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aikorns
AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

DRAMA AT THE BIRD FEEDER

Story and photos by Tanja Britton

THE BIRD FEEDERS IN MY back yard in the south part of Colorado Springs are usually sites of peaceful avian gatherings. Sure, there are brief squabbles over who gets to eat first, but somehow the individual birds figure it out without too much ado.

In the winter, House Finches, Mountain Chickadees and White-Breasted Nuthatches visit regularly and get along well. The latter two usually don't remain at the feeder any longer than it takes to alight and fill their beaks, before they take off to the nearest tree where they enjoy their morsels. The finches tend to congregate for up to several minutes and as many as a dozen perch on the tube feeder filled with mixed seeds.

Hairy Woodpeckers are not shy either, and take their time at the suet-filled holes of a hanging wooden log feeder. They will make room for the Northern Flickers when they approach, the males flashing bright red cheek stripes and wing feathers before clinging with their nearly foot-long bodies to the log's entire length, often upside-down.

Occasionally one or two pairs of American Goldfinches visit our thistle feeder and I enjoy their sweet, cheerful vocalizations, but they have not been as numerous as in previous years. A few Scrub, Steller's or Blue Jays appear sporadically, announcing their presence with bravado and raucous calls, chasing the other birds away.

Mourning Doves have no compunction about squatting and eating inside the feed tray, effectively blocking access for other birds. When not

feeding, they intently watch the goings-on from the closest power line whence I perceive their soft, plaintive voices.



With spring, the American Robins arrive. They wait for me to refill the feeders each morning and as I walk back to the house, they land on the seed tray, not minding me a bit. Before sunrise and after sunset, their melodious songs fill the air, rendering my favorite season more enchanting.



On a recent April morning, the usually tranquil atmosphere in the yard was disrupted. I

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

INSPIRATION TO WRITE

Sometimes these "President's Letters" are hard to write, and I drag my feet because I'm not sure what to say (which, of course, drives Leslie, our newsletter editor, crazy because then she has to gently remind me to send it to her—my apologies Leslie!). At other times, I'm inspired to share a message. This letter is a combination of the two.

I wasn't sure what to say for this newsletter, but then I had the privilege of attending the Palmer Land Trust Southern Conservation Awards Dinner. This event honors individuals and organizations that have put extraordinary efforts into conservation in southern Colorado. For instance, one

...continued on back page

Coming programs

NOVEMBER 12 (2ND WEDNESDAY!)

Luxury and Lifers

Mel Goff

DECEMBER 20

Christmas Bird Count

JANUARY 21

Raptor ID

Debbie Barnes-Shankster

FEBRUARY 18

Program/Speaker To Be Announced

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 January/February 2015 issue of *Aikorns* is Wednesday, December 17.

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

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NOVEMBER 12 / MEL GOFF LUXURY & LIFERS

HAVE YOU EVER WANTED TO RETURN FROM a hard day of garnering a few dozen life birds to a gourmet dinner and a Vegas style production show? In his presentation "Lifers in Luxury: Birding and Cruising Can Coexist", Mel Goff will tell tales and provide you with tips on how to make the most of two seemingly incompatible activities—birding in exotic locations and cruising aboard the beautiful ships that sail to these destinations around the world. Yes, luxury and birding can co-exist!

Note that this program will be held on the *second Wednesday* of the month!

PHOTO: MEL GOFF



Southern Lapwing, Panama



DECEMBER 20 / YOU! AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

PLEASE JOIN US FOR THIS YEAR'S COLORADO Springs Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, December 20! Everyone is welcome to participate. Plan to spend at least the entire morning finding birds, though times will vary. Feeder watchers are also encouraged to sign up and participate. After the count, we'll gather at Bear Creek Nature Center at 5 p.m. for a potluck dinner, species count compilation, and sharing of the day's adventures. For more information or to sign up, please contact Tyler Stuart at (719) 661-9308 or tylerhstuart@gmail.com.

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.

Drama, continued from front page

watched several birds disperse hurriedly in multiple directions, but I could not account for their sudden flight. Minutes later, when I sat down at my desk, I detected the reason. In the corner of the yard I glimpsed a collection of feathers in the grass, and in the center of this newly generated nest, a Sharp-Shinned Hawk, tearing pieces of flesh from a dove's carcass. It didn't see me, so I was able to watch it devour its prey. After about thirty minutes it took off with the remainder of the dove's body to a place unknown to me. I reflected on the meek dove's shortened life, the downy plumes in the grass all that remained of it.

Several days thereafter I watched possibly the same hawk dive into a gathering of birds at the feeder again, but on that particular occasion, its intended meal got away. It was a close call. Observing this dramatic scene, I held my breath while my heart skipped a beat.

Bearing witness to nature's workings reminds me of its apparent contradictions: the indescribable beauty and peacefulness on one hand, harshness and constant struggle to survive on the other. At times I have trouble reconciling the order of things, all the while feeling fortunate to be part of this incredible experience. ☘

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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.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 8 AM - 3 PM EASTERN EL PASO COUNTY RAPTOR HUNT

Head east with raptor expert Debbie Barnes-Shankster to look for birds of prey. Are the Rough-legged Hawks back yet? Bring lunch, water and snacks. Scopes are also helpful. Meet at the Ruth Holley Library (685 North Murray Blvd., Colorado Springs) to carpool.

For more information and to RSVP, contact trip leader Debbie Barnes-Shankster at (303) 947-0566 or kfoopooh@yahoo.com.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 8 AM PUEBLO BIRDING

We'll plan on scoping Pueblo Reservoir, and also visit Rock Canyon area and Pueblo City Park. Bring lunch, as we'll plan on birding into the afternoon. State Parks Pass (daily pass or yearly pass) required on all vehicles. Meet at the parking lot at the end of West Fishing Road at Pueblo Reservoir.

Contact trip leader Brandon Percival, bkpercival@yahoo.com, if you have any questions.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20, TIMES VARY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Please join us for this year's Colorado Springs Christmas Bird Count! (See details on page 2.)

MONDAY, DECEMBER 29, 8 AM - 3 PM ELEVEN MILE CANYON

Bundle up in your warmest winter gear and venture out for photography and birds. Targets include American Dippers and both eagle species. While this trip is geared toward photographers, with time for lots of picture-taking, non-photographers are welcome. We will not be hiking very far from the vehicles. Photographers bring tripods and long lenses; digiscopers are welcome.

Meet at Red Rocks Safeway. In addition to gas costs, there is a \$5 per car fee to enter Eleven Mile Canyon.

For more information and to RSVP, contact trip leader Debbie Barnes-Shankster at (303) 947-0566 or kfoopooh@yahoo.com.

More trips online!

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

SATURDAY, JANUARY 10, TIME TBA FOUNTAIN CREEK WINTER 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.

Sponsored by Fountain Creek Nature Center, \$5 fee (for birdseed), reservations required, 520-6745.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 24, 8 AM - 3 PM RAPTOR ID

Attend Debbie's Raptor ID program, then put your new skills to work in the field. Bring lunch, water and snacks. Scopes helpful. Meet at Ruth Holley Library (685 North Murray Blvd., Colorado Springs).

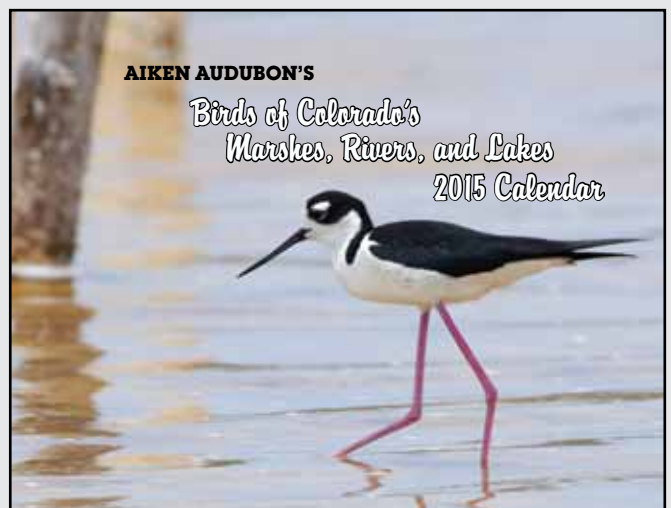
For more information and to RSVP, contact trip leader Debbie Barnes-Shankster at (303) 947-0566 or kfoopooh@yahoo.com.

On sale now...

AIKEN'S 2015 CALENDAR!

FEATURING:

- For Birds of Colorado's marshes, rivers, and lakes
- For Aiken photographers
- For Aiken-related reminders
- For Professionally printed and ready to hang
- For Proceeds support Aiken's programs!



WATER IN THE WEST

by Jackie Heyda

THE COLORADO RIVER BASIN COVERS WYOMING, Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, Nevada, Arizona and California. Cities within these states, including Denver, depend on this water. A new study has found that the basin has lost about 65 cubic kilometers of fresh water over the last nine years. About two-thirds of this water has come from underground water supplies rather than surface water. A variety of organizations have initiatives addressing this issue.

NATIONAL AUDUBON

National Audubon has started the “Western Rivers Initiative” highlighting the challenge to create healthier western rivers for people, birds and wildlife. This new program “will advocate for sensible water policies and management that benefit communities, birds and wildlife alike.”

For more information on Audubon's Western Rivers Action Network, go to rockies.audubon.org/audubons-western-rivers-initiative.

AUDUBON ROCKIES

Audubon in Colorado has started a program, the Audubon Colorado Water Task Force, headed by Jen Bolton. Bolton has experience working with the state legislature, as well as with water/river issues in other parts of the state. Contacts for more information are:

- Neri Holguin, Audubon's Western Rivers Campaign Coordinator for CO/NM: neriholguin@gmail.com
- Daly Edmunds, Audubon's Regional Policy Coordinator for CO/WY: dedmunds@audubon.org
- Sean Saville, Audubon's National Field Director: ssaville@audubon.org.

NATURE CONSERVANCY

The Nature Conservancy has information about the Colorado River on their website. Learn where the water comes from, and discover easy-to-implement water saving tips to support the river.

For more information, go to www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/areas/coloradoriver/index.htm?src=e.nature&lu=222277

CONSERVATION COLORADO

Conservation Colorado discusses water issues on their website: conservationco.org.

COLORADO STATE LEADERS

According to an article by Allen Best, Colorado leaders have announced a new water conservation program, with discussion on electricity and water prices for corn farmers, ski area operators and cities along the Front Range, along with the relationship “between energy production and water during time of drought.”

Allen Best frequently writes for *The Denver Post* about water and energy. This article appeared in the Sunday, August 10 Perspective section. He also publishes an online news magazine, found at mountaintownnews.net.

SUSTAINING COLORADO WATERSHED

The 9th annual Sustaining Colorado Watershed Conference “Come Hell or High Water” was held in Avon, Colorado from October 7 – 9. It was hosted by the Colorado Watershed Assembly, the Colorado Foundation for Water Education and the Colorado Riparian Association.

Contact information: coloradowater.org/Conference

PROTECTING CHATFIELD STATE PARK

THE AUDUBON SOCIETY OF GREATER Denver has filed a complaint against the US Army Corps of Engineers to protect Chatfield State Park. The project would add 2.8 million gallons of water a year. These water supplies will flood ten percent of the state park. Mike King, Colorado natural resources director, estimates that the state's population will grow by 2050 and that extra water will be needed for this growth.

Polly Reetz, Conservation Chairman of the Denver Audubon, said that Colorado will lose cottonwood forests and wetlands with this new project, proposed by the US Army Corps of Engineers. The park would lose 587 acres of wildlife habitat and recreational land. The Corps has estimated that the reservoir would only fill two or three years out of ten. She also thinks that the Corps of Engineers needs to take another look at alternatives that they previously dismissed.

Denver Audubon proposed alternatives, such as increased water conservation, storing water underground, and use of gravel pits like the ones at C-470.

The Denver Post had an article about the Chatfield Reservoir water supply project in the Friday, October 10 issue. The article describes the amount of water to be added to the Front Range Supply. The article also mentions that the Audubon Society opponents have filed a lawsuit in federal court trying to block construction.

To read more details about this project, go to www.savechatfield.org

For more information on National Audubon issues and actions, go to the Audubon Action Center, audubonaction@audubon.org.

GOT BIRDS? TELL FEEDERWATCH!

DON'T LET WHAT HAPPENS AT THE FEEDER STAY AT THE FEEDER

Ithaca, N.Y.—Chickadees, Bushtits, Northern Cardinals, and other feeder birds carry an important message about the health of bird populations and our environment. In order to decode that message, people just need to count their birds and report what they see to Project FeederWatch. The 28th season of this Cornell Lab of Ornithology citizen-science project is about to begin. The door is open for new participants and more observations.

FeederWatch begins November 8, 2014, and continues through April 3, 2015. New and returning participants are urged to sign up now at www.FeederWatch.org to enjoy the full season. The project is easy to do and makes a great family activity.

“We learn so much from the information people report to us, and the data become more and more valuable as time goes by,” says project leader Emma Greig. “This is how we learned that Bushtits are increasing in the western part of the country and that more Yellow-rumped Warblers are appearing in the East”

To learn more about joining Project FeederWatch in the U.S. and to sign up, visit www.FeederWatch.org or call the Cornell Lab toll-free at (866) 989-2473. In return for the \$18 fee (\$15 for Cornell Lab members), participants receive the FeederWatcher Handbook and Instructions with tips on how to successfully attract birds to your feeders, an identification poster of the most common feeder birds, and a calendar. Participants also receive Winter Bird Highlights, an annual summary of FeederWatch findings, as well as the Cornell Lab's printed newsletter, All About Birds News.

Project FeederWatch is a joint research and education project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Bird Studies Canada. ☞

A CHECKLIST OF BIRDERS

by Leslie Holzmann

JUST AS THERE ARE DIFFERENT KINDS OF BIRDS, THERE are different kinds of birders. What kind of birder are you? I'm sure that as you read through my list, you'll be able to identify with one or these—or add another “species” that I haven't thought of. And if you think I had you in mind when I made my list, well, maybe I did!

THE MERLIN

Like a raptor on the hunt, this birder makes a beeline for where the action is. They expend a tremendous amount of energy while birding, but they're always on the bird. They aren't easily distracted. If someone points out a bird, they're first on the scene, and all over it.

THE BUSH TIT



This social birder enjoys being part of the flock, moving through the brush, searching high and low for an LBJ skulking in the underbrush, and chatting as they go. The more eyes looking, the more birds on the trip list, so hanging out with a flock of Bush Tits can be quite productive.

THE RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD

If the Bush Tits travel together, this birder prefers to fly solo. If the group takes the right fork in the trail, this birder will take the left fork. Not surprisingly, at the end of the day everyone will be wondering what happened to the missing loner. Then they'll turn up with a trip list that has little in common with the “official” sightings. Of course, they'll have seen the “good birds” that everyone else missed.



THE CANADA GOOSE

It seems that every group of birders has one individual who has a naturally loud voice. Everyone else can be talking softly, or in whispers, when suddenly the silence is broken by the



goose exclaiming, “WHAT'S THAT BIRD OVER THERE BY THE TREE?” You mean that bird that just flew away?

THE MOTHER HEN



One of the birders most appreciated on a trip is the one (and it's usually a “she”) who packed all the home-baked goodies, which they then share with everyone else. The night before an early departure, when we've just finished dinner and are feeling content, we tend to pack healthy, practical food: trail mix, perhaps, and a piece of fruit. Maybe a wedge of cheese and some whole grain crackers, all natural peanut butter, or a turkey roll-up. But once we're out on the trail, we find that we've worked up an appetite and we inhale our lunch in two bites. How grateful we are then for those gooey brownies or pumpkin cupcakes!

THE DOVES



For a single birder, one of the best places to meet a compatible companion is on a birding trip. When things begin to click, the rest of the group suddenly realizes that we have an “item” among us. Just as Mourning Doves pair off and stick together, so do these two love birds. No one minds, of course. In fact, they just make the rest of the group smile and remember their own special someones.

This is an incomplete list, but it's enough to get you started. What other kinds of birders do you go birding with? ☞



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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

individual was honored for her work in preserving the area around the Rio Grande River headwaters, while a couple was recognized for the preservation of short-grass prairie on a 62,000 acre ranch between Fort Carson and Pueblo.

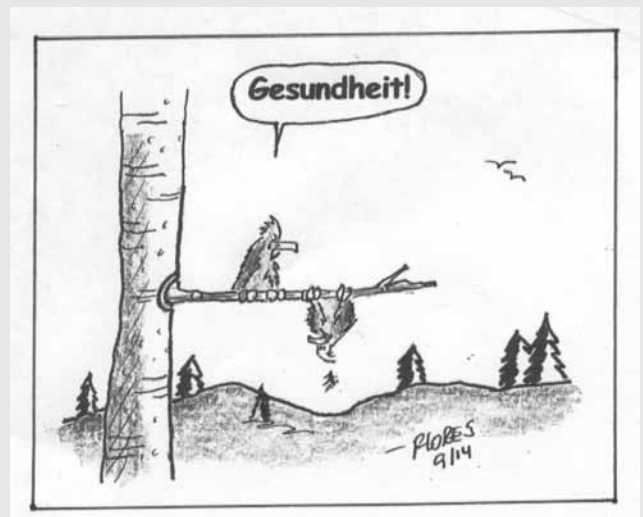
Amidst the “doom and gloom” associated with various conservation efforts, and controversy such as the recent report from National Audubon regarding climate change and birds or the Chatfield Reservoir changes, it is heartening to hear such uplifting stories.

We can all do our part— individually, as a family, as a group—to make changes in our lifestyles and to educate others, so we can preserve not only our landscapes that we love but also the birds we watch. I encourage you to make one small change that could impact on a larger scale.

Christine A. Bucher,
Aiken Audubon President

Editor's note: The Audubon website lists ten things you can do to help birds. See www.audubonmagazine.org/articles/living/10-things-you-can-do-birds for some excellent suggestions.

Flores' Funnies



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



Look for the
Aiken Audubon Society
Facebook page!

facebook.com/pages/Aiken-Audubon-Society