatic critters, and managing wildlife mischief, a well planned habitat can improve the quality of your landscape and help save declining bird populations.

If you, your neighbor, or a friend wants to landscape with nature in mind, integrating native species and inviting birds, butterflies and wildlife into their yard, then consider joining the Audubon At Home program. Visit <http://co.audubon.org/aah.html> to learn how you can turn your landscape into a wildscape. You can help achieve the Audubon At Home goal of conserving and restoring habitat all across America for our native birds and other wildlife, one yard at a time.

• **SUSIE MOTTASHED IS A NATURE ILLUSTRATOR AND AUTHOR WHO TEACHES NATURE JOURNALING WORKSHOPS BASED ON HER NEW BOOK, "WHO LIVES IN YOUR BACKYARD?"**

This article was excerpted from the Colorado State Audubon website. Visit <http://co.audubon.org> for more information about what Audubon is doing in our state.

AIKEN AUDUBON BOARD MEMBERS

President

Risë Foster-Bruder
719.282.7877

Vice President

Frank Dodge
719.548.9863

Secretary

Pamela Wickerd
719.229.2506

Treasurer

Gail Biedronski
GBied@yahoo.com

Conservation Chair

Sandra McNew
719.632.4374
SandraMcNew@aol.com

Publicity Chair

Stephen Vaughan
719.531.7076

Field Trips

Norman Lerch
719.495.9305
Norm Karasa
NormKar@excite.com

Aikorns Editor

Leslie Holzmann
719.495.8889
Leslie@icta.net

Christmas Count

Ben & Sally Sorensen
719.635.1716



AIKEN AUDUBON FIELD TRIPS

Everyone is welcome on Aiken field trips, regardless of experience level or membership in Audubon. Contact trip leader for details and to let them know you are coming. New trip information is available online at www.aikenaudubon.com.

Sunday, May 4

Chico Basin Ranch

Brandon Percival is leading a joint AAVS/Aiken trip to this amazing hot spot. (John Drummond had to cancel the May 10 trip.) Bring your scope and lunch, and dress in layers for Colorado's spring weather fluctuations. Meet at ranch HQ at 8 am.

Contact Brandon Percival: bkpercival@yahoo.com, 719.547.3722 by May 1 to reserve a spot. Please note that there is a \$10/person admission fee to the ranch.



Saturday, June 7

Boreas Pass

Allan Burns is leading an all-day trip to Colorado's gorgeous high country. Boreas Pass is an old railroad grade, now a dirt road, southeast of Breckenridge. The high point is approximately 12,000 feet. Previous birds, which *might* be encountered again this year, include Veery, Pine and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Red Crossbills, and breeding Fox Sparrows.

Come prepared for all kinds of weather. Meet at the Red Rocks Safeway (in Old Colorado City) at 7:30 am to carpool, and be sure to bring your lunch.

Contact Allan Burns at 719.632.2081

Monday, June 23

Emerald Valley

Join El Paso County naturalist Ken Pals in exploring the biological diversity of this alpine meadow off Stage Coach Road. Slipper orchids and other native plants will be top priority, followed by butterflies, and then birds such as Band-tailed Pigeon, flycatchers, vireos and hummingbirds. Consider bringing a camera.

We'll rendezvous at Cheyenne Mountain High School east parking lot at 7:00 am and carpool to Emerald Valley. Be prepared to drive or offer to drive. High clearance vehicles are recommended. Passengers should contribute \$5 to drivers for gas. Bring the usual things (binoculars, field guides, water, lunch, sun screen, camera, rain gear, ability to ford small streams). Reservations are required. Group size is limited to 12 people as parking is limited at the site.

Call Ken Pals at Fountain Creek Nature Center to reserve a spot: 719. 520.6745, mtnpals@juno.com

ARKANSAS VALLEY AUDUBON FIELD TRIPS

The Arkansas Valley Audubon Society welcomes you on their field trips. Check their website, www.socobirds.org for more information. Be sure to contact trip leaders to let them know you would like to join them.

UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

Saturday, May 3, 7 – 9:30am

Bird Banding Demo

Budding ornithologists of all ages are invited to join a master bird bander to learn what's required and how to band wild birds. Using mist nets, we'll gently capture, band, collect data, and release live songbirds.

\$3.00 per person, reservations required, 520-6745

Saturday, May 10, 7 – 11am

Spring Bird Count at Fountain Creek

Beginning-to-advanced birders are invited to observe and record the numbers of bird species and populations found in Fountain Creek Regional Park.

Free, reservations required: 719. 520.6745



Saturday, May 10, 10am – 4pm

Hummingbird Festival

Celebrate the return of the hummingbirds at the 15th Annual Hummingbird Festival, held at Starsmore Discovery Center, 2120 S. Cheyenne Cañon Road. Participate in programs about hummingbirds, migratory birds, and birds-of-prey. Activities for all ages with children's crafts and face-painting, discovery hikes, native plant sale, food vendors, live music, silent auction, climbing wall, live rattlesnake exhibit, nature products, magic programs, and more.

To help with limited parking, please park at Cheyenne Mountain High School, 1200 Cresta Road, and take free shuttle buses to the Festival.

For more information, call 719.385.6086

Saturday, May 17, 7 – 11am

Spring Bird Count at Bear Creek

Bird enthusiasts of all ages and abilities are invited to participate in this quarterly bird count in Bear Creek Park.

Free, reservations required, 719.520.6387

August 14 & 16, September 4 & 6, 18 & 20

Birding 202 Course

Led by county naturalist Ken Pals, this series of classes and field trips goes beyond the basics of birding and focuses on species that are more difficult to identify. Hawks, shorebirds, flycatchers and warblers will be among the groups studied.

Classroom time will be held three Thursday evenings from 6:30 – 8:30 at Fountain Creek Nature Center. Field trips are the following Saturday mornings from 8 – noon. Destinations will vary.

The course fee is \$50. Registration is required: 719. 520.6745, KenPals@elpasoco.com

Saturday, May 17, 2008, 7:30am to 3:00pm

Chico Basin Ranch: A Day of Adventure

Benefiting Environmental Education and Research



PHOTOS: LESLIE HOLZMANN

This is a great opportunity to experience this historic working ranch with one of the richest wildlife populations in Colorado:

- Over 300 species of birds
- 200 species of wildflowers and almost 60 species of grasses
- Teepee Buttes—methane vents from an ancient tropical sea with lots of fossils
- Ponds and wetlands with giant old willow trees
- An 1890's schoolhouse, plus sod and adobe ranch houses
- Coyotes, turtles, pronghorn antelope, prairie dogs, hawks, and Golden Eagles
- Ancient cottonwood trees where bird banding demonstrations will be held
- The amazing feel of miles of 87,000 acres of unbroken open space in every direction, with views of Pikes Peak as a backdrop

Ride the Range— It's for the Birds

This event features 3 mountain bike options, mostly on flat to rolling terrain: a 25 mile route for more serious bikers; a less rigorous 12 mile mountain bike loop; and an easier 9 mile ride to the 1890's Lone Star School. Along the way riders will see grazing cattle, early spring wildflowers, fabulous views of Pikes Peak, and who knows... perhaps a Burrowing Owl or a White-faced Ibis!

Hike the Plains— It's for the Birds

For non-bikers, this option begins with a hay ride to Chico Creek. There, Colorado College Biology Professor Extraordinaire, Alex Vargo, will lead a leisurely hike along the Creek exploring the great diversity of plant and animal life to be found there. Join us for this unique adventure and fall helplessly and happily under Alex's spell. This is off-trail walking but on fairly level ground. This event runs from 9 am to noon and is limited to 25 people.

Bird Banding

Participants in either activity are invited to watch bird banding at Chico Basin Ranch's Bird Banding Station from 7:30 am – 8: 45 am. The ranch is considered one of the premiere birding areas in the country, with close to 5000 birds having been banded over the years. The banding station's educational programs attract students of all ages, and supply scientists with critical information on the migratory habits of birds. Proceeds from our Day of Adventure will go to support the work of the Bird Banding Station and to other environmental programs at the ranch.



Banding a Yellow Warbler

For more information about the ranch, event times, registration, directions, and a suggested list of what to bring: www.chicobasinranch.com. For additional questions, contact Kim Sellers at kim@chicobasinranch.com or Linda Overlin at overlinl@earthlink.net



Part of the herd at Chico Basin Ranch

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

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



COLORADO
Breeding Bird Atlas II

Upcoming Training

John Drummond is planning to run several training classes for those of you who are new to atlasing. Since most of his weekends in May are committed to other birding projects, hopefully a mid-week date will work.

The class will be held in the field in one of your assigned block or blocks in Region 24. Please let John know if any of these dates fit your schedule. Also, feel free to attend more than one session.

May: Wed. or Thurs., May 21/22;
Saturday, May 31

June: Saturday June 7 or 14;
Any midweek day June 3 to 5

Contact John Drummond, Region 24 Coordinator:
Jxdrummo@aol.com, 719.488.3700

Outwitting Squirrels

Anyone who puts out food for wild birds quickly learns that the squirrel food alert network is very efficient. Within hours, often before the birds find your new feeders, the squirrels are on site, shoveling sunflower seeds into their mouths as fast as they can. That's pretty fast.

Some people actually like squirrels. That's fine with me. If they want to feed expensive seeds and nuts to squirrels, let them go right ahead. Of course, their largess will encourage the production of more squirrels....

On the other hand, most bird feeders want to feed birds, not rodents. Banging on the window and waving your arms may alarm the neighbors, but it won't faze the squirrels for long. So what's a frustrated bird lover to do?

My daughter gave me *Outwitting Squirrels*, by Bill Adler, Jr., for Christmas, along with a bottle of hot pepper spray. While the pepper spray just proved that I have squirrels with an appetite for spicy food, the book has proven extremely helpful, and I laughed my way through each chapter.

The subtitle sums it up well: "101 Cunning Strategems to Reduce Dramatically the Egregious Misappropriation of Seed from Your Birdfeeder by Squirrels."

Indeed, Adler does a very thorough job of discussing various ways in which to feed the birds and only the birds. At the same time, he freely admits that there is no perfect solution. Could we admit that squirrels might be smarter than we are? At least, they are more highly motivated, and therefore more persistent.

I particularly appreciated the chapter entitled "Know the Enemy: Everything a Bird Feeder Needs to Know About Squirrels." I must say it gave me a new respect for the maurading tree rats.

At the same time, I don't have room in my birdfeeding budget for squirrels, and I now have some hope that I can exclude them from my feeders... at least most of the time.

• REVIEWED BY LESLIE HOLZMANN

If you have read a bird-related book that you particularly enjoyed, please share it with us. Write a short review and send it to the Aikorns editor at Leslie@icta.net.



PHOTO: LESLIE HOLZMANN

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

TRIP REPORTS

Fountain Creek Nature Center

APRIL 12—It's clearly spring at Fountain Creek Nature Center. With Risë leading the trip, we expected snow, but the brisk 35 degree day was tempered by bright sunshine, and the birds were out and about. Of the 39 species seen, highlights included a Marsh Wren, two Snowy Egrets, and **three** Virginia Rails strutting about in clear view to be admired.

FCNC: Canada Goose, W Meadowlark, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-winged Blackbird, House Finch, Euro. Starling, Downy Woodpecker, American Robin, Mallard, Song Sparrow, Mourning Dove, Pied-billed Grebe, Northern Shoveler, American Coot, N Flicker, Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's), White-breasted Nuthatch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet (displaying his red crown!), Brown-headed Cowbird, Belted Kingfisher, Virginia Rail, Marsh Wren, Euro. Collared Dove, Gadwall, Common Crow, Great-tailed Grackle, Hooded Merganser, Blue-winged Teal, Cinnamon Teal, Green-winged Teal, Great Blue Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, Killdeer, American Wigeon, Wood Duck, Black-capped Chickadee, Snowy Egret, Turkey Vulture, House Sparrow.

Some of us made a quick stop at Big Johnson Reservoir on the way home, and picked up an additional 13 species.

BIG JOHNSON: Eared Grebe, Bonaparte's Gull, Franklin's Gull, Ruddy Duck, Western Grebe, Clark's Grebe, Common Goldeneye, Ring-billed Gull, Lesser Scaup, Common Merganser, Bufflehead, California Gull, and a Common Loon in full breeding plumage.

• REPORTED BY LESLIE HOLZMANN



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

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

WILDLIFE GARDENING: CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE



Pine Siskin getting a drink.

berries, and seeds. Appropriate flower varieties, often in shades of pink and red, can be a source of nectar for hummingbirds. Even apartment dwellers can have some potted flowers and a nectar feeder on their balcony.

Try to include plants that have fruit on their branches all winter. For example, some varieties of crabapple are still feeding waxwings and robins in early March, while many plants are sleeping beneath the snow.

Additionally, most birds eat insects during at least part of the year, particularly during the warm months as they are raising young. Be slow to apply pesticides, even organic ones, and give the birds a chance to benefit from the arthropods in your yard.

even a simple plant saucer filled with water will keep the birds refreshed on hot, dry days. Be sure to keep it clean, and change the water frequently to avoid inviting mosquitos along with the birds.

Food may be provided directly in the form of purchased bird food, but don't overlook the value of landscape plants that offer nuts,



Mahonia produces plenty of berries in the fall.

Shelter is found not only in roosting boxes, but in dense hedges, evergreen trees and bushes, and brush piles. Maybe this is the excuse you have been looking for, to avoid doing all that yard cleanup this spring. Be a little messy. The birds will thank you.

Birds seeking a safe place to nest will consider those same thickets and brush piles, as well as tree cavities, both real and artificial. Construct or purchase nest boxes designed for a specific species. If you can, be slow to remove dead trees. They may hold the nests of many cavity-nesting birds, such as woodpeckers, chickadees, nuthatches, and wrens.

Make sure you take measures to protect the new family from predators. Use baffles and reinforce entrance holes to block out intruders. Keeping cats indoors protects both birds and cats.

Finally, with all this consideration given to making the birds at home in your garden, don't forget that your yard is for people too. Use some basic design principles to make a pleasing place for you to hang out and enjoy your feathered visitors.



Tree Swallows in nesting box.

• TEXT AND PHOTOS BY LESLIE HOLZMANN
COLORADO MASTER GARDENER