



aikorns
AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

CICONIA CICONIA

By Tanja Britton

The dark point circling in the sky assumes shape, size, and color with decreasing distance, and soon I recognize a large white bird with long red legs and bill. Its head points straight forward, its white wings beat measuredly up and down, and its black trailing feathers glimmer in the sun.



PHOTO: CARLOS DELGADO, WIKICOMMONS

birds ignore me. After five minutes the adult takes off again and the young ones are left to their own devices. Until the next visitation by mother or father, who are not easily distinguished at first glance (the males tend to have thicker and longer bills), they fill their time inside the nest by sitting, pacing or flapping their wings in preparation for the day in the not too distant future when they will fledge. As they observe their environs, a cock crowing nearby captures their attention. Their heads turn in synchrony toward that sound, rendering the black beaks of the immature birds very obvious, in contrast to the adults' bright red ones.

I know of this White Stork nest in the southern portion of Hessa, in West-central Germany, from a previous visit. In June, 2015 I reach it again by ferrying across the Rhine River from my

I am not the only one who anticipates its return, for before me, inside a stick nest on top of a tall pole, two nestlings flap their wings impatiently. Once the adult alights and regurgitates food from its gullet, the offspring commence to devour it hungrily, while the regal elder surveys the surroundings. Luckily, at a distance of 30 yards, I pose no threat, for all three



PHOTO: TANJA BRITTON

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

MUTED COLORS

Unlike back east, where the bright red of the cardinal glows during the winter months, we in Colorado enjoy birds with more muted colors. The bouncing Black-capped Chickadee. The comical Pygmy Nuthatch. The cautious Northern Flicker with a few flashes of red. The whole family of Juncoes which visit during the winter. Yet there is much beauty in these muted colors as well as a contemplative silence.

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Coming programs

NOVEMBER 11 (2ND WEDNESDAY)

The 10 Coolest Birds in Colorado

Ted Floyd

DECEMBER 19

Aiken Audubon Christmas Bird Count

JANUARY 20

Raptor ID

Debbie Barnes-Shankster

FEBRUARY 17

Flammulated Owls Update

Brian Linkhart

Newsletter articles

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

The deadline for the January/February 2016 issue of the *Aikorns* is Wednesday, December 16.

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

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NOVEMBER 11 / TED FLOYD THE 10 COOLEST BIRDS IN COLORADO

Everybody loves Top 10 lists. How about a list of the 10 Coolest Birds in Colorado? And what is it that makes cool birds so cool? Ted Floyd, editor of *Birding* magazine, will reveal Colorado's 10 coolest birds. He'll also tell us how and where to find them, and, best of all, how to understand and appreciate them.

As mentioned above, Ted Floyd is the editor of *Birding*, the flagship publication of the American Birding Association. He has published extensively on birds and ecological topics. Ted received a B.A. in Ecology & Evolutionary Biology from Princeton University in 1990 and a Ph.D. in Ecology from Penn State University in 1995. He is currently an instructor with the American Birding Association's Institute for Field Ornithology program, and he has taught college-level courses in ecology, evolution, entomology, statistics, conservation biology, and other topics. Ted is a frequent speaker at birding festivals and ornithological meetings, and he has led birding trips and workshops throughout North America.



DECEMBER 19 / YOU! AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Please join us for this year's Colorado Springs Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, December 19, 2015! 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. We will gather for a potluck dinner, species compilation, and sharing of the day's adventures at Bear Creek Nature Center from 5-7 pm on count day. For more information or to sign up, please contact Tyler Stuart by phone, (719) 661-9308, or email tylerhstuart@gmail.com.

The Christmas Bird Count is a long-standing program of the National Audubon Society, with over 100 years of citizen science involvement. It is an early-winter bird census, where thousands of volunteers across the US, Canada and many countries in the Western Hemisphere count birds in their region over a 24-hour period during the two week Christmas Bird Count event.

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.

President's Message, continued from front page

Birding during the winter can be a challenge, but every year I look forward to the Christmas Bird Count. I enjoy the chance to see our local birds in their quiet colors while sometimes seeing a flash of color. The surprise of the green head of the Mallard in sunshine brings joy. I hope all of you will consider helping with the bird count this year. It is a great time for fellowship and sharing

of birding stories, while helping to record local bird populations.

Tyler Stuart is our CBC leader again this year so contact him to participate.

Enjoy the quiet colors of winter!

Christine A. Bucher,
Aiken Audubon President

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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.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19, TIMES VARY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Don't miss out on the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count! See the article on page 2 for more information on this citizen science opportunity.

More trips online!

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

FAR-FLYING SHRIKES

Susan Craig

As you may know, I'm a Loggerhead Shrike bander. I've been plugging away at this volunteer 'job' for almost 40 years. On Saturday I got a most excellent notice of a band recovery from the Bird Banding Lab in Laurel, MD, the organization that keeps track of this activity nation-wide.

A shrike that I had trapped and banded in 2013 east of Hanover had been killed during their hunting season in Pineda, Guerrero State, Mexico, on October 15, 2015. That bird was hatched in 2012. The distance from here to Pineda is close to 1800 miles as the crow flies, but likely closer to 2000 miles as the shrike flies. This may turn out to be the longest band recovery in my career.

Shrikes (and many birds) are faithful to their territories at both ends of the migratory route, so if this bird was as faithful as all the rest of his people, this could mean that he traveled perhaps 4000 miles every year going to and from El Paso County (where he may have hatched) and Guerrero State in Mexico. ☞



JEANNIE MITCHELL

NEW: AUDUBON FIELD GUIDE APP

The National Audubon Society has released an updated Audubon Birds Pro mobile app available via iTunes, Google Play and Amazon at no cost. The app includes an 821-species checklist from the American Ornithologists Union (AOU) and is the first time a complete field guide to North American birds is available for free mobile download.

With the Audubon Bird Guide, one can:

- Identify 821 species with in-depth descriptions including information on appearance, habitat, behavior and more.
- Explore a gallery of more than 3,200 images from the world-renown VIREO, Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University's world-wide collection of bird photography.
- Listen to up to eight hours of bird calls, differentiated by region and season.
- Access robust seasonal and migratory range maps. Browse species in a gallery view and filter by shape, region and color, aiding quick identification.
- Use "Find Birds with eBird" to locate birds seen recently in the vicinity, drawing on the continuously updated database from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and eBird.
- Post, keep lists and share sightings with friends and followers with Audubon NatureShare's easy and user-friendly interface.

To learn more about how to use this complete and free bird guide, please visit www.audubon.org/apps.



CAMILLA CEREJA/AUDUBON

HERE'S A WINTER VACATION IDEA...

NEW NATIONAL PARK IS FOR THE BIRDS

A new national park in the Bahamas will help ensure the survival of several at-risk shorebird species, including Piping Plovers and Red Knots. The new 113,920-acre Joulter Cays National Park protects a group of uninhabited islands and intertidal sand flats, as well as a portion of the Andros Barrier Reef, second largest in the Western Hemisphere. Habitats include intact healthy reefs and deeper waters important for fisheries productivity, extensive banks of oolitic sand, seagrass meadows, mangroves and tidal creeks provide nursery areas and feeding grounds for sharks, conch, sea cucumbers, spiny lobsters and marine turtles.

CITY OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT PLANS TO BE UPDATED:

HOW ARE BIRDS AFFECTED?

by *Linda Hodges*

The process has just begun for the City of Colorado Springs to update a few of its open space management plans. Included in the overhaul are Bluestem Prairie (Big Johnson), Sinton Pond, Stratton and University Park Open Spaces.

Aiken Audubon will want to insure that practices currently in play are continued, such as preservation of native habitat/native prairie, buffers from raptor nests and minimal chemical usage. This also presents an opportunity to include provisions that weren't provided for previously. For instance, Burrowing Owls hadn't been spotted at Bluestem Prairie when the last (also the original) management plan was introduced. How should the area be managed to best support that population? Are Prairie Dogs a help or a hindrance to bird populations?

The first public planning session for Stratton Open Space was held on Oct 10th. Future sessions will be held on November 20 and January 12—both at 6 p.m. at Cheyenne Mountain Junior High, 1200 West Cheyenne Road, Colorado Springs 80906. Alerts will be given for other open space meetings once they are announced.

If you have any thoughts or concerns that you'd like to see addressed, please contact Linda Hodges at (719) 635-5551, or at hikerhodges@gmail.com.

FEDERAL JUDGE REMOVES LESSER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN FROM ENDANGERED SPECIES LIST

NULLIFICATION OF US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE DECISION LEAVES THREATENED BIRD'S FUTURE UNCERTAIN

DALLAS, Texas – Earlier this week a federal district court voided the US Fish and Wildlife Service's decision to list the Lesser Prairie-Chicken, a brightly-colored resident of the southern Great Plains known for its unique mating dance, as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The National Audubon Society issued the following statement:

"Removing the Lesser Prairie-Chicken from the endangered species list eliminates necessary and critical protections required for this species to return to a stable population," said Executive Director of Audubon Texas Brian Trusty. "The US Fish and Wildlife Service is

best suited to judge whether a species requires a listing, and reestablishing protections ensured by the Endangered Species Act is paramount for its successful comeback. Voluntary measures are essential and will continue to play a role in this species' conservation management, but unfortunately they alone are not sufficient for the Lesser Prairie-Chicken." ☞



LESSER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN: MELODY LYTTLE/AUDUBON PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS

NEWS & NOTES

PINELLO RANCH MASTER PLAN

A master plan is under development for Pinello Ranch, which is leased by the Pikes Peak Community Foundation from Colorado Springs Utilities. Located along Fountain Creek, just north of Fountain Creek Regional Park, it is quickly becoming a birding hot spot. Stay tuned for details on the master planning process, which is tentatively scheduled to begin in early 2016..

GREATER SAGE GROUSE

As you have likely heard, on September 22 it was determined that listing the Greater Sage-grouse under the Endangered Species Act was not warranted. Audubon had backed this course of action, stating that the strategy of getting buy-in from all parties—from ranchers and private landowners to the energy industry and federal government—would prove more effective than an endangered species listing.

"This is a new lease on life for the Greater Sage-Grouse and the entire sagebrush ecosystem," said National Audubon Society President and CEO David Yarnold.

JOIN THE CONSERVATION ACTION TEAM

Are you interested in learning about regional conservation issues? Might you be willing to send off an email to a legislator to protect a property or a species that you care about? Aiken Audubon is looking to put together a list of folks who could be contacted for issues of import. No commitment required. If this sparks an interest, please give Linda Hodges your contact info. 719.635.5551 or hikerhodges@gmail.com. Thank you.

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



...continued from front page

childhood home in Rheinhessen, then riding my bike on paved multiuse trails.

As pleased as I am to find this nest occupied again, I am elated to observe different groups of storks in the sky overhead. Out of one of them, ten individuals suddenly descend, land behind a tractor, and follow the path of its mower. In the wake of the clipped grass they capture whatever scuttles beneath their piercing beaks. Not choosy about their culinary tastes, their menu, in general, includes earthworms, insects, fish, frogs, snakes and small rodents.

Soon I find the explanation for the profusion of storks when, on my way back to the ferry, I happen across a bird refuge, in the town of Biebesheim, which is home to entire stork colonies. The air is filled with the sounds and sights of storks in many nests—taking off, landing, feeding and clattering their elegant bills. This latter activity translates as “klappern” and is responsible for one of the many common German names of this beloved creature, “Klapperstorch”.

White Storks typically lay three to four eggs, and in times of abundance as many

as seven, but on average only two to three hatchlings survive into adulthood. The eggs hatch after 33 days and the nestlings are cared for over the course of two months before they take flight. Often called European White Storks, their distribution is not limited to that continent, for breeding groups exist in Asia Minor. Furthermore, flocks that breed in Europe and Asia migrate to their wintering grounds in Africa. This happens in two distinct patterns.

Storks in Western Europe fly across the Straits of Gibraltar to West Africa, whereas eastern populations follow a route across Turkey, the Bosphorus Strait, the Sinai Peninsula and the Gulf of Suez to East and South Africa. A flight path across the Mediterranean Sea, albeit much shorter, is not feasible because to traverse the long distances the storks are in need of thermal uplifts which are only generated where soil is heated by sun, in particular along mountain ranges.

Growing up in Germany forty years ago I never encountered wild storks. This did not prevent me from following a folk custom related to me by my grandparents. To encourage a stork to bring me a sibling, I

placed many a sugar cube on the windowsill. Sadly, it didn't work.

I am happy, however, that the legendary storks which populate German nursery rhymes, songs and myths populate the German landscape once again. The welcome fact that White Storks have not only recovered, but have even increased their numbers by 40% in their eastern, and by 80% in their western breeding grounds is a testament to what can be accomplished when (wo)mankind sets its mind to a task. While the increase in the western population is at least partially attributable to changing migratory patterns (many of the storks overwinter on the Iberian peninsula, where they find enough food, precluding further travel south with its attendant risks), human preservation efforts also play a role in the stork's success story. Provision and caretaking of breeding spaces on tall poles or rooftops, restoration of wetlands and meandering streams, decreased use of pesticides and insulation of high-power utility lines to lessen the chance of electrocution contribute to attracting breeding pairs and to promoting the survival of their offspring.

In this day and age, when we are overwhelmed by the sad tidings about the demise of so many species, the example of the White Stork reminds and admonishes us that we humans are, indeed, able to protect and share habitat through our concerted efforts. ☘

AIKEN'S WEATHER CANCELLATION POLICY

Sometimes inclement weather may cause us to cancel an Aiken meeting. If this happens, a decision will be made by 1 p.m. on the meeting date. Notification will be placed on our website, on our Facebook page and sent out through our email notification list. In addition, a message will be posted on the CoBirds Listserv, to which many of our members subscribe. If there is any doubt, please do not hesitate to contact any of Aiken board members via telephone. Always, your safety is first so use your own judgement when coming to a meeting.



Look for the
Aiken Audubon Society
Facebook page!

facebook.com/pages/Aiken-Audubon-Society



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

GIFT-GIVING MADE EASY

Looking for a gift for the birder who has everything? Consider making a gift to Aiken Audubon Society in honor of someone. Your gift is tax-deductible and a card will be sent to the person you designate to acknowledge your donation in their honor. Your gift will help us continue to bring educational programs to our meetings, provide support to local groups such as Fountain Creek Nature Center and the bird banding station at Chico Basin Ranch and keep us from having to charge a membership fee. If you have questions, call Christine at 596-2916.

WE NEED YOU!



The Aiken board has openings for Program Chair and Education Chair. Descriptions and contact information are on the Aiken website—aikenaudubon.com/about-aiken-audubon-2/volunteer-with-aiken/.

We're waiting to hear from **YOU!**

Flores' Funnies



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