



November/December 2018
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aikorns
AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

NAMING BIRDS

Story & photos by Leslie Holzmann

I was adding some recent sightings to my life list when I got distracted reading down the list of the world's bird species. There are so many—and some have pretty peculiar names! I started wondering how birds get their common names.



There's always the old standby of choosing a name based on appearance. Red-headed Woodpeckers, bluebirds, and Black-throated Gray Warblers (*left*) fall into this category, as do spoonbills, crossbills, and hornbills. Other names are based on location—you know where to look for the West Indian Whistling-Duck, Chilean Flamingo, or Galapagos Petrel. Some names are based on size, with plenty of "greater" this and "least" or "lesser" that.

You could honor that ornithology professor who taught you so much—which is how we came up with MacGillivray's Warbler, named by John James Audubon in honor of Scottish ornithologist William MacGillivray. It happens that the bird was actually discovered by John Kirk Townsend, so perhaps he deserved the honor, but he has plenty of other creatures bearing his name, including a ground squirrel, chipmunk, mole, vole, bat, jackrabbit, and two birds: Townsend's Solitaire (*right*) and Townsend's Warbler.

Rails are secretive marsh birds, more often heard than seen. Yellow and Black Rails are notoriously hard to spot. I'm sure the rest of the rails can be just as elusive, so I can't fault the scientists for getting a bit frustrated. Still, someone must have been having a really bad day when they named the Invisible Rail!



...continued on page 5

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The first freeze and snow have come to the Pikes Peak area, and it might feel like it's time to put away the binoculars until the first spring migrants start filtering back in. But even though it may seem less exciting, winter birding has its own unique species and rewards.

Winter is a great time to see ducks, especially during cold snaps when many species will concentrate in the few unfrozen ponds. Some duck species only show up in Colorado during the winter, including occasional sea ducks such as Long-tailed Ducks and all three Scoter species.

...continued on back page

Coming programs

NOVEMBER 14 (2ND WEDNESDAY)

Birding by Boat on the Rio Negro
John Drummond

DECEMBER 15

Colorado Springs Christmas Bird Count

JANUARY 16

A Brood of Backyard Kestrels
Michelle Caldwell

FEBRUARY 20

Birds and Coffee
Gemara Gifford
Includes **Death by Chocolate potluck**

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 submissions to the January/February 2019 issue of the *Aikorns* is Wednesday, December 19. Contact the editor, Leslie Holzmann, at aikenaudubon@gmail.com or call (719) 964-3197.

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NOVEMBER 14 / JOHN DRUMMOND BIRDING BY BOAT ON THE RIO NEGRO

PHOTO: JOHN DRUMMOND



Born in the ancient sands of the Guianan Shield, the Rio Negro's dark waters course over foaming rapids and through vast inland archipelagos to meet the Amazon at Manaus. Second only to the Amazon in volume of water, the Negro drains a huge portion of the Northern Amazon basin.

Manaus is the capital city of Amazonas and is the center of a vast river boat transportation system serving communities a thousand miles upstream and a thousand miles downstream to the Atlantic Ocean. It is at Manaus that John's Field Guides group joined their boat, Victoria Amazonas, for a voyage upstream to search for some great

birds in the Jau National Park and Anavilhanas Archipelago.

John started birdwatching in his native England as a teenager. His 35 years in the oil industry allowed him to travel extensively on business, using his free time to bird. His world list is approaching 8,000 species!

Moving to Colorado from Virginia in 2006, John became active in the birding community. Some of his contributions have included sitting on the DFO Board, leading CFO field trips, membership in the Colorado Rare Bird Committee, and acting as a regional coordinator for the new Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas. He's currently a partner and trip leader for Partnership for International Birding. John is also a popular field trip leader and speaker for Aiken Audubon.



PHOTO: JOHN DRUMMOND

DECEMBER 15 / YOU! CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT



Please join us for this year's Colorado Springs Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, December 15, 2018. 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.

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.

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

If inclement weather cancels an Aiken meeting, decision will be made by 1:00 PM on the meeting date. Notification will be placed on our website, on our Facebook page, and sent out through our email notification list. If there is any doubt, please contact any Aiken board member via telephone. Always, your safety is first, so use your own judgement when coming to a meeting.

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Look for the
Aiken Audubon Society
Facebook page!
facebook.com/pages/Aiken-Audubon-Society

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 3, 8 – 11 AM KETTLE CREEK LAKES

This trip will give participants a chance to bird a variety of habitats within a relatively small area. There are three lakes and a level trail along Kettle Creek.

We will meet at the north end of Airfield Drive, which is a right turn just before the South Gate entrance to the Air Force Academy. For more information and to sign up, contact Risë Foster-Bruder at riserefb@comcast.net.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 6 AM – 3 PM SPINNEY MOUNTAIN & ELEVEN MILE RESERVOIR

PHOTO: DIANA BEATTY



David Tønnessen and Linda Hodges are leading this trip to look for ducks, gulls, grassland birds, and whatever else flies our way. Dress warmly and bring a scope if you have one.

Meet at Red Rocks Safeway to carpool. Trip limited to 8 participants. Contact David at davidtonnessenx@gmail.com with any questions and to reserve your spot.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 7 – 10 AM KIOWA CREEK RANCH



PHOTO: LESLIE HOLZMANN

Kiowa Creek Ranch is an expanse of ponderosa forest, shortgrass prairie, and wetlands located in the northeastern part of Black Forest. It's owned by National Audubon and administered by Audubon Rockies. While normally closed to birders, we have a rare opportunity to bird the property on Black Friday—a terrific alternative to shopping for bargains! The trip is not strenuous, but expect to walk a mile or two over flat terrain.

We will meet on site (directions at aikenaudubon.com/birding/trips/). Because this is a residence as well as a sanctuary, it's important that you don't arrive earlier than 6:45 AM.

The trip is limited to 12 people. Contact trip leader Gloria Nikolai at glorianikolai@hotmail.com with any questions and to sign up.

More information: aikenaudubon.com/birding/local-birding/kcs-2/

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15, TIMES VARY COLORADO SPRINGS CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

See blurb on page 2.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 5, TIME TBD BLACK FOREST CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Gloria Nikolai will be coordinating the Black Forest CBC, and she is looking for birders to help her. Kiowa Creek Ranch is part of the count area, and she has permission to access this typically off-limits property. Participants must be able to hike 5+ miles across uneven terrain. Contact Gloria at glorianikolai@hotmail.com with any questions and to sign up.

More trips online!

For the latest information on field trips and events:

www.AikenAudubon.com

If you value your health, birds, and the environment, vote against it.

AMENDMENT 74 COULD END COLORADO'S ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS

By Jen Boulton, Audubon Rockies Lobbyist

What if environmental regulations ceased to exist in Colorado? Development restrictions to protect Important Bird Areas? Gone. Required buffer zones for wildlife migration? Gone. Regulations on industrial discharges to streams? Mining reclamation standards? Scrubbers on smokestacks to protect your air? Gone, gone, gone.

PHOTO: ANTTI T. NISSINEN/FLOKOR (CC BY 2.0)



If Amendment 74 (A74) passes this November, all this and more could happen. In essence, A74 would require Coloradans to pay industry not to pollute their environment and poison their families.

Here's how it would work:

A74 would require governments to compensate property owners for any reduction in property value as a result of a government regulation. Since no level of

government in Colorado operates at a surplus, the only option would be to eliminate regulations. Proponents claim that the measures protect private property rights, but in reality they elevate commercial property owners over all others.

A74 isn't specific to the environment; it targets *all* regulations for which compliance costs money. Restaurant health regulations cost money, so those would also be eliminated. Zoning regulations—like prohibiting adult bookshops next to schools—would also be off the table.

One important caveat is that the requirement for compensation only applies to the property owner seeking to avoid regulation. Suppose you're a surface owner of a split estate and the mineral rights owner wants to drill in your front yard. Could you claim compensation if your property value plummeted as a result? No, because your loss in value would not be due to a regulation. Good news though: you could operate a landfill in your backyard!

Lastly, the amendment only applies to private owners and increases costs to the public. Governments would still need to meet regulations and could face significantly higher costs to do so. For example, federal water standards would still apply to public water providers, so Denver Water and others would still need to provide safe drinking water. The water flowing into their facilities, however, would be significantly more polluted as a result of nonexistent regulations on upstream industries. It's pretty easy to guess who would have to pay the increased treatment costs: you.

If you value Colorado's environment, vote against Amendment 74.

Given the extreme threat to public health, the environment, and the quality of life in Colorado, A74 is the most dangerous issue to appear on the ballot in over 20 years. If you care about birds, wildlife, or your health, vote no on A74 and tell your friends to do the same.



PHOTO: EVAN BARRIENTOS

*If you value Colorado's environment,
vote against Amendment 74.*

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.

GET THE LEAD OUT!

By Clark Jones

Aiken and Arkansas Valley Audubon received a small grant to purchase and distribute non-lead ammunition for big game hunters in Colorado in September. The aim of this project is to increase awareness of the harmful effects of lead ammunition and promote the use of non-lead alternatives for hunting big game.

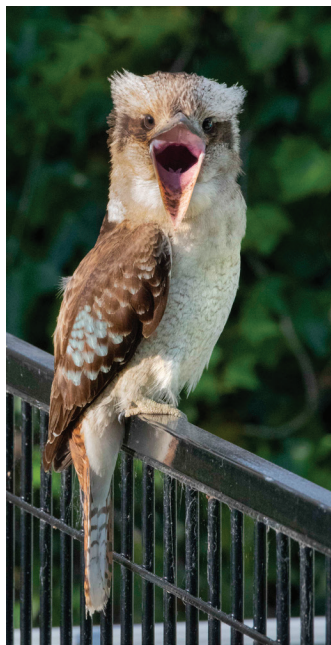
While lead has been banned for waterfowl hunting for many years, it is still permitted for big game hunting in Colorado. Non-lead alternatives are widely available, but big-game hunters have been slow to adopt these alternatives due to cost as well as a lack of awareness of the extent of the problem.

Research illustrates that lead ammunition is a direct threat to both human and bird health. Numerous bird species have been documented ingesting and/or being poisoned by lead ammunition including Bald and Golden Eagles, California Condors, Turkey Vultures, Black Vultures, various species of waterfowl, Mourning Doves, and Northern Bobwhite Quail.

By distributing non-lead ammunition, along with educational material and a survey, Aiken and Arkansas Valley Audubon hope to persuade hunters to consider using lead-free alternatives in the future. ☿

Name that Bird... continued from front page

A flightless rail of Indonesia, the Invisible Rail is endemic to the island of Halmahera (meaning it isn't found anywhere else in the world), and it lives in dense sago swamps—the kind of place you really don't want to venture into. Add in its black plumage, and I can understand why most people never see one, even with its contrasting bright orange legs and beak.



Many birds are named after the sounds they make. Chickadees, various pewees, towhees, and kiskadees all tell us their names. There are Laughing Kookaburras (*left*) and Laughing Gulls, mockingbirds, and hummingbirds. (Oddly, the Pale Chanting Goshawk is described as a quiet bird. Perhaps it chants softly.)

Then there's the Snoring Rail (*Aramidopsis plateni*), another flightless endemic of Indonesia. Does it really snore? No one knows. Only a few specimens have made it into collections, and decades may pass between sightings.

Birds are named for other characteristics, too—Fish Crows eat fish, the various lizard cuckoos eat lizards, and flycatchers catch flies. The Fluttering Shearwater presumably flutters. And woodpeckers definitely peck at wood (and siding, and stucco, and chimney flues). Some bird names try to include everything; witness the Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler.

I wonder, did someone count the spots on the Forty-spotted Pardalote? Is the Red-faced Barbet embarrassed?

Is the Melancholy Woodpecker sad? Does the Red-necked Grebe keep an old couch on its porch?

I get the creeps wondering how the Blood-colored Woodpecker got its name, especially since there's a closely related Red-stained Woodpecker as well.

And speaking of red—there are more color names than in a paint display. Birds (or parts of birds) come in scarlet, rufous, coral, rosy, rose, ruby, ruddy, cardinal, crimson, wine, claret, maroon, carmine, chestnut, magenta, copper, garnet, pink, roseate, rufescent, and vermilion—such as the Vermilion Flycatcher shown here.



I'm particularly fascinated by birds with names that are simply weird. Considering that there are approximately 10,000 bird species, maybe ornithologists just ran out of ideas. How else could you come up with Restless Flycatcher, Rifleman (a small, inconspicuous little brown job from New Zealand), Gibberbird, Bohemian Waxwing, or Antenna Satinbird. (I guess the single feather sticking up from its head does resemble an antenna... if you've had a few margaritas.)

Recent research has ornithologists wondering if perhaps they've missed as many as 8,000 additional species of birds hiding in plain sight—birds that look the same, but are actually different enough to be separate species. If so, as these birds are split into different species, we're going to need 8,000 *more* names. I hope that they ask for suggestions. ☿

BIRDS ARE SMARTER THAN I THOUGHT

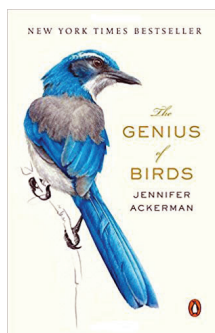
by Leslie Holzmann

We ooh and aah over their colorful plumage and marvel at their ability to soar, turn, and plummet, but how often do we admire birds for their intelligence? Read *The Genius of Birds*, and you'll realize that being called a "bird brain" can be quite a compliment.

From fascinating behaviors to the minutest details of neurophysiology, author Jennifer Ackerman takes us on an incredible adventure into how birds think. Meet Alex, the African Grey Parrot who had a vocabulary of hundreds of English words, and knew how to use them.

Or how about the New Caledonian crows who make tools, then pass along their expertise to their offspring? They're able to solve multiple problems to reach a reward, creating tools to access more tools to reach the treat.

Some species accomplish remarkable feats of memory. Others always know exactly where they are. Black-capped Chickadees have an extensive language, complete with syntax. And if you've ever searched for that rare bird you're hearing, only to discover it's actually a mockingbird, you'll know that some species are multilingual, learning the songs of hundreds of other species.



Throughout the book, Ackerman draws parallels between bird and human brains and abilities. Like humans, birds have large brains for their body size. However, we often achieve the same result via very different approaches—an example of convergent evolution.

How do birds accomplish such marvels? New studies reveal that birds' brains are structurally different from the brains of mammals. They have a higher concentration of neurons packed into their heads, helping them think while still being light enough to fly.

Not only is *The Genius of Birds* jam-packed with information, it's a pleasure to read. While Ackerman assumes that her readers will understand some big words and scientific concepts, the technical parts are broken up by plenty of true stories, and engaging examples illustrate each principle. I had a hard time putting it down. ☿

President's Message, continued from front page

Birds that breed at higher latitudes or elevations spend their winters with us: American Tree Sparrows and most races of Dark-eyed Juncos show up at our feeders, Swainson's Hawks are replaced by Rough-legged Hawks, and Loggerhead Shrikes are forced to share their fenceposts with Northern Shrikes.

And of course, we have our resident birds that brave the cold to spend their winters at home. The American Robins, Mountain Chickadees, and American Goldfinches that can be so easy to overlook in the summer become welcome signs of winter life and activity.

So next time you're feeling a bit of cabin fever, grab your binoculars, some warm clothes, a good pair of gloves, and a willing friend and head outside. Enjoy the lack of crowds, and happy birding.

Anna Joy Leknicke
President, Aiken Audubon Society

TURKEY TRIVIA

Native to North America, turkeys have been domesticated and eaten for centuries. Wild turkeys originally ranged throughout the eastern half of the United States and southward into the mountains of central Mexico. However, by the 1930s, the native population was in serious trouble, largely due to overhunting.

An early attempt to reintroduce domestic turkeys to the wild was unsuccessful, but in the 1940s, a new plan was formed. Wild turkeys were captured, then released back into areas where they had been extirpated. Others were relocated to the western states, expanding their range.

As a result, today there are more wild turkeys than ever, and their numbers are growing. In fact, wild turkeys are now found in every state except Alaska—including Hawaii!

SUPPORT AIKEN AUDUBON WITH AMAZONSMILE

There's an easy way to support Aiken Audubon, and it won't cost you a dime. It's called AmazonSmile. AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know. Same products, same prices, same service. The difference is that when you shop on AmazonSmile, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to the charitable organization of your choice. Of course, we hope you'll choose Aiken!

It's simple. First, sign up at smile.amazon.com. Then, any time you order anything from Amazon, be sure to use the AmazonSmile site. Aiken Audubon will receive 0.5%. That may not seem like much, but it adds up. ☿

VOLUNTEER!

SECRETARY, EDUCATION, & HOSPITALITY CHAIRPERSONS NEEDED

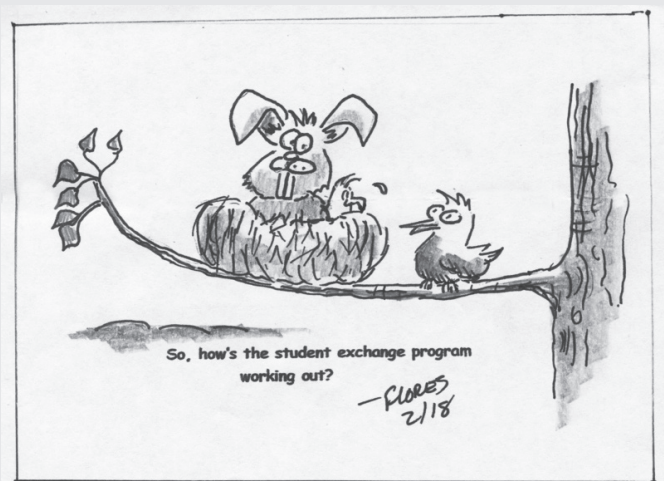
Aiken is looking for three new board members! At this time, Aiken does not have an **elected secretary**. This is an important position that we would like to fill as quickly as possible. The secretary attends Aiken board meetings (one evening, five times per year, in September, November, January, March, and May) to record the minutes of the meeting, then distributes them to the other board members.

At times, Aiken is called upon to provide speakers for civic groups and school children of all ages. The **Education Chair** will work with fellow board members and other volunteers to develop programs to be used in presentations at schools, scout groups, various club meetings, etc. You could offer to go yourself, or you can compile a list of potential presenters. Not everyone is suited for every group. We are looking for a special someone to serve our community and the birds.

Finally, Kathy Minch, our outstanding **Hospitality Chair**, is resigning after our May meeting, so we're looking for a new volunteer. (We admit she will be a hard act to follow!) The Hospitality Chair is responsible for coordinating the snacks for our monthly meetings.

Board members also have the opportunity to get involved in various other issues that affect Aiken Audubon and our mission of education and conservation. If you are interested in volunteering for one of these positions, please contact any board member (see page 2 for contact information). ☿

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.