



November/December 2016
Volume 13 / Issue 2

aikorns
AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

A BIRD LOVER'S DREAM

by Tanja Britton

Out of a ten day camping trip to New Mexico this spring, my husband and I spent two days at the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. Its environment is intricately linked with the nearby Rio Grande, a major migratory route, and is best known for the overwintering of myriad Sandhill Cranes, Snow Geese, plus a vast proportion of western North American waterfowl, but represents an avian haven year-round. The combination of a 12 mile car loop, hiking trails, and overlooks provides access to significant portions of the refuge with its various habitats, which center around wetlands, but include prairie and woodlands as well.

PHOTO: TANJA BRITTON

We came for the birds, but all manner of creatures made their presence known. Bullfrogs, unfortunately an invasive species, were audible from afar. The sinuous copulation dance of two snakes on the edge of



the road in plain sight caught us by surprise and made us feel slightly voyeuristic. Desert cottontails and black-tailed jackrabbits abounded, and mule deer browsed on screwbean mesquite, leaving a clear line of demarcation, with copious fruit above a line they could reach while standing on their hind legs, but none below. We had our first sighting of a family of collared peccary, or javelina, foraging for food during the early morning hours. A striped skunk flashed us a warning, tail raised, but thankfully scuttled into the brush, without emitting a fragrant cloud. At dusk, bats began to hunt insects, which was also the signal for Common and Lesser Nighthawks to commence their feeding.

Depending on the source, the impressive bird checklist for the refuge hovers around 393 species. Still somewhat a novice to birding, my discoveries might not rouse expert birders to flights of exultation, but they were uplifting to me. Bosque's graceful, adobe-style visitor center, is a good place to start looking for feathered beings. Directly over the entrance, tiny, but noisy Say's Phoebe babies greeted us from their nest. A large window overlooks feeders which often yield unusual encounters. Only a few days earlier, fellow birders glimpsed a Northern Parula, but this rarity did not repeat his curtain call for us. A second feeding station in the artfully designed adjacent desert

...continued on page 5

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Have you ever thought about carpool etiquette? There always seems to be one car that stops whenever it wants. They are obviously not following the premise "if the lead car doesn't stop, nobody stops." If you are in front of them, do you slow down so you don't lose them or do you go back in case they are seeing a rare migrant? If you are behind them, do you pass and get out of "sequence," or stop to find whatever it is they are seeing.

Then there are walkie-talkies. Hopefully your car has one, it is fully charged and the person

...continued on page 5

Coming programs

NOVEMBER 9 (2ND WEDNESDAY)

Birding to the North Pole

Bill Schmoker

DECEMBER 17

Christmas Bird Count (No program)

JANUARY 25 (4TH WEDNESDAY)

Owl

Paul Bannick

FEBRUARY 15

Eggs

Gloria Nikolai

(Includes our annual "Death by Chocolate" potluck buffet)

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!

Note: The deadline for the January/February 2017 issue of the *Aikorns* is Wednesday, December 21.

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

Inside this issue

Coming Programs	2
Field Trips & Events	3
Special January Program!	3
Conservation Corner	4
Banding Data	back page
Aiken Cancellation Policy	back page
Flores' Funnies	back page

NOVEMBER 9 / BILL SCHMOKER BIRDING TO THE NORTH POLE

In August, 2015, Bill Schmoker embarked on the US Arctic GEO-TRACES Expedition as a PolarTREC teacher. The experience began in Dutch Harbor, Alaska, aboard the US Coast Guard Cutter Healy. For 65 days this polar icebreaker was home to the Coast Guard crew, 49 scientists, and Bill as they transited the Bering and Chukchi Seas en route to deep water basins of the Arctic Ocean and ultimately the Geographic North Pole (marking the first time a US surface ship reached the pole unaccompanied.) After over a month in the pack ice the Healy returned to Dutch Harbor in mid-October. Join Bill as he recounts the unusual birding opportunities he was afforded on this journey, along with other wildlife and natural phenomena he experienced to accompany the cutting-edge physical oceanography that the expedition focused on.



In addition to his 23 years of teaching middle school science in Boulder, Bill is an instructor for the American Birding Association, National Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, and Boulder County Nature Association. Bill has embarked on two Arctic Ocean research expeditions as a PolarTREC Teacher and explored Greenland as a National Geographic Grosvenor Teacher Fellow. A widely published bird/wildlife photographer, author, and public speaker, Bill finds adventure and seeks new knowledge wherever he finds himself, whether gardening in his back yard, on an icebreaker at the North Pole—and everything in between.

DECEMBER 17 / YOU! AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Please join us for this year's Colorado Springs Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, December 17, 2016! Anyone 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 p.m. on count day. 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.

Aiken Audubon Board Members

PRESIDENT

Risë Foster-Bruder
(719) 282-7877

Riserefb@comcast.net

VICE PRESIDENT

Frank Dodge

(719) 549-0651

SECRETARY

Debbie Barnes-Shankster

(303) 947-0566

kfoopoh@yahoo.com

TREASURER

Bonnie Morgan

compassrose360@gmail.com

PROGRAM CHAIR

Diane Luck

luckdiane@gmail.com

CONSERVATION CHAIR

Linda Hodges

(719) 425-1903

hikerhodges@gmail.com

PUBLICITY CHAIR

Christine Bucher

(719) 596-2916

baccab@aol.com

EDUCATION CHAIR

Position Open

FIELD TRIPS

Mel Goff

melgoff@comcast.net

AIKORNS EDITOR/WEB

Leslie Holzmam

(719) 964-3197

aikenaudubon@gmail.com

HOSPITALITY

Kathy Minch

(281) 435-6850

kathydaboo@gmail.com

CHRISTMAS COUNT

Tyler Stuart

(719) 661-9308

tylerhstuart@gmail.com

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, NOVEMBER 19, 8 AM – 1 PM BLUEBIRDS AND WAXWINGS

We'll spend the morning looking along Hwy. 115 for wintering waxwings, bluebirds, and whatever else we might find. Meet at the Tinseltown Cinemark theater to carpool.

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

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3, 8 AM – MID-AFTERNOON RAPTOR PHOTOGRAPHY

We'll venture out onto the plains of eastern El Paso County to look for winter raptors to photograph. This is also a terrific opportunity to practice your ID skills with a very helpful trip leader.

Bring water and lunch as we will be out all day. Meet



PHOTO: LESLIE HOLZMANN

at the northeast corner of Platte and Academy: 535 N Academy Blvd., Colorado Springs. Limited to six participants in two cars. Contact trip leader Debbie Barnes-Shankster with questions and to sign up: kfoopoo@yahoo.com.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17 COLORADO SPRINGS CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

See article on page 2.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29, 8 AM – 3 PM ELEVEN MILE CANYON

Bundle up in your warmest winter gear (previous trips have encountered wind and temperatures well below zero) 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 kfoopoo@yahoo.com.



PHOTO: LESLIE HOLZMANN

More trips online!

For the latest information on field trips and events:

www.AikenAudubon.com

JANUARY 25 / PAUL BANNICK OWL: A YEAR IN THE LIVES OF NORTH AMERICAN OWLS

Award winning photographer Paul Bannick will present a new program featuring video, sound, stories from the field and several dozen new images from his brand-new book: *Owl: A Year in the Lives of North American Owls*. Paul uses intimate yet dramatic images to follow owls through the course of one year and in their distinct habitats.

We will witness the four seasons on territory, as each stage in an owl's life is chronicled through rare images: courtship, mating, and nesting in spring; fledging and feeding of young in summer; dispersal and gaining independence in fall; and,



finally, winter's migrations and competitions for food. His program shows how owls use the unique resources available to them in each habitat to face those challenges. All 19 species found in Canada and the United States are featured in photos, video and narrative throughout the book, with a special focus on the Northern Pygmy-Owl, Great Gray Owl, Burrowing Owl, and Snowy Owl.

Owl is a stunning follow-up to Bannick's best-selling title, *The Owl and the Woodpecker*, giving bird lovers yet another gorgeous photographic tribute, engaging natural history, and a compelling call to preserve the habitats that sustain these most iconic of birds.

Paul will be selling his books after his presentation. This is a perfect opportunity to get your autographed copy.

Finally, please note that the January meeting will be on the *fourth* Wednesday of January. ☼

FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE INITIATES FOCAL SPECIES STRATEGY

To better measure its success in achieving its bird conservation priorities and mandates, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Migratory Bird Program has initiated a Focal Species strategy for migratory birds. The goal is to measure the success in achieving bird conservation and to increase accountability. This is one of several ways that the Service measures bird conservation success. The Focal Species approach is just one component of the Migratory Bird Program and complements other work on migratory birds and their habitats.

To select Focal Species, the Migratory Bird Program identifies species from the Birds of Management Concern list that need investment because they: 1) have high conservation need, 2) are representative of a broader group of species sharing the same or similar conservation needs, 3) act as a potential unifier for partnerships, and/or 4) have a high likelihood that factors affecting status can be realistically addressed.

Current Focal Species include Trumpeter Swan, Northern Pintail, Greater Scaup, Lesser Scaup, Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Yellow Rail, Black Rail, Snowy Plover, Mountain Plover, Upland Sandpiper, Long-billed Curlew, Hudsonian Godwit, Marbled Godwit, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Western Burrowing Owl (subspecies), Sprague's Pipit, Grasshopper Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow, and Bobolink.

At the FWS website, you can click on each species to see the current Status Assessment and Conservation Plan. Go to fws.gov/mountain-prairie/migbirds/focalSpecies.php.

RMBO HAS BECOME BIRD CONSERVANCY OF THE ROCKIES

The Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO) has changed its name, and will now be known as Bird Conservancy of the Rockies. Along with the new name comes a new logo (*right*) and a new slogan: Connecting people, birds and land. The organization remains "committed to conserving birds and their habitats through science, education and land stewardship." Why change? The following quote from their website explains:

Why Bird Conservancy of the Rockies?

BIRD: Our feathered friends have always been—and will continue to be—our primary focus. Birds are a wonderful part of our natural world and indicators of environmental change.

CONSERVANCY: This term most accurately reflects who we are as an organization: We conserve birds and their habitats.

ROCKIES: Our headquarters exist in the Rocky Mountains, and our work radiates from this region to the Great Plains, Mexico and beyond.

Why change our name? We migrated to Bird Conservancy of the Rockies to: MORE ACCURATELY AND COMPLETELY



REFLECT WHO WE ARE IN OUR NAME:

Since our earliest days, we have had robust bird population monitoring, bird banding, and citizen science and education programs. Through 25-plus years of progress, we have greatly expanded the breadth of our work to include cutting-edge research, private lands conservation and international programs. We have grown into a conservancy, and our new name better reflects who we are and better positions us to achieve continued success in the future.

REACH NEW AUDIENCES: As the scope of our work has increased, so has the need to expand our community of partners and supporters.

Aiken Audubon supports Bird Conservancy of the Rockies' bird banding station

NEWS & NOTES

PROPOSED QUARRY ADJACENT TO AIKEN CANYON PRESERVE

The Aiken Audubon Society board recently voted to oppose the proposed 400-acre Transit Mix Concrete quarry off Hwy. 115 on the Hitch Rack Ranch, adjacent to Aiken Canyon.

The Colorado Dept. of Reclamation, Mining and Safety deadline for public comments was moved up from November 4, and has since passed. Rumor has it that they plan to approve the quarry.

If that is the case, the application will then go to the El Paso Cty Board of County Commissioners. We will be ready to address the board in writing and in person to oppose this environmentally-unfriendly measure.

CENTENNIAL BLVD EXTENSION VIA SONDERMANN PARK

Though this is likely a done deal, the AAS board agreed to send a letter urging City Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services to consider stronger storm runoff protection for Mesa Creek. The road is slated to come dangerously close to the creek, and there is concern not only for the continued viability of the creek, but for the wildlife that make their homes there and/or migrate through.

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 contact Linda Hodges at (719) 635.5551 or hikerhodges@gmail.com.

at Chico Basin Ranch. It agrees with our priorities of encouraging local bird conservation and educating the public about birds (many schools take field trips to the banding station). ☘

Bird Lover's Dream... continued from front page

arboretum afforded sightings of the speedy Greater Roadrunner, New Mexico's state bird, and of Gambel's Quail, known to loaf there all day. In this setting, I also lay eyes on my first fanciful Pyrrhuloxia, fittingly described as desert cardinal.

PHOTO: LESLIE HOLZMANN



On the refuge proper, a central pond with dead trees offered roosting sites for Great, Snowy, and Cattle Egrets, as well as for Double-Crested and Neotropic Cormorants, which facilitated the comparison of their prevalent features. This crowd was joined, on occasion, by a gorgeous Green Heron. Vermilion Flycatchers, brilliantly attired, flew onto my life list, followed by an equally dazzling Summer Tanager, and by elegantly dressed Black Phoebes. Yellow and Yellow-rumped Warblers, as well as Common Yellowthroat were conspicuous, but I am sure I missed many other warblers. They still present a challenge, along with flycatchers, gulls, and several other families. American Avocet, Black-necked Stilts, Spotted Sandpipers, Willets, Long-billed Dowitchers, and Wilson's Phalarope helped lessen my intimidation with shorebirds, though they are outnumbered by the many I have yet to recognize. The prize for cuteness went to a Pied-billed Grebe and her five young. All jostled for a free ride on her back, succeeded for an instant, but one or the other slid off, paddled hard to catch up and hop on again, until, finally, everybody was safely stowed.

Needless to say, two days were not enough to explore this sanctuary. My resolution: return there. Often. Hop on Interstate 25, take Exit 139 in New Mexico. The distance between Colorado Springs and Bosque del Apache is a mere 300 miles. ☿

President's Message, continued from front page

holding it knows how to properly use it (hold the button for at least two seconds before speaking). It is so frustrating to hear a garbled, partial bird identification. You may or may not see the bird because you don't know on which side of the car it's being seen. If the identification comes from a car behind you—never mind.

Make sure to choose your companions well. There is always the chance for informative discussions—how's the family? What's for lunch? Definitely ask about their latest birding adventures.

Pay attention and be on time when everyone heads back to the vehicle. Quietly close the car door when anyone is taking a picture.

And from time to time there is gossip. So remember the most important thing about carpooling—what happens in the car, stays in the car!

Risë Foster-Bruder
President, Aiken Audubon Society

IT'S TRUE—EXCEPT...

by Leslie Holzmann

We think we know. We think we understand. We've observed, conducted studies, collected facts. We think we have it right—and then Mother Nature confounds us. For example, we know that:

... only the male bird sings—except a 2014 study found that “of 71% of all songbird species with available data, the female sings too.” Surprise!

... birds that migrate fly north in the spring and south in the fall—except some bird species migrate northward in the fall. One example is the Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*), which moves from continental to northern Europe for the winter. In the southern hemisphere, with its seasons reversed from ours, some birds migrate south for the summer and northward to more temperate climes for the winter. Finally, some bird species (such as our Dark-eyed Junco) migrate between higher and lower altitudes. (Juncos also move latitudinally.)

... males have the ornate feathers while females tend to be drab and camouflaged—except it turns out that males aren't always the fancier sex. Male Eclectus parrots (*Eclectus roratus*) are plain green, matching their tropical backgrounds, while the females are a brilliant red. And female phalaropes are larger and more brightly colored than their mates.



PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

... birds have no sense of smell—except Turkey Vultures (and some others) do. In fact, where their ranges overlap, Black Vultures (with no ability to scent a decaying carcass) follow Turkey Vultures to dinner.

... the female incubates the eggs—except that in the majority of bird species, both sexes share that duty.

... Swans are monogamous—except an Australian study found that “extra-pair copulation” is the rule, and one in six cygnets is the result of such an affair. This is true of other so-called monogamous species as well.

There aren't many “rules” that nature hasn't broken. I used to assert these and other “everybody knows” facts with confidence. Now I use words such as “usually” and “often” with a large dollop of humility on top. I think this is yet one more reason birding is so much fun. You never know what you'll find. ☿



AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

6660 Delmonico Dr. D-195
Colorado Springs, CO 80919

President Risë Foster-Bruder

(719) 282-7877

AikenAudubon@gmail.com

www.AikenAudubon.com

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



Look for the
Aiken Audubon Society
Facebook page!

facebook.com/pages/Aiken-Audubon-Society

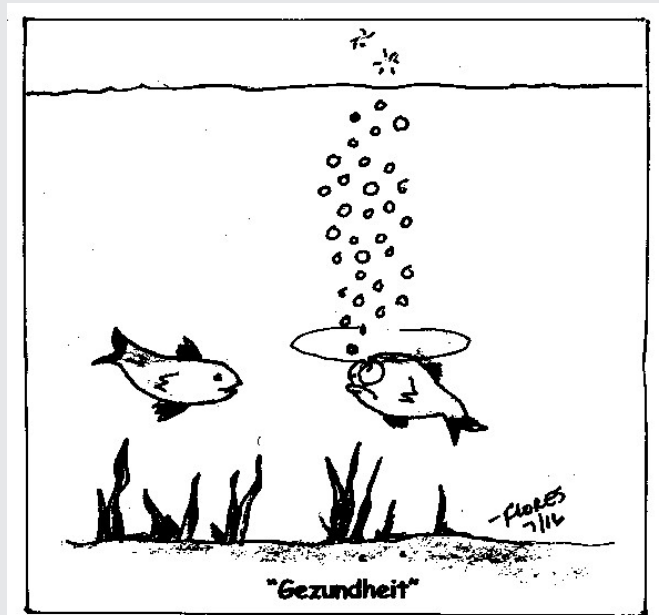
YOU CAN ACCESS BANDING DATA

We've all seen birds wearing bracelets, but what happens to the information that banders collect? The Institute for Bird Populations is the group that receives bird bander data, allowing scientists to determine bird populations and monitor trends. Now this information is available to all of us on their website, birdpop.org. How is your favorite bird doing?

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 pm 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.

Flores' Funnies



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