



# Canyon Wrenderings

*The Journal of the Black Canyon Audubon Society*

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

Summer 2015

Volume XXVII Number 2

## Mark Your Calendar

### May

- May 9

*International Migratory Bird Day*

### June

- June 4

#### *Annual Dinner*

*Make your reservations by May 26 to join us for a great dinner and to hear about the birds of Bhutan. To sign up, please complete the reservation form on page 3. Contact Jon Horn at (970) 209-5404 or Elaine Probasco at (970) 252-0918 with questions.*

- June 26 – 27

#### *Kevin Parks wetlands*

*Field trip with limited reservations, see article this page*

### September

- September 10 - 14

*Yampa Valley Crane Festival  
Fourth Annual Crane festival,  
Steamboat Springs. Presented by  
the Colorado Crane Conservation  
Coalition*

*For more upcoming events:*  
[www.blackcanyonaudubon.org](http://www.blackcanyonaudubon.org)

## BCAS Starts Fund to Help with Gunnison Sage Grouse Conservation

At the last board meeting of the Black Canyon Audubon Society (BCAS) it was decided to start a conservation fund for the Gunnison Sage Grouse (GUSG). Initially the funds were going to support a graduate student who is studying the efficacy of water run off control measures designed to increase riparian areas for GUSG. The fund was initiated by a contribution of \$1,400 and the board hopes to increase that amount through further member donations. While we are waiting to hear if the graduate student still needs funding, the board would like to consider other “on the ground” measures to helping with the conservation of GUSG.

In the past, BCAS has been instrumental in the startup and funding of the local working groups that have been the primary providers of concrete measures to help protect GUSG. While continuing the funding of the working group coordinators is one option for use of this fund, others include funding graduate student research, habitat improvements, population monitoring or smaller projects such as fence marking to avoid bird strikes. It appears that the legal wrangling over the status of GUSG is going to continue even further as those that oppose the listing of the species as “Threatened” by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) have filed a suit and proponents of an “Endangered” status have also initiated a suit. It is crucial that the working groups are able to continue their tangible and concrete measures toward the protection of this species. Please consider a donation to the GUSG Fund if you would like to see resources used for actual conservation as opposed to legal battles. Because BCAS has non-profit status, donations will be tax deductible. To support actual conservation measures, send checks to: Black Canyon Audubon Society, P.O. Box 387, Delta, CO 81416. On the check memo line, please indicate your donation is for the Gunnison Sage Grouse Research Support Fund.

## Kevin Parks Wetland Trip

The Black Canyon Audubon Society and the Black Canyon Regional Land Trust will hold a joint field trip to the Kevin Parks wetlands on June 26 and 27, 2015. The Kevin Parks wetlands are located along the Gunnison North Fork between Hotchkiss and Paonia. The wetlands and adjacent riparian corridor attract a large variety of migratory songbirds, shorebirds and waterfowl. Specifics regarding time and directions will be sent to participants when they have been finalized, but a morning start time is anticipated. BCAS has six slots reserved for each day of the field trip. Sign up by emailing Bill Harris at [trlgpa@skybeam.com](mailto:trlgpa@skybeam.com)

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

### *Comings and Goings*

The bird songs have increased in volume and quantity over the last few weeks, but I haven't been able to get out to see the new arrivals as much as I would like to. The variety of birds that will be arriving will keep growing and soon some of our most colorful summer residents will be here.

Our annual dinner meeting will be held on June 4, and I hope you will attend. We always try to have an interesting speaker at the event and this year's program is sure to be delightful. Norm Erthal has led birding trips throughout the world and will be showing us the brilliant birds and unusual culture of Bhutan on the eastern end of the Himalayas. Reservations can be made using the flier on the next page.

In the last newsletter, I appealed to the membership for individuals interested in filling important roles in the operation of BCAS. I am pleased to report that Marilyn Westerdahl jumped right in and is taking over management of our Membership rolls. Thank you, Marilyn! Your help is greatly appreciated.

For many years, Elaine Probasco has served on the BCAS Board and has been our Treasurer. Her term as Treasurer is about to expire. As a result, we are in immediate need of someone who can step in. This is not highly complicated, but requires someone with good organizational skills to keep track of income and expenses, pay bills as they arise, and work within our annual budget. Elaine will work closely with the new Treasurer to ensure a smooth transition. We really need your help in filling this position, as it is critical to the functioning of the organization. Please call me at 209-5404 or Elaine at 252-0918 for more information or to say that you will do it!

Evelyn Horn, who does such a nice job keeping track of the cranes at Fruitgrowers Reservoir, has served as a Board member for the past couple of years. She has decided to step down from the Board. Thank you, Evey. We appreciate your efforts on our behalf

As part of the Annual Meeting, we will have elections of Board Members and Officers. If keeping BCAS a vital organization is something you think is important, please, let us know and become a Board Member or an Officer. Officers are President, Vice President, Recording Secretary, and Treasurer. Vice President has been unfilled for many years, and a new Secretary and new Treasurer are needed immediately. *Please, don't hesitate.*

***Jon Horn***

BCAS President

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# ***Black Canyon Audubon Society Annual Dinner***

**Thursday, June 4, 6:00 p.m.**

We will be gathering at Remington's Restaurant at The Bridges Golf Course in Montrose. This year's annual dinner will include a delicious meal and a talk by Norm Erthal of Arvada about a bird watching expedition he led to the Kingdom of Bhutan on the eastern end of the Himalayas. Norm's talk will include photos of Bhutan's incredible scenery, not to mention its spectacular birds. Please join us for a fun and relaxing evening!

## **Dinner Reservations**

Please indicate choice and number of entrees, each priced at \$30 (includes gratuity):

\_\_\_\_\_ *Tchoupitoulas Terras Major with Mashed Potatoes* (Tender beef shoulder steak in a Cajun butter sauce)

Indicate doneness: \_\_rare \_\_med. rare \_\_med. \_\_med. well \_\_well

\_\_\_\_\_ *Pan Seared Chicken sauce jus lie (thickened pan drippings) with Mashed Potatoes*

\_\_\_\_\_ *Smoked Salmon on Linguini*

\_\_\_\_\_ *Mushroom Risotto Cakes on Greens*

All entrees come with a salad with champagne vinaigrette, fresh seasonal veggies,  
plus prosciutto-stuffed breadsticks

*Special dietary needs can be accommodated: please ask!*

**Includes:** Coffee, iced tea, and water — Cash bar available!

\_\_\_\_\_ Total number of reservations, at \$30 each.

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone# \_\_\_\_\_ Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail your check to arrive by May 26 to: **BCAS, P.O. Box 387, Delta, CO 81416**

### ***Directions to Remington's at the Bridges (2500 Bridges Drive):***

Take East Niagara Road from South Townsend Avenue (US 550) (just south of Safeway and Holiday Inn Express) eastward for 0.8 mile to the Montrose Pavilion. Turn right (south) onto Pavilion Dr. for 0.5 mile to East Oak Grove Road /Bridges Drive. Turn left (east) for just under 0.5 mile to the entrance on the right to the Bridges clubhouse where we will be upstairs.

***Please be prepared to bid on delightful silent auction items!***

If you have any questions, please contact: Elaine Probasco at 252-0918 or Jon Horn at 209-5404

## American Bird Conservancy News

*As we move into summer, invasive weeds can become a persistent problem and we often reach for herbicides to control those persistent thistles, bind weed, dandelions and other non-desirable plants. However, the results of many studies are indicating that the use of common pesticides/herbicides is affecting our bird and pollinator populations.*

*The following is a reprint from a recent American Bird Conservancy outreach news article.*

Neonicotinoid chemicals — now the most commonly used insecticides on earth — have **lethal effects on birds, bees, butterflies, and other pollinators**. American Bird Conservancy and a coalition of conservation organizations, beekeepers, scientists, and business leaders are asking the EPA to **suspend the four most toxic neonicotinoids** until a comprehensive study of their effects on wildlife and people is completed.

Please take action and **urge your U.S. Representative to cosponsor the Saving America's Pollinators Act of 2015**. The bill requires EPA to suspend the registration of neonicotinoid insecticides pending thorough review of the adverse effects on birds, bees, butterflies, bats and other beneficial organisms.

Tell Congress that **it's time for the EPA to get serious about neonicotinoid pesticides!**

### EPA Is Taking Action

Although more needs to be done, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will restrict use of a class of pesticides known as 'neonicotinoids'. These pesticides are known to impact bees, butterflies, birds and other wildlife.

Scientists agree that while other factors such as disease and loss of habitat are contributing to declines of pollinators, the use of pesticides, whether in low doses that are weakening pollinators and making them more susceptible to disease, pests or other stressors, or application in high doses that results in outright mortality is a problem.

## About Bird Longevity

In the last issue of *Canyon Wrenderings*, a question was posed on what bird is known to live 40 years but might actually live 70 years? Let me first dispel a myth that the smallest birds are the longest-living. Not so; it is actually the largest birds that live the longest.

References generally cite the Laysan Albatross' as having the maximum recorded lifespans and the Shrikes and Warblers as having the shortest lifespans (3 years).

Captive birds are known to live longer than expected; however, a bird living with the trials presented by predators, natural disasters, loss of habitat etc. generally does not live as long as a bird in captivity. Recently discovered was an actively breeding 63-year-old Laysan Albatross on her nest. Several documented 60 and 62 year old Laysan Albatrosses have also been noted.



*Photo of Laysan Albatross from Wikipedia*

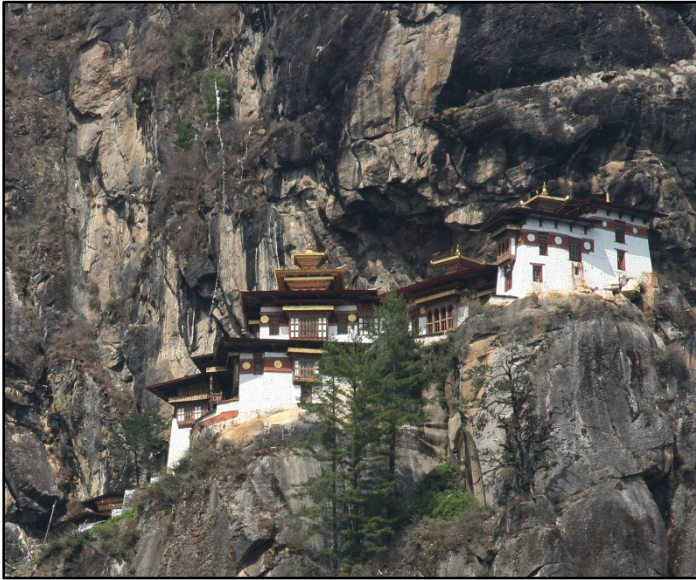
Adults with chicks have been known to leave on foraging trips that might last up to 17 days and cover a straight-line distance of 1,600 miles from their nest.

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An excellent desktop reference that is encyclopedic in nature but also provides basic information on where birds breed, how birds display, how many eggs they lay, how the nest is shaped and what it is made from, **ALONG** with detailed essays that cover a wide range of subjects – nest building, *longevity*, bird guilds, diets etc. The Birder's Handbook by Paul R. Ehrlich et. al.  
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# Birds of Bhutan

World traveler, lifetime birder, and retired Colorado Division of Wildlife Norm Erthal will present his program on the birds of Bhutan at our annual meeting and banquet set for 4 June. Erthal recently took a group of fellow birders to Bhutan where they not only saw several hundred bird species but also were able to view numerous Buddhist cultural sites of this small Himalayan country.



*The Tiger's Nest Buddhist monastery. Photo by Geoff Tischbein.*

Erthal has birded in 15 countries spanning six continents including such diverse habitats from the deserts of Mexico, the jungles of Costa Rica, and the high Andes of Peru. Over his 54 years of birding, including some 18 international trips, he has compiled a lifetime list of over 3,000 species.

BCAS Board member, Geoff Tischbein, who has joined Erthal on several trips including Bhutan, commented, "Norm does just such a great job of not only researching fascinating places to go and setting up local guides, but he also puts together interesting groups of people. He just loves to do this and I know will present a fascinating program including sharing some of his more exciting experiences."

Erthal got started at an early age (8 years-old) when his parents gave him the two-volume set of the *National Geographic Birds of North America*. He read it from cover to cover several times and then asked for a pair of binoculars for Christmas. From that point, there was no

turning back. Since then, hundreds of people have been the beneficiaries of his lifetime passion, which he will share with us at the BCAS Annual Dinner on June 4.



*Great Hornbill, photo by Geoff Tischbein.*

## Newsletter: From Paper to E-Mail

This newsletter marks a major change in our distribution process. Over the past few months we have been working on transitioning from a primarily print newsletter to one that is mostly electronic. Printing of the newsletter and postage to send it out amounted to several hundred dollars from the BCAS budget every year. We have always sent out a large number of newsletters to members that we have emails for, but we have numerous members who come to us through National Audubon as subscribers to *Audubon Magazine* that we were sending printed newsletters to through the mail, not knowing if they really wanted it or not. We sent a postcard to those individuals asking for them to send us their email addresses, send us \$5 for a mail subscription, or to look for the newsletter on the BCAS website. We have had a good response with some sending emails and others sending money to cover postage and printing. For those of you who are local, BCAS members, you will continue to receive your newsletter as you always have, by email or mail, depending on what you chose at the time you joined. We will always have a printed newsletter that will go by mail to those that choose, but the days of sending printed newsletters by mail to everyone are over, allowing us to better use our precious funds for the many important projects that we do. If you receive the newsletter by email, please let us know if your email address changes so we don't lose track of you.

# Crane Days 2015

By Alan Reed

The Black Canyon Audubon Society hosted its annual Crane Days on March 20, 21, and 22, 2015, at Fruitgrowers Reservoir in Delta County. Sandhill cranes use the reservoir as a stopover point on their spring migration northward to the general vicinity of Idaho. The focus of the public event was the mid-morning crane liftoff from the fields around the reservoir, so BCAS volunteers provided information and opportunities to use spotting scopes on the three mornings. Although the spring mornings were beautiful, buoying the spirits of all attendees, the crane numbers varied widely. Only 16 cranes were seen on the first day; Saturday's numbers were only slightly better, with about 75 cranes. About 700 cranes were counted on Sunday morning, enough to make the liftoff a spectacle. The numbers of human attendees ranged from about 60 on Friday to about 200 on Saturday. The Saturday totals included two van-loads of people on a Montrose Recreation District tour that was organized expressly for the Crane Days event. Since last year's event, Delta County had constructed a parking lot at the

west end of the causeway across the reservoir, which was most useful and enhanced public safety.



This year's Crane Days also included two public lectures. On Friday afternoon, Van Graham, a biologist from Grand Junction, made a presentation on the Rocky Mountain crane population at the Cedaredge Community Center. Nearly 50 people were in attendance. On Saturday afternoon, Evelyn Horn, a local expert on cranes, made a presentation on cranes at the Eckert Presbyterian Church. Many of the 75 attendees had pie and coffee provided by church members, with donations earmarked for restoration of the wonderful stone building.

The BCAS is grateful to all members that helped with the event. Special thanks are extended to Carole Scott, who donated proceeds from the sales of her beautiful wildlife cards at the festival to the BCAS. Susan Chandler was responsible for much of the event's organization. Chris Lazo

coordinated safety signage and was our on-site savant. Geoff Tischbein coordinated event publicity, and Jon Horn helped with logistics. Kelli Hepler of Delta County Tourism designed and printed the Crane Day poster, helped to identify event venues, and loaned projectors and microphones. Local representatives of Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Cody Purcell and Stuart Sinclair, were on hand at the reservoir to answer questions and oversee public safety. BCAS is especially grateful to Van Graham and Evelyn Horn for their presentations, which were both informative and entertaining. All these efforts helped to make the Crane Days 2015 a success.

Slightly over 11,000 sandhill cranes migrated through Hart's Basin from March to April 2015, with over 5,200 arriving at Fruitgrowers Reservoir during the five days leading up to Eckert Crane Days (ECD). This year's ECD welcomed roughly 800 cranes over the three-day event.

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Although birds migrate on different days, International Migratory Bird Day is celebrated this year on May 9 throughout the world. This year the focus is on the importance of habitat to birds. Go to their website for instructional and informational tools: [www.birdday.org/](http://www.birdday.org/)



## Bird Festivals – Been to Any?

So many birding areas, so many festivals – which ones are the best and what do people recommend based on their own experience? Where will you go back to, were the birds as expected – or, maybe they just didn't show that year. Were there related or non-birding events or unique areas to visit in the area? What about the cost and logistics to get there – what worked for you? There are so many advertised festivals and known interesting birding areas that I'd like to compile some information about the *best of the best* events. I'm thinking about an article for next fall or winter that can help people make a choice on an organized birding trip, an out-of-the-country experience (Costa Rica?) or find out about the little known but great weekend events. Send on information about your best experiences to me, the editor at: [sj07pioneer@bresnan.net](mailto:sj07pioneer@bresnan.net)

## Update on Marine Road Property

By Jon Horn and Sandy Beranich

Last July, the City of Montrose asked the BCAS to provide input and recommendations about the suitability of a recently acquired 18-acre parcel of land along Marine Road, just west of the Uncompahgre River as a park to be managed for wildlife. In early January, Sandy Beranich and Jon Horn presented BCAS' initial findings and recommendations for the suitability of the property to the city. It is an outstanding piece of property with wonderful wildlife qualities. To see a copy of the information that was handed out to the city, prepared by Claudia Strijek with the important input of many participants, visit the BCAS website [www.blackcanyonaudubon.org](http://www.blackcanyonaudubon.org) and go to the Marine Drive Park section under Field Trips where a link can be found. What our future role will be in the development of the parcel is not known, at present, but we have several activities underway that will help us to continue to gather information in hopes of providing input into the placement of trails, viewing facilities, interpretive signage, and habitat improvement. We have begun a plant list that currently includes 54 species that can certainly be increased with additional effort as the spring growing season begins. Several native species were noted, including Rocky Mountain iris. We have also identified 58 species of birds to date. Although many are common species that would be expected residents or migrants, it was great to find a Sora near one of the ponds recently. Also, four Great Blue herons are nesting in trees to the north of the property but can be seen on

the property. The site is an eBird hotspot. We encourage you to quietly visit the parcel and enumerate the birds you see, while being careful to cause the least disturbance possible to birds using the wetlands. Reporting what you see on eBird will help us keep track of what birds utilize the parcel and when. Many animals and insects have been observed and more work regarding them would be worthwhile. Of particular interest would be confirmation of Monarch butterfly reproduction. The city has a new parks director, John Malloy. In early April, several of us met with him on the property and discussed our early discoveries and concerns. One of the more interesting ongoing activities BCAS has been carrying out is taking monthly photographs from key photo points throughout the parcel. Janet Haw is the project photographer and we now have a series of photos from November through April. One of the most important observations so far has been that the ponds and watercourses on the parcel did not freeze during the winter. This was proposed as a possibility by hydrologist Dennis Murphy, who identified water entering the area as being mostly ground water from saturation of nearby land during the irrigation season. Ground water is warmer than surface water and is less prone to freezing during the winter. Clearly, Montrose had an unusually warm winter, but nearly all of the open water in the Montrose area froze for a period of weeks except that in the Marine Road parcel. As a result, it served as a magnet for migratory waterfowl.

It's nest-building time of the year. Many birds adapt materials as they build, come back to use the same nest each year, and then there is the miracle of the beautiful eggs that they lay and keep warm. Whose nest is this?



Black Canyon Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 387  
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<http://www.blackcanyonaudubon.org>



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To help reduce our use of paper and postage and to receive photos in color, send an e-mail to:  
[blackcanyonaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:blackcanyonaudubon@gmail.com)



Black Canyon Audubon Society (NAS chapter C5ZD140Z)  
**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.

(Check one) Renewal (see mailing label for expiration date) \_\_\_\_\_  
New Member \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Enc: \_\_\_\_\_ \$10 for email newsletter.  
Email address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$15 for U.S. mail/print subscribers.

Mail your renewal to:  
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, P.O. Box 422250, Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250. Please use this form and list Black Canyon Audubon Society/ C5ZD140Z on your check so that BCAS can receive membership recruitment funds.*