



Bird Profiles:

House Sparrows

You see them everywhere... singing outside your bedroom window, eating squashed bugs off the windshield of your car, cleaning up spilled crumbs at sidewalk cafes. They mob bird feeders full of millet and take up space in nest boxes intended for other species. I've even found them in a tiny town in the middle of the Utah desert, miles from anything wet or green. One would think that House Sparrows are one of the most successful species ever to populate planet Earth.



PHOTO: LESLIE HOLZMANN

Not closely related to North American sparrows, House Sparrows are relative newcomers to our country. They were deliberately shipped here and released during the latter half of the 19th century in repeated attempts to establish a breeding population in the U.S.

While the story is a bit muddled, apparently the birds were imported to eat insects that were damaging crops. If so, it was an egregious error. House Sparrows are primarily seed eaters, and according to one study¹, 78% of those seeds come from agricultural crops intended for livestock or human consumption.

As early as 1887, people were becoming aware of the mistake that had been made. States began to pass laws encouraging the extermination of the immigrants, but it was far too late. There are now approximately 150 million House Sparrows living in the Western Hemisphere—from Canada to Central America, and throughout the temperate parts of South America.

As the numbers of House Sparrows soared, they began to have a detrimental impact on several species, including Tree Swallows and Purple Martins. However, the most serious repercussions involved bluebirds.

For a variety of reasons, bluebird populations took a nose-dive during the early 1900s. Winters during the 1890s were exceptionally severe, and many birds died. It takes time for populations to recover, and the repeated cold weather was very damaging, at least to Eastern Bluebird numbers (no one was counting Western and Mountain Bluebirds at that time).

Continued on page 4

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This past June, my youngest son was in Jump training at the USAFA. Weather depending, his first jump of the day was often scheduled at 6:15 am. Being a dutiful, scrapbooking parent, I of course, was at the airfield, binos and camera in hand.

Airfields are interesting places. At the Academy, the "Twotter" was ferrying cadets for parachuting, on another runway the Powered Flight Program

was doing "touch and goes" and the soaring class was taking off with their planes in tow. And of course, at 6 am, no matter where you are or what is happening—there are birds.

Whenever I wasn't using my binos to watch my cadet fall with purpose, I was bird watching. Western Bluebirds pirouetting mere inches above a grass cluster going for insects. A Western Meadowlark seemingly announcing to the cadets

Continued on page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Coming Programs	2
Field Trips & Events	3
Wind Power Research	4
You Can't Get There from Here, by Ogden Nash	5
New Volunteers	5
Subscription Form	5
Book Review	back

COMING PROGRAMS

September 16
 "Out of Breath Birding"
 presented by Bill Schmoker

October 21
 "Cheyenne State Park"
 presented by Pat Grove

November 18
 "Birds of Bolivia"
 presented by John Drummond

December 19
 Christmas Bird Count

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 November/December 2009 issue of Aikorns is Wednesday, October 21.

Contact the editor, Leslie Holzmann, at: AikenAudubon@Gmail.com, or 719.495.8889

UPCOMING AIKEN PROGRAM

September 16 • Bill Schmoker Out Of Breath Birding: The Timberline & Tundra Ecosystems of the Central Rockies

Join Bill Schmoker in a discussion of the unique birding at and above treeline along the crests of the central Rocky Mountain ranges. Bill's talk will set the stage for your high-elevation birding adventures, with information on the natural history and environmental factors shaping bird life up in the rarified air.

Bill is a dynamic speaker who manages to keep a classroom of junior high science students enthralled day after day. He's also a skilled photographer, as this owl photo attests. Be sure to take a look at BRDPICS (<http://brdpics.blogspot.com>), his nature and birding blog. There are many more photographs, as well as fascinating tales of his birding adventures.



October 21 • Pat Grove Cheyenne Mtn. State Park



Bears, Deer, Mountain Lions, Oh My! Come hear about Colorado Springs' only state park—Cheyenne Mountain State Park.

What birds—and other animals—live here? What's the birding like? Park naturalist Pat Grove will be speaking about our newest park's history, wildlife and beauty.

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 pm and programs begin at 7 pm. 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.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (CONT'D FROM FRONT PAGE)

they were in his territory. A tail-bobbing Say's Phoebe completely ignoring the many people while hunting. And the nearly omnipresent metallic buzz of the male Broad-tailed Hummingbird. There were Vesper Sparrows, Swallows and an occasional Red-tailed Hawk. Yet, I think I was the only one who noticed.

Today it's mid-August and I'm back at the airfield waiting for my oldest son's first jump. In the nearly 45 minutes I've been here the only birds I've heard have been the hummer and some immature Vesper Sparrows. "What a difference a month makes!"— is all too true.

Keep on birding,

Risë

• RISË FOSTER-BRUDER
PRESIDENT, AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

AIKEN AUDUBON BOARD MEMBERS

President

Risë Foster-Bruder
719.282.7877

Vice President

Frank Dodge
719.548.9863

Secretary

Christine Bucher
719.596.2916
baccab@aol.com

(Acting) Treasurer

Gail Biedronski
GBied@yahoo.com

Program Chair

Debra Barnes
303.947.0566
kfoopoh@yahoo.com

Conservation Chair
(Position open)

Publicity Chair

Stephen Vaughan
719.531.7076

Education Chair

Michael E. Whedon

Field Trips

Cyndy Kulp
719.634.0627
KulpC@aol.com

Aikorns Editor

Leslie Holzmann
719.495.8889
AikenAudubon@gmail.com

Hospitality

Arlene Sampson
719.574.6134

Christmas Count

Ben & Sally Sorensen
719.635.1716



AIKEN AUDUBON FIELD TRIPS

NOTE: We are creating a list of those who would like to receive email reminders for upcoming field trips. To sign up, send your name and email address to AikenAudubon@gmail.com with “field trip list” in the subject line.



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. Don't forget to pack your binoculars, scope (if you have one), field guide, water, snack or lunch, hat, rain gear, sun screen, bug spray, camera(?), and some gas money for the drivers.

Saturday, September 5, 7 am — 3 pm

Burnt Mill Road

Travel south of Pueblo down Burnt Mill Road and the St. Charles River drainage, looking for Cassin's Kingbird, Blue Grosbeak, Black Phoebe, Greater Roadrunner, Lewis's Woodpecker, Hummers and other fall specialties. Bring your lunch, a full tank of gas and plan on returning to Colorado Springs after 3 pm. (You can leave the trip around noon if needed.)

Meet at Sears Southgate / Broadmoor Towne Center (Hwy 115 and Lake Ave.) in the parking lot across from Starbucks. Please bring talk-about and radios if you have one.

Contact trip leader Gary Conover, 719.635.2505, with any questions and to let him know you are coming.

Saturday, September 26, 8 am

Red Rock Canyon

Rich in geological history, Red Rock Canyon Open Space proves a beautiful place to hike and birdwatch. Mountain mahogany, skunkbush, and Gambel's oak blanket the slopes; pinyon pine and juniper border the trails. Garden of the Gods, visible from Red Rock Canyon, is similar in habitat and birdlife. Participants can expect to hear and see many of the common foothill species including Western Scrub Jay, Bushtit, and Spotted Towhee. Red Rock Canyon offers a variety of trails for all levels of hikers. Depending on the participants, we can choose to take the quarry trail to an overlook, but plans remain flexible and open to the opinion of the group. The turnoff for Red Rock Canyon is located south of U.S. 24.

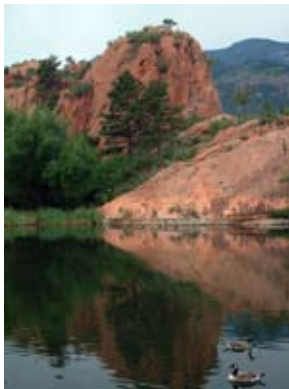


PHOTO: LESLIE HOLZMANN

Meet at the Safeway parking lot on West Colorado Ave at 8 am.

Contact trip leader Sariaya Rayuno, 719.641-4305, mokeysue01@comcast.net with any questions and to let her know you are coming.

**For the latest information on
field trips and events:
www.AikenAudubon.com**

Saturday, October 10, 7:30 am

Castlewood Canyon

Join Allan Burns for a birding walk through the canyon. We'll hope for some montane breeders and fall migrants. Bring a snack and something to drink. The hike is approximately six miles with modest elevation changes.



PHOTO: LESLIE HOLZMANN

Meet at the SW corner of the new Hollywood Theater parking lot on Interquest (exit 153 off I-25) to carpool. There is a state park entrance fee of \$6 per carload, unless you have a parks pass.

Contact trip leader Allan Burns, 719.632.2081, with any questions and to let him know you are coming.

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, September 12, 7:30 - 11 am

Fall Bird Count @ FCNC

Come help count the birds. We'll meet at the nature center to divide into groups. Then each group takes responsibility for one area of the park. We meet together again at the end to turn in our tallies and compare notes. Which area will have the most interesting birds?

No experience necessary—everyone is invited to participate in this annual event. Juice and bagels will be provided to sustain you on your walk.

The nature center is requesting a \$5.00 donation for the count. Contact the Fountain Creek Nature Center at 719.520.6745

Saturday, September 26, 10 am – 3 pm

Art Festival at FCNC

Fountain Creek once again is hosting an art festival featuring local artists with prices to fit a budget. Jewelry, Native American art, photography, pastels, and watercolors will be on display. Sales support the nature centers. This year's theme is “Nature's Colors.”

There is a Fun Run from 8:30 - 10:30 am (call to register), followed by the art show/sale and “Artivities”: Caricatures, nature cards, balloon animals, glitterific animal face painting, barefoot books, children's mural and a rock art station. Most artivities will have a cost associated with them. The children's mural is free.

For more information, contact Fountain Creek Nature Center at 719.520.6745.

Scientists to Investigate Wind Power Impacts on Migratory Wildlife

Thirty top wildlife scientists have announced agreement on some of the highest research priorities to help America's rapidly growing wind energy industry produce much-needed alternative energy—while also providing safe passage for birds and bats. This coalition of scientists from industry, government, nongovernmental organizations, and universities met recently in Racine, Wisconsin, to address unanswered questions about how continued wind energy development will affect migrating birds and bats. The meeting was hosted by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the American Bird Conservancy, and The Johnson Foundation at Wingspread.

“We see great potential in wind energy for ... reducing America's reliance on fossil fuels,” said Dr. Michael Fry of the American Bird Conservancy. “It's critical we act now to understand the interactions between wind energy installations and birds and bats.”

“Billions of birds migrate annually, taking advantage of the same wind currents that are most beneficial for producing wind energy,” said Dr. Andrew Farnsworth of the CLO. “We know that in some locations a small percentage of wind turbines may cause the majority of bird and bat deaths. For example, Altamont Pass, east of Oakland, California, is an extreme case: in an area used regularly by migrant and resident raptors, only a fraction of the 5,000 turbines are responsible for most of the raptor deaths annually. As wind power develops further, we need to know more about how placement, design, and operation impact birds and bats as well as how habitat and weather conditions affect potential hazards.”

The scientists addressed the critical information that could be collected using cutting-edge tools such as weather surveillance radar, thermal imaging, and microphones directed skyward to map migrations by day and night. New research will build upon monitoring and research studies of birds and bats before and after construction of existing wind energy facilities as well as work done by other researchers. The coalition appointed working groups to move this new research agenda forward. Top research priorities identified by the coalition include:



- Studying bird and bat behaviors and more accurately estimating mortality at existing wind turbines
- Using current and newly-obtained information on bird and bat population numbers and distributions to focus research on critically important migratory routes and timing
- Documenting how interactions of birds and bats with turbines are affected by factors such as weather, topography, and their distribution within airspace swept by wind turbine blades
- Establish standardized methods for pre- and post-construction studies of bird and bat behavior at wind facilities
- Conduct research on the best methods for mitigating the impacts of wind energy development on birds and bats

“Conducting this research will help the wind industry make informed, science-based decisions about where future wind energy projects can be built, and how they can be operated to minimize the impact on migrating wildlife, while still providing much-needed alternative energy,” said Dr. John Fitzpatrick, director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. “It will also help flesh out specific guidelines for wind farm construction being developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.”

• CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY

Both bluebirds and House Sparrows nest in holes excavated by woodpeckers. During the last several hundred years, much land that used to be forested has been cleared for farming. So much land has been cleared that there are few trees available for perching and nesting. Also, because dead trees are now routinely cut down, fewer rotting trees with holes in them are available for the birds to use. If the birds can't find a suitable cavity for their nest, they are unable to breed for that season.

Of the two species, House Sparrows are much more aggressive than the even-tempered bluebirds. They will evict bluebirds from their homes, often killing both the nestlings and the parents in the process. People who provide nest boxes for birds such as bluebirds, swallows, chickadees and nuthatches are responsible to ensure that no House Sparrows harass their tenants.

In a curious case of come-uppance, the House Sparrow is actually the victim of another introduced species, the House Finch. While House Finches are native to the west, they were limited in their range until a number of birds were released on Long Island, NY, in the 1940s. The highly adaptable species quickly colonized its new territory. House Finches are now found from northern Florida into Canada. At least in the eastern U.S., as the newcomer finches usurp food and nest sites, House Sparrow numbers have decreased.²

While most birdwatchers in the U.S. consider House Sparrows anathema, the situation is strikingly different in Europe. In their native habitat, these birds are in serious trouble. Recent surveys show a 60% decrease in sparrow populations in Great Britain and western Europe. (Other songbirds are also experiencing significant reductions in population numbers.) The causes are unknown, and probably complex, although habitat destruction must play a significant role. It is certainly ironic that a bird considered a pest species in our country is now on the threatened species list at home.

• LESLIE HOLZMANN

¹ www.sialis.org/hosphistory.htm

² www.birds.cornell.edu/Publications/Birdscope/Spring2007/sparrow_numbers.html

You Can't Get There from Here

by Ogden Nash

Bird watchers top my honors list.
 I aimed to be one, but I missed.
 Since I'm both myopic and astigmatic,
 My aim turned out to be erratic,
 And I, bespectacled and binocular,
 Exposed myself to comment jocular.
 We don't need too much birdlore, do we,
 To tell a flamingo from a towhee;
 Yet I cannot, and never will,
 Unless the silly birds stand still.
 And there's no enlightenment in a tour
 Of ornithological literature.
 Is yon strange creature a common chickadee,
 Or a migrant alouette from Picardy?
 You can rush to consult your Nature guide
 And inspect the gallery inside,
 But a bird in the open never looks
 Like its picture in the birdie books-
 Or if it once did, it has changed its plumage,
 And plunges you back into ignorant gloomage.
 That is why I sit here growing old by inches,
 Watching a clock instead of finches,
 But I sometimes visualize in my gin
 The Audubon that I audubin.

EXCERPTED FROM "UP FROM THE EGG:
CONFESSIONS OF A NUTHATCH AVOIDER"

MEET YOUR AIKEN VOLUNTEERS

Welcoming Our New Volunteers

We would like to welcome some new people to Aiken Audubon: Christine Bucher as Secretary, Deborah Barnes as Programs Chair, Arlene Sampson as Hospitality Chair, Mike Whedon as Education Chair and Cyndy Kulp as Field Trip Coordinator. Please say hello to these folks and help them when you can. Thank you for volunteering to help make Aiken Audubon a great organization.

(Please note that two positions are still vacant: a new Conservation Chair and Treasurer are still needed.)

A word from our new Field Trip Coordinator

Hi, my name is Cyndy Kulp, and I have recently volunteered to coordinate the field trips for our Aiken Audubon group. First, I would like to thank Norman Lerch for his many years of dedicated service in this position. We owe him a big debt of thanks (and also Norm Karasa for his assistance).

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



Hosted by Bird Watcher's Digest, The Ohio Ornithological Society, and the Lakeside Association, the 2009 MBS will surely be the highlight of the birding year!

Don't miss the chance to learn from experts during informative and entertaining programs and guest speakers!

More information: www.birdwatchersdigest.com/mwb

I have been a birder in Colorado Springs for the past ten years, but I still have much to learn about good birding spots and best times of the year to see certain species. If you have a favorite birding location that you would like to suggest for a future field trip, please help me out by contacting me with the information. Also, if you'd like to volunteer to lead a group to a favored location that you know, we would welcome your help. I can be reached at (719) 634-0627 or by e-mail at kulpc@aol.com.

Thanks to the many able leaders who have given their time to lead field trips. I look forward to working with them and with the Aiken Audubon members to continuing the excellent birding opportunities to which we have become accustomed.

We will be creating an e-mail list of people who would like to receive reminders for upcoming field trips, so look to receive information about that. [See page 3—Ed.]

Good Birding!



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

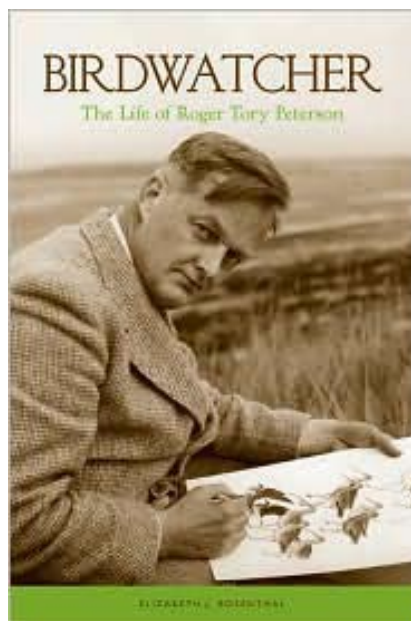
YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BE A MEMBER TO PARTICIPATE IN AIKEN'S ACTIVITIES

BOOK REVIEW

Birdwatcher: The Life of Roger Tory Peterson, by Elizabeth Rosenthal

Have you ever wondered, who was the man behind the famous field guide? Rosenthal's exhaustive research is evident as the reader learns every detail of Peterson's life, from his birth in 1908 to his death in 1996. Citing numerous references, and including twenty photographs, the author provides an intimate account of this boy, born to working-class parents in 1908, in Jamestown, New York., who grew up to have world-wide influence as an ornithologist and conservationist.

Drawing inspiration from Ernest Thompson Seton's book, *Two Little Savages*, and urged on by a prominent nature columnist and birder named William Vogt, Peterson published his now-famous field guide at the tender age of 25. The first printing sold out the day it was released, and almost overnight, the doors of opportunity swung wide.



For more information, go to
www.petersonbird.com

Audubon members will be particularly interested in the substantial role Peterson played in the organization. Even after he left his salaried position with the Society, he remained an Audubon insider, serving on the board of directors, and contributing regularly to the Society magazine.

My favorite parts of the book described Peterson's adventures as he traveled around the world in search of birds. For example, at one point he almost died as heavy seas swamped the small rowboat carrying him back from viewing seabirds on an island off the coast of Argentina. You are left with the impression of a man whose concern for birds far outweighed his concern for his own well-being.

Reading this book left me wishing that I could have personally known this fascinating and influential birder.

• REVIEWED BY LESLIE HOLZMANN

Have you enjoyed a bird-related book that you would like share with us? Write a short review and send it to the Aikorns editor at AikenAudugon@gmail.com.