

Canyon Wrenderings

The Journal of the Black Canyon Audubon Society

Representing Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Montrose, Ouray and San Miguel Counties of Western Colorado

Fall 2014 Volume XXVI Number 5

Mark Your Calendar

- Saturday/Sunday Sept 6 7 Annual Bird Count in Ridgway Meet at Ridgway State Park at 8 a.m. See article this page.
- Monday, September 8

 Birding in the Gunnison Gorge
 Colorado Canyons Association
 hosts birding walk. Led by Jason
 Beason, meet at Smith Mt/North
 Sidewinder trailhead at 8 a.m.
 RSVP Contact 970.263-7902.
 Bryanna@ canyonsassociation.org
- Friday September 12 15 Yampa Valley Crane Festival Third annual crane festival, Steamboat Springs. For more information, see article page 4.
- Saturday September 13

 Bird Banding in Ridgway

 Join us at the Ridgway State

 Park to watch bird banding, see more this page.
- Dave Sussman Free Talk
 "Birds, Animals, Plants Geology,
 and Fossils of the Colorado River
 Delta in Mexico." 7p.m. at Bill

• Thursday September 25

• More Upcoming talks: check the BCAS website: www.blackcanyonaudubon.org

Heddles Recreation Center, Delta

Bird Count and Bird Banding at Ridgway State Park

by Sheryl Radovich

You can feel it in the early morning air, see it in the Chamisa as yellow blossoms swell on gray-green branches and hear it in the unmistakable sound of geese and cranes. Fall is on its way. During this time, the Uncompandere River Valley becomes an important corridor for migrating birds and a resting place where resident and non-resident species build up energy stores before flying over the San Juan Mountains.

Every September birders have a rare opportunity to view this congregation of birds from Billy Creek to Ouray's Box Canyon with the Annual Ridgway Bird Count led by Coen Dexter and Brenda Wright. This year's count will take place on Saturday and Sunday, September 6th and 7th. Participants should meet at Ridgway State Park Visitor Center at 8:00 a.m. for the first leg of the journey then carpool to a variety of habitat areas. If you want to get your competitive juices flowing, fill out a form provided by Coen with predicted sightings – add a point for each specie you actually see and subtract a point for those you miss. Don't forget to bring a lunch for a mid-day stop in the park and a chance to compare notes.

Another major event for BCAS members and area residents is the Public Bird Banding Day on September 13th. Each year, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, BCAS, and Ridgway State Park invite viewers to come during morning hours to the banding station on the west side of the bridge at Dallas Creek. There you can observe the process of netting, banding, and release as scientists collect data in an attempt to better understand migration and the health of bird populations. On weekdays from Sept. 8 – Sept. 16, over 500 school children will visit the park to experience nature first-hand and observe that same miracle of migration.

For the first time, Colorado Parks and Wildlife will offer a "Flying Wild" educator's workshop about birds, which will also take place on Sept. 13th from 7:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Ridgway State Park. The only cost is a \$7 admission fee. All who attend will spend the morning learning activities that can be used in the classroom or at public events to connect education and birds. Participants will visit the Public Banding Station and take short bird and habitat walks as they learn to use a guide book and binoculars. BCAS members are invited to attend and/or lead these walks. All will receive a wealth of materials that can be used with elementary age children. This activity is planned to help educators learn more about birds that they can transfer to classroom activities. Experienced birders that can help with leading a bird walk should contact Leigh Gillette, Education Coordinator, Southwest Region at 970. 375-6709.

Enjoy indigo blue skies and crisp fall mornings by getting outdoors with the birds. For more information on any of these events, contact Sheryl Radovich: canyon.creek@ bresnan.net.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Comings and Goings

Fall migration is just beginning and will pick up speed over the coming weeks. Maybe I have just been paying better attention, but it seems that my yard has seen a bounty of fledgling birds this year, including a couple of black-chinned hummingbirds I had the good fortune to watch as nestlings under my back porch. We have had the usual abundance of young robins, house finches, and starlings with fluttering wings, but have also had quite a few Say's phoebe and western kingbird youngsters and know that we had Bullock's orioles grow up in the nest in the cottonwood trees above the house, though I never saw them emerge. I am sure we had other successful nesters in and around the yard that I never recognized, like yellow warblers and maybe even the rubycrowned kinglet that seemed to sing forever for most of the summer. We also had cedar waxwings appear periodically through the summer, where before I remember only seeing them on occasion in the fall and winter. Lately, I have seen many American and lesser goldfinches poking their beaks into the sunflowers, and more and more kestrels have been around after being largely absent for most of the summer. Every year is different! The ever-changing variety and color that birds bring us is a wonderful enhancement to our outdoor experiences wherever we are.

BCAS will once again be conducting bird banding at Ridgway State Park. This has been an annual event for a number of years, includes classroom and outdoor education for many students, provides important scientific information, and includes a public visitation day. More information about this year's program can be found in the featured article in the newsletter. Also of interest in the newsletter is a summary of this year's annual dinner. We greatly appreciate the support of the local merchants who donated silent auction items, all of the members who attended, and Pete Loncar's wonderful presentation about Colombia, its people, and birds. Don't miss the upcoming sandhill crane festival in Steamboat Springs and Dave Sussman's presentation about birds, plants, geology, and fossils in the Colorado River delta in Mexico. His talk on September 25 at 7:00 p.m. is the latest in the series of presentations BCAS has sponsored at the Bill Heddles Recreation Center in Delta.

The City of Montrose has approached the BCAS to see if we might be interested in helping them develop a new city park to be managed for wildlife. Several individuals – both BCAS members and other environmental professionals – have visited the parcel and have found it to have wonderful possibilities. We have expressed our interest in helping the city in the park's development and think this is a project that BCAS members will be interested in participating in. More details can be found in the newsletter and on the website. This project should provide many opportunities for volunteers from start to finish. Many of these opportunities will likely be on short notice, so provide us with email contact information so that we can keep you informed!

Jon Horn

BCAS President

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A Montrose First – A Proposed City Park Managed for Wildlife

by Jon Horn

The City of Montrose is planning a new park and has asked the BCAS to help in developing it. It will be the first park in Montrose established with management of wildlife as its primary goal. Situated along Marine Drive off of West Main Street/Spring Creek Road, the 18-acre parcel at first does not seem to have much appeal, but a closer look shows what a gem it really is with incredibly diverse wetland and upland habitats.

Since first visiting the piece of land in May, members of BCAS and other interested plant, hydrology, and wildlife professionals have spent a considerable amount of time making some initial assessments. The initial work has focused on four basic aspects:

- Suitability of the characteristics of the parcel for management as a park for wildlife.
- Functionality of the wetland system.
- Invasive species.
- Concepts for development and use.

The consensus among visitors to the parcel is that it is eminently suitable for management as a park for wildlife. The prior activities at the site have resulted in marsh and pond habitat that is a haven for birds and mammals. It is likely that a wide variety of insects, reptiles, and even a few fish are present. In particular, we have observed numerous bird species, including probable nesting yellowthroat, catbird, and Virginia rail, which are seldom seen in the Montrose area, particularly within the city limits. The wetlands are so lush and extensive that we have been unable to visit the eastern portion of the property. Although the wetlands are the primary wildlife habitat of the parcel, the drier uplands in the western portion of the parcel are also a very rich and diverse habitat with dense and varied grasses, forbs, and shrubs that is rarely found in the area. Consequently, both the wetlands and drier uplands have much to commend them and can be managed to benefit wildlife and public visitation/interpretation/education.

Our initial assessment of the wetlands is that they appear to be functioning well and that no enhancement is necessary. The high water table of the river floodplain probably enhances the system and certainly has a strong effect on the diversity of vegetation with slight changes in elevation result in wide diversity of plants. Water flows in low channels into two ponds on the south boundary and then flows into ponds on the north edge of the parcel. Additional wetlands and another pond are nearly inaccessible in the eastern part of the parcel where it nearly reaches the Uncompangre River.

Growing within the parcel are several invasive species – Russian knapweed, white top, thistle, cheatgrass, climbing nightshade, Russian olive, tamarisk, and Siberian elm – that will likely require careful attention, particularly when they grow within areas that contain beneficial or unusual native species. We have begun a list of plants for the parcel that we plan to continue adding to. (Continued page 7)

BCAS Annual Dinner

Thirty Black Canyon Audubon Society members gathered together at the Bridges in Montrose on June 12, 2014 for a convivial evening of delicious food and drink accompanied by a silent auction. President Jon Horn presented a summary of the activities conducted by the BCAS during the past year. Keynote speaker Pete Loncar regaled the group with a slideshow documenting his 45-day birding trip to Colombia in February and March 2014. The focus of the trip, led by guide Carl Downing of Birding Colombia, was endemic Colombia species. To this end, several geographic regions were explored, ranging from the Andes to the Amazon jungle. Over 767 bird species were identified, of which 289 were new to Loncar's life list.

The BCAS Board would like to boost attendance at next year's annual event and welcomes suggestions from members for alternatives to the sit-down dinner format. Please e-mail jon_horn@ alpinearchaeology.com with your ideas. (Continued page 4)



Bearded helmetcrest, one of the 79 species of hummingbirds viewed by Pete Loncar duing his birding trip to Columbia.

BCAS Annual Dinner (Continued from page 3)

Silent auctions require a lot of volunteer time and effort to contact potential sponsors and volunteers. BCAS would like to thank the following individuals and businesses that donated items to the silent auction, which raised \$377 for BCAS.

Bill Aitken Ceramic planter

Bill Wilson Ceramic casserole dish; two mugs

Carole Scott Gallery wraps: ptarmigan in arctic tundra and American kestrel (photographs);

Book about bears for children

Cheryl Day Glass tile hummingbird necklace

Christopher Lazo Hummingbrids of North America (book); Redtails in Love (book)

Colorado Boy Gift certificate for pizza and beer

Don Radovich Original watercolor of a Lewis's woodpecker

Evelyn Horn Smithsonian Field Guide to the Birds; The Birds of Heaven (books and

bookmark)

Fabula (Sonja Horn) Bird dishcloth; Salt and pepper shakers

Home Depot Petunia planter

Maureen Briggs Sibley Guide to Birds; Binocular harness, neck strap, and bird bag; Kokopelli

key chain; Peterson Field Guide to Insects

Remington's \$50 gift certificate

Robin Nicholoff 2-hour consultation

Sue Hirshman National Geographic Birds of Western North America

The Liquor Store Wine

True Value Bird feeder

T.4...1 .4'...4. Ti D'..1

Introduction to E-Bird

by Jon Horn

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society launched an electronic, internet data collection program called eBird in 2002. It compiles the observations of recreational and professional birdwatchers in order to utilize historical and real-time data to understand the distribution, abundance, and movement of birds throughout the world. It is a very powerful tool because it takes advantage of an abundance of data provided by everyday observers that could not be done prior to the advent of the internet.

The program is easy to use and is a very convenient way for birders of all abilities to keep track of their observations, while also contributing to science in a positive way. To start, the website can be accessed through the web address http://ebird.org/ This brings you to an informational page with a variety of interesting topics to explore. At the top of the page are a series of tabs, including one that is labeled "Submit Data." The first time you enter, you will be asked to register so that you will have a separate account that will keep track of all of your observations. It costs nothing to do, but you may be tempted to donate to the cause, which is a good idea, because it is such a cool and useful program.

Once through the registration process, entering data is easy. The first page you will see will be "Where Did You Bird?" Initially, you will want to use the mapping tool to find where you birded on a map. You can then mark a location and name it whatever you would like. On the map, you may see that someone has already birded at the same location, so you can click on their marker and use the same name that pops up. This will enable your observations to be linked to others for that place. If it is a new place, you can suggest it as a hotspot so that others might be enticed to visit it. The places that you have marked will be kept in a personal list of locations that you can choose from if you visit the same place at some time in the future, making repeated reportings for the same place quite simple. (Continued page 5)

Yampa Valley Crane Festival

Friday September 12 – Monday, September 15

The third annual Festival of Cranes will soon be coming to the Steamboat Springs – Hayden Area. To find a complete schedule of events, go to www.coloradocranes.org.

Some event highlights include four days of free events, guided and daily crane viewing by free shuttle bus, outstanding speakers, including Black Canyon Audubon Member and noted naturalist, Evey Horn, Ted Floyd, editor of *Birding Magazine*, and Dr. Richard Beilfuss, President and CEO of the International Crane Foundation. A horse-drawn wagon tour of a crane-friendly ranch, workshops, nature and bird walks, a nationally renowned bird show, birding by pontoon boat, a barbecue dinner at The Nature Conservancy's historic Carpenter Ranch, family activities, a nature walk including gondola ride on the ski mountain,...and more!

Evey Horn will present a talk on Monday, September 15, on the Whooping Crane, which is highly endangered. Her talk will include a screening of the film "Hope Takes Wing". Her talk and film describe what is called Operation Migration – the use of ultralight aircraft to teach young Whooping Cranes migration routes.



Evey Horn

Why should we be interested in Sandhill Cranes? They are the oldest living species of birds on earth. Fossils have been dated back 10 million years. The cranes that you will see during the festival breed in the Yampa Valley and are a part of the Rocky Mountain population of the Greater Sandhill cranes.

The Colorado Crane Conservation Coalition, Inc. offers the Yampa Valley Crane Festival to the public at no charge. Please consider making a donation to support the festival. By supporting the festival, you help promote conservation of Sandhill Cranes and also the many other wetland species that share the habitat with the cranes.

eBird (Continued from page 4)

Once you have identified your birding spot, you move to the "Date and Effort" page. You just select the date of your observation and the level of effort/observation type, which will then ask you additional questions, such as the time you started, how long you were out, and how far you traveled (when pertinent). If you have forgotten to fill something in, the program clearly lets you know. Once you finish that step, you will see a list of birds to choose from. You can either put an X in the column adjacent to your selection or the number of birds that you observed. The list is fairly well customized to your location and time of year, which is helpful if you are a bit uncertain of an identification, but you also have the ability to add species if what you saw is not on the list. If you add something unusual, you will be asked for details. You can add details for any bird observation, even when not asked, if you want to record some important details or something that was memorable to you. When done entering the birds that you observed, you will have the opportunity to review a summary of what you entered to confirm that it is correct. Even at a later date you can add to or correct a list you entered because the program keeps track of all of the checklists that you have made. Also, if you would like to make additional checklists right away, you can do so easily through the links in the side bar to the right.

When I first started using eBird, I decided to enter all of the first bird observation records that I had. This was a rather tedious process because I had records that went back many years and were from a wide variety of places. Once my first sightings were entered and some routine reporting had been done, the fun really began. By going to the "My eBird" section through the tabs at the top of the page, you get to see how many birds you have seen in your life broken down by country, state/province, and county. It divides it even further by year and month, and you can sort the information in a variety of ways. The selections from the sidebar at the right are portals to all sorts of interesting uses of the accumulated data, and it is fun to investigate what these are and what they show, so have fun exploring.

The "Explore Data" section is where the really interesting part of the program comes into play. You can see the variety of birds that have been seen in various places worldwide, whether they are in your own county or across the globe. (Concluded on page 7).

Can the Black Canyon Audubon Society Make Use of this Dead Bird I Found?

by Theresa Childers

Every once in a while, we all come across a bird that has flown into a window, been clipped by a vehicle or met some mysterious end. We think "what a waste." Did you know Black Canyon Audubon can legally collect and taxidermy found dead birds? We maintain a salvage collection permit for found dead birds with both the State of Colorado and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. However, these permits do not allow any collection of Threatened or Endangered birds or eagles (Bald and Golden).

We use bird mounts and study skins as visual aids for the many educational programs put on by BCAS's educational team every year. If you find a dead bird that is in good physical condition (does not have broken skin, legs or feathers), you can contact BCAS members who are named on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Permit and arrange for them to take possession of the bird. Those permittees will then work with the collection caretaker and educational committee to determine if the bird will be a useful addition to the collection and arrange for it to be preserved as a mount or study skin.

Many bird skins have been in the collection for many years, are showing signs of aging and can be replaced with new specimens. And, the addition of new species is always welcome.

If you would like to donate a bird that you have found dead and in good physical condition, please contact one of the sub-permittees listed below. The names that are asterisked are either on the BCAS board or one of the committees (see page 2) and can help you find other contacts.

Theresa Childers

- *Jon Horn
- *Chris Lazo
- *Bill Day

Martha Grewal

- *Marti Isler
- *Elaine Probasco

Jason Beason

- Dennis Garrison
- *Robin Nicholoff
 *Geoff Tischbein
- *Sheryl Radovich

The following is a list of Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Species birds which may be encountered in southwestern Colorado that **cannot be collected**:

Mexican Spotted Owl, Gunnison Sage-grouse, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and Southwestern Willow Flycatcher

More on What to Do with a Dead Bird and the BCAS Study Skin collection

by Elaine Probasco

Friday, April 11, I approached with curiosity a bag fastened to the porch railing. It was too early for a gift of tomatoes or zucchini but not too early for a female Red-wing Blackbird - sadly dead, probably from a window collision. I removed it from the bag, placed it in a jar, and placed the jar in the freezer. Once I found out who had left the bird and had information from her, I let Theresa Childers know that I had the bird, when and where it had been found, and its possible cause of death. The next step will be to have it prepared by a taxidermist as a study skin to be used by BCAS or a partnering organization for educational purposes.

The study skins look like stuffed birds. They are not flat. White material takes the place of the eyes. The practice has been to let children or adults view and touch specimens. This leads to some wear and tear as does transport. In the past few years some of the skins have visited Crested Butte, Gunnison, Hotchkiss, Paonia, Cedaredge, Eckert, Delta, Montrose, and Ridgway. Viewers have been the general public, home schoolers, and public school children. The BCAS bird skin study collection consists of 52 prepared study skins with the oldest year indicated being 1996; however, not all study skins have the year acquired on the tag. There are some duplicate species. In some cases, those are male and female or mature and immature. There are four male Evening Grosbeaks. It is interesting to compare them, but there is not a need for another.

Taxidermy is time consuming and expensive. BCAS has used professional and amateur taxidermists. For several years Cindy Loos has worked on preparing and repairing the bird skins. Knowing that the bird skins were being handled, she tried to reinforce the weak points. I appreciate that she has shared her talent. Cindy Flowers is currently working on a Coopers Hawk and a coot.

If you find a dead bird in good shape that you think could be salvaged for the BCAS collection, pick up the bird using the inverted bag technique to protect yourself from any possible mites. Put it in your freezer. Call any board member to arrange a drop-off/pickup.

Marine Drive (Continued from page 3)

In the short time that we have spent at the parcel, some concepts for public visitation have developed. The western edge of the parcel along Marine Drive would be the most logical place for a parking area. Such a parking area could interpretive signage include information about management of the area for wildlife that would outline etiquette in the use of the park. We strongly recommend that the park prohibit dogs, but if dogs need to be included, a strong leash law should be enforced. A trail system could be developed that can provide wildlife viewing opportunities in the wetlands without causing undue disturbance to nesting or migrating birds. The ponds on the north and south sides of the parcel might be ideal locations for slightly elevated blinds that could be screened with natural vegetation and constructed in a manner that would provide viewing opportunities without disturbing the birds being viewed. In order to fully understand how birds and other wildlife use the parcel, develop a trail system that would be most beneficial to visitors and result in the least disturbance to wildlife, consider interpretive signage, and see how the wetland system functions through the various seasons, we have proposed that study of the parcel take place over a full year before any management or enhancement takes place. This seems to fit well with the planning schedule, which requires considerable time for funding to be allocated. At the present time, 2016 would likely be the earliest that development might take place. This is good news for us, because it gives us plenty of time to study the parcel and come up with design and management plans.

The time will go quickly. If you are interested in joining a BCAS park planning committee, we would like to hear from you, particularly if you have a background in planning, interpretation, wildlife management, plant science, invasive species, trail

construction, or grant writing. Even if those are not your background, we hope that you will be encouraged to participate in the wide variety of activities that will be necessary for this exciting project to come to fruition.

E-Mail Communication

BCAS is moving more and more toward electronic communication. We know that a lot of people like to have a paper copy of the newsletter, but it is very expensive for us to print and mail newsletters, and the quantity of paper that it generates is quite large. Another difficulty that we have in that regard is that many on our membership rolls are people who join the National Audubon Society and happen to live in the region that we cover. As part of their national membership, they are BCAS members, as well. Many national members are active and interested BCAS members and we appreciate that and want to continue that wonderful relationship. Other national members may receive the newsletter and wonder why they are getting it and have no interest in BCAS - we hope that is not the case. In order to be more fiscally and environmentally responsible, we would like to deliver the newsletters to our membership electronically. If you are already receiving the newsletter by email -Thank You. If you are receiving this newsletter by mail, we would like to convert you to email delivery. To do so, send an email to our Membership Chair, Rich Stafford, at megrich@ montrose.net. In addition, newsletters are published immediately upon completion on the BCAS website. One of the benefits of receiving the newsletter by email or by viewing it on the website is that the photos and graphics are in color. Also, because the newsletter is printed only quarterly, if we have your email, we can contact you during the intervening time about presentations and field trips that may come up on short notice. We will only use your email for BCAS notifications and will never provide it to anyone

else. We hope this is appealing to you and that you will convert to email right away.

Baby Bird Bath Issues

A recent news short found on Environmental News Network reported incident that occurred Massachusetts. An animal rescue volunteer found a baby bird frantically trying to get out of a bird bath. The bird had exhausted itself before the rescuer tried to help it get out of the water by placing a stick in the bath for the bird to hop onto. The bird did get onto the stick but was too exhausted to fly and fell over. The rescuer then placed the bird in a cat carrier and once the bird had dried off and rested, it was released and able to fly off.

For smooth bottoms on bird baths it might be a good idea to add some rocks or other stepping stones for baby birds to use.

eBird (concluded from page 5)

If you are planning a trip, you can generate checklists and frequency graphs for the time of year and places that you are headed. If you can generate checklists and frequency graphs for the time of year and places that you are headed. If you are interested in finding out where people have seen a specific bird, you can do that – including where the most recent sightings have been. You can even see how certain birds move across the landscape throughout the year. There are so many different options, I haven't been able to explore or take advantage of them all, so I encourage you to check it out. In addition to being a really great tool on a personal level, the data you input as an individual adds collectively to what appears on the screen as you explore – the information base that you add to makes it all possible. You are part of a greater whole and a contributor to science on a large scale, which is a wonderful thing!

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



http://www.blackcanyonaudubon.org



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Black Canyon Audubon Society (NAS chapter C9ZD140Z) **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

	y, \$15 if newsletter is mailed. Dues remain locally.	
(Check one)	Renewal (see mailing label for expiration date) New Member	
Name:		
Mailing Add	ress:	
City:		
State:	Zip:	
Phone (option	onal):	
	10 for email newsletter. Email address: 15 for U.S. mail/print subscribers.	
Mail your re		
Black Canyo	n Audubon Society PO Box 287 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, P.O. Box 422250, Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250. Please use this form and list Black Canyon Audubon Society/C2ZD140Z on your check so that BCAS can receive membership recruitment funds.