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aikorns
AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

THE ISLANDS OF ALOHA— HAWAI'I, THE BIG ISLAND

Story & photos by Mel Goff

The island of Hawai'i, commonly called The Big Island, is the youngest and largest Hawaiian island. In fact, it has a bigger land mass than all the other islands of the archipelago combined, some 4,028 square miles. However, it has only 13% of the state's population. It is the largest island in the United States and has the two highest mountain peaks in the entire South Pacific—Mauna Loa and Mauna Kea.

You can go from deep sea diving on the Kona Coast to skiing and snowboarding on Mauna Kea in the same morning. Snow in Hawai'i? Yes. Fun?

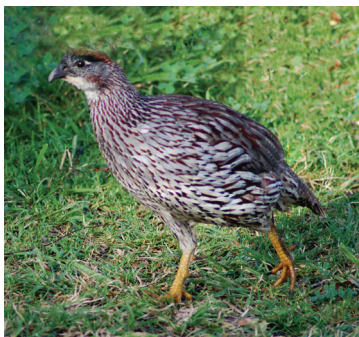
I suppose, but for Jeanne and me it is the birding that draws us back to the Big Island. Seabirds, shorebirds, waterfowl, gamebirds, birds of prey, and endemic forest birds combine to make the Big Island a place of challenge, variety, and beauty.

Since 2004, Jeanne and I have birded on the Big Island six times. We have an island life list of 81 species, including several of the state and island endemics. We have several favorite birding locations that take us to all parts of the island. With that in mind, here are our top four hot spots offering a big variety of species, and gorgeous scenery.

OLD SADDLE ROAD

This 10-mile stretch of the old cross-island highway has an amazing array of birds. From the west end drive slowly watching right away for Eurasian Skylarks on fences and posts. As you proceed, watch for pullouts where you can safely park. Common sightings included Gambel's Quail, Wild Turkey, Black and Erckel's Francolins, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, and Ring-necked Pheasant. Watch the sky for Pueo (Short-eared Owl) and 'Io (Hawaiian Hawk). Go early on a weekday morning if you can.

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Erckel's Francolin

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

We've all seen "Leafbirds," "Stumpbirds," and "Treebirds." They are those distant shapes you are sure is a bird until you look through your binos and realize your error.

During the recent Christmas Bird Count, my group discovered some additional oddities. While looking at Dark-eyed Juncos we had an interesting "Sprinklerbird" appear. And somewhere in Palmer Park we found the elusive "Rockbird" and a beautiful "Benchbird."

We all chuckled when we named our discoveries while still trying to find actual, living, flying birds. Some days, birding can be a creative writing assignment.

Happy 2018!

Risë Foster-Bruder
President, Aiken Audubon Society

Coming programs

JANUARY 17

The Colorado Springs Christmas Bird Count:

A Closer Look

Tyler Stuart

FEBRUARY 21

Amazing Ecosystems of Southern Brazil

Stephen Getty

MARCH 21

Color Banding of Brown-capped Rosy-finches

Luke George

APRIL 18

The Magic of Moths

Eric Eaton

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 submissions to the March/April 2018 issue of the *Aikorns* is Wednesday, February 21.

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

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JANUARY 17/ TYLER STUART THE COLORADO SPRINGS CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT: A CLOSER LOOK

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.

The Colorado Springs Christmas Bird Count began in 1950. Come hear Tyler Stuart, the count's current compiler, discuss the history of the Colorado Springs CBC. His analysis of 68 years of data has revealed historical trends, changes, and even a few surprises.



FEBRUARY 21 / STEPHEN GETTY BEYOND THE AMAZON—THE PANTANAL & ATLANTIC RAINFOREST OF BRAZIL

Perhaps best known for the soaring Andes and the vast Amazon Basin, South America hosts many other spectacles and natural treasures. Two of those are found south of and beyond the Amazon Basin, and largely in Brazil—the Pantanal wetlands and the Atlantic Moist Forest.

The Pantanal is the largest freshwater wetland on Earth, about 75% the size of Colorado and larger than Pennsylvania or New York. Two distinguishing features of this vast wetland are its remarkable biodiversity, and the scale of changing water depths during the year. During the rainy season, at least 80% of the Pantanal is submerged under water. Then over a period of several months, with the ensuing dry season, the flooded wetland is reduced to isolated ponds and numerous rivers. Within the limited gallery forest along those rivers, wooded islands, or drying ponds, wildlife of all types is highly concentrated, making for very exciting viewing. From jaguars and ocelots, to the local, endangered Hyacinth Macaw, traveling in the Pantanal is an incredible experience.



Moving southeast across Brazil, one progressively enters the more mountainous, densely forested region of the Atlantic Rainforest. It is compromised by agriculture in many areas, yet remaining tracts harbor hotbeds of endemism and biodiversity. For example, a striking number of bird species are found only in the narrow strip of rainforest extending from the region around Rio de Janeiro to the mountains surrounding São Paulo. While it is more difficult to observe mammals in this dense forest, the attentive observer will get lucky. And not surprisingly, the astounding avifauna are considerably more accommodating.

Join us as Steve Getty shares his travels to several parts of these two unique repositories of avian diversity.



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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 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, JANUARY 13, 7:30 AM – ? AIKEN CANYON PRESERVE

Join us on a 3.3 mile loop through Aiken Canyon Preserve to look for species of the foothills and pinyon-juniper ecosystems. Juniper Titmice, Bushtits, nut-hatches, Spotted Towhees, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jays, Townsend's Solitaires and various finch species are among those to be expected. Although the trail is well-maintained, this is a moderate to strenuous hike, so come prepared with snacks and plenty of water.

We will meet at the dirt parking lot just before the gate on the right side of Turkey Canyon Ranch Rd. (west side of Hwy. 115, aka Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway).

Please note that at publication, this field trip was filled. Contact trip leader David Tonnessen at davidtonnessenx@gmail.com with questions and/or to add your name to the waiting list.



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 8:30 AM – 3:30 PM ANNUAL EAGLE DAY FESTIVAL AT LAKE PUEBLO STATE PARK

Join us for the annual Audubon trip to Pueblo Reservoir in search of our national bird, the Bald Eagle. We will explore back roads in search of Golden Eagles, Ferruginous, Red-Tailed and Rough-Legged Hawks, Merlin, Kestrel and Prairie Falcons on the way to Pueblo.

At the Reservoir, we will take some time to enjoy activities at the Division of Parks & Wildlife and Arkansas Valley Audubon Society's Eagle Day Celebration. Prior years featured Air Force Academy falcons, rehab bird releases and a visit to the Pueblo Raptor Center.

Please bring a sack lunch and a full tank of gas. We will be outside for short periods with a few short walks if the weather is bearable. This is a great trip for beginners!

Meet at Broadmoor Towne Center near the Starbucks. Plan to return by mid-afternoon. A parks pass is required for entry to the state park. Please call Gary Conover, (719) 635-2505 for more information. Reservations not required.

More trips online!

For the latest information on field trips and events:

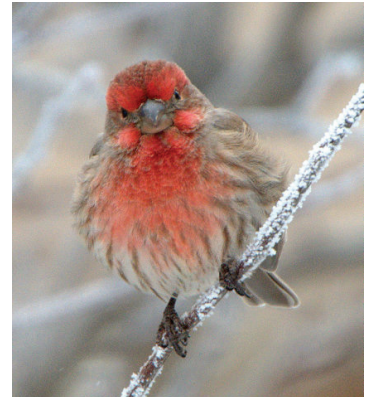
www.AikenAudubon.com

WINTER WATER SOLUTION:

HEATED BIRDBATHS

By Leslie Holzmann

I'm gazing out my frosted window at the birds in our backyard. In the four hours since sunrise, the thermometer has only climbed from 13 to 15 degrees. Tiny snowflakes waft down onto the deck and bird feeders. The predawn fog has frozen onto every twig and blade of grass, turning the landscape into a fairyland of hoar frost.



The birds—House Finches, Dark-eyed Juncos, a few pigeons—are devouring my black-oil sunflower seeds as fast as their little beaks can crack the shells. A flicker has staked out the suet feeder. But as popular as the feeders are, the birds are also flocking to my heated birdbath.

I have several drinking options for the birds. A plastic saucer sits on the bricks surrounding my raised beds. A water-holding basin has been carved out of a two-foot wide rock on our stone retaining wall, last year's birthday present from my astute husband. At this temperature, the water in both of these is frozen solid. (I got tired of refilling them with hot water every few hours.) What are thirsty birds to do?



Of course they could eat snow—it's what they would normally do. But it takes calories to melt those frozen flakes into drinking water, calories that could be put to better use keeping the birds warm. And in very cold weather, or if energy-providing food is not readily available, having those calories available for warmth might make the difference between death and survival.

Then, consider the times when the weather is frigid—and snowless. That's quite common in Colorado's arid climate. What are the birds to do then? Even the toughest beak would have a hard time chipping ice out of a frozen birdbath or puddle.

That's why providing liquid water in winter attracts so many visitors. Even birds that turn up their beaks at bird seed or suet will come to a water feature. (So will other animals, something to consider.)

...continued on page 5

MIGRATORY BIRD TREATY ACT IN PERIL

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) is in danger of losing its teeth. The SECURE American Energy Act (HR 4239), which would allow greater state control of oil and gas activities on federal lands, includes an amendment (Liz Cheney, R-WY) that would remove liability for incidental or accidental “take” of migratory birds under the MBTA. This amendment was added in response to a complaint from the oil and gas, as well as solar, industries.



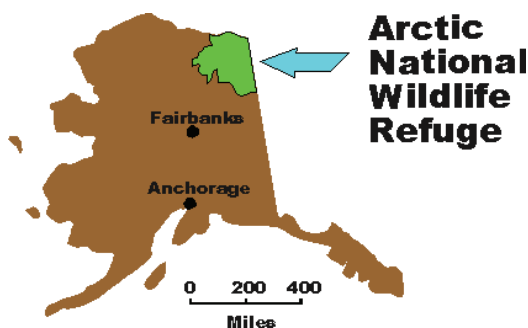
While the Trump administration would like to avoid regulations that are burdensome to industry, there is concern that this change in the MBTA would allow industries to be careless about their bird take. Currently, according to US Fish and Wildlife, oil waste pits (like the one shown here) cause 500,000 – 1,000,000 avian deaths/year, power lines cause 175 million, and communication towers cause 50 million.

Debate continues as to the original intent of the MBTA, which will turn 100 in 2018. Was it meant primarily to stop the poaching and sale of birds? Do its protections extend to birds that aren’t threatened? The answers remain murky.

The bill is expected to come up for a vote in January.

TAX BILL PASSES, ALLOWS DRILLING IN THE ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

You have likely seen the news that Congress passed the tax bill on Dec 19, which opens up ANWR’s fragile coastal region to oil and gas drilling. David Yarnold, President and CEO of the National Audubon Society, still holds out some hope, claiming that, “A number of regulatory, scientific, political, and infrastructure-related hurdles must still be cleared before lease plots can be made available for sale. This whole process will likely take years and we will persist every step of the way.”



**Arctic
National
Wildlife
Refuge**

QUARRY UPDATE

Aiken Audubon has officially taken a position opposing the proposed quarry on Hitch Rack Ranch, adjacent to the Aiken Canyon Preserve (a Nature Conservancy-managed property) along Hwy 115. Transit Mix Concrete re-applied for a drilling permit this fall, requesting a smaller parcel, but vehement opposition remains as strong as ever. The public comment period has ended, and a decision is expected in the next few months.



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Buy a Hat!**

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.

Hawaii... continued from front page

HAKALAU NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

This refuge requires you to go with an organized tour. We chose Hawai'i Forest & Trail, and we were very happy with that decision. The tour included transportation, breakfast, lunch, and expert guides for our hike. At over 32,000 acres, Hakalau NWR is the best place on the Big Island to see native birds. The extensive Koa and O'hi'a forest supports no less than eleven native species. This is the only place in Hawai'i where we have seen the 'Akepa and the 'Akiapōlā'au. Nature surrounds and envelops you in this unique birding site. It's a must-see if you visit the Big Island.

Big Island endemic species include Hawai'i Elepaio, 'Oma'o, Palila, 'Akepa, Hawai'i Amakihi, 'Io (Hawaiian Hawk), Hawai'i Creeper, and the 'Akiapōlā'au. Some are getting very hard to find, and of the ones we have seen, single sightings were the rule, not the exception. Unfortunately, there is not space for a pronunciation guide here.



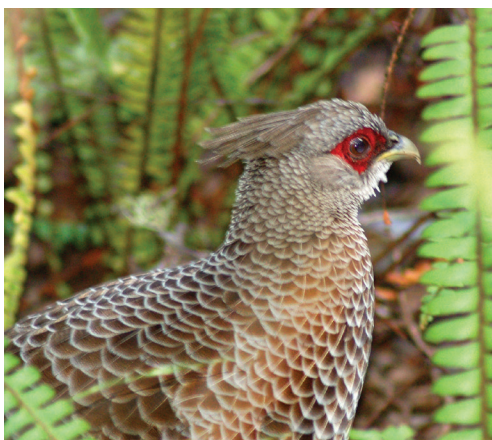
Zebra Dove

HAWAI'I VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK

An entire article could be written about this magical place, but I will just tell you about our favorite places to see. First is the area around the Visitor Center and the Kilauea Military Camp. From dawn to dusk the trees and bushes are alive with song. 'Apapane, 'Amakihi, Northern Mockingbird, Omao, I'iwi, Cardinals, and more are your companions for a walk here. At the Kilauea Caldera you can see the Hawai'i state bird, the Nene, and you can catch a glimpse of White-tailed Tropicbirds that actually nest in the caldera itself. Next, visit the Thurston lava tubes and follow the Chain of Craters Road down to the rugged cliffs at the ocean's edge. Here you can watch for Black Noddy, Tropicbirds, hawks, owls, and more. Don't forget a jacket and rain gear. You are at over 4,000 feet altitude at the Visitor Center, and the weather can be blustery.

THE BIRD PARK ON MAUNA LOA ROAD

Just west of the entrance to Volcanoes National Park is Mauna Loa Road, and a couple of miles down this road is the Bird Park. The trail here leads through some fairly dense



Female Kalij Pheasant

forest and is a great place to see and hear some of the area's native and non-native forest birds. This was the first place we saw Kalij Pheasants, Red-billed Leothrix, Hawai'i Elepaio, Hwamei, and Omao. Other species include Hawaiian Hawk, Japanese White-eye, and Scaly-breasted Munia. There are benches along the trail, but those are the only things you could call facilities. You can get up close with the Kalij Pheasants, so bring your camera.

There you have just four of the great birding venues on the Big Island. However, there are many more. Any golf course or

open grassy area can provide opportunities for small birds like Java Sparrows, Yellow-fronted Canaries, Saffron Finches, and Yellow-billed Cardinals. Also check out the new Hawai'i Island Coast to Coast Birding Trail, for great tips and hot spots between Hilo and Kailua-Kona.

Aloha and Mahalo until next time, when we will put our birding scope on the islands of O'ahu and Maui.☘

Birdbaths... continued from page 3

As with any birdbath, make sure it's constructed for birds. It should have enough traction that the birds won't slip. Ideally, it should have a gentle slope to allow for a gradual increase in water depth. Like many of us humans, birds like to gingerly inch their way into the water. (Mine has straight sides, but the overall bath is shallow and the birds don't seem to mind.)

No matter what the brand, a heated birdbath keeps the water at 40° F—not exactly a hot tub, but warm enough to keep ice away. If all the water evaporates, the heater automatically shuts off to prevent problems. They last a long time; I had my first electric birdbath for over a decade before it finally wore out.



Here's a photo from our previous house. As you can see, we bolted the supporting metal frame to a balcony railing, then plugged in the heater with an exterior extension cord that ran under the deck boards.

At our new house, our railing is made of a wood substitute, and we didn't want to put permanent holes into it. Happily, the newer models come with a removable screw-on mount. Or, simply place the bath directly on the deck. Another option is to choose one that comes with a metal stand, similar to those for unheated birdbaths.

Heated birdbaths aren't cheap, but they aren't out of reach either. I found several very nice products for under \$50, and many more for under \$75. If that's too much for your budget, you can get a thermostatically controlled deicer for under \$20, although it won't look as nice. (If you buy online, be warned—some companys' shipping costs are absurdly high).

Adding a heated birdbath to your yard is an easy way to attract more birds, plus provide an essential resource. After the initial expense, the electricity and water cost mere pennies. That's a small price to pay for the enjoyment you'll receive! ☘



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

AIKEN'S WEATHER CANCELLATION POLICY

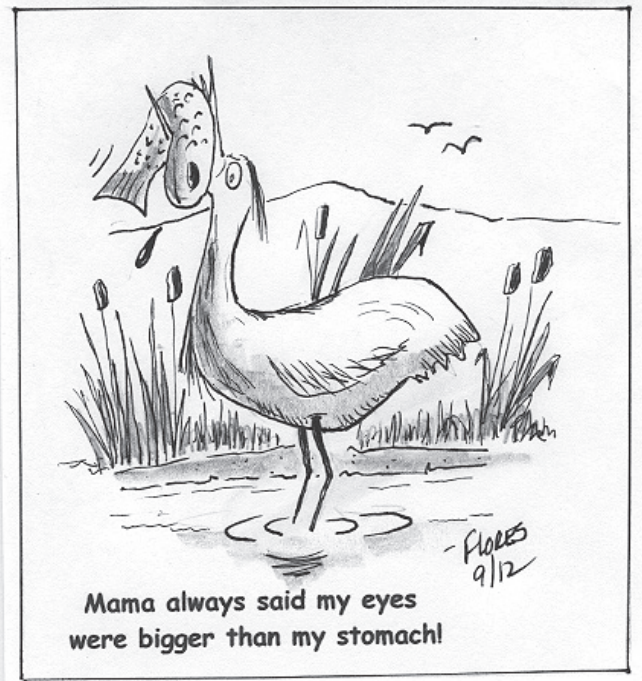
Sometimes inclement weather may cause us to cancel an Aiken meeting. If this happens, a decision will be made by 1 PM on the meeting date. Notification will be placed on our website, on our Facebook page, and sent out through our email notification list. In addition, a message will be posted on the CoBirds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



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

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Flores' Funnies



Artist Rick Flores, an El Paso County Nature Center volunteer, enjoys sharing his views of happenings at Bear Creek & Fountain Creek Nature Centers.