Sandhill Cranes outside of Delta; photo by Sandy Beranich

**Upcoming Events:**

**December**

**December 2:** Join us on Blue Mesa to look for ducks, loons, and anything else that floats, flies, or moves around on the ground, in the air, or in the trees. Dress warm and bring a lunch and water. This is not an official Barrow’s Goldeneye survey but we expect to observe them as present along with multiple other species. Contact Bruce Ackerman to car pool from Montrose. We will meet at the Lake Fork Marina and boat ramp (near the dam) at 10 a.m. and stop at numerous locations as we head east along Colorado’s largest reservoir. Contact trip leader Bruce Ackerman (727-858-5857) or Bruceackermanaud@aol.com for directions, more information, and to sign up.

**December 7:** Dr. Patrick Magee, from Western State University in Gunnison will be speaking about his research on the Gunnison Sage-Grouse in Montrose at the Montrose Recreation Field House (formerly known as the Aquatic Center), located on the corner of Colorado Avenue and Rio Grande. He will start at 7 p.m. Sponsored by the Black Canyon Audubon Chapter of the National Audubon Society, all are welcome. Contact 970 497-0376 for more information.

**Christmas Bird Counts held in four locations**

*Annual Christmas Bird Counts* in Montrose, Gunnison, and Delta Counties. Bring: warm clothes (dress for weather), snack and/or lunch, drinks, binoculars, spotting scope (if you have), bird books. You will be provided with a map of birding area along with a checklist of birds that might be seen. Instructions will be given prior to beginning the count. All skill levels are invited. Beginning birders will be assigned to go with a more experienced birder. Or, if you can’t come out into the cold with us, you can still watch your bird feeders and report those observations.

**Saturday, December 16, Montrose:** Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Public Lands parking lot, 2465 South Townsend Avenue. Follow signs to the meeting place in the warehouse. We will bird most of the day, or, until we finish all assigned areas, or run out of daylight. All data needs to be turned into the leader by the end of the day. Contact Missy Siders, 970-240-5332, msiders@blm.gov. For those interested in meeting afterwards to informally discuss counts and observations, join us at Two Rascals Brewing Co. in Montrose around 4 p.m.

**Saturday, December 16, Delta:** Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the Delta City Market parking lot to receive maps, data sheets and directions for conducting surveys. Please contact Amy Seglund at 970-252-6014 or amy.seglund@state.co.us if you are interested in participating or need additional information.

**Sunday, December 17, Gunnison:** Meet at 7:30 a.m. on the Western State University Campus - Hurst Hall Room 130 to get organized and break into field teams. Things can be wintry in Gunnison so come prepared for whatever weather we may have. We will bird most of the day then get back together for a potluck at Arden Anderson’s house at 5:30 p.m. to compile our results. Those planning to join us are encouraged to contact Arden Anderson beforehand so we can start to plan out our field teams. Contact Arden at 970 901-5739 or, Kankan@frontier.net for further information. Unless other arrangements have been made, all data needs to be turned into the leader by the end of the day.

More events on page 4
PRESIDENT’S CORNER
Comings and Goings

Susan and I recently came back from 10 days in Baja, Mexico. We had a great time, sea kayaking, birding, snorkeling, fishing, and camping on the beach. We really enjoyed meeting a great group of people from all over Colorado. But it’s a little bit hard to get back to Montrose at the beginning of winter.

We’ve been birding here and there in the Montrose area. Sue Hirschman spotted an immature red-headed woodpecker, an eastern bird in Montrose, and invited us to see it. We’ve also heard about a blue jay in Montrose, but haven’t connected with it yet. One nice sighting was 50 sandhill cranes migrating south over our house on Sunday Nov. 19. You would think that now is the time for the last birds to be migrating, if they are going to do it this year.

We really enjoyed Dr. David Inouye’s slide lecture on Nov. 16 in Delta. He has done ecology research for over 40 years at the Rocky Mountain Biological Lab in Gothic (9,500 feet), an old mining town high above Gunnison and Crested Butte. Dr. Inouye’s long-term studies on how changes in climate affect the high-elevation native wildflowers and their pollinators, like bumblebees and hummingbirds, are really interesting. He has found that perennial wildflowers that live up in that high alpine terrain can be very long-lived and slow-growing – some live 80 years, and don’t even flower until they are 35 years old. It turns out that gradual warming trends are not a benefit to these mountain flowers. In years when it is warmer and the snow melts earlier, it causes the flowers to bloom earlier, and then the flower blooms may get killed by a late hard frost in June. This makes it a tough year for the hummingbirds and bumblebees. This talk prompted me to put on my “bucket list” to visit the Rocky Mountain Biological Lab next summer. I hope you’ll come to some of our future evening lectures, they are really interesting.

Be sure to come on one of the Christmas Bird Counts this month. I gave one of those 5-minute “Ignite!” talks on Nov. 28th about the Christmas Bird Count program. Did you know it has been in existence since the year 1900, when the National Audubon Society was just getting started? The Christmas counts are now in their 118th year. There are 50 count locations (“circles”) in Colorado, the oldest being in Denver, since 1912, 105 years. Last year, Montrose counted 70 species on a snowy day, Delta 65, Hotchkiss 62, and Gunnison 49 species. Grand Junction got the highest count in western Colorado, 92 species. The highest count was 117 species east of Pueblo. Come out on one of the Christmas counts in our area on December 16-17. Or if you can’t come out into the cold with us, you can still watch your bird feeders and report those observations.

I would like to thank Maureen Briggs for volunteering on the Board of Directors. She had to step down, after a year of service, for personal reasons. We appreciate her volunteering. We are looking for some additional board members, so please get in touch if you might be interested.

I hope you have had a Happy Thanksgiving, and will soon have a Merry Christmas. Happy Holidays!

Bruce Ackerman
BCAS President
BruceAckermanAUD@aol.com
727-858-5857

OFFICERS
President – Bruce Ackerman Montrose (727) 858-5857 Bruceackermanaud@aol.com
Vice President – OPEN
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BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Sandy Beranich Montrose (970) 497-0376 sj07pioneer@bresnan.net
Mary Costello Montrose (208) 610-4896 mc.costello5@gmail.com
Jane McGarry Paonia (970) 433-0482 westelk@tds.net
Geoff Tischbein Montrose (970) 615-7329 geofftischbein@gmail.com
Marilyn Westerdahl Montrose (970) 249-8571 fmsimon66@hotmail.com

COMMITTEE CHAIRS
Audubon CO Council – Jane McGarry 433-0482 westelk@tds.net
Education – Marcella Fremgen 249-8407 marcella.fremgen@co.usda.gov
Sheryl Radovich 240-3788 canyon.creek@bresnan.net
Conservation – Bill Day 872-3216 bilday@paonia.com
Robin Nicholoff 527-3997 robret@tds.net
Field Trips – Chris Lazo 424-3309 2006clazo@gmail.com
Membership – Marilyn Westerdahl 249-8571 fmsimon66@hotmail.com
Publicity – Geoff Tischbein 615-7329 geofftischbein@gmail.com
Programs – OPEN
Newsletter Editor – Sandy Beranich 497-0376 sj07pioneer@bresnan.net
Eckert Crane Days – Chris Lazo (424-3309) 2006clazo@gmail.com
Carole Scott (640-8711) carole.Lscottphoto@hotmail.com
Website Manager – Jon Horn 249-6761 ext. 14 jon_horn@alpinearchaeology.com
Preventable Entrapment of Birds
Part 1: Vault Toilets
By Mary Costello

Birds face numerous man-caused threats, including entrapment in uncapped pipes of various sizes. Birds enter these pipes, because they appear to be potential roosting or nesting sites, but cannot fly back out. This results in fatal entrapment from prolonged exposure and starvation. One entrapment problem results from owls and other birds and bats entering into vault toilet vent stacks. Vault toilets are found in recreation sites and campgrounds maintained by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, and various state agencies.

Fortunately, there is a solution readily available in the form of vault toilet vent stack covers, a.k.a. “Poo-Poo Screens.” When installed, these covers, which resemble metal grates, allow the toilets to vent properly, while preventing access by birds and other wildlife. Screens can be man-made, but the Teton Raptor Center manufactures covers that are proven to work, and are easily installed.

Several vault toilets on BLM-administered lands, including the Gunnison Gorge National Recreation Area, have been identified as needing screens to be installed. The good news is BLM staff members have already purchased the screens, which run $30 each. BCAS has identified this as a project that we would like to help with to ensure that the screens are installed as soon as possible. An initial meeting was held with BLM staff members who are eager for our assistance. Recently, BLM organized a follow-up field training day to demonstrate the correct placement of the screen over the vent. Two screens were installed.

We are looking for volunteers who can either drive their trucks to the vault toilet sites and/or help install the screens. There are 34 screens to be installed at various sites. Once the BLM covers have been installed, we will be looking to assist other local land management agencies, as needed. You do not need to have attended the training to volunteer.

This will be a fun project that will get you out in the field, and one that you can feel really good about. Installing these covers will save owls and other wildlife from a grim death.

If you can help, please contact Sandy at: sj07pioneer @bresnan.net.

To read more about this problem and the solution: Teton Raptor Center’s poo-poo-project

Part 2 (Spring newsletter) will discuss bird and small mammal entrapment in PVC pipes used by the mining industry as boundary monuments.

Unusual and Unexpected Bird Sightings

Some unusual bird sightings have occurred in the Montrose area over the past several months. As shown below, a Trumpeter swan was observed marooned in a dry farm field opposite the Ute Museum south of Montrose by Bruce Ackerman who was en route to Denver. Bruce notified other members and Jon Horn was able to get a photo before the swan resumed its flight.

Note how the bill is straight, up to the eye. This bird was originally believed to be a Tundra Swan until looked at closer.

Sue Hirschman reported another unexpected bird sighting of an immature Red-headed Woodpecker – apparently quite adrift from its expected location. She found it in cottonwoods on her property south of Montrose, where it stayed several days. Photo credit to Bruce Ackerman.

REMINDER: BCAS sponsors once-a-month birding trips in the Montrose area. Meet at the Gold’s Gym parking lot on East Main at 8 a.m.on the first Tuesday of the month. Locations to bird TBD. Contact Bruce for more information: 727 858-5857.
(Events – Continued)

December

Sunday, December 17, Hotchkiss. The Hotchkiss CBC will take place on Sunday, December 17th. Please meet at the City Market parking lot in Hotchkiss at 8:30 am. We'll survey in small groups until early or late afternoon. Coffee and bottled water will be provided. In addition, Andrea Robinson will be hosting a catered get-together at her house following the count. Please contact Adam Petry for more information or to RSVP: 970.462.8702 or petry@westernbiology.com. Birders of all experience levels are welcome.

January

Thursday, January 4, Montrose. Come hear local wildlife biologist, Dr. Ken Logan of CPW, talk on cougars and the results of his local research. He will be speaking at the Montrose Recreation Field House, corner of Colorado Ave. and Rio Grande Ave, starting at 7 p.m. All are welcome to come.

Sunday, January 21: Open water birding at several locations between Montrose and Delta. Expect to see a wide variety of waterfowl. Meet at the Montrose downtown City Market south of the fuel pumps at 9:00 a.m. Call or email Jon Horn, trip leader, if you plan to attend (970) 209-5404 or jon_horn@alpinearchaeology.com.

February

Thursday, February 1, Montrose. Come hear President Bruce Ackerman and Susan Werner talk about their recent adventure sea kayaking off Baja, Mexico. More information to come. Join us at the Montrose Recreation Field House, at 7 p.m.

February: Annual Raptor trips around Montrose and up the North Fork. Based on past trips, you can expect to see most Red-tailed Hawk morphs, Golden and Bald Eagles, Kestrels, Northern Harriers, and other species, depending on the weather.

Saturday, February 11 and Sunday February 12: North Fork area raptor trips. Space each day is limited to 12 participants. Trips will be led by Jim LeFevre and Adam Petry. Contact Jim at jmlf@paonia.com to reserve your place. We plan to leave at 9:00 a.m. from the City Market in Hotchkiss. We will look for raptors until 2-3 p.m. Wear warm clothes; bring lunch, binoculars, drink.

Saturday, February 18: Montrose area raptor trips. The Raptor Field Trips were initiated several years ago by now deceased Audubon member, Herb Probasco. These field trips are organized in his memory. The Montrose area is home to several wintering and resident raptors. We will travel the back roads to view these avian species. Meet at 8:30 a.m. by the fuel pumps at the downtown City Market in Montrose. To maintain road safety, the trip is limited to 12 participants each day. We will carpool and proceed to viewing areas. The field trip will end in early afternoon; bring your lunch. Please contact Bill Harris at 970-615-7166 or at trlgpa48@gmail.com to sign up or for more information.

March

Thursday, March 1, Delta. Mr. Van Graham of Grand Junction will be speaking on the results of his studies related to Sandhill Cranes in western Colorado. Come to Bill Heddles Recreation Center in Delta starting at 7 p.m. Details to follow.

Friday, Saturday, Sunday, March 17 – 19: Annual Eckert Crane Days, more information to follow in March newsletter and on the website. We will be observing migrating sandhill cranes and area waterfowl. Bring your binoculars; BCAS members will have spotting scopes set up with members present to answer questions.

GMUG Forest Planning – Draft Assessment Reports Issued, Comments Due December 8

By Bill Day

Earlier this fall the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forest (GMUG) released 15 'Draft Assessment Reports'. These reports evaluate specific resources and their current conditions. They provide interested citizens the opportunity to comment early in the process on the upcoming Forest Plan. The deadline for submitting comments on these 15 documents is December 8th. The documents and a link to a guide for reading them can be found at https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/gmug/landmanagement/planning/?cid=fseprd563243.

Some of the subjects covered in the assessment reports include: Terrestrial Ecosystems, Special Designations, Scenic Character, Recreation, and Energy and Mineral Resources. A full list of subjects is found on the link above. Please provide comments on them. Two more assessments, Wildlife and Air Quality, will be released later this winter and will have their own similar one-month comment period. These reports are part of the planning process required by the 2012 Planning Rule.

More info on the new rules can be found at https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/gmug/landmanagement/planning/?cid=fseprd500704 and http://wilderness.org/article/national-forest-planning-rule. Also, information on how to provide comments is included on these websites.

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Having Trouble Using Email Addresses?

A space is inserted in all member email addresses in this newsletter to avoid unwanted emails. When emailing any of the individuals identified in this newsletter, find and delete the extra space or your email will get rejected.
Results of the 12th Annual Bird Banding at Ridgway State Park

By Marcella Fremgen

In early September, school kids and the public were invited to watch bird banding at Ridgway State Park. This annual event captured birds caught in mist nets. The nets are monitored and birds are removed, banded, and the species, weight, condition, and other attributes are recorded before the bird is released. In 2017, professional bander, Linnea Rowse, from the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, was present to band the birds caught in the mist net and to conduct the studies. This year groups were hosted from 13 schools and 1 home school. A total of 648 students and about 75 adults (teachers and parent helpers) participated in this annual event. There were five educational stations hosted by volunteers and staff.

Class Stations ran about 30 minutes in length from 9:30 a.m. to about noon. The stations included (1) banding, (2) bird walk, (3) bird skins, (4) habitat, and (5) dangers of migration. Almost every group was able to see a live bird at the banding station, which was very exciting to everyone involved! Students then ate lunch at the Pa-Cho-Chu-Puk area and had the option to play a migration scavenger hunt game with the park educator.

In 2017, 177 birds were banded at the Ridgway banding station, the second highest total ever. Last year, 131 birds were banded over a nine-day period. The total number of birds banded to date at the station is now up to 1593 over the 12-year period. There were 30 species banded in the 10-day period, including several new species that had not ever been caught at the station before: one Golden-winged Warbler and one Marsh Wren. Our most common species at the station was the Wilson’s Warbler (53) followed by the Orange-crowned Warbler (24) and Song Sparrow (15). This year’s schedule had one day open for the public and the other nine days were reserved for school groups.

Thousands of Sandhill Cranes, G50 Rd, Delta

If you’ve been reading the Western Slope Birding Network reports, then you’ve been hearing about the literally thousands of Sandhill Cranes that are being observed along G50 Rd outside of Delta in late afternoon. To get to G50 Rd, coming from Montrose or points south, turn west on South 5th St. in Delta, which becomes Sawmill Mesa Rd, and continue until you reach the intersection with G50 Rd. Turn onto G50 road and you will soon cross the Gunnison River. The cranes feed in the large fields along either side of the road and move to the river at night. There are two large ponds along the north side of the road that are variously home to many mallards, a great egret, grebes, etc. with Western Meadow Larks and Song Sparrows also present in the open areas. Also along G50 Rd is the Escalante State Wildlife Area; it has a good parking area off the road and you can walk out to the Gunnison River. The SWA is closed part of the year. There is no shoulder along G50 Rd and traffic can be fast. To get to G50 Rd coming from Grand Junction or the North Fork, watch for the turnoff west of Delta, called locally the Prison Turnoff, it has a good deacceleration lane before you make a sharp turn south.

Western Slope Birding Network

To follow the migrants and other unusual sightings for western Colorado, sign up on the Western Slope Birding Network (WSBN) website. Send an email to: wsbn-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. Once you sign up, you will get daily updates of what birders are seeing on the western slope. Although most entries come out of the Grand Junction to Rifle areas, birders from Montrose to Ridgway to Durango are more frequently reporting. No filter on what you think you see but do expect occasional disagreements and good discussions!

Feeder Watch

Project FeederWatch is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North America. FeederWatchers periodically count the birds they see at their feeders from November through early April and send their counts to Project FeederWatch. FeederWatch data help scientists track broad scale movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance. It is a Citizen Science project of the National Audubon Society.

Anyone interested in birds can participate. FeederWatch is conducted by people of all skill levels and backgrounds, including children, families, individuals, classrooms, retired persons, nature centers, and bird clubs. You can count birds as often as any week, or as infrequently as you like: the schedule is completely flexible. All you need is a bird feeder, bird bath, or plantings that attract birds.

New participants are sent a Research Kit with complete instructions for participating, as well as a bird identification poster and more. You provide the feeder(s) and seed. Then each fall participants receive a 16-page, year-end report, Winter Bird Highlights.

The above text is excerpted from the FeederWatch website. To sign up, go to: https://feederwatch.org/. There is a small cost to join.
Avian Recovery Efforts in the Caribbean
By Sandy Beranich
(The information below is taken from the website for BirdsCaribbean)

The Caribbean is home to over 500 species of birds, including 172 species that are endemic to the region and found nowhere else in the world. In one instance, there are over 100 bird species that only live on one island. In addition, over 150 migratory bird species are present seasonally in the region after breeding in North America, or travel through en route to South America.

Hurricanes Irma and Maria recently caused devastation throughout the Caribbean Islands. Following a natural disaster, we typically hear of national and international medical and human relief efforts to aid human populations; however, we don’t often hear of efforts to aid bird and other wildlife populations who have also had their homes and food sources destroyed.

After the two hurricanes left the islands, an organization called BirdsCaribbean sent out teams to survey damage to bird populations, bird habitat, and to assess avian needs. The following describes their initial assessment conducted in October.

Codrington Lagoon is the home to the largest colony of Magnificent Frigatebirds. Instead of finding a thriving colony of 4,000 to 5,000 birds, one small group of 30 adult birds was observed perched on a dead mangrove bush. It is possible that more birds who left ahead of the storms will return, however, the mangroves that they rely on to roost and nest are dead. On the island of Barbuda, it was discovered that most large trees had been uprooted or broken. Trees and shrubs had no green or live leaves and not even grass was found to be present. Pictured above is the endemic Barbuda Warbler, first thought lost (photo by Jeff Gerbracht). Cuba; due to communication difficulties, little information is available; thousands of flamingos are known to have been killed. Dominica: the eye of Hurricane Maria passed directly over the island; there is concern for two parrot species; large areas of the island are denuded. Guadeloupe: was hit by both hurricanes; shorebirds have been sighted. St. Eustatius: not badly hit by hurricanes; noticing vagrants and other species that were blown off path by the hurricane; a lot of concern about the impact on the endemic Bridled Quail-Dove population that they have been monitoring. Sint Maarten: hummingbirds are of greatest concern due to the lack of food. It is believed that half of the Brown Pelican population was lost. American Kestrels were finding happy hunting grounds, since the trees and bushes were stripped of leaves. British Virgin Islands: was hard hit by both storms. Trees were stripped of leaves and many larger trees were damaged or destroyed. The largest mangrove forest at Paraquita Bay was completely leafless. Elsewhere, small pockets of mangrove were already removed during the post-hurricane cleanup. This raises a general concern that the destruction of bird habitats, especially forested areas, may be accelerated by post-storm cleanups. A gas station may be built in their place, rather than the habitat being restored and replanted. Puerto Rico: status unknown due to lack of communication ability.

One of the main concerns in the aftermath of the hurricanes is not just the direct loss of bird habitat and adult bird populations, but also the loss of this year’s young that had not fledged and the loss of food sources for those birds who did survive, including vagrants or other species blown off course that are also looking for food. In addition to the loss of birds and habitats, however, is also the loss of jobs related to ecotourism and the loss of the ability to do jobs without any equipment. Early reports by BirdsCaribbean focused on the loss of bird habitats and presence of birds, but also on the loss of equipment to enable bird surveys, bird research buildings and laboratories that were demolished by the hurricanes, and extreme conditions that were present.

BirdsCaribbean has already purchased and sent thousands of pounds of bird seeds, powdered nectar, bird feeders, binoculars, and other equipment necessary for surveys and habitat restoration. They have raised over $73,000 and are still fund-raising. If you wish to help, please go to their website www.birdscaribbean.org/2017/10/bird-dispatches-from-the-hurricane-front-lines/.

An eBird email dated October 16, 2017 provided a link to Birds Caribbean, a 501 c (3) non-profit that was crowd-sourcing funds to help with relief efforts related to bird populations in the Caribbean. Formerly called the Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds, it is the largest regional organization dedicated to the conservation of wild birds and their habitats in the Caribbean. This group works with agencies and similar allies to support bird diversity, habitat, education, raising public awareness and appreciation of the region’s endemic bird species. They were founded in 1988 and have over 1200 members and supporters from around the world and throughout the islands. They serve as the Caribbean’s primary forum to promote grassroots conservation.
Who Was That Bird Named For?

Wilson’s Phalarope, Warbler, and Snipe
By Susan Chandler-Reed

Alexander Wilson has been called the “Father of American Ornithology.” In addition to the Wilson’s phalarope (Phalaropus tricolor), Wilson’s snipe (Gallinago delicata), and Wilson’s warbler (Wilsonia pusilla)—birds that can be seen in western Colorado—the Wilson’s plover and Wilson’s storm petrel were also named in honor of Alexander Wilson. This A. Wilson is not to be confused with A.D. Wilson, a cartographer for the Hayden Survey in the late nineteenth century, who gave his name to San Miguel County’s Mount Wilson and Wilson’s Peak. (Portrait of Alexander Wilson attributed to Thomas Sully [Public Domain], via Wikimedia Commons)

“Sandy” Wilson (1766-1813) was born in Paisley, Scotland. He was apprenticed as a weaver, but made his living as a fairly successful poet and muslin peddler until his pro-labor satiric poems lampooning a mill owner landed him in jail for nearly two years. Upon his release in 1794, he emigrated to the United States and obtained work as a village schoolmaster in Pennsylvania. His neighbor was the famous naturalist William Bartram, who encouraged his talents.

During the first decade of the nineteenth century, Wilson traveled 12,000 miles through all 15 U.S. states and 4 U.S. territories. He was the first to study American birds in their native habitat. He discovered 26 species and wrote 314 bird descriptions, accompanied by lavish illustrations. His nine-volume American Ornithology, published between 1808 and 1813, is considered to be the first major scientific publication in the U.S. and is the precursor to Audubon’s work. Right: Wilson’s warbler (image courtesy of Alan and Elaine Wilson

Two Wilson’s Snipes seen recently in the Grand Junction Wildlife Area, photo by Katey Buster

References:


Available for Purchase
1948 Calendar with 4 J.J. Audubon Prints
Size of each print is 16 X 19 1/2 inches
Prints are of:
Pileated Woodpecker
Meadow Lark
Columbia Jay
Snowy Owl
Nancy 970 249-5165

Marine Road Wildlife Park Update
The Montrose City wildlife park continues to be a future possibility. Last summer, the city crews fenced the west and north property boundaries and used a brush hog to cut a partial trail from the Marine Road fence line to the north ponds and north property boundary. Grasses in that area can often exceed six feet in height; this was a welcome site maintenance action. Great Blue Herons nesting just north of the property survived an unexpected late heavy wet snowfall accompanied by high winds. Of the four actively used nests, three of the nests survived with an estimated eight Great Blue Herons that fledged. Over 90 species use the property, have been seen on the property, or have been observed flying over the property. All reports are posted on eBird.

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Black Canyon Audubon Society
P.O. Box 387
Delta, CO 81416

http://www.blackcanyonaudubon.org

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Membership Renewal and Application Form

Members may participate in all chapter activities, receive the Canyon Wrenderings newsletter and vote on chapter issues. Annual local membership dues are $10 if newsletter is received electronically, $15 if newsletter is mailed. Dues remain locally.

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Black Canyon Audubon Society, PO Box 387, Delta, CO 81416.

If you would like to join or donate to National Audubon Society and receive Audubon magazine, please send a check for $20 to National Audubon Society, Inc., 225 Varick Street, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10014, Attn: Chance Mueleck. Please use this form and list Black Canyon Audubon Society/D14 on your check so that BCAS can receive membership recruitment funds.