



What's that bird that's driving me crazy?

Not even the cat is awake before 5 am. Soft snoring comes from the bedroom, darkened by shades against the early appearance of the sun this time of year. It's a Saturday morning in late April, and nothing important is scheduled for hours. Later there will be errands to run, chores to catch up on, phones ringing and dishes to wash. But right now, all is peaceful, all is calm.

BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM

Like a staccato burst of machine gun fire, the noise reverberates off the metal gutters directly outside our bedroom window.

“What the... ?!” Husband groggily opens his eyes.

BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM echoes through the still morning air.

It's a woodpecker, I realize. A Northern Flicker, to be exact. Unsticking my gummy morning lips, I mumble something about birds defining territories in anticipation of mating and raising lovely bird families. Husband is not impressed.

Later, over breakfast, the topic comes up again.

“What can we do about those annoying woodpeckers?” Husband wonders. “Are they hurting the gutters? I don't want to wake up to that racket every morning! Can't you get rid of them?” Sadly, my husband's appreciation of nature isn't on the same stratospheric level that mine is.

I again explain about woodpeckers. Instead of singing, they use the metal on houses (along with hollow trees) to amplify their pecking into a territorial statement of ownership. It's spring; the males



Continued on page 5

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Birding in Ecuador brought to mind an article in the September issue of *Birding*, “Notes from a Crabby Birder,” by Rick Romea. His comments definitely struck a note with many readers since 13 of the 16 letters in the January issue addressed some of his statements. He definitely seems to have something against floppy hats and the people who wear them and I don't know if his article was meant to be a serious commentary on poor group birding behavior or not.

Some of his points regarding group birding, i.e., be quiet, stay behind the leader, no sudden movements, are always worth mentioning since

these common sensical “rules” are sometimes ignored. The recent visiting Snowy Owl and the inappropriate/careless/dangerous behavior being demonstrated by some only shows that we all need to be reminded once in a while how we shouldn't act. So, the next time you are out birding, think about your actions and be the example of proper birding etiquette.

Keep on birding,

Risë

• RISË FOSTER-BRUDER
PRESIDENT, AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

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COMING PROGRAMS

March 16 (Tuesday)
“The Owl and the Woodpecker”
presented by Paul Bannick

April 21
“Mountain Plovers”
presented by Victoria Dreitz

May 19
“Hummingbirds”
presented by Steve Vaughan

No summer programs—see you September 15

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 May/Summer 2010 issue of *Aikorns* is Wednesday, April 21.

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

March 16 • Paul Bannick (Note: This is a Tuesday!)

The Owl and The Woodpecker

Encounters with North America's Most Iconic Birds

Award-winning photographer Paul Bannick will take you on a visual journey of 11 key North American habitats through the needs of specific owl and woodpecker species. This stunning photographic study will be accompanied by field stories, and rich natural history derived from thousands of hours in the field. His talk will look at the way owls and woodpeckers define and enrich their habitat and how their life-histories are intertwined.

Paul's work has appeared in Audubon magazine, Sunset magazine, Pacific Northwest magazine, the National Wildlife Federation Guide to North American Birds, Smithsonian Guide to North American Birds and in many other books, magazines, parks, refuges and other places in North America and Europe.

Paul works full-time as a director for Conservation Northwest, a conservation organization dedicated to protecting and connecting wild areas from the Pacific Coast to the Canadian Rockies.



PHOTO © PAUL BANNICK

See sample images and pages from his book, and early reviews, at www.paulbannick.com

April 21 • Victoria Dreitz

Mountain Plovers

PHOTO © VICTORIA DREITZ



This Mountain Plover chick, weighing only 10 grams, has been fitted with a radio transmitter.

The Mountain Plover is a migratory upland shorebird that inhabits the Great Plains region of North America. It is a species of special concern throughout its range due to suggested declines in population numbers. In Colorado, it is believed that more than 50% of the continental population breeds across the eastern plains, with smaller breeding populations in the high elevation valleys, such as South Park and the San Luis Valley, and arid areas in western parts of the state.

These plovers are now being considered for the Endangered Species List. Do they belong there? The Colorado Division of Wildlife, in cooperation with other agencies, is conducting field studies to answer this very important question. Since much of the plover population nests on private ranch land, listing this species would greatly impact dryland wheat farmers and ranchers, especially those eking out a living on Colorado's eastern plains.

Victoria Dreitz earned her B.S. at Colorado State University and her Ph.D. at the University of Miami-Florida. Her dissertation focused on one of the first species listed under the endangered species act, the Snail Kite. She is a native of Colorado, growing up as a "farm girl" near the town of Iliff, in the northeastern corner of the state. She has been employed by the Colorado Division of Wildlife as an avian researcher since 2003, where her primary interest is grassland birds, particularly the breeding ecology of the Mountain Plover.

Don't miss the 4th annual Mountain Plover Festival in Karval, CO, April 30 – May 2 (see page 4).

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.

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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 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.

In cases of extreme cold or snowy/icy conditions, trips may need to be cancelled. If you have any questions about the weather, please contact the trip leader an hour before the scheduled meeting time.

To receive e-mailed reminders of upcoming trips, send your name and e-mail address to AikenAudubon@gmail.com with "field trip list" in the subject line.



Saturday, March 6, 8 am – 1:30 pm

Eagles! Remix

Gary Conover repeats his Eagles trip to Lake Pueblo State Park via the back roads. Search for raptors east of I-25, then enjoy the eagles at Lake Pueblo. A scope will be very helpful; bring one if you have one. Be sure to pack a lunch.

Meet at Broadmoor Towne Center (at Nevada and Lake Avenue) near the Starbucks to carpool.

Leader: Gary Conover, 719.635.2505

Rescheduled due to snow:

Saturday, March 20, 8:30 am – 1 pm

Fountain Creek Nature Center & Big Johnson Reservoir

Birding is always good at the Nature Center, and Saraiya Ruano has explored this area thoroughly. She will lead us on a trip to discover what birds are around. Afterwards we will make a stop at Big Johnson to look for waterfowl.

Meet at Broadmoor Towne Center (at Nevada and Lake Avenue) near the Starbucks to carpool or caravan.

Leader: Saraiya, 719.641.4305

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

Saturday, April 17, 8 am – noon

Cheyenne Mountain State Park

State park volunteer and Aiken member Debbie Barnes will lead this trip to Colorado Spring's only state park. We'll explore some of the trails at Cheyenne Mountain State Park, looking for Western Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, Western Tanagers, as well as raptors and other birds.

Be prepared for muddy trails and changeable weather.

Meet at Broadmoor Towne Center (at Nevada and Lake Avenue) near the Starbucks to carpool. Park entry fee required: \$6 per car or season pass.

Leader: Debbie Barnes, kfoopoh@yahoo.com, 303.947.0566

Saturday, April 10, 7 am – noon

Ramah Reservoir SWA

Join us for this trip to seasonal Ramah Reservoir, out on the plains near Calhan. Past trips have seen an assortment of waterfowl and short-grass prairie species from sandpipers to sparrows. In spring, hawks soar overhead. The shallow marshes at the south end of the reservoir give way to a low area full of willows, an excellent migrant trap. Hopefully, the snow will be melted and the reservoir full. The sun rises at 6:30 am this time of year, so set your alarm clock and enjoy the early birds.

Meet in front of the Falcon Safeway to carpool. A scope will be helpful. Note: Habitat Stamps are no longer required for birding.

Leader: Leslie Holzmann, Leslie@mountain-plover.com; 719.494.8889



Saturday, May 1

Chico Basin Ranch

Save the date: John Drummond has agreed to lead a field trip to Chico Basin during spring migration. Anything could turn up! Details will be on the website when they become available.

Leader: John Drummond, jxdrummo@aol.com

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

COMING EVENTS

March 11 – 15
Laughlan, Nevada

Wings & Wildlife Festival

Nature enthusiasts will find everything from Swallows to Eagles hidden among the area's river banks, Chaparral, Scrub Oak, Desert Scrub, Gambel Oak, Joshua Tree, Mesquite, Pinion pine, and Ponderosa pine trees. Birding opportunities will include species indigenous to the Southwest, as well as, late winter and early spring birds. With over 400 bird species seen in Clark County, the possibilities are amazing!

More information: www.SNBWTP.org

March 12 – 14
Monte Vista NWR
Crane Festival

Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge, near Alamosa, is the site for the 27th annual Crane Festival. While the festival offers outstanding opportunities for celebrating and understanding cranes and other wildlife, the common denominator that brings visitors back year after year is the 20,000 or so greater sandhill cranes and a few thousand lesser sandhills, that really put on a show for each other and visitors, too. Besides the cranes there are thousands of waterfowl, numerous wintering bald eagles and other raptors that highlight the wildlife viewing.

More information: www.cranefest.com

March 18 - 21
Kearney, Nebraska
Rivers & Wildlife Celebration

Gather with wildlife enthusiasts from around the world to celebrate the annual migration of 500,000 sandhill cranes and millions of waterfowl through central Nebraska. This 40th annual conference is open to anyone interested in experiencing one of the greatest wildlife spectacles on Earth and learning more about the natural world in a friendly and informal atmosphere.

More information: www.nebraska.audubon.org/RWC.htm, Nebraska@audubon.org; 402.797.2301; Rowe Sanctuary has information about viewing the sandhill crane migration, 308/468-5282; www.rowsanctuary.org.

Thursday, April 8,
9 – 10:15 am

2s & 3s Outdoors: All About Birds

Share in the joy of your 2 or 3 year-old child's discovery as he or she enjoys a story and an exploration hike outdoors. Held at Fountain Creek Nature Center, 320 Pepper Grass Lane, Fountain, CO 80817.

Reservation required, call 719.520.6745. Fee: \$3 for each participant including adults and siblings.

Birding for Beginners 101 Course

**Thursday classes, April 8,
22 & May 6, 6:30 – 8:30 pm**

**Saturday field trips, April 10,
24 & May 22, 8 am – noon**

Led by naturalist Ken Pals, this series is designed to teach beginning bird watchers the basics of birding and to develop and improve skills in identifying birds by sight and sound.

Thursday classroom time will be held at Bear Creek Nature Center, 245 Bear Creek Road, Colorado Springs, CO 80906; Saturday field trips meet at Fountain Creek Nature Center, 320 Pepper Grass Lane, Fountain, CO 80817.

Registration required, call 719.520.6387. Fee: \$50/nature center member, \$60/nonmember

April 30 – May 2
**4th Annual Mountain
Plover Festival**

From the Friday night ice cream social to the home-grown beef BBQ, you are made to feel like a local as you explore private rangeland where the elusive Mountain Plovers nest. Sightings are almost guaranteed. Other birds of the prairies are also present, along with wildlife endemic to the seasonal wetlands called playas.

Don't delay; registration deadline is April 15.

Full registration is \$200, but you can sign up "a la carte" as well. Discounts for more than one person. For more information, or to register, go to www.karval.org or call Carl and Cherry Stogsdill at 719.446.5354.

We Love Birds

New York, NY—The Natural Resources Defense Council and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology have announced the launch of WeLoveBirds.org, an interactive online community for bird enthusiasts. WeLoveBirds.org offers a free and open social network of people who are passionate about birds; access to information on birds and birding from a leading ornithology lab; and an opportunity to make a positive difference for birds and their habitats.

WeLoveBirds.org will feature information on more than 500 species of birds, bird news, notes on scientific discoveries, and an open platform for bird enthusiasts of all levels to contribute their own stories, photos, birding observations, questions, and more.

See you online!

CONSERVATION CORNER

Hope for the Greater Sage-Grouse

The sagebrush landscape has long epitomized the American West. But this unique habitat, home to scores of plants and animals, including the Greater Sage-Grouse, is rapidly disappearing. Already heavily impacted by oil and gas development, its high plains and sweeping vistas are also an important potential source of wind energy. Audubon's Sagebrush Initiative engages industry, government and community leaders, ranchers, conservationists, and other stakeholders to protect this remarkable ecosystem—while also promoting renewable energy development.

The BLM manages nearly one third of Wyoming's land and is responsible for mineral rights on nearly two-thirds, making it a critical player in deciding the future of wildlife and energy development in the state. The agency's January 2010 announcement of major changes in its leasing policies offered fresh hope for the survival of imperiled Greater Sage-Grouse, enhanced protection for other wildlife that share the western sagebrush ecosystem, and an innovative model to advance wildlife-friendly energy development nationwide. It was a big victory for Audubon, for wildlife and for thoughtful energy development.

More information: <http://audubon.org/campaign/energy/sagebrush/index.html>

FLICKERS, CONT'D.

are merely advertising for a female. You can't fault the males for showing off. The whole process lasts only a month or two—then they'll settle down to domesticity, and you can enjoy your quiet mornings again.

The next weeks are long ones. It seems our resident flicker is somewhat of a social loser, and it takes what seems like forever to impress the ladies. Finally, however, the morning comes where 5 am passes, and all remains still. I breathe a sigh of relief.

Enthusiastically, I explain that the woodpecker has claimed his prize, and won't be up disturbing the neighborhood at the crack of dawn any more. He's now into home building, nesting and mating, and will be far too busy to bother anybody. In fact, while many bird species—chickadees, nuthatches, owls, etc.—use existing cavities, woodpeckers play a very important role in nature by creating the holes in the first place. Husband is dubious, but willing to accept this happy news.



Two days later:

BAM BAM BAM

It isn't quite as loud this time, and it's not 5 am. However...

BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM

"What's that?!" Husband turns to me with accusing eyes. "I thought you said they were done making all that noise!"

We venture outside, and find the spot in our house siding where the happy couple has decided to create their dream home. A neat, circular hole several inches in diameter has appeared, seemingly overnight. Bits of loose insulation waft down to the growing pile on the ground underneath. Apparently Mr. and Mrs. Woodpecker have ignorantly mistaken our beautiful stained cedar for a rotting tree trunk.

I give my husband a weak grin. He is busy calculating the cost of repairs, including new siding, insulation, semitransparent stain, and labor. He is not happy.

"Perhaps if you build them a nesting box, they'll leave our house alone," I helpfully suggest. "You can place it over the hole they made, and they'll use the box instead. Plus, they'll keep the other flickers away, since they're territorial."

aikorns

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"Why don't you just stop feeding the birds?" counters Husband. "That way, they'll leave our house alone, and we won't have all these problems."

I gape at him in astonishment. Stop feeding the birds? The thought had never entered my mind. "Tha... that's a drastic step!" I stutter. "Can't it be a last resort?"

Husband is nothing if not patient. A nest box is constructed and attached to the side of the house right over the existing hole. I tell him what a wonderful man he is, so handy and resourceful, and how much he must love me to put up with all this. He agrees.

It's now several weeks later. A family of starlings is trying to move into the flicker box. I keep evicting them. Meanwhile, the flickers must like the neighborhood. There's a new hole two feet below the original one. Blown-in insulation must make good nesting material, as they've laid eggs in it. I haven't mentioned any of this to Husband.

Stop feeding the birds, indeed!

• LESLIE HOLZMANN

Flicker Solutions

While the above story is meant to be humorous, it is based on a real issue—what do we do when the birds we love start causing severe property damage? For one solution that seems to be (mostly) working, check the Aiken website: www.aikenaudubon.com/Pages/Conservation/conservation_NOFL.html. The CDOW lists additional suggestions at <http://wildlife.state.co.us/WildlifeSpecies/LivingWithWildlife/Birds/Woodpeckers.htm>.



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President Risë Foster-Bruder
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www.aikenaudubon.com

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

THE BACK PAGE

Audubon President Steps Down

Former Science Chief to Serve in Interim Role

NEW YORK, NY, JANUARY 20, 2010—The leader of America's best-known bird conservation group is leaving his post.

John Flicker is stepping down after 15 years as President and CEO of the National Audubon Society. Flicker says he will be taking a much-needed break for a while, but plans to continue working for Audubon in another capacity to help the organization advance its conservation agenda.

The transition comes after major advances during the past year, including the spread of an Audubon-championed approach to saving an imperiled bird while allowing properly located domestic energy development; and the opening of three new Audubon Centers serving urban communities.

Audubon will launch a nationwide search for a new leader to help carry its hundred-year legacy of bird and habitat conservation into the new decade and beyond. Former Audubon

Chief Scientist and current National Board Member, Frank Gill, PhD will serve as interim president during the search.

"It won't be easy to match John's vision, expertise and accomplishment," said Audubon Chairman Holt Thrasher. "We're lucky to have someone of the caliber of Frank Gill to step in for the short term while we look for a leader to help us build on the solid conservation foundation John created."

During Flicker's tenure, Audubon focused on keeping common birds common, educating the public and decision makers about the important role of birds as indicators of environmental health, and connecting new and diverse audiences to nature and their power to protect it. Flicker envisioned a network of Audubon Centers nationwide to build that connection. Today, 43 Audubon Centers engage more than a million people each year in nature discovery and conservation

action. Urban Centers in places such as Los Angeles, Baltimore, Phoenix and New York City are helping to revitalize abused landscapes and empower local communities.

Flicker led Audubon through dramatic growth in revenue and programs and as the organization identified more than 2,400 Important Bird Areas across America, working toward their restoration and protection, often in concert with conservation efforts across the hemisphere. He helped educate the public about the alarming decline of bird species through Audubon Citizen Science that fueled headline-making reports and that now forms the foundation of ongoing analyses by an alliance federal agencies and non-profit groups. He championed landscape-level conservation efforts that brought huge strides in conservation of the Everglades and the Long Island Sound. And he brought Audubon's considerable credibility and political clout to the fight against climate change. 🐦