



## Winter Birding

Winter is here, traditionally a time to hole up and hunker down. We are attracted to warm firesides, hot chocolate, and snuggly quilts. But wait, we're birders! Just because the temperature outside is in the single digits, are we to ignore our passion and hibernate like bears?

Of course, some birds have opted for tropical vacations, and I'm sure we would love to do likewise. But if your schedule and budget don't allow for a trip to Central America, be encouraged that there are plenty of birds to be enjoyed right here.

A surprising number of species hang around for the season. In spite of the many verses praising robins as harbingers of spring, they stay here in Colorado year round. During the Christmas Bird Count of 2006, we counted well over 200 individuals in just one tiny corner of Palmer Park. Chickadees and Nuthatches are well-known as year-round birds. American Goldfinches hang around too—they just exchange their sunny summer outfits for drab winter wear. Woodpeckers winter here, and are easier to spot when the leaves have fallen.

Some species that spend their summers in the arctic actually come here for the winter. My initial discovery of the joys of birding occurred in the spring. I still remember driving down to Fountain Creek Nature Center, all excited to be seeing my first Blue Jay, Song Sparrow, or Sharp-shinned

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### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

If you have attended a general meeting recently, you may have noticed the new Aiken Audubon banner hanging there. Each Audubon chapter has a bird "mascot." For example, the Huachuca Audubon Society chapter in Sierra Vista, Arizona has the Elegant Trogon as its mascot. The Audubon chapter in Tampa Bay, Florida is known by the American Avocet. And our Aiken Audubon Society chapter's mascot is the Western Screech Owl. Dr. James Aiken, for whom our chapter is named, did research on the Western Screech Owl.



For some time the AAS board has been contemplating creating a banner, but we had to find just the right image of a Western Screech Owl. I was shopping at a high school craft fair when I came upon a Screech Owl photo at the booth

of a local photographer. Asking the attendant if this was indeed a Western Screech Owl, I explained why an Eastern Screech Owl image was not acceptable. She called the photographer, who said the photo was taken in Colorado. Now, we know this fact does not guarantee that the bird actually is a Western Screech Owl, but it was such a nice image, I thought I'd take the chance. With a little fine-tuning in Photoshop, our banner now proudly displays an "Aiken" Western Screech Owl.

I would like to thank KKO Images of Monument, Colorado for allowing us to use his Screech Owl image on our banner. There are many other Colorado images on his website if you would like to visit: [www.kkoimages.com](http://www.kkoimages.com). Now when Aiken Audubon participates in a conference, everyone will know who we are. They may even learn something about Aiken Audubon, Audubon chapters around the country or the Western Screech Owl.

Rise

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### COMING PROGRAMS

#### January 21

"Birds of Prey"  
presented by Steve Vaughan

#### February 18

"Flammulated Owl Research"  
presented by Brian Linkhart

#### March 18

"Colorado's Breeding Bird Atlas"  
presented by Lynn Wickersham

#### April 15

"Gardening is for the Birds"  
presented by Leslie Holzmänn

## 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 March/April 2009 issue of Aikorns is Wednesday, February 18.

Contact the editor, Leslie Holzmänn,  
at: [AikenAudubon@Gmail.com](mailto:AikenAudubon@Gmail.com)  
719.495.8889

## January 21 • Stephen Vaughan Birds of Prey

PHOTO © DEBRA BARNES



Colorado has 23 species of diurnal raptors. Stephen Vaughan will presenting an information-packed program explaining how to identify Colorado's eagles, hawks and falcons. Steve has been studying the identification of these birds for more than 30 years and has developed a simplified method for separating the various species. Here is your chance to learn the tips that will greatly improve your skills. Don't miss this outstanding program. [You can put your new skills into practice by signing up for the Hawks to Eagles field trip in February. —Ed.]

Steve holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Zoology from Colorado State University. He has been a professional nature photographer since 1985. Stephen has photography credits from such prestigious magazines as Audubon,

Birders World and Sierra. His photographs have appeared in calendars published by Audubon Society, Sierra Club and Arizona Highways. He has been teaching nature photography at Pikes Peak Community College since 1998. In addition, he has led photography workshops to Cape May (New Jersey), Garden of the Gods, Rocky Mountain National Park, Southeast Arizona, Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge (New Mexico) and Costa Rica.

## February 18 • Brian Linkhart Flammulated Owls

PHOTO © DEBRA BARNES



The Flammulated Owl is as small as a fist and reticent enough to disappear into the shadows of western forests.

Considered the country's leading expert on Flammulated Owls, Dr. Brian D. Linkhart has been studying the demography and habitat requirements of this small raptor on the Manitou Experimental Forest since 1981. His aim is the development of conservation plans for forest ecosystems containing this and other sensitive species.

With this extended period of study Brian has been able to uncover some fascinating secrets about this species. Don't miss this outstanding program.

Dr. Brian D. Linkhart is an Assistant Professor of Biology at Colorado College, where he teaches courses in ornithology, ecology, and field biology.

**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; 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.**

I'm sure, as birders, you have noticed Canada Geese flying around in a vee formation. But have you ever noticed that when the geese are in their formation, the line on one side of the vee is longer than the other? Do you know why that is? It's because there are more geese in it.

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Everyone is welcome on Aiken field trips, regardless of experience level or membership in Audubon. Contact trip leader for details and to sign up. Current trip information is available at [www.aikenaudubon.com](http://www.aikenaudubon.com).

Saturday, January 17

## Photographing Rosy Finches

PHOTO © DEBRA BARNES



This birding trip will have an emphasis on photography rather than seeing lots of birds. We'll meet at the Red Rocks Safeway, 3275 W. Colorado Ave., at 9am to carpool to Victor, Cripple Creek, and Goldfield. The 8-person limit is to ensure everyone gets lots of personal attention from photographer and trip leader Debbie Barnes.

Contact Debbie Barnes at 303.947.0566 or email her at [Kfoopooh@yahoo.com](mailto:Kfoopooh@yahoo.com).

Saturday, February 7

## Hawks to Eagles

Lake Pueblo State Park hosts its annual Eagle Day, and Aiken will be attending. We'll follow fearless field trip leader Gary Conover as we take the back roads east of I-25, looking for raptors. Following a brief rest stop, we'll continue to Lake Pueblo for more birding, and to enjoy whatever programs are of interest.

Bring a sack lunch and plan to carpool. This is a great trip for beginners. Meet outside the AAA office at Broadmoor Towne Center (Nevada and Lake Avenue) at 8am. Plan to return around 3pm.

While we can't make guarantees, previous trips have yielded Bald and Golden Eagles, Rough-legged and Ferruginous Hawks, and a good time for everyone.

Contact Gary Conover: 719.635.2505

For more information about Eagle Days,

check out [www.eagleday.org](http://www.eagleday.org) or call (719) 561-5300.

Admittance to the state park is \$6 per car, unless you have an annual pass.

**Pueblo's Arkansas Valley Audubon Society invites Aiken Audubon to join them on their trips. Check their website for current information: [www.socobirds.org](http://www.socobirds.org). Then, please contact trip leaders for details, and to let them know you are coming.**

## Get Your Birding Trail Booklet!

Wondering where to go birding? The hard copy of the Colorado Birding Trail booklet is now available. One place you can pick it up is the Department of Wildlife office at 4255 Sinton Rd., (where Aiken's monthly meetings are held). Even better, they're free!

[www.coloradobirdingtrail.com/news-and-events/index.php](http://www.coloradobirdingtrail.com/news-and-events/index.php)

Saturday, February 21, 8:30am – 1:30pm

## 2009 Colorado Legislative Forum

For the 2009 state legislative session, Colorado State Audubon is expecting an all-out attack on Colorado's new oil and gas regulations, particularly the ones that attempt to protect wildlife habitat, plus an assault on the legislation that enabled them. Find out what our legislators will be up to and meet the Audubon and Sierra Club legislative liaisons as well as some of the influential members of the Colorado General Assembly. Audubon lobbyist Jen Boulton and Sierra Club legislative director Gary Lindstrom will give their latest reports on the session, followed by discussions of the really hot issues of 2009 with experts such as Mike King, Deputy Director of the Dept. of Natural Resources.

Cost: \$12 in advance, \$15 at the door.

Location: First Plymouth Church, 3501 S. Colorado Blvd., Englewood (sw corner of Colorado and Hampden Ave.)

Registration: Contact the Audubon office, 303-973-9530, [www.denveraudubon.org](http://www.denveraudubon.org)

February 16 – 19, 2009

## Great Backyard Bird Count

Bird and nature fans throughout North America are invited to join tens of thousands of everyday bird watchers for the 12<sup>th</sup> annual Great Backyard Bird Count. A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, this free event is an opportunity for families, students, and people of all ages to discover the wonders of nature in backyards, schoolyards, and local parks, and, at the same time, make an important contribution to conservation.

Learn more at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org)

## New "Project FeederWatch" Guide

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has just released its newly revised, **free** Homeschooler's Guide to Project FeederWatch.

For more than 20 years, Project FeederWatch has been an easy, fun way for children to learn about birds and strengthen their skills in observation, identification, research, computation, writing, creativity, and more. FeederWatchers keep track of the numbers and kinds of birds at their feeders through the winter and report what they see to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

The Homeschooler's Guide to Project FeederWatch will guide you through bird-related activities that promote learning across many disciplines, including science, math, history, and the arts.

You may choose to use the free guide as a stand-alone resource, or sign up for Project FeederWatch to submit the data you gather. If you would like to be a project participant, the signup fee is \$12 for members of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, \$15 for non-members. There are discounts for group participation.

For more information, go to [www.FeederWatch.org](http://www.FeederWatch.org) and click on the "Education/Home School" button.

• FROM THE CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY



## Keeping Common Birds Common:

# Two more ways to help

In 2007, Audubon released "Common Birds in Decline: A State of the Birds Report," detailing alarming changes in bird populations in recent years. This is 3<sup>rd</sup> in a series on how we, as birders, can be involved in reversing this trend.

## Promote Sound Agricultural Policy

How we grow our food has enormous impact on grassland birds and habitat, including Northern Bobwhites and Eastern Meadowlarks, two species in decline. Promoting strong conservation provisions in the federal Farm Bill and Conservation Reserve Program can help to protect millions of acres of vital habitat.

The federal Farm Bill is a massive piece of legislation. Originating in the Dust Bowl during the 1930s, it has grown to include such diverse issues as food stamps, nutrition education, commodities, international food aid, biofuels, agricultural research, risk management, and conservation. The bill must be renewed annually, providing a yearly opportunity to increase funding and thereby protect wildlife and habitat. Read Audubon's public policy fact sheet on the 2007 bill at [www.audubon.org/campaign/pdf/audubonfactsheet.pdf](http://www.audubon.org/campaign/pdf/audubonfactsheet.pdf).

The Conservation Reserve Program, or CRP, has been a vital resource for farmers, wildlife, consumers, and American taxpayers for over twenty years. Under the program, farmers receive payments for planting trees and grasses, or restoring wetlands, on land that would otherwise be under cultivation. Currently more than 36 million acres are enrolled in the program. This is more than all the acreage of National Wildlife Refuges in the lower 48 states combined.

Audubon has advocated in favor of the program for years. Benefits from the CRP have been widespread. The new wetlands and grasslands have greatly improved soil and water quality and provided habitat for many species. Ninety bird species have been observed using CRP land. Six species on Audubon's WatchList use CRP land for breeding, including one species, Henslow's Sparrow, which is severely imperiled. Many common bird species facing rapid declines also rely on CRP land.

## Support Sustainable Forests

The Boreal Forest in the Northern U.S. and Canada is essential breeding territory for many species of birds.

One familiar bird impacted by the fate of these forests is the Evening Grosbeak. Evening Grosbeaks are birds of boreal and montane forests and are therefore susceptible to all the incursions into those habitats. Chemical control of spruce budworm and other tree pests lowers this species' food supply and may also cause secondary poisoning. Competition and the spread of disease among House Finches, Goldfinches, and other feeder birds may also be playing a role in the decline. Finally, populations are affected by fluctuations in insect populations and the frequency and intensity of forest fires.

Federal and state legislations promoting sustainable forest management will help fight habitat loss from inappropriate logging, mining, and drilling. Become educated about the issues and write those legislators who are most likely to make critical decisions. The informative article in the September/October 2008 issue of Aikorns (available online at [www.aikenaudubon.com/newsletters/2008/0809\\_newsletter.pdf](http://www.aikenaudubon.com/newsletters/2008/0809_newsletter.pdf)) is a good place to start.

• FROM THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY; EDITED BY LESLIE HOLZMANN



Montana Wheat Farming



PHOTO © LESLIE HOLZMANN

It was 13°F, with a biting wind, but these intrepid Aiken members still managed to count several hundred birds for Audubon's annual Christmas Bird Count.

## TRIP REPORT



PHOTO © LESLIE HOLZMANN

## Kettle Creek Lakes

NOVEMBER 22, 2008: A beautiful late-fall day provided the setting, and the birds provided the interest. While the species count wasn't overwhelming, the 13 participants agreed that it was well worth the effort just to be outside enjoying nature.

Here is the species list, in the order of appearance:

Gadwall, Mountain Chickadee, Black-capped Chickadee, Dark-eyed Junco (Gray Headed, Pink-sided and Slate-colored subspecies), Black Billed Magpie, Western Scrub Jay, European Starling, Pied-billed Grebe, Cooper's Hawk, Common Raven, Stellar's Jay, Townsend Solitaire, White-breasted Nuthatch, Belted Kingfisher (heard), Mallard, Song Sparrow, Canada Goose (saw footprints), Red-breasted Nuthatch, Great Horned Owl (Ben only), Red-winged Blackbird, (Ben only), House Finch, Chipping Sparrow, American Goldfinch, American Tree Sparrow, Northern Flicker, Spotted Towhee (Ben only).

• RISÉ FOSTER-BRUDER

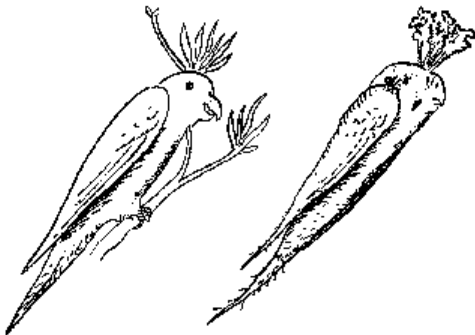
## WINTER BIRDING

(Continued from front page)

Hawk. I eagerly scanned the various ponds, looking for the ducks depicted in my Peterson's Guide. All I could find were Mallards. Throughout that first summer, whenever the opportunity presented itself, I would take a break and head to the closest body of water. But month after month, it was Mallards, Mallards, Mallards. (In August, I was totally mystified, wondering what had happened to all the males, when there were so many females still around, but that's another story.) I was beginning to believe the rest of the pictures in my guide were a hoax, that there were no other kinds of ducks, and Peterson had painted the pretty pictures just to increase book sales. (Several years later, I had the same doubts about all the various owl species.)

Then the days began to shorten, temperatures cooled, and the migrants arrived. Seemingly overnight, the Mallards had company: Gadwalls at first, then American Wigeons, Green-winged Teal, Goldeneyes and Buffleheads, and the incredible hooded Merganser. I was thrilled. While I have since learned that many species really are around in the summer, to me, winter remains the best time to look for ducks.

Ducks aren't the only ones who come as winter visitors. When the Swainson's Hawks head for the plains of Argentina, the Rough-legged Hawks arrive from their breeding grounds in the Arctic tundra and taiga. They are well-suited for our cold winters. Along with Ferruginous Hawks and Golden Eagles, they share the distinction of being the American raptors equipped with feathery "bloomers," perfect for keeping their legs warm.



### The Parrot. The Carrot.

The Parrot and the Carrot we may  
easily confound,  
They're very much alike in looks  
and similar in sound,  
We recognize the Parrot by his  
clear articulation,  
For Carrots are unable to engage  
in conversation.

~ 5 ~

From "How to Tell the Birds from the Flowers: A Manual of Flornithology for Beginners," by Robert Williams Wood, 1907.

*aikorns*

## Aiken Audubon Society Membership/Subscription

### Sign Up For:

☐ One Year \$10.00

☐ Two Years \$18.00

☐ Donation

☐ New

Total \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Renewal

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

### Mail Check To:

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

Perhaps one of the most convenient aspects of winter birding is the tendency for high altitude species to move to lower elevations. Birds such as Juncos, that spend their summers frolicking on the mountain tops, become familiar yard birds when severe weather arrives. Rosy-Finches come from both the north and the highest elevations, congregating in places such as Victor and Cripple Creek, where we can go see them. This is an opportunity not to be missed. [Note the upcoming field trip to photograph Rosy-Finches, described on page 3—Ed.]

Birds with wanderlust (or just a poor sense of direction) may show up in the strangest places at any time of year. Some strays are more likely to come to town in winter, Geese and Gulls in particular. For example, recent Front Range gull sightings include Mew, Thayer's, Iceland, Lesser Black-backed, Greater Black-backed, Glaucous, and Glaucous-winged!

If you have been sitting indoors by the fire, you also likely missed the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Black Phoebe, Greater White-fronted Geese, Trumpeter Swans, Dunlin, Chihuahua Raven, White-throated Sparrow, and Lapland Longspur, all of which have been sighted locally in the last month. Those are birds you don't see every day!

There are several field trips already planned for the next two months. Both offer excellent opportunities to view birds best—or only—seen in winter. If this article has inspired you to pull out the long johns and wool socks, it's never too late to add additional outings. Just contact Risë or myself (contact information is on page 2), and we'll make sure your trip is put on the schedule.

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

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

### BOOK REVIEW

*Brushed by Feathers*, by Frances L. Wood

## Birding from Your Recliner

It's 15 degrees outside, the snow is not so much falling as being hurled against the windowpane, and the highway patrol has just closed the interstate. You are itching to go birding. What's a snowed-in birder to do? One solution is to grab a fuzzy blanket, a nice cup of hot tea, and hunker down with a copy of *Brushed by Feathers: A Year of Birdwatching in the West*, by Frances L. Wood.



Starting in January, Wood chronicles a year of birdwatching from her perspective as a naturalist, artist, speaker and writer. While the material is factual and informative, the true worth of this book is the way in which it is presented. The author comes across as an old friend sharing her birding journal with you.

Maggie Seymour, reviewing this book on Amazon.com, says it perfectly: "This is one of those books that becomes a journey, transporting you to another place with the author your gentle, ever-present guide, making it all happen, yet remaining completely unobtrusive."

If that isn't enough to make you want to read this book, consider this: So many birding books and magazines are written from the point of view of an easterner. The species mentioned don't occur in Colorado. Frances Wood lives on Whidbey Island, in Puget Sound, and does most of her birding in the West. I was very familiar with many of the birds she writes about. It was a refreshing change.

This isn't a book to be gulped, but rather sipped slowly, like the tea in your cup. Since each chapter is only a few pages long, it's the perfect bedtime read, soothing and without suspense. While our local library has it available, this is a volume to be owned and savored. So let it snow—it's a great excuse to enjoy a good read.

• 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 [AikenAudubon@gmail.com](mailto:AikenAudubon@gmail.com).