



Avian Imports

When we think of non-native birds, the Big Three usually come to mind: Rock Pigeons, European Starlings, and House Sparrows. All three are major nuisances, threatening native species, eating our harvests, and causing millions of dollars in property damage every year. But these aren't the only aliens among us. In fact, there are nearly one hundred imported bird species that have established breeding populations here in the United States.*

Polly is a Problem

Many birds kept as pets have ended up in the great outdoors where they have set up housekeeping on their own. Weslaco, Texas is famous for its noisy flock of wild parrots, and parrots are found in many other cities as well—including Los Angeles, San Francisco, and even New York. While many residents love seeing these colorful birds, and birders are delighted to add them to their North American lists, some of these species are creating problems. For example, Monk Parakeets in Florida have a penchant for building huge nests on utility poles, shorting out the wires and causing outages.

Parrots (such as this Princess Parrot, at right), are by far the most common feral birds, but they're not alone. Red-whiskered Bulbuls, Java Finches, Indian Hill Mynas, and Spot-breasted Orioles have also established wild populations, mostly in Florida. At this point, numbers are small enough that little impact is being recorded. However, some of these birds are breeding rapidly enough to raise concern.



Game Birds

In a never-ending quest for more targets, hunters have imported a number of game birds to North America. Some populations struggled or died out—the Himalayan Snowcock, introduced in the 1960s, is still restricted to a small range in the Ruby Mountains of Nevada—but other species made themselves at home and multiplied. Chukar and Ring-necked Pheasant (also known as Common Pheasant) are two familiar examples.

Cont'd. on page 5

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Since September 2005 I've been writing a president's message. Sometimes it's been the hardest part of the job. Leslie patiently endured my tardiness—more or less. [Ed. note: "Hey!"]

For my final message, I would like to thank the many board and committee members who have served with me over the years. Without them, Aiken Audubon would not be the organization it is today.

For me, our collaboration with the City of Colorado Springs and the donation of the Redwing Sanctuary

to their stewardship was a milestone. The first ever Aiken Art Show, which raised funds to support our monthly programs, and our financial support of many local and state research projects and nature centers are also major accomplishments.

I would also like to thank the numerous individuals who led any and all field trips and participated in the Christmas Bird Counts. Your willingness to give your time and expertise are greatly appreciated.

But I think the most satisfying change to occur over the past years has been the steady and

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COMING PROGRAMS

May 16
 "Following in the Footsteps of Georg Steller," presented by Bob Steller

Summer break.

September 19
 Program presented by ABA President Jeff Gordon

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 Sept./Oct. 2012 issue of Aikorns is Wednesday, **August 15.**

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

UPCOMING AIKEN PROGRAMS

May 16 • Bob Steller Following in the Footsteps of Georg Steller

PHOTO: LESLIE HOLZMANN



We have Steller's Jays, Steller's Sea Lions, Steller's Sea Eagle, and Steller's Sea Cow (now extinct). Who was this Steller who has given his name to so many animals?

Russian naturalist Georg Steller accompanied Vitus Bering on his journey to Alaska in 1741, where he was the first European to document the variety of plants, birds, and mammals he found there. Additionally, upon sighting the jay that now bears his name, he recognized that it was related to the more familiar Blue Jay, and deduced that Alaska, therefore, must be part of North America.

Georg Steller and his wife had no children. However Bob is a descendant of one of Georg's brothers. He has studied the life of his famous uncle, culminating with a trip that retraced the route Georg followed so many years ago. In 2005, a bush pilot flew Bob to Kayak Island, the first landing site of the 1741 expedition. He stayed on this uninhabited

island for four days, walking in Georg's exact footsteps. This was easy to do because Georg kept a daily journal. Bob's only neighbors were wild animals such as brown bears, moose, Bald Eagles, Steller's Jays, Steller's Sea Lions, and land otters.

Join us as we hear Bob's account of his adventures in Alaska, walking in the footsteps of history.

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

sustained increase in attendance to the monthly programs. So, my biggest thanks goes to everyone who presented and/or attended a program. It means we consistently offer interesting, engaging presentations that the public want to attend. Hopefully, they learn something along the way.

We follow Dr. Brian as he continues to study Flams and more recently Jenyva and her favorite vultures. We visit Africa, the Galapagos Islands, South America and even a few United States locations. We learned about beekeeping, snakes, many types of owls, mountain plovers, hummingbirds, shrikes and ptarmigan just to name a few. And we've had top notch photographers and authors entice us with their wares.

I look forward to seeing you at a future program, look for me in my regular spot but I probably won't have my big, fat notebook.

Thanks for supporting Aiken Audubon,

Risë

• RISË FOSTER-BRUDER
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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. 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.

1st Wednesdays starting May 2, 9 – 11 am

Kiowa Creek Sanctuary

Jeannie Mitchell will once again be leading monthly bird walks at Kiowa Creek Sanctuary, on the first Wednesday of each month, starting May 2 and running through October 3.

Check out the KCS webpage for current details, or contact Jeannie at vancerus@earthlink.net or (h) 719.494.1977, (c) 719.233.1956 if you have any questions, and to RSVP.

Saturday, May 5, 7:30 am

Manitou Lake

For a small area, Manitou Lake has a wide variety of habitats, from riparian to ponderosa forest. Located north of Woodland Park at an elevation of 7,700 ft., the lake attracts warblers, waders, cross-bills and other mountain species.

Meet at the Red Rocks Safeway (on Colorado Ave.) to carpool. Manitou Lake charges a small fee for entry.

Contact Alan Burns at 719.632.2081 if you have any questions. RSVP not necessary.

Saturday, May 12, 7 – 11 am

Fountain Creek Spring Bird Count

Beginning-to-advanced birders are invited to observe and record the numbers of bird species and populations found in Fountain Creek Regional Park during the height of the spring migration.

Reservations required: \$5.00 donation for birdseed, 520-6745

Saturday, May 19, 7 – 11 am

Bear Creek Spring Bird Count

Birding enthusiasts of all ages and abilities are invited to participate in a citizen science project counting species and populations in Bear Creek Park.

Reservations required: \$5.00 donation for birdseed, 520-6387

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

Tuesday, May 22, 8 am

Corral Bluffs

Only accessible via guided walks, city-owned Corral Bluffs is east of Powers. Last year's trip turned up a variety of reptiles and mammals, as well as some less-common birds. We'll also be identifying native wildflowers and other plants.

Meet in the west parking lot of the Loaf N Jug at 6857 Space Village Ave. to carpool. A signed waiver is required: www.aikenaudubon.com/Pages/hikewaiversrev.pdf (note: there are two pages).

More information on Corral Bluffs can be found at corralbluffs.org.

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

Sunday, June 3, 7am – 2pm (-ish)

Summer Raptors

Raptor expert Debbie Barnes will lead this trip to Eastern El Paso County to look for eagles, hawks, and other birds of prey. Scopes will be very helpful. Birding is along roads; no hiking.

Meet at Fountain Creek Nature Center to carpool.

Contact Debbie Barnes, kfoopoo@yahoo.com, 303.947.0566 if you have any questions and to RSVP.

Monday, June 25, 7 am – 3:30 pm

Emerald Valley

Join El Paso County naturalist Ken Pals in exploring the biological diversity of this montane forest and meadow off Old Stage Road. Slipper orchids and other native plants will be top priority, followed by butterflies, then birds such as possible Band-tailed Pigeon, flycatchers, kinglets, vireos and hummingbirds. Consider bringing a camera.

We'll rendezvous at Cheyenne Mountain High School east parking lot and carpool to Emerald Valley. Be prepared to drive or offer to ride. High clearance vehicles are recommended. Passengers should contribute \$5 to drivers for gas. Bring the usual things (including the ability to ford small streams).

Reservations are required. Group size is limited to 16 people as parking is limited at the site.

Contact Ken Pals, mtnpals@g.mail.com or 719.471.0687, for more information and to let him know you are coming.

Birding for Beginners—202

Thursday Classes, August 16 & 30,
September 13, 6:30 – 8:30 pm

Saturday Field Trips, August 18 &
September 1 & 15, 7 – 11 am

This series of classes and field trips with Ken Pals goes beyond the basics of birding and focuses on species that are more difficult to identify, including hawks, shorebirds, flycatchers and warblers.

Classes held at Bear Creek Nature Center, field trips vary.

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

Udall Moves to Protect Colorado Wilderness

Colorado's Mark Udall is chairman of the U.S. Senate's Subcommittee on National Parks and co-chairman of the bipartisan Outdoor Recreation Caucus. He is launching a collaborative process to create legislation for wilderness and national monument designation for two areas in Colorado: the Central Mountains and the Arkansas River Canyon. With the support of Sen. Michael Bennett, he is asking Coloradans in these communities and other interested people to comment about what they would like to see from a wilderness and national monument designation for these two sites.

The Central Mountains proposal includes as many as 32 areas in Pitkin and Summit counties, including Holy Cross, Eagles Nest and the Maroon Bells. The Arkansas River proposal would protect river rafting between Salida and Buena Vista.

Sen. Udall would like to build on work that has been done previously. He has developed draft maps of possible wilderness boundaries and hopes that people in these communities will comment. Even

if you don't live in these communities, this is an exciting proposal for wilderness protection.

Sen. Udall needs to hear from as many Coloradans as possible. He has posted all the maps at <http://markudall.senate.gov/outdoorheritage>. There is an e-mail comment form on this site.

I encourage you to read this information and make a comment.

• JACKIE HEYDA



Legislative Forum Report

The Legislative Forum was held on Saturday, March 10 in Denver.

It was sponsored by the Audubon Society of Greater Denver and the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Sierra Club. An overview of environmental bills and issues of the 2011 Legislative Session was presented by the Legislative Liaisons from Audubon Colorado and the Sierra Club.

These are three of the bills in the Senate and House that were discussed:

House Bill 1317 - Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission.

This bill establishes the makeup of the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission. The bill specifies that the governor must strive to maintain a reasonable balance between business, wildlife biology, energy, conservation, non-consumptive wildlife use, non-profit organizations, OHV use and habitat management.

The bill has been amended with the numbers of people represented from each group. Beneficial use of water was added to the desirable experience paragraph and non-consumptive wildlife organization was removed. There will be an e-mail action alert when there has been a decision.

Senate Bill 107 – Protect Water from Fracking.

SB107 requires additional rule-making to protect water quality from fracking. The bill requires pre- and post- fracking reports on water quality in the area and creates a rebuttable presumption of liability for water pollution occurring with a half-mile and six months of fracking operations. The bill also prohibits fracking near superfund sites and requires posting of environmental surety bonds for fracking operations in sensitive areas. Fracking near surface water is also precluded unless a closed loop system is used.

A scientist of the Colorado Oil and Gas Commission presented info about fracking. The Commission reviews applications for the drilling of each well. There are many rules relating to exploration and waste. The Commission is in charge of any spill that occurs. Colorado has never had an impact from fracking.

A representative of the Western Resource Advocates mentioned the importance of drilling properly and added that there are many safeguards that can be used.

The March 2012 issue of *High Country News* has an opinion article "A fresh focus on frack attacks" by Jonathan Thompson, a

student in Environmental Journalism at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

There was also a commentary in *The Denver Post* on Sunday, March 18 about fracking. This commentary was written by Dave Neslin, the former director of the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Committee.

HB 1160 – Captured Methane from Coal Mines.

This bill permits the use of coal-bed methane as biomass under the renewable energy standard. It passed the House by a 34-29 vote. The bill, sponsored by Senator Gail Schwartz of Snowmass, is now in the Senate.

The Denver Post has run several articles and commentaries on this topic. An article on the merits of methane fracking appeared in the March 18 issue, and on March 22 they ran a commentary on methane harvesting written by John Nielson, the energy program director at Western Resource Advocates, based in Boulder. Finally, "New front in the fracking wars," by columnist Vincent Carroll, was published March 24.

As the status of these bills change, this website information will be updated.

• JACKIE HEYDA

You can get involved with Audubon by signing up at Audubon Action, where you can get the latest information on issues. Go to Audubonaction@audubon.org.

Conservation Progress

The Nature Conservancy in Colorado secured a final 7,000 acre conservation easement on private land near Fort Carson. This completes an 18-mile long, 23,000 acre open space buffer next to the military installation. There are nine easements providing habitat for rare plants.

How to contact your representatives

Start your letter "My name is _____. I live in your district." (if you do). Representatives give priority if you live in their district.

If responding to a mass e-mail from an organization and you want to personalize your letter, change the subject line in the e-mail with the bill number and mention that you are making a personal comment. Personal comments have more impact than form letters.

If you prefer to make a phone call, leave your name, where you live, the bill number and your comments.

AVIAN IMPORT, CONT'D. FROM FRONT PAGE

Other native species have been moved around within the United States. Gambel's Quail (right) are native to Arizona and New Mexico, but they were introduced to western Colorado. They are easy to spot near Grand Junction, especially in Colorado National Monument. Similarly, Wild Turkeys, not native to Oregon, were introduced to that state for hunting in 1961.



PHOTO: LESLIE HOLZMANN

Do these exotic game birds affect the ecology of regions where they are released? One study showed that landowners will plant trees and shrubs to provide cover for pheasants, inadvertently increasing suitable habitat for native songbirds and other wildlife.

On the other hand, "In areas where introduced pheasants have naturalized successfully, researchers have documented incidents of nest parasitism of native birds such as wild turkeys, waterfowl, greater prairie chickens, ruffed grouses, and blue-winged teals.... Pheasants have also been found to pass diseases to other bird species."***

Eurasian Collared Doves

Introduced into the Bahamas in the 1970s, the first breeding Eurasian Collared Doves were documented in Florida in 1982. Since that time they have literally exploded across North America. They are now found in most states, including Alaska. It's easy to assume that such an adaptable species must be thriving at the expense of our native doves, Mourning Doves in particular. Are they?

Early studies in Florida produced surprising results. Instead of harming native dove populations, the Eurasian Collared Doves appeared to be helping them! Areas supporting high numbers of Eurasian Collared Dove also had more Mourning Doves, Common

aikorns

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Ground Doves, White-winged Doves and Rock Pigeons.

Of course, this is in a sub-tropical environment, not representative of the rest of the country. More studies are needed to see in the new doves out-compete the natives in areas with more limited resources.

One laboratory experiment concluded that Mourning Doves and collared doves prefer the same foods, but are equally aggressive. It will be interesting to see how that plays out in nature.



PHOTO: LESLIE HOLZMANN

What Should I Do?

Humans seem to make a habit of rearranging the planet, usually with unanticipated results. Even with laws in place, stowaways and accidental releases continue to add to the confusion. And, once a species is well established, it's pretty much impossible to go back to the way things were before.

The best we can do is to monitor the spread of new birds and try to mitigate the damage. Birders can help by participating in citizen science efforts such as Breeding Bird Atlas surveys, bird counts, Project FeederWatch and eBird.

• LESLIE HOLZMANN

*http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/nwrc/publications/05pubs/avery053.pdf

**http://www.humanesociety.org/assets/pdfs/hunting/pheasantreport_02_07_rev.pdf



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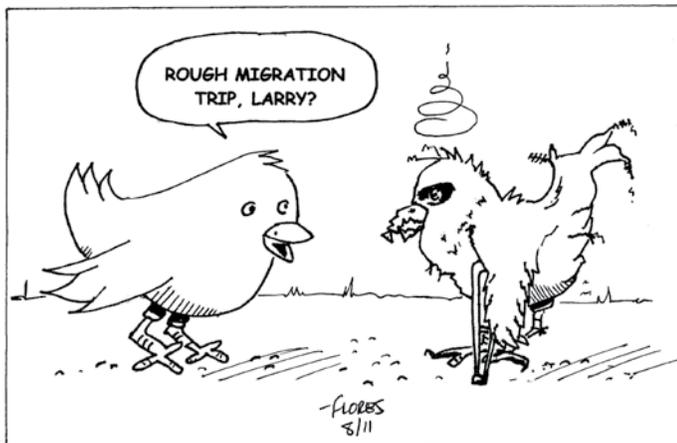
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President Risë Foster-Bruder
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YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BE A MEMBER TO PARTICIPATE IN AIKEN'S ACTIVITIES

FLORES' FUNNIES



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



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

Registration is now open: www.cfobirds.org



Look for the
Aiken Audubon Society
Facebook page!