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aikorns
AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

HOW TO TAKE BAD BIRD PHOTOS

Story and photos by Leslie Holzmann

Today I'm going to explain how to take bad bird photographs. I've had years of experience doing just that, so I consider myself an expert. After reviewing various online photo galleries, it seems that anyone can take very nice bird photos but it takes a master to create truly horrible images.



PHOTOGRAPH BIRDS WHEN THE LIGHT IS BAD.

A thick overcast steals the color from your subject, turning everything into a silhouette. In addition, the low light means that you have to use a high ISO to keep your shutter speed and depth of field at suitable levels. As a result, your photos will be "noisy"—the digital equivalent of grainy. Dark, drab, speckled photos of birds won't impress anyone.



PHOTOGRAPH THE REAR

Everyone photographs birds facing the camera. You can be different! Take your photos of birds facing away. Even better, get them flying away! The best way to photograph birds from this angle is to get nice and close to your subject. If they don't turn and leave, get even closer. Soon you will have an entire portfolio of retreating tails.

...continued on page 5

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Late summer has arrived in the Pikes Peak region.. I hope you have taken the opportunity to do some birding, either here at home or at more exotic locations.

There is much to look forward to as our new program year begins. There are the monthly meetings from September to May with speakers on varied topics and the opportunity to socialize with fellow birders, novices and experts alike. Field trips are planned to interesting locales. Watch for our 2015 Aiken Audubon calendar with this year's theme of "Marshes, Rivers and Lakes" - just in time for the upcoming gift giving season. The Christmas Bird Count with the pot-luck "after count" dinner in December is a favorite and which I am looking forward to again this year.

...continued on back page

Coming programs

SEPTEMBER 17

Volunteer Opportunities

Assorted presenters

OCTOBER 15

Bicycling & Birding through Alaska

Gloria Nikolai

NOVEMBER 19

Luxury & Lifers: Birding & Cruising Can Coexist!

Mel Goff

DECEMBER 20

No program. See you at the **Christmas Bird Count!**

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 November/December 2014 issue of *Aikorns* is Wednesday, October 15.

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

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SEPTEMBER 17 / ASSORTED PRESENTERS VOLUNTEERING IS FOR THE BIRDS

AS BIRDERS, WE'RE INTERESTED IN DOING ALL WE CAN TO ENSURE THAT BIRDS THRIVE. Many organizations in our area use volunteers to accomplish their goals of conservation and education. For our first meeting of the season, we are offering a variety of ways that you can participate in activities ranging from stuffing envelopes to tracking wildlife.

Speakers include Donna Ralph from Ellicott Wildlife Rehab Center; Jena Sanchez from Colorado Department of Parks and Wildlife (she's the SE Region Volunteer Coordinator); Ashley Armborgo, the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo Volunteer Coordinator; Paula Megorden, Interpretive Volunteer Consultant with the Friends of El Paso County Nature Centers; and more. We're looking forward to welcoming everyone back after a beautiful, fire-free summer!

OCTOBER 15 / GLORIA NIKOLAI BICYCLING & BIRDING THROUGH ALASKA



GLORIA NIKOLAI SPENT ONE MONTH OF THE summer of 2013 exploring Alaska and the Yukon Territory with one of her sons, Ben. Both avid cyclists and enthralled with the natural world, they decided to combine Gloria's passion of birding with their joint exploration of new territory.

They started the trip in Seattle, Washington and ended the journey in Anchorage, Alaska. Confronted with a late winter and numerous "adjustments" to the carefully planned schedule due to missing or closed services, they

bicycled over 1000 miles with fully loaded bicycles on their self-supported trip. Come and hear Gloria share their challenges and joys from bicycling and birding in Alaska and the Yukon Territory.

Aiken Audubon programs are free and open to the public. They are held at the Colorado Parks and 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.

"NATURE'S INSPIRATIONS" ART SHOW & SALE

THE FRIENDS OF EL PASO COUNTY NATURE CENTERS IS HOSTING ITS SEVENTH ART SHOW and sale Friday, October 17, from 9 am to 7 pm and Saturday, October 18, from 9 am to 4 pm at Bear Creek Nature Center. The theme is "Nature's Inspirations." A percentage of each sale helps support exhibits and programming at your nature centers. Several Aiken members are among the artists.

Here is an opportunity to do your holiday buying in October. Enjoy shopping in a relaxing natural setting away from the chaos of the shopping malls. Best of all, you are supporting two important community assets, Bear Creek and Fountain Creek Nature Centers. ☘

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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. Remember 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.

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 and notices of last-minute cancellations, send your name and e-mail address to AikenAudubon@gmail.com.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 7 AM - 2 PM CHICO BASIN RANCH

We're excited to have John Drummond leading this fall migration trip to Chico. In addition to migrants, other Chico specialties include thrashers, quail, towhees, waterfowl, raptors, woodpeckers, shrikes, and more. You just know the birding is going to be outstanding! As an added bonus, the RMBO banding station will be open. Scopes are very helpful for viewing the ponds. Bring a two-way radio if you have one.

To carpool, meet at the Woodmen & I-25 Park-n-ride at 6:45 am sharp, or join the group at the Hanover fire station on Peyton Hwy. at 7:30. The trip ends after lunch. Bring a snack or lunch to be eaten while birding.

Trip is limited to 16 participants and will fill up quickly. There is a \$10 fee to bird the ranch (\$15 if you're with a group of fewer than five people.) RSVP required to John Drummond, jxdrummo@aol.com.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 7 - 10:30 AM FOUNTAIN CREEK FALL 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 fall migration. Sponsored by Fountain Creek Nature Center, \$5 fee (for birdseed), reservations required, 520-6745.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15, TIMES BELOW BRETT GRAY RANCH

Once again Aiken has received permission 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. There are no trails and no facilities, so expect to be tromping through grass, climbing through the scrub, and otherwise roughing it a bit. The ranch is accessed by dirt roads; higher clearance vehicles are recommended.

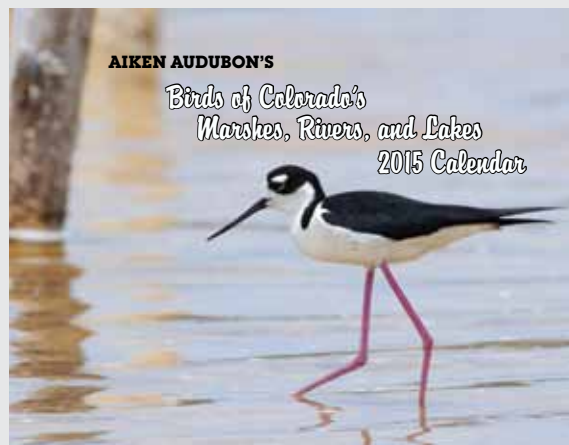
Meet at the Woodmen Park-n-Ride at 6:45, or the Fuel B gas station on Hwy 94 in Ellicott at 7:30 to carpool. Trip lasts until afternoon. Limit 12 participants, and the trip will fill quickly. Sign up with Mel Goff, MelGoff@Comcast.net.

On sale September 17th...

AIKEN'S 2015 CALENDAR!

FEATURING:

- /// *Birds of Colorado's marshes, rivers, and lakes*
- /// *Aiken photographers*
- /// *Aiken-related reminders*
- /// *Professionally printed and ready to hang*
- /// *Proceeds benefit the birds!*



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

BEAR CREEK AND FOUNTAIN CREEK NATURE CENTERS

An Environmental Education Program Leader Training Class will be held Tuesdays, September 9 and 16, and Wednesdays, September 10, and 17 from 1 to 5 pm at Bear Creek and Fountain Creek Nature Centers.

Enjoy the look of excitement and innocence in children's faces as you help them experience the fascinating outdoor world. Learn all about being an environmental education program leader at El Paso County's Bear Creek and Fountain Creek Nature Centers during these four training sessions. You can make a difference in the lives of school children who visit the nature centers.

Contact Jamie Bequette at Bear Creek Nature Center, 520-6387, or e-mail: jamiebequette@elpasoco.com by September 5, 2014. ☼

More trips online!

For the latest information on field trips and events:

www.AikenAudubon.com

BIRD RETURNS

RENTING HABITAT, RATHER THAN BUYING IT

by Jackie Heyda

I IN THE FALL, THOUSANDS OF SHOREBIRDS MIGRATE through the Sacramento Valley from the Arctic. Shorebirds include dunlins, dowitchers and least sandpipers. This is the heart of the Pacific Flyway.

The Sacramento Valley, in the northern half of California's Central Valley, used to have about 4 million acres of wetland habitat. Many of these wetlands have been changed to farming and other uses. About 250,000 acres of wetlands remain.

The Nature Conservancy is testing a new program called Bird Returns. This program pays farmers to leave water in their fields for a few extra weeks at critical times during the birds' winter and spring stopovers in the valley—effectively creating “pop-up,” on-demand wetlands. The Conservancy realized that purchasing many of these properties would be extremely expensive and ensuring that there was a reliable water source wouldn't be practical.

In 2012, The Conservancy began working with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology using eBird. This program has more than 150 million sightings by birders around the world. Cornell used that data to build migration models for the Pacific Flyway. The Point Blue Conservation Science scientists were trying to predict water availability to do shorebird consensus. The Conservancy used the two sets of data to boost the wetland acres from a quarter million acres to a million acres.

To access more information about this exciting program, go to magazine.nature.org. This article “On the Wing” is in the August/September 2014 issue of Nature Conservancy.

To read about how citizen scientists are helping migratory birds, go to their website: nature.org/ebird. ☞

DEMAND FOR ELLICOTT WILDLIFE REHAB CENTER GROWING

ELLICOTT, JULY 27, 2014—Wild B.I.R.D. has announced it will be closing its doors permanently on September 1, 2014. Since opening in 2000, they have accepted approximately 3,000 sick, injured, and orphaned wild birds into their facility annually.

Ellicott Wildlife Rehabilitation Center (EWRC) has accepted overflow wild bird and wild mammals from Denver since opening in 2001, but doesn't have the financial or people resources necessary to accept an additional 1000 to 3000 birds from Denver each year without major financial support for staffing (EWRC currently has no paid staff) and animal care expenses (food, medical,

housing) for that number of birds and mammals. Significant Denver intake without this help would force EWRC to shut our doors permanently as well.

We are hoping to rise to the challenge of caring for Colorado's native and migratory birds, including species of concern. We can do this only with support from our local and State community.

EWRC is an all-volunteer nonprofit 501(c)3 organization whose mission is to provide compassionate care to sick, injured, and orphaned wild birds and small mammals for the purposes of release and education. We rely on donations to provide services.

Ellicott Wildlife Rehabilitation Center is located in Ellicott, Colorado, and provides services throughout the state of Colorado, with the majority of programs located in El Paso County. Principal programs include wildlife rescue and rehabilitation, community education and outreach, internship, volunteerism, and sponsorship of qualified licensed wildlife rehabilitators. ☞

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

LAST SPRING, AIKORNS RAN AN article titled "Reclamation, fracking, and Colorado's growing energy sector," by Jackie Heyda. We received an informative reply from Cyndy Kulp, which we've excerpted here. Unfortunately, we don't have space here to include her entire letter, but you can view it online at <https://aikenaudubon.files.wordpress.com/2012/07/dear-editor.pdf>. Please take the time to read the rest of what Cyndy had to say.

Dear Editor,

I wanted to respond to Jackie Heyda's recent newsletter column about reclamation of drilling areas in Colo. and conservation of the land. ...

I must point out that this supplement is not a section of the Sunday paper, although it is deceptively designed to look like one. It is in fact advertising paid 100% by the gas and oil industry, under the guise of a new group they've formed called Coloradans for Responsible Energy Development. All of the articles in it are written by industry insiders and 100% favorable to the industry!

... In fact the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Sierra Club initiated a petition drive against the Denver Post for the deceptive nature of the supplement, pointing out that it is near impossible for the paper to report accurately on the subject of gas and oil development if they are receiving this type of advertising revenue from the operators themselves.

...

Where can a person find accurate information? I would suggest looking to the wildlife groups that we support, including the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society. While you may have to do your own research to get the facts, at least you know they are coming from a credible organization that shares your same values for conservation and preservation of bird habitat.

Sincerely,

Cyndy Kulp

Aiken Audubon Member



BYE BYE BIRDIE

Compose your shot so that the bird is flying out of the picture, rather than into it (right, above). Leave a lot of space behind the tail so you can imagine where the bird has been.



(OUT OF) FOCUS

Focus on the beak, or wings, or any part of the bird except the eye. This is particularly effective with big birds or in low light (where you have a wide-open aperture with minimum depth of field). Even better, focus on the object behind the bird, guaranteeing a blurry subject (as illustrated).



LOOKING UP

Take your shot from under the bird, looking straight up. We all need more practice identifying birds from underneath, since that's often the angle we see them from.



BURY THE BIRD

Make sure the bird you are photographing is buried in a tangle of twigs and leaves, hopefully obscuring all field marks. You don't usually get a clear view in the field, so why should your photo be any different?



WHAT IS THAT?

Take your photo from far away. You won't have to consider such annoying details as shutter speed, depth of field, or ISO. No one will question your ID, since they can barely see the bird. Just think of all the money you'll save, not having to buy an expensive telephoto lens. As a bonus, you don't have to worry about all the above points, since the bird is just a speck in your picture.



A VERY BAD PHOTO

In this shot, you can see how I have combined various elements into one photo. The bird is facing away, it's buried in the foliage, and I've even included a bright, distracting object.

I'm sure you can think of more helpful tips. With some practice, you too can excel at making bad bird photos! ☘

FOUNTAIN CREEK NATURE CENTER EXPANSION

A IKEN AUDUBON provided financial support to the Fountain Creek Nature Center expansion project. The ribbon cutting and celebration was held on May 17th with several Aiken board members in attendance.



The expansion project added 2,500 square feet of space to the building with updated and new educational exhibits as well as a new deck overlooking the ponds.

Our donation helped fund the creation of the birding exhibits – one which showcases the “Bird Beak” game teaching visitors how the shape of a bird's bill determines a bird's diet and the second which includes binoculars and bird identification guides.



In addition, a number of the photos throughout the new exhibit space were provided by several of our talented Aiken Audubon members.

It is hoped that everyone takes the chance to see the amazing transformation of this local treasure. ☘





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

President's Message, continued from front page

Of course, all these things would not be possible without the hard work and support of my fellow members of the Aiken Audubon Board. Without them nothing would be done and I would like to thank each and every one of them for their hard work and dedication to this local and active chapter. Thanks dear friends – it couldn't be done without you!

With happy birding thoughts,
Christine A. Bucher,
Aiken Audubon President



Look for the
Aiken Audubon Society
Facebook page!
facebook.com/pages/Aiken-Audubon-Society

SAVE THE DATE!
COMING MAY 8 - MAY 10, 2015:
THE INAUGURAL PIKES PEAK BIRDING
AND NATURE FESTIVAL.

Details will follow as they become available.

Flores' Funnies



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