



May/Summer 2013

Volume 9 / Issue 5

**aikorns**  
AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

## DEAR AIKEN AUDUBON,

by *Leslie Holzmann*

*"DO YOU HAVE PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN?"*

*"I'D LIKE TO BUY A BLUEBIRD HOUSE"*

*"WHAT SHOULD I FEED THE SPOTTED OWL IN MY BACKYARD?"*

*"HOW CAN I KEEP THOSE BIG WOODPECKERS FROM WAKING ME UP?"*

*"WHAT BIRD IS THIS?"*

When our Audubon chapter website encourages people to "Contact Aiken Audubon," the emails come to me. Yes, I'm the "real person" behind the Aiken email address. It's fun. I never know what I'm going to find in my inbox!

Sometimes coming up with an answer is easy. Yes, children are welcome at our programs. Sorry, we don't sell nest boxes. Owls eat mice; we suggest you let it forage on its own... and here's how to identify owl species!

Some questions are more challenging. I can make suggestions for foiling flickers, but the only foolproof deterrent I've found is a physical barrier. (My husband and I ended up hanging bird netting on the sides and back of our cedar-sided home; now the flickers only make holes on the front!)

Some emails just leave me scratching my head: "I am assisting a man doing a documentary on early aviation. What was a predatory bird Denver 1910 that could be used for poetic use to symbolize early aviation?"

Sometimes people think that we can work miracles: "Recently the city has put up netting under the Colorado Ave. bridge to keep the pigeons from roosting there. Some of the birds have gotten trapped. Please do something."

But it's the ID questions that have me pulling out my hair. Everyone wants to know what kind of bird they saw. Photos can be useful, but often they look like this one.

Other times we simply get a vague description: "What's that big white bird at the intersection of Palmer Park and Academy?" (Happily, I was able to answer that one because I know there's a leucistic Red-tailed Hawk frequently seen there.)

Once in a while we get a terrific photo and a question that has me doing research, contacting more knowledgeable birders, and learning something new. One thing is for sure. The more questions I get, the more I learn about birds... and people! ☘



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### LIKE A KID IN A CANDY SHOP

I love Spring—even the cold and snowy spring that we have been experiencing recently. One of the things that I like about spring is the return of favorite birds that have been gone all winter. Yes, I am sad that friends like the juncoes are leaving but I love the excitement of seeing my first-of-season Black-headed Grosbeak, Broad-tailed Hummingbird or Western Tanager.

The other thing that I like is all the birding activities that seem to "spring" up as the weather gets warmer. There are bird counts at Fountain Creek Nature Center and Bear Creek Nature Center. There are bird festivals such as the Hummingbird Festival at the Starsmore Discovery Center. There are field trips sponsored by Aiken Audubon and other Audubon chapters. I feel like a kid in a candy shop! I don't know which one to choose.

Get that "kid in a candy shop" feeling and check out our website at [www.aikenaudubon.com](http://www.aikenaudubon.com) to get all the latest details on field trips, festivals and other birding opportunities. I plan to!

Happy Birding!

*Christine A. Bucher,*  
Aiken Audubon President

### Coming program

**MAY 15**

**Live Raptors!**

Presented by Nature's Educators

### Newsletter articles

Articles, announcements, or other items of special interest to Aiken Audubon members are welcomed for consideration. We'd love to hear from you!

Deadline for the September/October 2013 issue of *Aikorns* is Wednesday, August 21.

Contact the editor, Leslie Holzmann, at [aikenaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:aikenaudubon@gmail.com), or call (719) 964-3197.

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## MAY 15 / NATURE'S EDUCATORS LIVE RAPTORS!



WE WILL DIVE INTO THE CHARACTERISTICS that define raptors and why they are important to our ecosystems.

Audiences will discover the various types of raptors found all over the world, what it takes to care for a raptor, and learn how Nature's Educators is permitted to keep raptors. Three to four of our ambassadors will be present based on length. The audience will learn about their personal histories, anatomy, hunting strategies, and habitats.

Nature's Educators is a non-profit 501(c)(3) all-volunteer run educational wildlife program focusing on raptors. Our mission is to teach anyone and

everyone about the importance of birds of prey. We strive to get audiences excited to learn about wildlife.

Nature's Educators is licensed by Aurora Animal Control, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and United States Fish & Wildlife Service to keep non-releasable raptors for educational purposes.

**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.**

## THE GREATER SAGE-GROUSE— AN "UMBRELLA SPECIES"

by Jackie Heyda

THE GREATER SAGE-GROUSE IS threatened by habitat degradation largely due to farming, invasive plants and oil and gas development. The federal government has adopted a "core-habitat" strategy which hopes to limit development on land most critical to the species.

The Sage-grouse is considered an "umbrella species". Many other birds, plants and animals are likely to benefit from this conservation.

The birds are Loggerhead Shrike, Brewer's, Sage and Vesper Sparrows, Sage Thrasher and Western Burrowing Owl.

Mammals that could benefit are Kit Fox, Merriam's Shrew, Mule Deer, Pronghorn, Pygmy Rabbit, Sagebrush Vole, White-tailed Jackrabbit and Wyoming Ground Squirrel.

Other vertebrates are Common Sagebrush lizard, Great Basin Spadefoot and Striped Whipsnake.

Plants that could benefit are Big Sagebrush, Flatspine Stickseed, Fringed Sagebrush, Hoad's or Spiny Phlox, Hooker's Sandwort and Maiden Blue-eye Mary. ☘



PHOTO: COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE

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### Aiken Audubon Field Trips & Events

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.

### SONDERMAN PARK

**SATURDAY, MAY 11, 8 AM - NOON**

This west side park has yielded some interesting birds over the years, including a variety of warblers and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. What will be migrating along the creek this year?

Meet at the Beidleman Environmental Center, 740 W. Caramillo St., Colorado Springs, CO, 80907. Leader: Allan Burns. No reservations needed—just show up. Questions? Contact Jeannie Mitchell, (h) (719) 494-1977, (c) (719) 233-1956.

### FOUNTAIN CREEK BIRD COUNT

**SATURDAY, MAY 11, 7 - 11 AM**

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 spring migration. This event is hosted by Fountain Creek Nature Center and is listed here for your convenience. Requested \$5 donation for birdseed. Reservations required, (719) 520-6745.

### BRET GRAY RANCH

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 15, TIMES BELOW**

John Drummond has arranged this rare opportunity to bird this 50,000 acre Nature Conservancy ranch east of Colorado Springs in Lincoln County. Pronghorn, Swift fox, Mountain Plover, Burrowing Owl, and Cassin's Sparrow are among the species possible. The ranch also hosts over 200 natural playas, which are critical for migratory birds, particular waterfowl, and are home to the Plains Leopard Frog.

Plan to bring food, plenty of water, sunscreen, and wear your hiking boots. High clearance 4-wheel-drive vehicles are needed.

Meet at the Woodmen Park-n-Ride at 6:45, or the Fuel B gas station on Hwy 94 in Ellicott at 7:30 to carpool Trip lasts until afternoon. RSVP required to Jeannie Mitchell, (h) (719) 494-1977, (c) (719) 233-1956; limit 16 participants.

*More trips online!*

For the latest information on field trips and events:

[www.AikenAudubon.com](http://www.AikenAudubon.com)

### BEAR CREEK BIRD COUNT

**SATURDAY, MAY 18, 7 - 11 AM**

Birding enthusiasts of all ages and abilities are invited to participate in a citizen science project counting species and populations in Bear Creek Park. This event is hosted by Bear Creek Nature Center and is listed here for your convenience. Requested \$5 donation for birdseed. Reservations required, (719) 520-6387.

### KIOWA CREEK SANCTUARY

**SUNDAY, MAY 26 (MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND), 8 - 11 AM**

See who's migrating through the sanctuary! Trip led by Aaron Shipe. Meet at the sanctuary house. Note that there is ongoing construction on Hodgen Road. RSVP required to Jeannie Mitchell, (h) 719.494.1977, (c) 719.233.1956; limit 12 participants.

### CASTLEWOOD CANYON INSECTS

**SATURDAY, JUNE 1, 8 AM - 3 PM**



Join "Bug Eric" Eaton and learn more than you ever thought possible, as we look for insects in Castlewood Canyon State Park. Bring sunscreen, a hat, lunch, and as much water as you can comfortably carry. Wear

boots; there are rattlesnakes in the area. Close-focusing binoculars and field guides might be useful. Bring a camera if you would like.

Target species include tiger beetles, grasshoppers, butterflies, bees, and flies. This is also a great wildflower area. You are welcome to look at birds, too!

Meet at the Monument Park-n-Ride, north end. There is a state parks entry fee unless you have an annual pass. Questions? Contact Eric at (719) 447-0927 or bugeric24@yahoo.com. RSVP required to Jeannie Mitchell, (h) (719) 494-1977, (c) (719) 233-1956

### TURKEY CREEK RANCH

**MONDAY, JUNE 3, 8 - 10:30 AM**

This treed picnic area on Fort Carson property is a popular hangout for Lewis' Woodpeckers, as well as Wild Turkeys, bluebirds and other migrants. Come spend a relaxing morning (little walking is involved). This trip will be led by Mel and Jeanne Goff.

We'll meet at the parking lot just to the right of the entrance road, 10 miles south of Ft. Carson's main gate on Hwy. 115. (Exit I-25 at South Academy/exit 135, go west one mile, then south on Hwy. 115.) The entrance is on the east side of the highway directly across from the entrance to Aiken Canyon. Be sure to obey all TCR speed limits and respect all off limits area signs. TCR will be closed to the general public on that day, so please plan to stay with our group. Bring water, sunscreen, and snacks.

For more information and/or to RSVP, email Mel and Jeanne or call them at (719) 591-1155. Bad weather cancels the trip.

More Field Trips on next page

## SUMMER RAPTOR ID TRIP

**JUNE 8, 7AM - 1 PM OR 2 PM**

Head out to exercise your skills in Raptor ID by working on our summer raptors. We'll drive out to Eastern El Paso County looking for Raptors. We will spend time with scopes so everyone has a chance to practice.

Be prepared for heat; bring food and water as needed. Bring your long lenses if you have them or attempt some digiscoping with small point and shoots or your phones.

Meet at Fountain Creek Nature Center parking lot; remember to share costs with your driver. For more information and to RSVP, contact Debbie Barnes at kfoopoo at yahoo.com or (c) (303) 947-0566.

## KIOWA CREEK SANCTUARY

**SUNDAY, JUNE 9, 9:30 - 11:30 AM**

Join the Arkansas Valley Audubon Society when they visit the sanctuary. It's always fun to see who is hanging around the feeders, ponds, trees and meadows of Kiowa Creek Sanctuary; the property list is currently at 125 species and counting. If you would like, bring a sack lunch to enjoy on the porch after the walk. Restrooms and a refrigerator are available in the house.

Meet at the sanctuary house: proceed through the gate and down the loong driveway at 10165 Meridian Road in Black Forest. Note that there is ongoing construction on Hodgen Road. Trip leader is Aaron Shipe. RSVP required to Jeannie Mitchell, (h) (719) 494-1977, (c) (719) 233-1956.

## MANITOU LAKE

**SATURDAY, JUNE 15, 7:30 - NOON**

Enjoy the cooler weather at higher elevations while looking for some of the over 150 bird species that have been sighted at Manitou Lake. Bring a snack or lunch and enjoy it at the picnic tables by the water. For those interested, we'll stop at FR 339 on the way back (good parking, no fee). Perhaps we'll see breeding Vesper Sparrows! Scopes are helpful but not mandatory. Trip led by Jeff Jones.

Meet at the Red Rocks Safeway parking lot in Old Colorado City by 7:30 to carpool up the mountain. There is a \$6 fee per car at Manitou Lake unless you have an RMRC annual pass (not the same as a state parks pass).

RSVP to Jeannie Mitchell, (h) (719) 494-1977, (c) (719)233-1956.

## EMERALD VALLEY BLOOMS, BUTTERFLIES, AND BIRDS

**MONDAY, JUNE 24, 7 AM - 3:30 PM**

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 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.

## CHICO BASIN RANCH ODES

**SATURDAY, JULY 20, 8 AM**



This is our second Aiken Audubon Dragonflies and Damselflies Trip. On our first trip last summer, in spite of unrelenting heat, 23 species were tallied. Bring a snack or lunch, and plenty of water. Unlike birds, dragonflies like to be out in the midday sun—don't forget the hats and sunscreen. Trip led by Bill Maynard.

Meet at Chico Basin Ranch headquarters. There is a \$10 admission fee (\$15 if fewer than 5 people sign up). RSVP required to Jeannie Mitchell, (h) (719) 494-1977, (c) (719) 233-1956.

## BIRDING FOR BEGINNERS 202

**THURSDAY CALSSES: AUGUST 15, 29, & SEPTEMBER 12, 6:30 - 8:30 PM**

**SATURDAY FIELD TRIPS: AUGUST 17, 31, & SEPTEMBER 14, 7 - 11 AM AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS**

This series of three Thursday evening classes and three Saturday morning field trips goes beyond the basics of birding. County Naturalist Ken Pals brings years of experience and enthusiasm as he 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. Cost is \$50 for Nature Center members, \$60 for nonmembers. Reservations are required. For more information, or to save your spot, call Bear Creek Nature Center at (719) 520-6387 or email kenpals@elpasoco.com.

## BUTTERS AND HUMMERS AT BEAR CREEK

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 3, 10 - 11:30 AM**

Nectar sippers such as butterflies and hummingbirds are amazing animals dependent on the specific resources. Find out how they feed, what plants attract them, and how they live their daily and yearly lives. You'll make a cool craft too. This event is hosted by Bear Creek Nature Center and is listed here for your convenience. Fee: \$4.00/nature center member, \$5/nonmember. Reservation required, call (719) 520-6387.

## NEWS & NOTES:

### BALD EAGLE NEST STRUCTURE

Mike Smith, conservation biologist for the Colorado Parks and Wildlife, thanked the Southeast Colorado Power and its staff for their assistance in the construction of a new artificial Bald Eagle nest east of Lamar. A local pair of eagles has used the nest for the past 20 years. The nest was recently toppled by high winds. The eagles arrived at the nesting site in late January and began courtship behavior. Kudos to the power company for locating the necessary materials, equipment and help to put up a new pole, guy wires and nest platform.

### GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE: ENDANGERED SPECIES?

The Gunnison Sage-grouse may be listed as an Endangered Species by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. National Audubon has identified this grouse as one of the top ten most endangered birds. The grouse occupied portions of Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona. Today 7 small populations remain in southwestern Colorado and Utah. A final decision on the listing of the species will be made in September 2013.

### BROWNS CANYON DRAFT PROPOSAL - PUBLIC COMMENTS DUE BEFORE THE END OF MAY, 2013

Senator Mark Udall would like interested persons to share their comments on draft legislation to create the Browns Canyon National Monument. The new monument would cover 22,000 acres between Salida and Buena Vista in Chaffee County. The proposal includes 10,500 acres of new wilderness and will also protect a popular rafting destination. To read more about the proposal, public meetings and to submit a comment before the end of May 2013, go to [www.markudall.senate.gov/browns canyon/](http://www.markudall.senate.gov/browns canyon/).

### AUDUBON CONVENTION 2013

For the first time in thirteen years, National Audubon will hold a convention, July 12-15, 2013. Join them at the Shamania Lodge in Stevenson, Washington. For more information or to sign up, go to [www.audubonconvention.org](http://www.audubonconvention.org).

### THE "WATER FOOTPRINT" OF AN AMERICAN

Everyone is interested in water and our use of it. The Nature Conservancy has a "water footprint" information sheet on their website. It is interesting to look at and read the information. Go to [www.nature.org/our/initiative/habitats/riverslakes/explore/water-footprint-of-an-american](http://www.nature.org/our/initiative/habitats/riverslakes/explore/water-footprint-of-an-american).

### REUSE/RECYCLE

Jack Flobeck is the founder of Aqua Prima Center, a nonprofit think tank for water research. On Wednesday, March 20, 2013, he wrote an article in the OP/ED section of *The Gazette* titled "More water conservation through residential reuse". This article was very interesting and the webpage of Aqua Prima has a lot of information about water. Go to [www.aquaprima.org](http://www.aquaprima.org) for more information.

## THE BLUEBIRD EFFECT: A REVIEW

by Leslie Holzmann

Maybe birding results from having a "collection gene." (At least a bird collection—aka a "life list"—doesn't take up any space on a shelf, and as a bonus, it never needs dusting.) I don't just collect birds, I seem to also accumulate books. Like many birders I have a shelf full of delightful books, each chronicling the nature experiences of an author. From a Victorian lady's garden journal to the a thin volume exploring the seasons of the north woods, I can immerse myself in the great outdoors from the comfort of my favorite chair.



I have to admit, however, that many of these books work equally well as sleeping pills. Reading detailed descriptions of the weeds on someone's farm just doesn't generate the page-turning thrills of a good adventure story.

When I heard that Julie Zickefoose had published a book about birds, I was rather ho-hum about the whole deal. Another nature book? Yawn. But after the fifth person in as many days waxed eloquent about *The Bluebird Effect* and strongly encouraged me to read it, I began to think there might be more to this particular story.

I had no idea.

Who knew you could write an exciting nature book? I actually stayed up late reading chapter after chapter. What would happen to the male bluebird? You mean there's something good about starlings? Could the Rose-breasted Grosbeak nestling be nursed back to health? In a series of beautifully written stories, Zickefoose draws us in, opens our eyes, and leaves us wanting more.

Then there are her illustrations. Zickefoose is already highly regarded for her incredible sketches and watercolor paintings. She lavishes her work on this book; you're treated to a new illustration every time you turn a page. I'd recommend this book for the illustrations alone.

If you enjoy books about nature, you will absolutely love this book. Even if nature isn't your favorite genre, you will love this book. Anyone who enjoys birds, anyone who sees beauty in God's creation, anyone who appreciates fine artwork, or even a well-written phrase—this book is for you. I guarantee you'll take as much pleasure in reading it as I did. ☘



Look for the Aiken Audubon Society Facebook page!

[facebook.com/pages/Aiken-Audubon-Society](http://facebook.com/pages/Aiken-Audubon-Society)



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You do not have to be a member to participate in Aiken's activities.

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## **STILL WANTED: TREASURER!**

The Aiken Audubon Society's current treasurer, Arlene Sampson, is moving away. Would you be willing to take her place?

Can you balance a checkbook? Can you get to a Wells Fargo Bank now and then? Are you able to use Excel or Quicken? Do you have email? Can you attend five yearly board meetings? (They generally last an hour to an hour and a half, involve food, and are lots of fun.)

Being Treasurer only takes an hour most months, and approximately two hours other months.

It really isn't any more difficult than taking care of your personal finances, and most definitely is less time consuming.

Give it a thought. The board works as a team—we won't let you go through any of it alone. Come be part of the Aiken Team!

*Contact any board member for more information or to let us know you're interested in volunteering.*

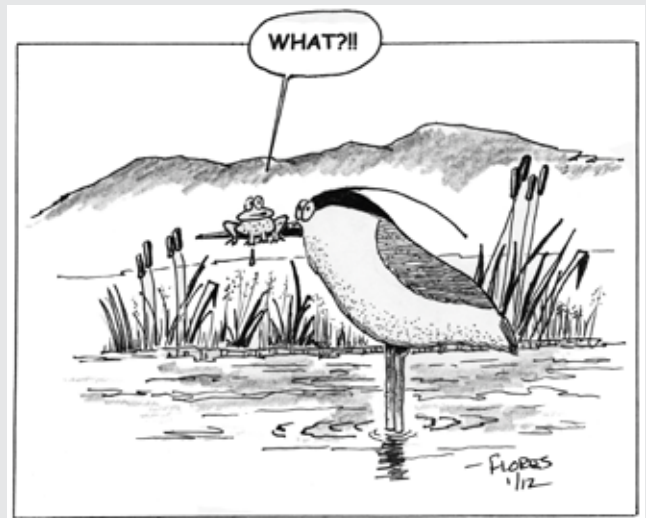


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## **SURVEY HELP WANTED**

Ann Adnet would like some birders to join her in doing bird surveys at Aiken Canyon Preserve. Available to help? Please contact her at (719) 481-3606.

### *Flores' Funnies*



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