



Good Birds

“Have you seen any good birds?” It’s the expected question when you meet another birder on the trail. We’ve all heard it, and probably asked it ourselves.

The first time I heard this, I was a bit confused. What’s a “good” bird? Does that mean there are bad birds? Since that time I’ve learned that the question actually means, “Have you seen any unusual birds?” This makes a lot more sense—we all want to catch the rarity. But if seeing a rare bird is the *only* reason to go birding, we’d get bored pretty quickly.

I’ve now been birding long enough now to know that most trips will produce the same birds over and over again. A trip to Fountain Creek Regional Park will almost always turn up Red-winged Blackbirds, an assortment of ducks (depending on the season), Song Sparrows (*right*), Black-capped Chickadees, House Finches, American Coots, Downy Woodpeckers ... you can finish the list yourself.

None of these would be considered “good birds” at Fountain Creek. Yet, we continue to go birding. Why?

There are probably plenty of reasons, as varied as we are, but a few come to mind:

- Having an excuse to go for a walk in a natural setting.
- Watching birds, even very familiar birds, go about their daily routines.
- Enjoying one another’s company, sharing a common interest.
- Learning another skill, such as birding by ear, or bird photography, or sketching.
- Adding to a year list, or a county list, or whatever other list we can dream up.
- Acting as tour guide for a visiting birder.
- Helping conservation efforts by counting birds or noting breeding locations.
- Sharing our birding skills with new birders or children.

None of these reasons to go birding have anything to do with “good birds” or “trash birds.” To an enthusiastic birder, they’re all good birds!

• LESLIE HOLZMANN

PHOTO: LESLIE HOLZMANN



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COMING PROGRAMS

March 21

“South African Vultures”
Jenyva Turner

April 18

“Kiowa Creek Sanctuary”
Your Aiken Board

May 16

“Georg Wilhelm Steller, Naturalist”
Bob Steller

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Although Aiken did not participate in the 2011 Indy GIVE! Campaign I did mention it at a few general meetings last year. The campaign ran from November 1 through December 31, and the results were amazing. The final tally of money raised was \$699,823.24! This will be split between 49 local, participating non-profits. Not only do local agencies receive much needed funding, they also connect with local businesses and create new partnerships for future events. I just want to say thank you to everyone who donated to this innovative fundraiser and hope you will choose to do the same next year.

Spring is almost here, and with the unusual temperatures we’ve had all winter, it will be a another unusual spring migration. I hope you are able to participate in the upcoming spring bird counts and field trips. Jeannie has done a great job this past year as our field trip coordinator and I appreciate her hard work and continued efforts to find leaders and interesting places for Aiken to go birding.

Enjoy,

Risë

• RISË FOSTER-BRUDER
PRESIDENT, AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

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 2012 issue of Aikorns is Wednesday, April 18.

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

March 21 • Jenyva Turner South African Vultures



In January 2011, Jenyva Turner, traveled to South Africa to work with the vulture conservationists of VulPro on a pilot field study of the effectiveness of using a human uric acid meter to detect early-onset kidney failure among wild Cape and African White-backed Vultures. The study also allowed researchers and conservationists to establish baseline health assessments on the vultures in the region.

Come learn about what VulPro is doing to help protect these unique scavengers and hear stories of what life is like when your day consists of carcasses, maggots and vomit! (There will be

some not-so-queasy photos of Africa's beautiful bird life for those of you who aren't so excited about the maggots....)

Jenyva Turner grew up in the Montana countryside, which is where she first developed her love for birds and for all of nature. Her parents knew she was destined to help protect wildlife someday when they would come home to find frogs in the sink, ground squirrels in the bathtub and rehabbed birds in the garage.

She is currently a zoo keeper in the African Rift Valley exhibit at the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo where she cares for zebra, meerkats, monkeys, red river hogs, tortoises, and several species of birds including her favorites, Cape Vultures and Ground Hornbills. She has managed the zoo's Cape Vulture Quarters for Conservation program for the last three years.

April 18 • The Aiken Board Kiowa Creek Sanctuary

Kiowa Creek Sanctuary, a pristine section of northern Black Forest, was donated to the National Audubon Society in 2010. As the chapter closest to the property, Aiken Audubon has gained controlled access to the fields, forest, and ponds there.

With such diverse habitat, it's no surprise that the birds range from Ponderosa species such as Pygmy Nuthatch and Hairy Woodpecker to grassland sparrows and hawks. Ponds and wetlands attract ducks, Wilson's Snipe, Virginia Rail, and nesting Soras. We recently spotted our 101st species on the sanctuary!

The other animals and plants are important too. Fireflies were spotted last June along the creek where it passes under Hodgen Road—who would have expected to see fireflies in Black Forest! Elk, Abert's squirrels, coyotes, pronghorn, and deer are also frequent visitors.

While the property is closed to the general public, field trips are organized approximately once a month during the warm months, and occasionally during the winter as weather permits. We know you'll want to visit after learning about the sanctuary, so a field trip is scheduled for the Saturday following the program.



PHOTO: JEANNIE MITCHELL

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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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.

PHOTO: LESLIE HOLZMANN



Saturday, March 17, 8:30 am – noon

Kettle Creek Lakes

Join us on this short and flat walk around the Kettle Creek "Lakes." Located directly adjacent to the Air Force Academy property, three ponds attract an assortment of seasonal birds.

Head for the south gate of the academy, but turn right at the information center before you cross over onto air force property. We'll meet where the road dead-ends in a parking lot. Snow cancels the trip.

Contact trip leader Risë Foster-Bruder at 719.282.7877

Saturday, April 21, 9 am – noon

Kiowa Creek Sanctuary

Join us as we see who's hanging around the sanctuary, Audubon's property in northern Black Forest. We'll definitely find forest birds—Downy & Hairy Woodpeckers, Northern Flicker, Pygmy and White-breasted Nuthatches, Mountain Chickadee, and Steller's Jay, for starters—but the property's species list grows weekly.

Bring a snack and drink. Scopes are helpful for the ponds. Kiowa Creek Sanctuary is at 10165 Hodgen Road. Meet at the sanctuary gate on the south side of the road. Abysmal weather cancels the trip.

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

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

Sunday, April 22, time tba

Bonny Lake

Bonny Lake State Park has been a recreational oasis on Colorado's northeastern plains, just a few miles from the Kansas border. On October 1, the park will become part of the South Republican State Wildlife Area, a 13,000-acre unit that offers deer, turkey, waterfowl and small game hunting.

The area contains riparian habitats, grasslands and marshes. Bonny is special because it supports eastern birds not normally seen in Colorado. Possible species include Northern Cardinal, Red-bellied Woodpecker, and Eastern Screech-Owl. We may get Chestnut-collared Longspur, McCown's Longspur or Field Sparrow. And if we're really lucky: Eastern Towhee, Purple Finch, and who knows what?

Contact Mark Peterson, mpeterson33@yahoo.com, 719.661.4439 if you have any questions or to RSVP.

Thursday, April 26, 7:30 am – noon

Prairie Canyon Ranch Open Space

The historic Prairie Canyon Ranch is bisected by Cherry Creek and lies just south of Castlewood Canyon State Park. It's characterized by rolling grasslands, mixed pine and Gambel oak forests, rocky outcrops, narrow canyons, riparian areas and lush hay meadows. Hawks, pronghorn antelope, coyotes, deer, elk and great blue herons are known inhabitants. Douglas County manages the property as a working cattle ranch. Public access is by appointment.



We're not aware of any birds groups who have done a hike there. It'll be fun for us and for Douglas County folks to start a bird list for the ranch.

Meet at the Monument Park & Ride (at Hwy. 105/I-25) to carpool.

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

Being a Bird is Risky

We estimate that from 500 million to possibly over 1 billion birds are killed annually in the United States due to anthropogenic sources including collisions with human-made structures such as vehicles, buildings and windows, power lines, communication towers, and wind turbines; electrocutions; oil spills and other contaminants; pesticides; cat predation; and commercial fishing by-catch.

Erickson, et al., http://www.fs.fed.us/psw/publications/documents/psw_gtr191/Asilomar/pdfs/1029-1042.pdf

Join the Conservation Committee!

Want a great way to get involved in local and national conservation issues? Join me, Jackie Heyda, on the resurrected Conservation Committee.

As Aiken's new Conservation Chairperson, I would like to good start by helping interested birders to get to know the State legislators—Representatives and Senators—in our area. Many local newspapers cover the legislature and the various issues they are discussing.

There are ways to get started in conservation issues on your own, too—sign up for e-alerts from the National Audubon Society and e-mail alerts from Audubon Colorado.

Our committee will be addressing these issues of both local and national concern by writing letters to our legislators. I will send out information about each issue as it comes along.

To get things started, check out this internet site that tells how to write a congressional letter: http://www.ehow.com/how_5915001_write-congressional-letter.html.

If you are interested in joining the Conservation Committee, please contact me.

JACKIE HEYDA,
JHMAYL@YAHOO.COM

National Audubon's Take Action!

We know that lawmakers care about your views and opinions. As a constituent, you have a unique ability to convey your concerns about issues affecting birds, wildlife and their habitats—and be heard like no lobbyist here in Washington, DC. The only way we'll be successful in our conservation efforts is with your help.

Current issues include compensation for the BP oil spill, protecting birds on Alaska's North Slope, and reauthorization of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act.

Learn more and sign up at <http://policy.audubon.org/take-action>

Rescheduled:

Audubon/Sierra Club 2012 Legislative Forum!

New Date: Saturday, March 10

Time: 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

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

**Place: First Plymouth Church
3501 S. Colorado Boulevard, Denver**

The Audubon Society of Greater Denver and the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Sierra Club would like to invite you to attend the 2012 Legislative Forum in Denver. Audubon Colorado Lobbyist Jen Boulton and Sierra Club Lobbyist Chuck Malick will go over this session's environmental bills, we'll hear from speakers on several of the key issues, and at lunch we'll talk with several Colorado legislators. A continental breakfast and lasagna lunch are provided.

The hot topics for this year include the merger of the Colorado Division of Wildlife with the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation; oil and gas regulation changes; diversion of GOCO funds, and the proposed transport of water from the Green River to the Colorado Front Range.

To register in advance, call the ASGD office at 303-973-9530 to give your name and contact information.

For more information contact Jackie Heyda, Aiken's Conservation Chair, at jhmayl@yahoo.com.

Chico Basin Ranch Restoration Project

Friday, March 23 through Sunday, March 25

In partnership with a handful of wonderful agencies and organizations (including the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory), Wetlands Restoration Volunteers (WRV) is working with the Chico Basin Ranch to restore a classic plains riparian (i.e., streamside) plant community essential to the well-being of so many birds and other wildlife. The site has been severely altered throughout the years, resulting in a dense over story of exotic Russian olive trees (see photo on left). These trees have been eliminated, and now the site is ready for the re-establishment of native shrubs and trees such as golden currant, wild rose, chokecherry, plains cottonwood, coyote willow, and others.



On this project, volunteers will be installing willow cuttings, container stock, and bare-root shrubs (see photo on right).

We hope you can join us to help restore habitat in one of Colorado's most important flyways. Forty volunteers are needed for each day; come for one or all three days! Minimum age 14, accompanied by an adult.

In the event severe weather hits the ranch on March 23-25, please reserve April 21-22 as a back-up.

Contact organizer Raghavendra Paturi at Paturir@yahoo.com with any questions and to volunteer.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Identifying Birds of Prey

Selected Sunday afternoons:

Owls, February 26, 1 – 2 pm

Eagles & Others, March 4, 1 – 2 pm

Buteos, March 11, 1 – 2 pm

Falcons & Accipiters, March 18, 12:30 – 2:15 pm

Cheyenne Mountain State Park presents photographer and expert birder Debbie Barnes in this four-class series. She will share her photos and birding skills to help improve your ability to identify soaring and perching birds of prey. Learn to use field marks and behaviors to distinguish between the many species of raptors that live in and around the Pikes Peak Region. Recommended for adults and children 12 years and older.

This free program will be conducted at the park visitor center and no parks pass is required.

Birding for Beginners 101 Course

Thursday Classes, April 19, May 3 & 17, 6:30 – 8:30 pm

Saturday Field Trips, April 21 & May 5 & 19, 7 – 11 am

This series is designed for beginning and intermediate bird watchers to learn the basics of birding and to develop and improve skills in identifying birds by sight and sound.

Reservations and prepayment required: \$50/ nature center member, \$60/nonmember, call 520-6387 or email kenpals@elpasoco.com

Fountain Creek Nature Adventures – Wacky Woodpeckers

Thursday, May 3, 9 – 10:30 am

Children ages 3-6, with an adult, will enjoy puppet shows, nature stories, crafts, hands-on activities, and discovery time on the trail.

Reservations required: \$4.00 per person, , 520-6745



2012 CFO Annual Convention
May 17 – 20 in Trinidad, CO

Registration is now open: www.cfobirds.org

aikorns

Aiken Audubon Society Mailed Subscription

Sign Up For:

☐ One Year \$10.00

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

FLORES' FUNNIES



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



Aiken Audubon Society
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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

THE BACK PAGE

Introducing Wes, our Western Screech Owl



Last fall Aiken held a contest to come up with a mascot for our Facebook page. The winner was Jenyva Turner (who also happens to be our March speaker). For her adorable “Wes,” she was awarded a gift certificate donated by the Wild Bird Center.

You can see Wes in his digital habitat by visiting the Aiken Audubon Society Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Aiken-Audubon-Society/361709300508098>. You do not need a Facebook account to view the page, but you must log in to add your own comments.

While field trip reports are posted on our website at AikenAudubon.com (see the link from the “Field Trips” page), additional photos and comments will be available on Facebook. We hope everyone will participate in telling us about their birding experiences.

Wes will also be piping up with interesting birding facts, entertaining stories, and his own observations about us birders. See you online!



**Look for the
Aiken Audubon Society
Facebook page!**