



## Bird Profiles:

# The Hamerkop

In case you're wondering, this is a Hamerkop (also known as a Hammerhead, Anvil Bird, or Umber Bird, among other aliases). I found him at the Denver Zoo, where he was making quite the racket. Apparently this is somewhat unusual as they are typically pretty quiet.

These are really strange birds. According to Wikipedia, my favorite source of potentially correct information, "One unusual feature is that up to ten birds join in 'ceremonies' in which they run circles around each other, all calling loudly, raising their crests, [and] fluttering their wings." Reminds me of my high school football team.

If that isn't weird enough, consider their nesting habits. It would seem that Hamerkops are really into nest building. Using perhaps 10,000 sticks, they construct a huge edifice more than four feet across. The sticks, cemented together with mud, are formed into walls and covered with a domed roof. This bird mansion is accessed by a tunnel, also mortared with mud, and decorated with the latest in colorful objets d' art. Then, as if this nest wasn't impressive enough, they go on a construction spree, building nest after nest, sometimes up to five per year. And they do this whether or not they need them for raising a family!

I can just see the society page of the Hamerkop News: "The party will be hosted by Commander and Mrs. Hammerhead, of Madagascar, Arabia and Uganda."

At least their compulsive nest-building serves some purpose. The surplus accommodations are quickly claimed by homeless families of birds, snakes, and small mammals.

• LESLIE HOLZMANN

See the article on page 2 about birding at the Denver Zoo.



PHOTO: LESLIE HOLZMANN

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Coming Program	2
Colorado Tropics	2
Field Trips & Events	3
Lesser Prairie-Chickens	4
Don't Feed the Bears	4
Are You a Beak Geek?	5
Subscription Form	5
Wesley the Owl	back

## COMING PROGRAMS

### November 19

"Birds of Bolivia"  
presented by John Drummond

### December 19

Christmas Bird Count

### January 20

"Raptor ID"  
presented by Steve Vaughan

### February 17

"Birds of Africa"  
presented by Frank Dodge

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A week or so ago my sister-in-law, who lives in southern Wisconsin, went to see a male Rufous Hummingbird not far from her home. In September a male Prothonotary Warbler spent a few days dazzling local birders in bird count Area 7 of Fountain Creek Regional Park. And I've heard from many Colorado Springs residents that quite a few of our own migrating hummingbirds hung around well beyond the regular Labor Day migration deadline this year. Have you ever wondered what happens to a bird that doesn't migrate "correctly"?

With all the humans feeding birds, a variety of food is probably available to a late migrant. They may survive until the migration instinct firmly takes hold and hopefully find enough food for the entire journey. But which factor has the strongest influence on when a bird migrates? Is it weather, the earth's magnetic fields, the amount of daylight, some genetic message from mom or dad, peer pressure or food availability that causes a bird to fly thousands of miles? And what do they do when they find themselves off course or behind schedule? Do they even realize they're in the wrong

Continued on page 5

## 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 January/February 2010 issue of Aikorns is Wednesday, December 16.

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

## UPCOMING AIKEN PROGRAM

# November 19 • John Drummond A Visit to Bolivia

Come experience a thrilling account of 12 days and 429 species. Despite civil unrest, road blockages and cancelled returning flights from La Paz, Aiken member John Drummond successfully covered Bolivia's topographic diversity and great variety of habitats.

The birders recorded numerous regional endemics (also found in southern Peru) such as Hooded Mountain-Toucan, Light-crowned Spinetail, Diademed Tapaculo (ext), Goldencollared Tanager (ext), and Orange-browed Hemispingus. Others shared with northwest Argentina included Bluecapped Puffleg, Rufous-bellied Saltator, and Citron-headed Yellow-Finch. Twelve or thirteen endemics were seen including marvelous views of the endangered Red-fronted Macaw, Black-hooded Sunbeam, Cochabamba Mountain-Finch and the Rufous-faced Antpitta (ext). Other favorites during the main trip included Greater Rhea, Andean Condor, Cliff Parakeet, Yungas Pygmy Owl, Cream-backed Woodpecker, and Giant Conebill. The lucky four birders on the extension trip managed to add Short-winged Grebe, Scimitar-winged Piha (one of the rarest birds in South America), Chestnut-crowned Cotinga, Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe, and Berlepsch's Canastero. Mark your calendars for this Bolivian experience.



**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.**

## WHERE TO GO BIRDING NOW

# Birding the Colorado Tropics

It's still technically fall, yet it sure feels like winter. We could go birding, but it's hard to juggle binoculars when one has on several layers of insulation, hat, scarf, and wool mittens. Cold weather has us huddled indoors, wishing we could migrate to someplace delightfully tropical.

Well, we can. I recently visited a place that's always nice and toasty, filled with moist air, green plants, and exotic species, and is only an hour or so from home—the Denver Zoo.

Bird World consists of a series of three large, sky-lit rooms, each with its own assortment of brightly colored birds from around the world. The rooms are sized so that you don't need binoculars to get a good look. Natural surroundings encourage natural behaviors, even courting, nesting and raising young. Because the birds aren't in cages, there are no bars between you and your subjects, making this a great place to take pictures.

Connecting these rooms are wide hallways where more birds live in glass-fronted enclosures.

If you're willing to spend some time outdoors, there are plenty of other birds to see. For example, the two species of penguins will be out playing no matter how cold it gets. All in all, there are almost 200 avian species, many of which are rare or endangered.

Of course, we can't add any of these captives to our life lists. But I figure that since it's unlikely I'm going to Madagascar any time soon, I'll just be happy for this chance to observe all these amazing birds.

• LESLIE HOLZMANN

For more information, go to [www.denverzoo.org](http://www.denverzoo.org)



Lady Ross' Turaco

## 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  
kfoopooh@yahoo.com

### Conservation Chair

(Position open)

### Publicity Chair

Stephen Vaughan  
719.531.7076

### Education Chair

Michael E. Whedon  
719.243.2083  
MEWhedon@peoplepc.com

### Field Trips

Cyndy Kulp  
719.634.0627  
KulpC@aol.com

### Aikorns Editor/ Webmaster

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](mailto: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.**

**No Aiken Audubon trips are currently scheduled for November or December.**

**For the latest information on field trips and events:  
[www.AikenAudubon.com](http://www.AikenAudubon.com)**

## ARKANSAS VALLEY AUDUBON FIELD TRIPS

**The Arkansas Valley Audubon Society welcomes you on their field trips. Check their website for more information: [www.socobirds.org](http://www.socobirds.org). Be sure to contact trip leaders to let them know you would like to join them.**

### **Saturday, November 14, 8 am – noon or later Pueblo Reservoir**

Meet trip leader Brandon Percival at 8 am in the parking lot below the dam, just before reaching the pay station into the state park. This lot is on the left (west) side of Juniper Drive. We will carpool to sites on the west and north ends of the lake first, ending the morning at the South Shore Marina and SE corner of the reservoir.

To enter the State Park, you will need an annual pass sticker or daily pass (fee \$6.00). We'll plan to bird the entire reservoir from 8 am to noon. The trip could continue into the afternoon, perhaps going to Valco Ponds/Rock Canyon, and Pueblo City Park looking for other birds. Bring lunch if you want to stick around into the afternoon.

Past trips have yielded rarities including Red-throated and Pacific Loons, Red-necked Grebe, Barrow's Goldeneye, Black Brant, Little Gull and Lesser and Great Black-backed Gulls. There will be many waterfowl to observe, along with raptors and interesting land birds. A new bird for the trip last year was a Northern Mockingbird.

Aiken members wishing to carpool from Colorado Springs should meet at 7 am at the Sears Southgate / Broadmoor Towne Center (Hwy 115 and Lake Ave.), in the parking lot across from Starbucks.

Contact Brandon at [bkpercival@yahoo.com](mailto:bkpercival@yahoo.com), phone 719.547.3722 (h) or 242.5822 (c), or Donna Emmons at [emmons7@yahoo.com](mailto:emmons7@yahoo.com) or 719.369.9704

Contact Cyndy Kulp at [KulpC@aol.com](mailto:KulpC@aol.com) or 719.634.0627 if you wish to carpool from Colorado Springs.

## UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

**Saturday, December 19**

# Christmas Bird Count

The Colorado Springs Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday, December 19. This will be the 59th consecutive year that Aiken Audubon Society will have taken part in the National Audubon Society's CBC. Our count is one of over 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 Pacific Islands are also included in the count. Each count area is a circle with a diameter of 15 miles (an area of about 177 square miles).

Our count circle is centered at the entrance to Cedar Springs Clinical Associates at 2135 Southgate Rd. Roughly, the area extends from Pulpit Rock on the north to the northern half of Fort Carson on the south; and Ruxton Ave. on the west to Marksheffel Road on the east. The count circle is divided into 17 areas, each with a count leader.

We are co-coordinating the count again this year and will be compiling the results that will be entered into the National Audubon 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.

Unusual birds seen prior to the count day are also important. If you see any birds during the week leading up to December 19 that are not commonly seen, please contact us 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 \$5.00 fee will receive this special issue.

• **BEN AND SALLY SORENSEN**  
719.635.1716



[www.friendsofthebosque.org/crane](http://www.friendsofthebosque.org/crane)

or call 575.835.2077 (registration)

## Colorado DOW seeking input on new Lesser Prairie-Chicken conservation plan

When: Thursday, November 12, from 4 – 8 pm

Where: Lamar CDOW Office, 2500 S. Main St., Lamar, CO

Who: Anyone interested in preserving the Lesser Prairie-Chicken in Colorado

The Colorado Division of Wildlife is in the process of updating their 1992 Lesser Prairie-Chicken Recovery Plan. The goal of this updated plan will be to derive strategies that the Division, in cooperation with local landowners, federal agencies and land managers and other stakeholders, can undertake to maintain the Lesser Prairie-Chicken in Colorado.

In order to provide an opportunity for interested individuals and groups to ask questions and provide input to the DOW on what should be considered as they draft the plan, they are holding an open house on Thursday, November 12, 2009 from 4-8 pm at the Lamar CDOW Office 2500 South Main Street, Lamar CO. This meeting will be held in an “open house” style format (no formal presentations will be given).

The DOW wants to identify realistic and achievable conservation actions. Therefore they are most interested in receiving comments on the effectiveness and feasibility of the



PHOTO: CDOW

potential conservation strategies. Which of these strategies make sense and which ones might not be effective? How can they modify these potential strategies to enhance their effectiveness and feasibility? Are there other strategies that they should be considering? Note that they are not going to be looking for input on the biological assessment, which is based on the best scientific data about the species in Colorado, nor are they looking for input on the question of whether or not the species should be listed.

It is important to understand that this plan will not be a regulatory plan. Nor will it be a site-specific plan. Rather, this plan will be aimed at identifying and implementing cooperative, realistic and preventative conservation actions that the DOW can take in partnership with landowners, local communities, and land managers throughout the species range in Colorado. Because they are on the fringe of the species’ range, any listing decision will primarily be a result of issues outside of Colorado. However, Colorado still has a role in taking positive, proactive conservation steps.

Although an RSVP is not required, they would appreciate it if you would please contact Mike Smith, Area Wildlife Conservation Biologist at [Michael.Smith@state.co.us](mailto:Michael.Smith@state.co.us) if you plan on attending, to assist in the logistics. If you are unable to attend this meeting but still have questions, comments, or suggestions, please feel free to send them to Eric Odell at the Colorado Division of Wildlife

• ERIC ODELL

Colorado Division of Wildlife  
317 West Prospect, Fort Collins, CO 80526; phone: 970.472.4340, fax: 970.472.4458, email: [eric.odell@state.co.us](mailto:eric.odell@state.co.us)

For more information about the Lesser Prairie-Chicken in Colorado, visit the CDOW website at <http://wildlife.state.co.us/WildlifeSpecies/Profiles/Birds/LesserPrairieChicken.htm>

## Don't Feed the Bears

Spring and Fall tend to bring a rash of bears in the news. While bears are around all summer as well, the extra demands of hibernation cause them to spend more effort foraging for food right before and after their long winter nap. As the city expands into bear habitat, more and more often we'll find bears foraging in our yards.



PHOTO: STEVE PFIFFER, BUGWOOD.ORG

In most cases, bears approach humans because they associate us with food. As one who delights in feeding birds, I'm very aware that what I intend for the birds may also be relished by bears. While bear sightings in my part of Black Forest are very rare, many neighborhoods along the Front Range extend into bear habitat. We would do well to take precautions.

Being omnivores, bear will eat a wide variety of foods. Suet feeders, fruit and berries, and even seeds will attract them. Many of us are hanging our suet feeders this time of year. If you live in bear country, make sure the feeders are out of reach or plan to bring them in at night.

Bears adore sugar water. Of course, our hummingbirds are currently enjoying their tropical vacation, but I was thinking about bears as I hung my hummingbird feeders last spring. My feeders are on a second-story balcony, so I consider them out of reach of all but a most-determined bear. However, if yours are at ground level, consider bringing them in at night as well.

Colorado's Department of Wildlife website has a series of articles on living with bears. "Attracting Birds, not Bears" specifically targets the problem of birdfeeders. I encourage you to read it.

• LESLIE HOLZMANN

DOW articles: <http://wildlife.state.co.us/wildlifespecies/livingwithwildlife/mammals/livingwithbearsL1.htm>

"Attracting Birds, not Bears": <http://wildlife.state.co.us/NR/rdonlyres/FC837577-0B46-4D7F-AD6E-7DBFC475FBE2/0/BearFactSheetBirds.pdf>

# Are you a Beak Geek?

Lately, my husband has taken to calling me a “Beak Geek.” I’m not sure whether or not to be insulted at this or take it as a compliment. I thought I’d ask a few other friends if the label fits. They hedged a lot. Hmm. So I did an internet search and found the following:

## You know you are a Birding Fanatic if...

- ... There is a strange, but distinct correlation between the last time your house was thoroughly cleaned and the development of your birding interest.
- ... you’re hopeless at remembering people’s names, yet you know the scientific names of all birds ever seen in North America.
- ... someone is trying to sell you some swamp land in a 3rd world country and you actually are interested! —*Bill Kossack*
- ... for your wedding anniversary he takes you to the Brownsville City Dump to see the Mexican crow! —*Keri Dawkins*

At this point I’d like to point out that, while I’ve never been to the Brownsville City Dump (because we’d heard that the Mexican crows aren’t there any more), my loving sweetie did make a side trip on our Florida vacation to take me to the Ft. Lauderdale dump to look for birds. In addition, we spent our 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary at a dumpy motel south of Alamosa because it was near two wildlife refuges... and he’s not a birder!

- ... you insist on doing the dishes all the time because you have a bird feeder visible from the kitchen window. —*Pierre Duguay*
- ... you have gotten in a traffic accident looking for a bird.
- ... you think getting in a traffic accident looking for a bird is fine if the bird was worth it.
- ... you need to get out for a little fresh air, so you head for the sewage treatment plant.
- ... when you ask your birding buddy what she did in the Grand Canyon, she describes driving up to the entrance gates and asking where the sewage ponds are—and that seems absolutely rational and appropriate to you.
- ... when you go to the Grand Canyon yourself what’s the first thing you do? Visit the sewage ponds, of course! —*Robin Smith*

Do any of the items on this checklist hit close to home? Would your friends and family label you as a beak geek? What warning signs would you add to the list? Send me your thoughts and I’ll print a follow-up in a future newsletter.

• LESLIE HOLZMANN

If you enjoyed these enough to get this far, there are a lot more at the Panhandle Bird Club website. <http://www.geocities.com/yosemite/2965/fanatic.html>

*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

## PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE (CONT’D FROM FRONT PAGE)

place? What causes them to get back on course, or to stay where they are? So many questions, and they may never be answered.

I often hear speakers say the birds don’t read the maps or field guides so they could be found almost anywhere but they must use some type of guidance system. I guess we should just be thankful when a wayward bird finds its way to our area and enjoy the view.

Keep on birding,

*Risë*

• RISË FOSTER-BRUDER  
PRESIDENT, AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY



## Free Birding Magazines

I have WILD BIRD from Sept 1997 to the present and BIRD WATCHER’S DIGEST from July/Aug 2002. They are available to anyone who would like them.

LINDA MASSEY  
719. 22.3450



## 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

### BOOK REVIEW

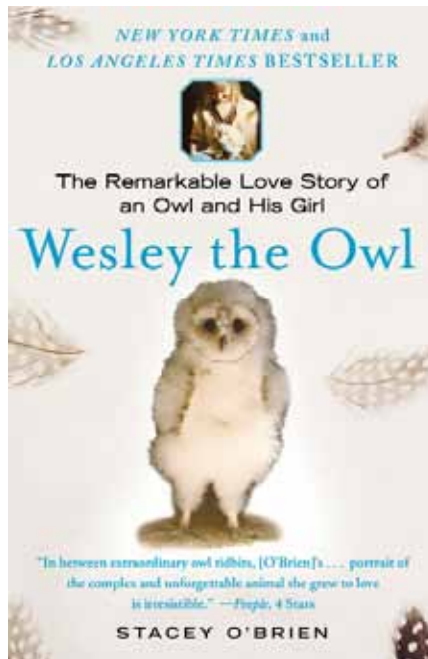
## Wesley the Owl

By Stacey O'Brien

*"Wesley's eyes were a deep, inscrutable black. Even when they first opened, they harbored a great mystery and held my gaze. Looking into his eyes was like looking into infinity, into something far away and cosmic. It was a profoundly spiritual experience...."*

This is not your average birding book. Stacey O'Brien adopted a baby barn owl when he was only days old, naming him Wesley. Nerve damage in his wing meant he'd never live successfully as a wild owl. Her commitment to live with and care for Wesley would span the owl's lifetime, until his death almost 19 years later.

Barn owls can't be kept in a cage, so Wesley and Stacey truly lived together with mutual love and respect. She adapted to "The Way of the Owl," and he, having imprinted on a



human, developed some very un-owl-like traits. For example, barn owls don't typically like to get wet, but Wesley delighted in taking baths!

Parts of this book are funny—such as when a bagful of live mice escaped, with one running down the hallways in full view of some Very Important dinner guests. Or when Wesley decided Stacey was his mate, built her nest after nest, and tried to cram dead mice into her mouth. Other parts are poignant, as all animal stories tend to be.

Stacey saved Wesley's life by taking him in and raising him in her home. In a very real sense, he saved hers as well, when she struggled through the depression of a major illness with no hope of a cure. Contemplating suicide, it was her love for Wesley and his trust in her that held her here.

• 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](mailto:AikenAudugon@gmail.com).