



## Blue Jays

**H**onk, honk! When I first heard them, I thought I was hearing bicycle horns. A brand new birder, I was checking out Denver's Cherry Creek State Park, and there were certainly bicyclists out enjoying the brilliant fall day. I wondered why they were honking so much, since there really wasn't anyone to honk at.

Then I heard the same sound at home. That tin horn honking. Realizing it had to be a bird, I started scanning the branches where the sound was coming from. Finally, I saw my noise maker.



Because I already knew what Steller's Jays and Scrub Jays look like, I quickly realized my new bird was a jay, but I had to consult my field guide to determine which one. Then I got pretty excited. I was seeing my very first Blue Jay!

For those of you who have lived in the eastern US, Blue Jays are probably not that exciting. But I grew up in California, and California doesn't have Blue Jays. Neither did Colorado until the '70s. Now they're common residents.

Why have the Blue Jays moved into Colorado? One explanation may be that they were reluctant to cross the treeless prairies—their relatively slow flight make them an easy target for hungry raptors. Now that humans have planted trees from the Ozarks to the Rockies, the trip is much safer. This explanation is supported by the bird's propensity to inhabit city parks. (The coast-to-coast

Continued on page 4

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I have three things I would like you to consider supporting. At our October meeting, I asked for a show of hands of everyone who had gone to see the new birding movie, "The Big Year." I would say nearly 80% of the audience raised a hand and some even admitted they had seen it twice. I have yet to see the movie primarily because I am not a big fan of two of the actors playing the main characters; I will likely buy a copy of it when it is released as a DVD. But please don't let my prejudice stop you from enjoying some great end credits and an entertaining film.

Next, the GIVE! 2011 Campaign begins November 1 and ends December 31. Forty-nine, well-deserving, local non-profits were chosen to participate this year and I'm confident everyone will be able to find one or two organizations worthy of your financial support. The minimum donation amount

again this year is \$10. If you want to receive some great rewards, you are asked to contribute at least \$33. Please read through the information when it is published, learn about all the groups involved, and seriously consider a financial gift.

And finally, please remember our annual Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, December 17. Ben and Sally Sorensen are once again taking charge of our day long bird quest so please contact them if you are interested in participating. We have lots of area to cover and all levels of birding expertise are invited. Ben is looking for someone to take over the CBC duties so if anyone is willing to take his place, please let him know.

Rise

• RISË FOSTER-BRUDER  
PRESIDENT, AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Coming Programs	2
Field Trips & Events	3
Conservation Corner	4
Telling the Boys...	4
Book Review	5
Scarlet Tanager!	back

### COMING PROGRAMS

#### November 16

"Birds of Colombia"  
John Drummond

#### December 17

Christmas Bird Count  
No program

#### January 18

Raptor ID  
TBA

#### February 15

Birds of South America  
Eric DeFonso

### 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 Jan./Feb. 2012 issue of Aikorns is Wednesday, December 14.

Contact the editor, Leslie Holzmann, at: AikenAudubon@gmail.com, or call 719.964.3197.

## November 16 • John Drummond Birds of Colombia

PHOTO: JOHN DRUMMOND



Come experience a thrilling account of John Drummond's trip to Colombia!

Colombia has recently opened up to eco-tourism and Pro Aves, the Colombian bird conservation organization, has been instrumental in purchasing land to protect the many endangered endemic species and habitat types.

Colombia possesses the highest number of bird species in the world, over 1,870 at the latest count. This presentation describes a trip made in April 2010 to visit the endemic rich areas around the central Cauca and Magdalena valleys and the isolated Santa Marta Mountains on the Caribbean coast. The wide variety of habitat types—humid cloud forest, paramo, dry forest, marshes and desert scrub—that they visited made for exciting birding,

particularly colorful hummingbirds and psittacidae. John will illustrate his talk with his photographs of these and other birds.

John Drummond could be described as an avid bird watcher as he is approaching 6,800 bird species on his world bird list and has banded in 28 countries, covering six continents. He has a Ph.D. in Inorganic Chemistry from Southampton University, England, has extensive field experience on a number of bird studies, and has spoken to a number of Audubon and other ornithological groups.

## December 17 • You! Christmas Bird Count

**W**hile Aiken doesn't meet for a program during December, we hope everyone will come out and count birds for Audubon's annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC). As Risë mentioned in her president's message (*front page*), you don't have to be an expert to help. Plus, you never know what will turn up!

CBC results are used to identify trends in bird populations and ranges. For example, the westward migration of Blue Jays mentioned in the front page article was first documented in bird count data.

This is Aiken Audubon's 61<sup>st</sup> consecutive year taking 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. It is divided into 17 areas, each with a count leader.

If you'd like to help with this citizen science project, contact Ben and Sally Sorensen at 719. 635.1716 to sign up.

**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.**

**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

**Treasurer**  
Arlene Sampson  
719.574.6134

**Program Chair**  
Deborah Barnes  
303.947.0566  
kfoopoo@yahoo.com

**Conservation Chair**  
(Position open)

**Publicity Chair**  
Christine Bucher  
719.596.2916  
baccab@aol.com

**Education Chair**  
Michael E. Whedon  
719.243.2083  
MEWhedon@gmail.com

**Field Trips**  
Jeannie Mitchell  
719.494.1977  
vancerus@earthlink.net

**Aikorns Editor/Web**  
Leslie Holzmann  
719.964.3197  
AikenAudubon@gmail.com

**Hospitality**  
Arlene Sampson (acting)  
719.574.6134

**Christmas Count**  
Ben & Sally Sorensen (acting)  
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. 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 dogs are allowed on Aiken trips.**

**Note: In cases of extreme weather, trips may be cancelled. If this might be a possibility, please contact the trip leader an hour before the scheduled meeting time.**

To receive e-mailed reminders of upcoming field trips, send your name and e-mail address to [AikenAudubon@gmail.com](mailto:AikenAudubon@gmail.com).

### Friday, November 25, 8 am – noon Kiowa Creek Sanctuary

Walk off that abundant Thanksgiving dinner before those extra calories become a permanent part of your physique! We'll enjoy the fresh air and winter birds... and who knows? We *could* even see a wild turkey!

The Sanctuary just tallied its 100th "yard" bird, a flock of Sandhill Cranes flying overhead on their way south. Maybe we can find bird number 101.

Bring something to drink and a snack. Scopes are helpful for the ponds. Kiowa Creek Sanctuary is at 10165 Hodgen Road. Turn in at the sanctuary gate on the south side of the road and follow the driveway to the ranch house. Bad weather cancels the trip.

Contact Jeannie Mitchell at [vancerus@earthlink.net](mailto:vancerus@earthlink.net) or (h) 719.494.1977, (c) 719.233.1956 if you have any questions, and to RSVP.

### Saturday, December 17, time tba Colorado Springs area Christmas Bird Count

See details on opposite page.

### Thursday, January 5, 2012, time tba Black Forest Christmas Bird Count

Aiken normally participates in the count centered in southern Colorado Springs, but Black Forest has its own event. Last year participants saw a Northern Goshawk, the only one discovered in an El Paso County CBC.

Contact Jeannie Mitchell at [vancerus@earthlink.net](mailto:vancerus@earthlink.net) or (h) 719.494.1977, (c) 719.233.1956 if you have any questions, and to sign up.

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

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Saturday, November 19, 10 – 11:30 am Wild Turkey Trivia & Hike

Come to Bear Creek Nature Center to talk turkey and marvel at the "I didn't know that!" world of turkeys, tame and wild. Everything you ever wanted to know about turkeys but were afraid to ask will be explored via a trivia game, slide show, hands-on activities, craft for kids and a short hike in search of wild turkey habitat.

\$4.00/ for Nature Center member, \$5.00/nonmember.  
Reservations required, 719.520.6387.

### Deadline: November 30 Photo Contest

The Audubon Society of Greater Denver brings you an opportunity to share your beautiful nature photos and have a chance to win up to \$1,000. Any images of the natural world are welcomed—including landscapes, flowers, wildlife, macro shots, aerials, behaviors, portraits, underwater, abstracts, black & whites, and even urban wildlife. Enter as many images as you like for an entry fee of \$10 per image. The top ten entries will be awarded cash prizes and the best 250 images will be featured on the contest website throughout 2012.

Proceeds from the contest benefits the Audubon Society of Greater Denver's education, conservation and research programs.

Visit <http://denveraudubon.contestvenue.com/> for more information.

Questions? Contact Karl Brummert at [kbrummert@denveraudubon.org](mailto:kbrummert@denveraudubon.org) or Wendy Shattil at [wendy@dancingpelican.com](mailto:wendy@dancingpelican.com).

## FLORES' FUNNIES



Artist Rick Flores, a Nature Center volunteer, enjoys sharing his views of happenings at Fountain Creek and Bear Creek Nature Centers.

# If You Find a Bird Band

**B**anding provides a wealth of information about the movements and lives of birds, and many banders have just finished another round of putting these bracelets on the birds. However, this important study would fail were it not for the many people who report and return bands to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Federal Fish & Wildlife bands are plain aluminum, inscribed with a nine digit number: a three or four digit prefix, followed by a dash, and five additional digits. If you find a band, you can report your information online, by phone, or via snail mail.

**Online:** Go to <http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBL/homepage/call800.htm>

**By phone:** 1-800-327-BAND (2263) from anywhere in Canada, the United States and most parts of the Caribbean.

**By mail:** Return it with the following information:

1. You name and address (plainly printed)
2. All numbers and letters on the band
3. The date you found the band
4. The place you found the band (mileage and directions from the nearest town, with county and state, or GPS coordinates)
5. How you found the band (on a bird found dead, shot, or caught in some other way)

Straighten the band, tape it to a piece of heavy paper, and place in an envelope marked "Hand Cancel." Mail to:

Bird Banding Laboratory  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Laurel, MD 20708

What do you do if you find a live banded bird? Do not remove the band (this might injure the bird), but record the number on it and release the bird. Send all the information you can about finding the banded bird to the Banding Laboratory.

You will receive a Certificate of Appreciation from the Bird Banding Laboratory telling you where the bird was banded, what kind it was, and who banded it. The person who banded it will also learn where and when you found the band.

## Telling the Boys from the Girls

**M**ale ducks don't look anything like female ducks, at least during the breeding season. And you can easily tell the boy Black-headed Grosbeaks (*right*) from the girls (*below*)... in fact, they don't look like they even belong to the same species! But with lots of birds, from Steller's Jays to Canada Geese, it seems that only they know who is who.



I've often wondered just how they do that. What is it that tells male Red-tailed Hawks who the ladies are? How do California Gulls avoid courting a gull of the same sex? Well, I just read some fascinating articles that solved this mystery, at least when it comes to Black-capped Chickadees.

It turns out that the birds do have sexual dimorphism—the males and females look different. The problem is that we can't see it with our limited human eyes. The markings are in the ultraviolet.

Most people are aware that bees and other insects see a different set of colors than we do. Flowers that appear plain yellow to us actually have ultraviolet runway lights inviting the bees to land and mix up some pollen. Hummingbirds see more colors at the other end of the spectrum, distinguishing reds that we are blind to. That is why they're attracted to red flowers, and plants have evolved to advertise in that color.

How do birds see colors we cannot? If you remember from your science classes, our eyes have three different kinds of cones—color receptors—each sensitive to yellowish, greenish, or bluish light. Birds have four. So where we see a rainbow of seven colors, they can see more. Birds' eyes also have more cones than ours, and more connections from the eye to the brain, giving them superior eyesight.

Now it turns out that Black-capped Chickadees, at least, use this extended range of color to proclaim their sex. The males are brighter white (into the UV) and deeper black (also into the UV) than the females. In fact, female birds prefer males with the brightest white patches and the sharpest contrast between the white and black patches.<sup>1</sup> This serves not only to maintain the differences, but to strengthen the distinction in each generation.



Chickadees aren't the only birds to have sexual markings that we can't see. According to Raphael Igor Dias, "In general, practically all bird families present some UV reflectance in their plumage."<sup>2</sup> In addition to distinguishing males from females, birds' ability to see into the ultraviolet helps them find prey, establish territories, and proclaim their virility.

Next time we see a pair of apparently identical birds courting, we don't have to wonder how they can tell which sex is which. If only we could see in the same wavelengths. Although, then we'd have to rewrite the field guides!

• LESLIE HOLZMANN

1. <http://beheco.oxfordjournals.org/content/16/1/218.full>

2. <http://www.ararajuba.org.br/sbo/ararajuba/artigos/Volume143/ara143rev.pdf>

## AFA Article

Aiken is famous! Our September program featuring the Air Force Academy falcons and their handlers was written up in the AFA newsletter under the title: "Colorado Springs bird watchers meet the Falcons." See the article at <http://www.usafa.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123273673>.

## Facebook

Aiken Audubon now has our very own Facebook page. Jeannie Mitchell will be the voice behind "Wes," our Aiken owl mascot. If you're on Facebook, be sure to "Like" our page and spread the word about birds.

### CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

"tree highway" may also account for the expanded range of House Finches, although they've moved in the opposite direction.)

Because hawks and owls are a threat, jays scream a warning when one is sighted. Other birds respond as well, diving into the foliage at the sound of the alarm. However, that doesn't explain the "bicycle horn" calls I heard, as the jays' "hawk in the area" warning sounds just like a Red-tailed Hawk!

Jays have a bad reputation, and to some degree they've earned it. Not only do they hog feeders, but they have been known to steal eggs and chicks from the nests of songbirds (although not very often). Plus, some people object to the loud noises they make. You can hear several of their calls at [Whatbird.com](http://Whatbird.com).

However, Blue Jays have many good points as well. Like other Corvids (crows, ravens, and other jays), they're highly intelligent and good at solving puzzles (such as how to open the door to a cage).

Additionally, they're devoted spouses and parents. Couples mate for life. Each spring, the pair builds a nest together, and the male brings the female her meals while she incubates the eggs. Once the babies hatch, both parents take care of them. Even after the young birds fledge, the family sticks together for the rest of the summer.

Finally, we may well owe our eastern oak forests to these (and other) acorn eaters. While Blue Jays do consume bugs, they are primarily vegetarians, and prefer to dine on seeds, nuts, and especially acorns. Like other jays, they store surplus food for consumption later, burying it in the ground. Rather than get eaten later, many of these buried acorns sprout.

I've been putting peanuts out on our balcony railing every morning for several years now. While my usual customers are the plentiful Steller's Jays, every spring and fall we're visited by several Blue Jays as well. If I'm the slightest bit late, the birds come to the kitchen window and squawk at me until I come out with their breakfast. Then they start screaming, as if to tell all the other jays that the food is ready. Or maybe they're just saying, "Thank you!"

• LESLIE HOLZMANN

For more information about the Blue Jay's range expansion, see the article at <http://elibrary.unm.edu/sora/JFO/v049n03/p0208-p0214.pdf>

*aikorns*

## Aiken Audubon Society Mailed 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

### BOOK REVIEW

## What Bluebirds Do, by Pamela F. Kirby

Would you like to introduce a child to birding?

This delightful book, full of gorgeous photographs, tells the life story of the Eastern Bluebird from the time the male and female meet until their family is ready to leave home.

The text accompanying the pictures explains what is happening at each stage of the birds' life. There are also sections on bluebird facts and conservation.

Author/photographer Pamela F. Kirby has won many awards for her widely published work.

Any child (or adult, for that matter) who likes nature would be thrilled to receive this gift.

What Bluebirds Do



Pamela F. Kirby



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

## THE BACK PAGE

### Scarlet Tanager, Orange Variant!

Lenore Fleck and I went for a short hike on August 8, 2011, on the Lower Columbine Trail in North Cheyenne Cañon Park. The first mile of the Columbine Trail follows Cheyenne Creek, offering cool hiking in the shade of towering ponderosa pines, white firs and willow trees. Within the first few minutes of our hike, we were amazed to see a gorgeous orange bird with black wings flutter into the leaves near us. Neither one of us had ever seen a bird like this before! Fortunately, we got a good look at this brand new (to us) bird as it fed its fledgling at close range. After consulting two bird books, we identified it as a Scarlet Tanager, Orange Variant.

I called expert Colorado Springs birder Bill Maynard who immediately dropped everything so that he could see and document the bird. Bill arrived in time to observe the tanager still tending its young. Bill took some great photographs to document the

unusual bird and reported it to Colorado's Rare Bird Alert.

Typically, Scarlet Tanagers nest in the eastern United States and are considered rare sightings if they are seen west of central



PHOTO: BILL MAYNARD

Oklahoma, Kansas and Nebraska. To see this rare Tanager with its even more rare "Orange Variant" color was quite a birding event.

Local birders and I exchanged many emails during the next 24 hours, and several of us had the good fortune to see the colorful Tanager again the following morning. I looked for it again on August 13, but couldn't find it.

My thanks to Bill Maynard for his permission to use his great photographs of the Scarlet Tanager, Orange Variant, and to reprint his email:

I looked at my photographs and the Scarlet Tanager grabbed what looks like a yellow jacket or other yellow and black abdomened wasp, worked the stinger end between its mandibles, probably disabling the stinger, and fed it to the juvenile. Pretty cool.

• MELISSA WALKER