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aikorns
AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

CLOSE ENOUGH!

Photos and story by Leslie Holzmann

When it comes to wildlife, how close is too close? We've all heard about the foolish tourists who want to snap a selfie with the bear or moose (or alligator!, *left*).



All too often, someone ends up getting hurt. But you and I are sensible people who do not want to be spitted by a bull elk, or gored by a buffalo. So, how close should we approach these potentially dangerous animals?

Or, consider the raptor perched on the telephone pole. We want a decent picture, with the bird occupying more than a speck in the viewfinder, so we try to slowly sidle

closer. But we don't want to get too close, because the bird will fly away.

Knowing how close to approach wildlife is an important part of identifying and photographing them—or simply making special memories. It's not just a balance between getting the shot and being attacked. Disturbing wild animals forces them to use energy, whether they decide to flee or fight. In severe weather, or in years when food is scarce, that energy is desperately needed just to sustain life. And if that animal is a nesting bird, it could also endanger the young. Furthermore, predators are smart. Your mere presence can alert a fox or coyote to a nest it might have otherwise overlooked.

Colorado Parks & Wildlife (CPW) has published a set of eight guidelines that ensure the safety of both wildlife and humans. I quote them here:

- Wildlife should be viewed/photographed from a safe and respectful distance.
- Use binoculars, spotting scopes, [telephoto] lenses, and viewing blinds to avoid disturbing species.
- Avoid getting close to nests or dens—your presence can disturb breeding and alert predators to nest/den locations.
- Stay on trails and roads, tread lightly, and leave plants and animals where you find them.
- Do not use recorded animal calls when viewing or photographing wildlife.
- If an animal shows any sign of stress, move away.
- Keep pets on leash at all times.
- Do not feed wildlife [even adorable chipmunks].



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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It's true, everything is relative. While back in Minneapolis recently, I learned through the local newspaper of a morning bird walk at a nearby national wildlife refuge. Since the refuge had been created after I had moved away, I decided to participate.

It was a good walk. We saw 13 Trumpeter Swans, a pair of Sandhill Cranes building a nest 20 feet in front of us, and six Bald Eagles, along with many duck species.

I also heard someone mention that a Common Loon was at a lake not far from where I had grown up. I had to see if it was still there. To my amazement, I found two loons on the lake. I have walked, run, and driven around this lake throughout my entire life. No Common Loon ever visits a lake in the city. You had to go "up north" to see loons. But there they were, and in striking breeding plumage, no less.

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Coming programs

MAY 17

Habitat Heroes

Bonnie Morgan & Jamie Weiss

NO PROGRAMS OVER THE SUMMER

See you September 20!

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 September/October 2017 issue of the *Aikorns* is Wednesday, August 16.

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

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MAY 17 / BONNIE MORGAN & JAMIE WEISS HABITAT HEROES

Habitat heroes are people who practice a form of landscape stewardship called “wildscaping,” planning shelter, food, water and plants for your yard in order to attract the most desirable wildlife. Whether the landscape you tend is a home yard, a few pots on a balcony, a public park or schoolyard garden, or a farm or orchard, habitat heroes believe in growing a healthy community.

The Habitat Hero program is for optimists—people who believe that the things they do can have positive impacts on the world around them. It's for people like you who know their landscape is a place where they can get closer to nature. Come learn how you, too, can be a Habitat Hero for the birds!

Bonnie has earned Gold Level of Habitat Heroes for her yard in Erindale, an older neighborhood in Colorado Springs. Jamie Weiss combines her science and educational background to manage the Habitat Hero program for Audubon Rockies, which focuses on engaging community members and businesses in actively restoring natural habitat for birds, butterflies, pollinators and other wildlife large and small.



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.

Close Enough, continued from front page

I can add a few more comments from my own experience:

// Don't try to fill the frame. You can always crop a bit. In fact, since photos often have to fit a particular size frame or space online, allow flexibility by zooming out a bit and giving your subject some margins.

// To approach animals without frightening them, pretend you are prey. In other words, don't stare at your subject—predators do that. Don't try to sneak. Don't make sudden moves. Rather, approach at an angle. As my friend Debbie suggests, pretend you are a grazing cow!

// Learn the signs of stress in the various species you want to view or photograph. Deer stop grazing. Birds stop preening, and they often “lighten the load” (like this Prairie Falcon at right) by defecating before they fly. Animals become agitated in the same way we do.

// I like to take a “guarantee” shot as soon as I arrive, then more as I move somewhat closer. That way, if I inadvertently flush the bird or frighten the deer, at least I have something. It takes the pressure off, and allows me to heed an animal's warning signs.

// Never chase wildlife. If an animal wants to move away from you, let it go. We make it a point to never flush a bird more than once, if at all.



Of course, sometimes the animal approaches you! I had an up-close-and-personal encounter with some elk last year at Rocky Mountain National Park. A friend and I were perched on a large rock formation at the end of a trail when a huge herd of elk wandered up the valley and surrounded us, completely blocking our exit and marooning us on our rock. They obviously felt completely comfortable coming within a few feet of us humans. I was very glad I was safely out of reach over their heads! ☼

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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, MAY 6, 7:30 AM – NOON SONDERMANN PARK

Join Bonnie Morgan and David Tonnessen for a walk at beautiful Sondermann Park, a bit of wilderness within the city limits of Colorado Springs. The park offers outstanding opportunities for wildlife viewing along a small creek and on trails over foothills scrub.

Possible species include Lazuli Bunting, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Black-headed Grosbeak, Spotted Towhee, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and migrants galore. Rarities at the park have included Northern Cardinal and Blackburnian Warbler.



Meet at the Sondermann Park parking lot at 7:30 am. This trip is limited to 15 participants. Contact Bonnie at compassrose360@gmail.com or David at davidtonnessenx@gmail.com for more information.

SATURDAY, MAY 13, 7 AM – 11 AM FOUNTAIN CREEK BIRD COUNT

Beginning to advanced birders are needed to count and record the numbers of bird species and populations found in Fountain Creek Regional Park during the height of spring migration. Registration required: online at elpasocountynaturecenters.com or call the nature center at 719-520-6745. A \$5 donation is requested. This event is sponsored by FCNC, and is listed here for your convenience.

SUNDAY, MAY 14, 7 AM – 11 AM KETTLE CREEK LAKES



Join Risë Foster-Bruder at the Air Force Academy's Kettle Creek Lakes area. A variety of habitats with three different lakes has the potential for a variety of species. Call Risë at 719-282-7877 or email her at riserefb@comcast.net to sign up.

More trips online!

For the latest information on field trips and events:

www.AikenAudubon.com

WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 6:45 AM OR 7:30 AM CHICO BASIN RANCH (fee area)



Join John Drummond as he looks for spring migrants that use Chico Basin Ranch as a stopping point on their journey north. Almost any type of warbler is possible. There will be bird banding in progress. This is always a popular trip and fills up quickly.

Meet at 6:45 am at the Tejon P&R, or 7:30 am at Hanover Fire Station. Limited to 15 participants. There is a \$10 fee per person for groups of 5 or more. Contact John Drummond at jxdrummo@aol.com to sign up.

SATURDAY, JUNE 3, 6:30 AM – 10:30 AM ASPEN VALLEY RANCH

Join Tyler Stuart at Aspen Valley Ranch, a 300-acre private ranch on the southwest side of Woodland Park. The ranch currently serves as a site for environmental education for students in the Woodland Park School District. Possible birds include Clark's Nutcracker, Violet-green Swallow, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Plumbeous Vireo, Western Tanager, Red Crossbill, and Evening Grosbeak.

This is a moderate to strenuous hike; expect high-elevation hiking on dirt roads and trails with some off-trail hiking possible.

Meet on the south side of the Safeway parking lot at 31st Street and Colorado (3275 West Colorado Ave., Colorado Springs). This trip is limited to 10 participants and should fill up quickly. To register, contact Tyler at tylerhstuart@gmail.com.

SATURDAY, JUNE 17, 8 AM FOUNTAIN VALLEY SCHOOL

Join Jim Mariner and Mel Goff for a morning of birding at this beautiful location. Areas vary from housing and dorms, to agricultural fields, to woodlands and wetlands. Possible birds include Virginia Rail, Northern Harrier, woodpeckers, and late migration warblers. Nesting Red-tail Hawks, Great Horned Owls, and Bald Eagles are possible. Bobolinks and Orioles have been seen on past visits.

Meet at the beginning of the entrance road off Grinnell Blvd. Do not go to the gate before the leaders arrive. There is a limit of 15 participants. Contact Mel Goff at melgoff@comcast.net with questions or to sign up.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 21, 6:30 AM – NOON DAWSON BUTTE OPEN SPACE NATURE HIKE

Dawson Butte Open Space trail is a gently rolling 5 mile loop through forest and meadow with a little bit of running water, located near Larkspur in Douglas County. A good variety of wildlife is possible, including Western Tanagers, Western Bluebirds, Plumbeous Vireos, Cordilleran Flycatchers, Hairy Woodpeckers, Ovenbirds, Aphrodite Fritillary butterflies, Easter Yellow-bellied Racer snakes,

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CHATFIELD STATE PARK LAWSUIT

The Audubon Society of Greater Denver (Denver Audubon) has sued the US Army Corps of Engineers over the Chatfield Storage Reallocation Project. Polly Reetz of Denver Audubon sees numerous flaws in the plan, including reservoir fluctuations of up to 17 vertical feet and the loss of 587 acres of wildlife habitat and recreational land in the park. Chatfield has been designated an Important Bird Area, and hosts over 375 species of birds.

For further information, visit www.DenverAudubon.org.

TREE REMOVAL PROJECT IN COLORADO SPRINGS

Outcry over the extreme tree removal at Stratton Open Space has gotten the attention of two City Council members: Council President Richard Skorman and Councilman Tom Strand. Skorman will be meeting with the Parks Director, Karen Palus, to ask that future projects are carried out with a lighter touch, and that there is accountability when the results don't jibe with the plans.

Dr. Anna Joy Lehmiche began a nest survey project at Stratton on April 1. Should nests be found, the crew will be advised on how to work around them.

HWY 115 QUARRY

Those who spoke out against the quarry at the last hearing have been served with a "Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation", or SLAPP suit, by Transit Mix Concrete. SLAPPs are considered to be frivolous lawsuits that are designed to silence opponents. As the Gazette reported, "Simply responding to the claim will cost defendants a \$158 filing fee, amounting to a sum of more than \$14,000 for all of the defendants to reply." Transit Mix Concrete plans to re-apply for a permit.

PINELLO RANCH UPDATE

Dave Rudin stated that the Pikes Peak Community Foundation will be allowed to continue education programs at Pinello Ranch once CSU completes its wetlands mitigation on the property. Dave estimates that programs will resume in the fall.

KIOWA CREEK SANCTUARY

The Palmer Land Trust and Audubon Rockies have been considering placing a conservation easement on Kiowa Creek, which would protect the property in perpetuity. The talks are in the early stages.

ARE YOU ADDICTED?

by Leslie Holzmann

You didn't think it would happen to you. All you wanted was to know the name of one bird. You naively picked up that field guide you've had forever and tried to look it up.

Was that bird at the feeder a Black-headed Grosbeak? Or perhaps it's a Spotted Towhee? Hmm... there are so many birds in here. And they all look so interesting! You're familiar with a few—Robins and Pigeons, House Finches and House Sparrows. But wait! Is that really a House Sparrow? Perhaps

it's a Black-throated Sparrow instead! And there could be *two* kinds of goldfinches at your feeder? Better look more closely.

At some point you realized that a lot of those birds in the field guide never showed up at your backyard feeder. Where are they all? Maybe it would be fun to plan an outing to the local nature center. Better bring those binos, just in case.

Those old binos aren't working so well, new ones are definitely needed. A scope

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. Interested? Please contact Linda Hodges at (719) 635-5551 or hikerhodges@gmail.com.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON National Audubon issues and actions, go to the Audubon Action Center, audubonaction@audubon.org.



Loggerhead Shrike by Jeannie Mitchell, KCS

would sure come in handy. And which field guide is best? Better get one of each!

You visited the family last year. Surely this year you can travel to a destination known for its birds—Florida, perhaps, or southern Arizona.

Your Facebook feed is now full of local bird sightings. You're planning field trips for your days off. The car floor is full of gravel, and the trunk has an extra pair of hiking boots in case of mud.

One day you wake up and realize that what all began so innocently is now a full-fledged addiction. You're one of them. You're a birder. ☘

Field Trips... continued from page 3

Woodhouse's Toads, and a variety of wildflowers and fungi. Portable restrooms are available at the trailhead and picnic areas. Plan to walk the entire loop at a slow pace with plenty of stops for photos, wildlife viewing, etc. All who wish may stay for a bring-your-own sack lunch picnic after the walk.

Meet at the Woodmen P&R to carpool. There is a maximum of 15 participants for this trip. Contact Diana Beatty at otowi33.33@gmail.com with any questions or to sign up for this trip.

MONDAY, JUNE 26, TIME TBD EMERALD VALLEY

Save the date for this popular "bugs, blooms, and birds" hike with Heidi Eaton.

FRIDAY, JULY 7, 5:30 PM – MIDNIGHT FLAMMULATED OWLS



After joining trip leader Dr. Brian Linkhart at the Experimental Forest HQs for an orientation, we will continue to the Manitou Experimental Forest and the owl nesting sites.

Meet to carpool at the Burger King on Hwy. 24 in Woodland Park. Cost is \$25 per person, which is a tax deductible donation to Dr. Linkhart's research and will be collected at the orientation.

Limited to 12 (quiet) participants. No exceptions. If the trip fills up, there will be a waiting list. If you have already been on the field trip, please consider letting those who have never seen these wonderful birds sign up first. To register for this trip, contact Mel Goff at melgoff@comcast.net.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 12, 6:30 AM – NOON HOMESTEAD RANCH REGIONAL PARK NATURE HIKE

Homestead Ranch Regional Park is a rarely-birded eBird hotspot located on the eastern edge of the Black Forest in Peyton. It has a man-made pond (containing fish that attract waterfowl), and forest and grassland/meadow habitats. Possible wildlife includes bluebirds, Leopard Frogs and Tiger Salamanders, Plains Lubber grasshoppers, and a nice variety of lizards. Consider bringing some insect repellent.

Plan for a four mile hike on a mostly rolling/flat trail, with a short hill or two. There will be plenty of stops for photos, birding, etc. Afterward, all who wish may stay for a bring-your-own sack lunch.

Carpool leaves from the southwest end of Lowe's parking lot at Constitution and Powers. There is a maximum of 15 participants. Contact Diana Beatty at otowi33.33@gmail.com to sign up for this trip.



President's Message, continued from front page

As I waited for one to come close enough for a photo, I was struck by the lack of interest of everyone else at the lake. Here were two representative state birds and no one noticed. As I "people watched," one man recorded his walk using a selfie stick, moms were out with their kids in strollers, there were runners, walkers on their phones, bikers, dog walkers—but no birders. No one noticed the loons, or the Common Mergansers doing their peculiar courtship display, or the Horned Grebes, or the hundreds of American Coots floating around.

To be honest, 35+ years ago I probably wouldn't have noticed the loons either. But I did now and I was thrilled. So, while the lake is used by many people for many different pastimes, we all see it a bit differently. I'm just glad my view has changed over the years and I was in the right place at the right time.

Risë Foster-Bruder

President, Aiken Audubon Society

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 7 AM – 3:30 PM (OR LATER) BURNT MILL ROAD

Gary Conover will lead this enjoyable trip south of Pueblo. We'll bird along Burnt Mill Road and down the St. Charles River looking for Cassin's Kingbird, Blue Grosbeak, Black Phoebe, Greater Roadrunner, Lewis's Woodpecker and other fall specialties.

Bring your lunch and a full tank of gas. The trip will include a few short walks along roadways.

Meet Broadmoor Town Center near Starbucks and Affordable Dentures. Contact Gary Conover at garylge@yahoo.com or 632-2505 with any questions and to sign up. Beginners welcome.



MAY 19 – 21:



Registration open:

PikesPeakBirdingAndNatureFestival.org



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

AIKEN'S WEATHER CANCELLATION POLICY

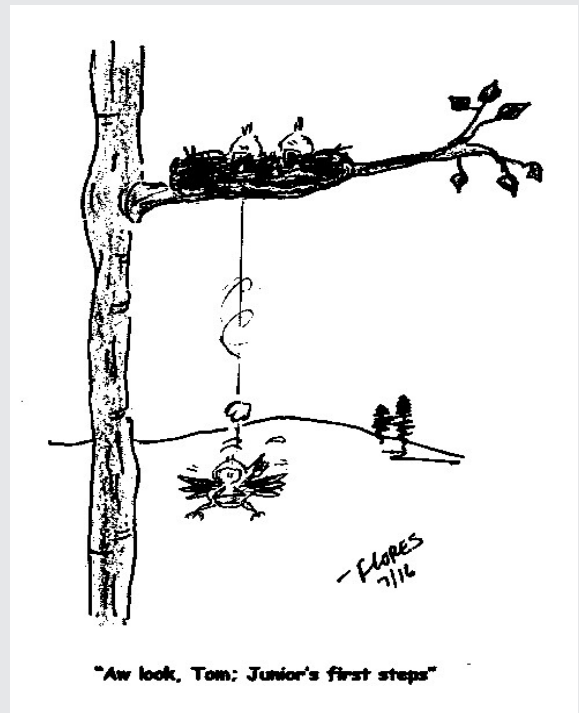
Sometimes inclement weather may cause us to cancel an Aiken meeting. If this happens, a decision will be made by 1 pm on the meeting date. Notification will be placed on our website, on our Facebook page and sent out through our email notification list. In addition, a message will be posted on the CoBirds 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.



**Look for the
Aiken Audubon Society
Facebook page!**

facebook.com/pages/Aiken-Audubon-Society

Flores' Funnies



Artist Rick Flores, a Nature Center volunteer, enjoys sharing his views of happenings at our local Nature Centers.