



November/December 2017
Volume 14 / Issue 2

aikorns
AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

THE ISLANDS OF ALOHA

Story and photos by Mel Goff

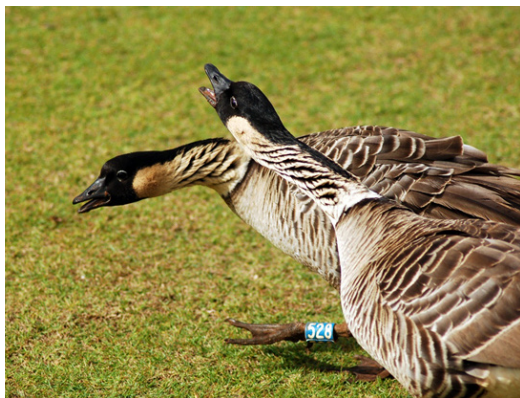
A White-tailed Tropicbird glides along the thermals of Waimea Canyon on Kaua'i. The endemic I'iwi dips its long, curved bill into the bloom of the Ohi'a tree at Hosmer Grove on Maui. The Hawaiian Goose, or Nene, proclaims its return from the brink of extinction at Hawai'i Volcanos National Park on the Big Island.

Hawai'i, our 50th state, now claims another distinction. In November of 2016, the membership of the American Birding Association (ABA) voted overwhelmingly to include Hawai'i as part of its geographical area. While a new ABA checklist is still being approved by the ABA Checklist Committee, it is expected that just over 100 species will be added as Hawai'i only.

An archipelago that stretches for more than 1400 miles, Hawai'i boasts the three highest peaks in the South Pacific. There are coral reefs and atolls, tropical wet forests, tropical dry forests, high and lowland shrublands, tropical grasslands, and tropical savannas. In fact, Hawai'i has eleven of the world's thirteen climate zones.

The main islands have the four primary climates of desert, tropical rainforest, temperate zone, and tundra. Rainfall ranges from 486" per year at Mt. Wai 'ale 'ale, to 200" per year in Hilo, to 6" or less on the leeward side of Maui and the Big Island. This variety of climate, habitats, and remote location make Hawai'i not only a vacation destination, but also a place that every birder should have on their birding bucket list.

The windward islands of Hawai'i boast a checklist of over 260 species. Of the more than 60 species and subspecies that are endemic to the islands, only 36 remain



*Hawaiian Geese (Nene), the Hawai'i state bird,
loudly honking at
Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge, Kaua'i*

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

In the last newsletter, I thanked the Aiken members who assisted at the city's BioBlitz events. The final report is out and has some interesting data. The four BioBlitz locations were Blodgett Peak Open Space, Jimmy Camp Creek Park, Bluestem Prairie Open Space and Ute Valley Park. A total of 2,432 observations of species were recorded resulting in an average of 352 species at each location.

Concentrating on just birds, at Blodgett Peak we identified 38 (eBird 91) bird species. At Jimmy Camp we had 117 species (this number included

...continued on page 3

Coming programs

NOVEMBER 8 (SECOND WEDNESDAY)

A Birder's Trip to Papua New Guinea
Diane Luck

DECEMBER 16

Colorado Springs Christmas Bird Count
(no program)

JANUARY 17

The Colorado Springs Christmas Bird Count:
A Closer Look
Tyler Stuart

FEBRUARY 21

Amazing Ecosystems of Southern Brazil
Stephen Getty

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 2018 issue of the *Aikorns* is Wednesday, December 20.

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

Inside this issue

Coming Programs	2
Field Trips & Events	3
Houe Sparrows	3
Conservation Corner	4
Letter to the Editor	5
Flores' Funnies	back page

...continued on page 3

NOVEMBER 8 / DIANE LUCK A BIRDER'S TRIP TO PAPUA NEW GUINEA

PNG is on every international birder's wish list, with Birds of Paradise, Crowned Pigeon (right), Wattled Plowbill, Berrypecker, and parrots in a rainbow of colors. This large and sparsely populated island north of Australia has an avifauna that includes hundreds of endemic birds of astounding beauty and peculiarity. It also harbors malaria, mud, and many travel misadventures. This presentation will include not only the birds but also the reality of travel in PNG. Diane Luck, a twitcher with a life list hovering near five thousand, will talk about the birds and experiences of her 2016 trip.



Having begun her life list at the ancient age of 40, Diane is making up for lost time and has birded on six continents. She is a certified bird bander (North American Banding Council) and master banding permit holder, and conducts a MAPS station at the Manitou Experimental Forest in Teller County. This summer, Diane was a guest lecturer at the Institute for Bird Population's advanced bird banding course held in northern Minnesota. She is the program chairperson for Aiken Audubon Society.

Note: this presentation is on the *second* Wednesday of November.

DECEMBER 16 / YOU! CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Please join us for this year's Colorado Springs Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, December 16, 2017! Everyone is welcome to participate. Plan to spend at least the entire morning finding birds, though times will vary. Come prepared for cold temperatures, and possibly snow and ice. Feeder watchers are also encouraged to sign up and participate.

After the count, we will gather for a potluck dinner, species compilation, and sharing of the day's adventures at Bear Creek Nature Center from 5 to 7 pm on count day.

For more information or to sign up, please contact Tyler Stuart by phone at (719) 661-9308 or email tylerhstuart@gmail.com.



PLEASE NOTE OUR NEW LOCATION!

Aiken Audubon programs are free and open to the public. They are currently held at Bear Creek Nature Center, located at 245 Bear Creek Road in Colorado Springs, 80906. Coffee and socializing is at 6:30 pm and programs begin at 7 pm.

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, which many Aiken birders subscribe to. If there is any doubt, please do not hesitate to contact any Aiken board members via telephone. Always, your safety is first so use your own judgement when coming to a meeting.

Aiken Audubon Board Members

PRESIDENT

Risë Foster-Bruder
(719) 282-7877
Riserefb@comcast.net

VICE PRESIDENT

Anna Joy Lehmick
alehmick@gmail.com

SECRETARY

Debbie Barnes-Shankster
(303) 947-0566
kfoopooh@yahoo.com

TREASURER

Bonnie Morgan
AikenAudubon@gmail.com

PROGRAM CHAIR

Diane Luck
AikenAudubon@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

Diana Beatty
otowi33.33@gmail.com

AIKORNS EDITOR/WEB

Leslie Holzmänn
(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.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 10 AM – 1 PM CORRAL BLUFFS OPEN SPACE

Visit the past and the present at the same time! Corral Bluffs holds 65 million years of history—from the extinction of the dinosaurs, to Paleo-Indians, to the Goodnight-Loving Trail. It is a unique semi-desert ecosystem just east of Colorado Springs. This is not primarily a birding trip, but will include lots of nature viewing, and the Townsend's Solitaires will greet you. If you're really lucky, you might spot a Golden Eagle.

There are no trails in this open space; hiking is moderate to strenuous. Our round trip will be approximately three miles. Long pants and closed-toe shoes are required. Bring water and snacks.

Meet at the Loaf'n Jug, 6857 Space Village Ave., just east of Peterson Rd., to carpool. Limited to 20 participants. Special hiking waivers will need to be completed to enter Corral Bluffs. Trip will be rescheduled if there is wind, snow, or temperatures below 20 degrees. Contact trip leader Sharon Milito at sharon.milito@comcast.net to sign up.

More trips online!

For the latest information on field trips and events:

www.AikenAudubon.com

President's Message, continued from front page

data collected over two years as well as the BioBlitz). At Blue-stem Prairie there were 53 species (eBird 244) including the water birds at Big Johnson Reservoir. And finally, at Ute Valley we observed 50 species (eBird 140).

Considering the short period of time spent at each location and the interesting weather, we represented the birds well. Numerous folks used the iNaturalist app and now many people can see what has been found, add an observation, or edit an existing submission.

Hopefully the public will continue to enjoy these sites year-round and take the time to add their observations. And if the city decides to have annual BioBlitzes, I hope Aiken Audubon will be there, too, counting the birds.

Risë Foster-Bruder

President, Aiken Audubon Society

Hawaii... continued from front page

on the four main islands. Several of these are listed as threatened, endangered, or critically endangered. One, the Hawaiian Crow, or 'Alala, is being reintroduced to the wild after a decades long captive breeding program. The Hawaiian Goose population dropped to only 30 birds in 1952, but an intense conservation program has brought the numbers back to over 2500, mostly on the Big Island and Kaua'i.



*'Iiwi feeding on nectar of Mamane flowers.
Hosmer Grove, Maui*

The species of most concern are the state's forest birds. 'Amakihi, 'Apapane, 'Elepaio, 'Akepa, Palila, I'iwi, 'Akikiki, 'Anianiau, are some of the 21 endemic forest birds. Each of the main islands has species or subspecies found only on that island. Look for Kaua'i 'Amakihi, O'ahu 'Elepaio, Maui Creeper, or the Akepa on the Big

Island. As beautiful as they are unique. Habitat loss, mosquitos, feral cats, rats, and the mongoose are the main reasons these birds are considered to be in peril.

Jeanne and I have been birding on the four main islands of Kaua'i, O'ahu, Maui, and the Big Island since 2004. We have seen 123 species, including 28 of the endemics. We have recorded birds from a boat at sea level to the high altitude forests on the side of Mauna Kea, the world's highest mountain from its base on the floor of the Pacific Ocean to its peak over 13,000 feet above sea level.

Birding in paradise offers opportunities and distractions. At the top of Koke'e State Park on Kaua'i, you can see and listen to the 'Akepa and Kaua'i 'Amakihi, and at the same time look down on the crashing waves along the Na Pali Coast more than 4,000 feet below. At Hawai'i Volcanos National Park, you can view the glow and steam of the active lava flows of Kilauea volcano while watching a Black Noddy dive and dart along the rugged cliffs at the end of Chain of Craters Road.

There are many resources for information about a birding trip to Hawai'i. Jeanne and I recommend the pocket-sized field guide *Hawaii's Birds*, by the Hawaii Audubon Society, 7th ed. Also, check out the HAS website at www.hawaii-audubon.org. In September of 2017, the Big Island unveiled the Hawaii Island Coast to Coast Birding Trail.

This article is meant to give you an overview of the birding opportunities that await you in our 50th state, Hawai'i. In future issues of Aikorns, we will take you to some of our favorite birding spots on each of the main islands. National and state parks and wildlife refuges, beach ponds and mountain groves, back roads and what Mark Twain called the Grand Canyon of the Pacific, long hikes and a Big Day trek—all ending with stunning sunsets and umbrella drinks. Paradise? You bet! ☘

DRILLING IN THE ALASKA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

by Linda Hodges

As many of you know, National Audubon sent me to Washington DC in early October, in order to speak to Colorado's federal legislative representatives regarding proposed drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). An Audubon Rockies board member, Gina di Giallonardo, and I met with aides for Senators Bennet and Gardner, and Representative Mike Coffman.

Drilling is proposed in the wild, ecologically intact coastal plain as part of the 2018 budget package. We argued that ANWR is an amazingly wild, intact ecosystem, hosting over 200 nesting bird species. It is not the right place for drilling, and the projected budget numbers are not attainable through the proposed drilling. Sandhill Cranes, Snow Geese and Lapland Longspurs are but a few of the birds that breed in ANWR and migrate through Colorado.

The House has approved the budget, and the Senate will have voted by the time you read this newsletter. On a positive note, even if the budget is approved, a committee will then work on the number crunching. At that point, we'll have another shot at protecting ANWR's coastal plain from drilling. This is National Audubon's top priority.

Learn more and take action: <https://action.audubon.org/onlineactions/s0xlm1uozk2sCXdx1pQJQg2>

HWY 115 QUARRY

Transit Mix Concrete has reapplied (on October 5) for a permit to quarry on the Hitch Rack Ranch. The ranch is adjacent to Aiken Canyon Preserve, which is managed by The Nature Conservancy. Changes in this application include decreasing the acreage from 400 to 200, and placing the quarry only on the south side of Little Turkey Creek Road. The expected lifetime of the quarry has been decreased from 55 to 30 years. Transit Mix would build a road solely for truck traffic, though Little Turkey Creek Road would still be closed any time that blasting occurs.

There will be a 48-day public comment period, then about a 3-month review process before a decision is made by the Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety. Aiken Audubon took a stand against this project the first time around. Once all the information is in, we'll decide whether comments are warranted.

PINELLO RANCH WETLANDS

Mitigation work is finally wrapping up at Pinello. This work included removing Russian olives, tamarisk and some small cottonwoods, and creating almost ten acres of wetlands in three separate sites. These changes are expected to enhance wildlife habitat and vegetation diversity on the property. This project was done to mitigate wetlands disturbance along the Southern Delivery System southeast of Marksheffel and Bradley Roads. It should take about three to five years to fill in completely. Birding at Pinello, which is a Colorado Springs Utilities property, is currently limited to a few outings per season.



Support
Aiken Audubon:
Buy a Hat!

GREATER SAGE-GROUSE

While in DC, we also asked Colorado legislators for continued protection for the Greater Sage-Grouse via the collaborative efforts of western governors, ranchers, environmentalists and agencies. It took almost ten years for members of this group to find common ground, and putting the grouse through a threatened or endangered listing process—which has been promoted by Interior Secretary Zinke—would undo the strides that have been made, and likely bring about development in grouse habitat.

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.

COLORADO SPRINGS WATER PROJECTS

Citizens need to understand the magnitude and ecological consequences of Colorado Springs water projects before voting on Issue 2A this November. There is no question we need proper funding of stormwater management, but the scale of these projects, in a short period of time, is disturbing.

There are 71 projects slated to be completed by Water Resources Engineering department between 2016 and 2036. This does not include additional projects by Colorado Springs Utilities. Most involve substantial widening of natural stream corridors with attendant heavy deforestation of riparian vegetation that is used by breeding and migratory birds and other wildlife. Some projects mandate a certain degree of mitigation to replace that vegetation, but often this is minimal, and certainly does not include mature cottonwoods, willows and other trees. It takes decades for streams to recover from the impacts that occur as a result of water projects. By 2036 there may be no stream corridors capable of supporting wildlife in the Pikes Peak region, especially on the plains.

I live near the confluence of the West Fork of Sand Creek and the main channel of Sand Creek. A CSU water project on the West Fork will likely eradicate the only known population of the Filigree Skimmer dragonfly (*Pseudoleon superbus*) in the state of Colorado. I discovered the population in 2014 and it continues to be viable. I can only imagine how water projects elsewhere are compromising the biodiversity that is necessary for healthy waterways here.

The rush to complete these projects is of course in response to the lawsuit brought against the city by the Environmental Protection Agency. While we need to fix the problems, we need a far longer timeline and a multidisciplinary approach to mitigation. Currently it is pretty much a "one size fits all" mentality with the same strategies applied to all waterways regardless of their biodiversity.

At the least, I urge citizens to question the rapidity and magnitude of water projects here. City government and utilities need to be held accountable for their impacts on ecosystems we depend on for clean water, recreational opportunities and wildlife habitat.

— Eric R. Eaton, Colorado Springs

CONTACT INFO

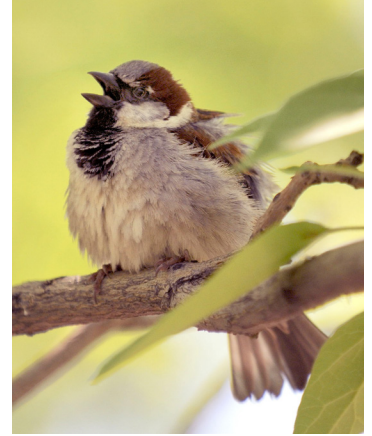
One way to make our voices heard is to contact our elected officials with our opinions and concerns. For a current list of council members and the districts they represent, see the Colorado Springs city website: coloradosprings.gov/city-council/page/2017-19-city-council-members.

Colorado Springs Utilities also plans water projects. You can keep up to date: www.csu.org/Pages/cmprojects.aspx. Additionally, your voice can be heard at www.csu.org/pages/customers-count-panel-r.aspx.

HOUSE SPARROWS— AT RISK?!

by Leslie Holzmann

House Sparrows are frequently despised by North American birders. An invasive species, they commandeer nest cavities needed by native birds, hog feeders, and generally make a nuisance of themselves. They're the target of various, and usually unsuccessful, "control" strategies, yet I have to admire this species. In spite of all our attempts at thwarting them, House Sparrows continue to thrive.



Introduced from England during the second half of the nineteenth century, they've been incredibly successful at colonizing the western hemisphere and are now found from Canada to Patagonia, with only a gap for the Amazon rainforest. Whether you're visiting an urban neighborhood or the southwest desert, House Sparrows are there, singing their little hearts out.

They've also been introduced to other parts of the world. This species was the first I saw upon emerging for the airport terminal in Johannesburg, South Africa (a bit of a letdown!), and was among the first I noted during a visit to Sydney, Australia. In fact, the House Sparrow is now the most widely distributed wild bird on Earth.

While they're in no current danger of going extinct, I was shocked to discover that House Sparrows are declining throughout their native range, which includes Europe, Asia, and north Africa. My first clue was this sign I saw while birding in New Delhi, India:



Why would such an incredibly successful species need saving? While we often think of House Sparrows as urban birds, they actually prefer farms, which provide the perfect combination of food and nest sites. Originally arising in the Middle East, their range slowly extended outward along with the development of agriculture. Now,

...continued on back page



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.

House Sparrows...continued from **page 5**

as modern agricultural practices consolidate family farms into huge enterprises, populations have declined.

The same factors influence populations in those areas where the species has been introduced. According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, North American House Sparrow populations declined between 1966 and 2015. The species currently rates an 8 out of 20 on the Continental Concern Scale.

Less desirable habitats are only one issue. A new study just published in *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution* found that urban sparrows suffer from stress due to high levels of air pollution, combined with poor nutrition. I can personally attest to the smothering layer of smog I encountered in New Delhi last year. Everyone was choking, including the birds.

Sadly, it seems that even the most successful species can be at risk. Just ask a Passenger Pigeon. ☹

WELCOME ANNA JOY & DIANA

Anna Joy Lehmicke is our new Aiken vice-president, replacing Frank Dodge, who has moved to Arkansas. A warm welcome, and thank you for volunteering!

Also, after three years as field trip coordinator, Mel Goff has stepped down for a well-deserved break. Thank you Mel for doing such a terrific job! Our new field trip coordinator is Diana Beatty. You can show your appreciation by volunteering to lead a birding trip or two—no experience necessary.

Flores' Funnies



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



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

facebook.com/pages/Aiken-Audubon-Society