



Canyon Wrenderings

The Journal of the Black Canyon Audubon Society

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

Fall 2019

Volume XXXII Number 3



Banding Returns to Ridgway September 3-13

Bird banding is one of the most popular educational activities BCAS works on every year. Audubon collaborates with Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies (BCR) to band birds for research at Ridgway State Park in September. Local students will participate each weekday morning,

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Tales from the Field

Tagging Along with My Birder

By Laura Faye Mah

When asked if I am a birder, my customary reply is, “No, I’m a Tag-Along.” But believe it or not, Tag-Alongs have great responsibilities.

This last February I was planning a trip to meet up with friends in Florida. When I envision Florida I think of heat, humidity, and busy cities. As a vacation destination Florida ranks low on my list.

My husband, Don, an avid birder, has a different vision of Florida—new birds to find, endangered wildlife to view, and diverse habitats to explore. Still not convinced of Florida’s vacation appeal, I told him that this was going to be our only visit. With that in mind I needed to make this trip count for him. My Tag-Along duty expanded to planning “The Great Florida Birding Adventure.”

When picking a destination for a birding vacation, time of year matters. Choice times are when the birds are migrating through the area, breeding, or the young are fledging. Was this the right time for southern Florida? From a web search on “the best time to bird in Florida,” I learned that many species of birds winter in the warmth of Southern Florida. Also, I found that the best time for vacationing and birding in Everglades National Park is the park’s dry season from November to April. February was the perfect time for a birding adventure in South Florida.

Searching the web for “the best places to bird in Florida” provided lists of hot spots and top places to bird. Checking the web sites for the local Audubon chapters and bird festivals provided even more locations. The Florida Fish & Wildlife Association has mapped out the Great Florida Birding and Wildlife

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President's Message

This is the start of our new fiscal year (July 2019 to June 2020). Please join us for fun birding and interesting lectures. Fall migration has already started and I hope you will find some interesting birds.

At our annual banquet June 26, we held an election of officers and board members for the coming year. First, I would like to say *thank you* to two outgoing Board Members: Sandy Beranich and Marilyn Westerdahl. Sandy was on the Board of Directors for five years, was the newsletter editor, coordinated all evening program meetings for the last several years, and instigated field trips. Marilyn Westerdahl was the membership chair for four years, keeping track of all of all member subscriptions and address changes.

Second, we had gotten pretty short-handed on the Board of Directors, and I *really* appreciate six new people who have stepped up to help direct your chapter. We have five new members on the Board of Directors: Kristal Cooper, Carrie Krickbaum, Don Marsh, Melissa (Missy) Siders, and Sallie Thoreson.

Mary Menz stepped up as the new newsletter editor. Mary recently published a wildflower guide titled *Common Wildflowers of the San Juan Mountains*, so you might want to get a copy of that.

Dian Torphy was re-elected as Treasurer, and I was re-elected as President. Mary Costello and Marcella Fremgen Tarantino continue on with their two-year terms.

We are slowly getting a grip on upcoming events and dividing up the tasks that we each will do in the coming year, so stay tuned. We can always use more volunteers for all the different projects we manage, most immediately the bird-banding at Ridgway State Park in early September. ■

Bruce Ackerman, BCAS President
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727-858-5857

From the Editor

Dear Readers,

In this issue, you'll find regular news and BCAS event happenings as well as feature articles from members—and sometimes family members.

As you read this issue, please think about how we can make it better. Have an idea for a story? Want to write an article? Your contributions and input are always welcome. The deadline for the Winter issue is November 15. I look forward to hearing from you! ■ MM

Canyon Wrenderings

The quarterly journal of the Black Canyon Audubon Society. Vol 32. No 3.

Managing editor

Mary Menz at mary.t.menz@gmail.com

ON THE COVER

Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher in the hand of a bander. Photo by Aleshia Fremgen Rummel.

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Programs—**OPEN**

Eckert Crane Days—**OPEN**

Website Manager—Jon Horn (see above)

AD HOC COMMITTEES (ANNUAL EVENTS)

Montrose County Fair—**OPEN**

Bird Banding—Carrie Krickbaum (see above)

Christmas Bird Count Team Leaders—**OPEN**

Eckert Crane Days—**OPEN**

Upcoming Events

September 4, Wednesday, 7:00 PM: Monthly program. "Well Spotted - The Parks and Wildlife of Southern Africa." Join naturalist and photographer Arden Anderson as he shares his impressive images from his trip to the parks and wild areas of Namibia, Botswana, and South Africa. The program is at the Montrose Field on the corner of Rio Grande and Colorado Ave in Montrose. There is no charge.

September 7, Saturday: Bird banding. *See article on cover.*

September 14, Saturday: Birding Ridgway/Ouray Area. Meet at the Ridgway State Park visitor center at 9:00 AM. We will travel to several birdy places, such as Billy Creek State Wildlife Area, Top of the Pines, Ouray Box Canyon, and more. If you do not have a State Parks Pass, let the guard know that you are with Audubon and will be leaving shortly. After birding around the visitor center, we will carpool to area locations. Bring your lunch and be prepared for weather. Leaders Bruce Ackerman and Bill Harris.

October 3, Thursday, 7:00 PM: Monthly program. Shawn Connor, biologist with BIO-logic, will present about their research project on Pinyon Jays. The program is at the Montrose Field on the corner of Rio Grande and Colorado Ave in Montrose. There is no charge.

October 12, Saturday: Ouray-Ridgway Birding trip. Come join us as we explore new areas for fall birds. We will be on the lookout for Mountain Bluebirds, Fox Sparrows, Dusky Flycatchers, and Three-toed Woodpeckers. This trip will be led by Bruce Ackerman (Bruceackermanaud@aol.com or 727-858-5857). Bring your lunch and be prepared for weather. Meet at 9:00 AM at City Market South in the parking lot facing Woodgate Rd. near the gas station. For those coming from areas south of Montrose, contact Bruce for a meeting location.

October 15, Tuesday: Grand Junction State Wildlife Area. This wildlife area near the Colorado River is a good fall birding spot. We may stop at some other good birding spots on the way back. Meet at 8:00 AM at Gold's Gym in Montrose. The trip is limited to 12 participants. We will carpool and proceed to viewing areas. The field trips will end in early afternoon; bring your lunch. Please contact Bill Harris at 970-615-7166 or at TRLGPA48@gmail.com or Bruce Ackerman at Bruceackermanaud@aol.com to sign up.

November 7, Thursday, 7:00 PM: Monthly program. Topic TBD. The program is at the Montrose Field on the corner of Rio Grande and Colorado Ave in Montrose. There is no charge.

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First Tuesday Bird Walks

Join us on the first Tuesday of each month as we visit local areas to bird and share birding experiences. We meet at 9 AM at the northeast corner of the Gold's Gym parking lot in Montrose (corner of Hillcrest and East Main St). All skill levels are welcome.

Bring a snack and water, binoculars, and field guides. Trips generally last a half day and we carpool. Contact trip leader Bruce Ackerman at BruceackermanAUD@aol.com or (727) 858-5857.

Mark your Calendars!

September 3
October 1
November 5
December 3

Birdology: Birding for Beginners

By Sheryl Radovich

BCAS took the show on the road the weekend of August 17 and 18 with educational programs at Ridgway State Park and Grand Mesa Visitor Center. A diverse audience of multi-generational participants came to learn more about basic bird identification skills with a presentation called "Birdology: Birding for Beginners." Attendee enthusiasm mirrored the national trend, which suggests that birding is one of the fastest growing recreational sports in America; second only to Pickleball! That trend may be due to the "nature" of a sport that inspires outdoor physical activity, brain stimulation, and social connections based on common interests.

The program began with tips for identifying summer birds using clues like size, color, beak, feet, markings, flight pattern, call/song, and habitat. Photos of birds and the BCAS study skin collection helped attendees put new-found skills to use. The real challenge came when participants stepped outside the Forest Service Visitor Center to identify a flycatcher, possibly Cordilleran, feeding young on the nest. The program was well received and BCAS has been invited back to both locations as well as Colorado National Monument. ■



Western Tanager. Photo by M. Menz.

Summary of CFO conference

The Colorado Field Ornithologists held its annual conference in Montrose, June 13-16. This statewide organization of birders and bird researchers convened in the area and mixed with local BCAS birders—some who are members of both groups. CFO meets in a different place each year, and this was the first time in SW Colorado since Cortez in 2013. CFO includes some of the top birders in the state. BCAS was honored to help them have a great experience in our area.

There were an amazing 12 field trips per day for three days, plus more while attendees travelled to Montrose from other parts of the state. Field trips left the Holiday Inn Express by 6:30 AM each morning, and scattered far and wide across Southwest Colorado. Almost 200 bird species were seen.

Other events included presentations of research papers, workshops, a barbecue, and an evening banquet with a special keynote speaker.

The keynote speaker was Nathan Pieplow, professor at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Pieplow is the author of “*Peterson’s Field Guide to Bird Sounds of Western North America*,” (April 2019). It is the first comprehensive field guide to what birds are saying. Check it out. He gave a fascinating talk about the interesting differences among songs, and why some species have only one song, and others have hundreds for different purposes.

Check out these interesting resources featuring Nathan Pieplow

Pieplow’s personal website:
<https://www.colorado.edu/globalstudiesrap/nathan-pieplow>

A podcast interview with Pieplow via CU Boulder’s online alumni magazine:
<https://www.colorado.edu/coloradan/2019/03/01/podcast-talking-birds-nathan-pieplow>

The companion sound library:
<https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/peterson-field-guide-to-bird-sounds/>

A birding by ear article by Pieplow:
<https://www.audubon.org/content/nathan-pieplow>

BCAS Members Honored

Local birders Coen Dexter and Brenda Wright received lifetime achievement awards at the CFO Conference for their work with CFO and many other birding projects. Congratulations!

Thank You BCAS Volunteers & Hosts!

BCAS volunteers helped lead some of the CFO field trips, assisted with registration, and even arrived at 5:00 AM to help distribute box lunches for the numerous field trips. Local trips leaders from BCAS included Coen Dexter and Brenda Wright, Sue Hirshman, and Bruce Ackerman. Mary Costello, Marilyn Westerdahl, and Susan Werner helped with registrations. Ken Dolezal, Betty Fenton, Sallie Thoreson, Sheryl Radovich, Susan Werner, and Bruce Ackerman handed out lunchboxes.

Next spring, CFO will be meeting in Pueblo. Maybe you will be interested in joining CFO for reduced conference rates, if nothing else, and joining in the fun. See you there! ■
BA

Visit the CFO website for more information about next year’s convention or to become a member.

<https://cobirds.org/>
<https://cobirds.org/CFO/Membership.aspx>

BCAS Needs Your Help

Hey, we really need more helpers! Have fun with like-minded people doing a lot or a little. BCAS needs volunteers for the following positions.

If interested, unless otherwise indicated below, contact President Bruce Ackerman at: bruceackermanaud@aol.com

Vice President Assist the president with accomplishing goals. This position is a Board Member as well as officer.

Program Chair Contact and schedule presenters for meetings and special events. Confirm details of the program with the speaker. Schedule the venue. At night of talk, be present to greet people, collect donations, and track numbers of people who attend. Prepare short paragraph about the program for the newsletter.

Field Trip Chair Suggest great trips. Arrange trip leaders and presenters and follow-up with them as the date approaches. You do not need to be the trip leader. Provide descriptions of upcoming trips for the newsletter.

Conservation Chair Track legislation of interest to the Chapter. Follow conservation issues. Write letters of support on behalf of the chapter. Report to the Board on upcoming issues. Write short summaries of conservation issues for the newsletter.

Open Pipe Project Help cap open pipes to prevent birds from getting trapped. Attach screens on vault toilet vents. Volunteer for one day or stay involved. For more information, contact Mary at: mc.costello5@gmail.com or Marcella at marcella.tarantino@co.usda.gov

Plant Natives for the Birds this Autumn

By Sallie Thoreson

For gardeners and birdwatchers, it's time to think about fall birdwatching trips AND getting the yard ready for birds. Think native plants. Why go with native plants for birds? Birds and their food and shelter sources have evolved together for millions of years. It's not just spring where this relationship is important. In spring, native trees host the insects birds require to feed their young. In late summer and into autumn, many birds switch to berries for food. In the winter, our non-migratory birds enjoy berries on shrubs and the cover that evergreen trees provide.

Fall is a good time for planting trees and shrubs. Colorado State University (CSU) Extension Service reminds us to plant by mid- October (mid-September in elevations over 7500 feet). Fall planting takes advantage of the cooler soil temperatures allowing for good root development. Healthy, strong roots will help the plants get through the next hot summer.



Ripe choke cherries. Photo by M. Menz.

Some good berry-producing shrubs for fall and winter birds are red elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*), serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia* and *A. utahensis*), buffaloberry (*Shepherdia argentea*), mountain-mahogany (*Cercocarpus montanus*), chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*), American plum (*Prunus americana*), mountain-ash (*Sorbus scopulina*) and many species of currant (*Ribes spp.*). Smooth sumac (*Rhus glabra*) is a nice choice for a fast-growing shrub with attractive red winter berries. The berry-producing shrubs will also bloom in the spring with flowers to attract pollinators and harbor caterpillars and other insect food for birds.

Birds also appreciate evergreens for the seeds and shelter in fall and winter. Your yard plans and fall planting might include Colorado blue spruce (*Picea pungens*), junipers (*Juniperus osteosperma* and *J. scopulorum*), and pinyon



Ripe serviceberries. Photo by M. Menz.

pine (*Pinus edulis*). Other native trees to consider for their value to birds in spring, and all year round, may be found in the resources listed below. It is important to pick the tree or shrub appropriate for your elevation and soil type, being mindful of the tree's watering and sun exposure requirements. Remember to keep watering during the fall and winter.

Evergreens are especially prone to desiccation and need winter water when there is not consistent snow cover.

There are many resources to help you on the path to utilizing native plants for food and habitat for birds. The Colorado Native Plant Society publishes two great pamphlets:

- Low-Water Native Plants for Colorado Gardens: Western Slope -Below7000'; and
- Low-Water Native Plants for Colorado Gardens: Mountains 7500' and Above.

Visit <https://conps.org/gardening-with-native-plants/> to download the publications

This site also has easy links to the CSU Extension Service factsheets on native plants, with species lists and growing requirements for trees, shrubs and herbaceous perennials. Other Extension factsheets on tree planting, fall and winter watering and special tips on growing trees and shrubs in for mountain areas are available at <https://extension.colostate.edu/garden/>

Finally, the National Audubon Society has an informative website (www.audubon.org/plantsforbirds) including a native plants database, searchable by bird species and appropriate plants for your ZIP code. ■

Sallie Thoreson is a BCAS board member. Her interests in native plants, gardening, ecology, and birds all come together in BCAS.

Bluebird Box Sales Raise Funds at Montrose County Fair

BCAS conducted its annual silent auction of bluebird boxes at the Montrose County Fair, July 22-27. This annual event netted about \$1000 for BCAS.

The Montrose Woodworkers Guild creates beautiful hand-crafted bird houses annually for this event and donates them to BCAS to be sold by silent auction during the fair. The funds raised benefit the BCAS education committee and pay for education and outreach programs. This is the fifth year BCAS has benefitted from the talented and generous woodcrafters who create unique and functional bluebird houses for sale.

The woodworkers judge the birdhouses and give awards based on the following criteria:

- Level of technical skill required to construct the birdhouse;
- Creativity of design;
- Wood craftsmanship; and
- How well it meets the specifications for a bluebird box.



These bluebird boxes in the shape of log cabins, demonstrated the use of different wood. Photo by Bruce Ackerman.



BCAS members Betty Fenton and Pat Culhane are just two of many members who helped staff the booth at the 2019 Montrose County Fair. Photo by Bruce Ackerman.

This year, woodworkers created 40 bluebird houses and 7 birdhouse kits for the auction. Special thank-you's go out to John Renzelman, Jim Norfleet, and all the Woodworking Guild members for their generous contributions of time and skill.

Thanks also to the members who staffed the BCAS booth during the fair. They include Lucy Allen, Sandy Beranich, Elizabeth Binder, Dick Bushmiaer, Kristal Cooper, Mary Costello, Pat Culhane, Betty Fenton, Linda Hansen, Bill Harris, Jon Horn, Don Marsh, Kirsten McGough, Brenda Miller, Dennis Murphy, Carol Pierce, Sheryl Radovich, Missy Siders, Sallie and Ron Thoreson, Susan Werner, and Bruce Ackerman. ■ BA

Tagging Along *continued from cover*

Trail for four regions of the state with a online planning tool. My goal was to make sure that when one of Don's birding friends asked, "Did you go here or there," he could say "yes." We did a loop from the Orlando area and stopped at the biggies—Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Everglades National Park, Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, and Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge. We didn't forget to check out smaller, lesser known locations—the Orlando Wetlands Park was one of our favorites.

Lifers. This being Don's and my only trip to Florida, we had to increase the number of birds on his life list. Searching the web for bird checklists I found not only the well-known birding locations had lists and sightings, but so did many

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Events *continued from page 3*

November 16, Saturday, 9:00 am: Bostwick Park Rd and Kinikin Rd birding trip. These two backroads near Montrose can be very birdy. Meet at the northeast corner of Gold's Gym parking lot in Montrose.

November 23, Saturday, 10 am: Blue Mesa Reservoir birding trip. Join us as we look for fall ducks and other birds. We will be looking especially for Barrow's Goldeneye and other cold season birds. Meet us at the Lake Fork Marina and boat ramp (near the dam) at 10 am. Trip size is limited and you need to sign up to reserve a place. Bring a picnic lunch and dress for cold weather. Contact trip leader Jon Horn at: jon_horn@alpinearchaeology.com, 970-209-5404, for directions, more information, and to sign up.

Questions? Contact Bruce Ackerman at Bruceackerman@aol.com or 727-858-5857. ■

Tagging Along *continued from page 6*

small towns and small parks. Searching the web for “ebird rare bird alert Florida” helped me locate unusual birds for Florida. Searching for lifers, we traveled the back roads and visited many wildlife venues and towns we would not otherwise have visited.

The most elusive of Don’s lifers was the red-cockaded woodpecker. The search “ebird red-cockaded florida” helped locate where this lifer had recently been seen. We had tried two locations with no luck and were going to try the third and last location (Picayune Strand State Forest) the next morning. The problem was we didn’t know the specific area at Picayune, and it had a couple of entrances. That night we were on a wildlife viewing platform at Ten Thousand Islands National Refuge and I struck up a conversation with a birder who was from out of state like us. I suddenly realized she was the lady who had posted the red-cockaded woodpecker sighting on eBird. She gave us directions on how to get to the entrance she used, which was not on the map, and also where she had seen her only sighting of the woodpecker.



Painted bunting seen on the trip.
Photo by Laura Faye Mah.

The next morning, Don found many red-cockaded woodpeckers and got his lifer. As a Tag Along, this trip plan was my *pièce de résistance*. Don added 12 life birds to his list and we experienced the wild side of Florida. I am a photographer and greatly improved my bird photography. There are many other details I took into consideration when planning this trip, but we also kept our trip flexible. Great adventures came our way unplanned. Ask and we will share our swamp-slogging escapade with you. ■

Laura Faye Mah is an award-winning photographer, extremely patient birding tag-along, and wife of BCAS board member Don Marsh.

Banding *continued from cover*

watching the bird banding process, as well as use binoculars, and other bird-related activities. This is the 13th year of this educational project.

The station will be open for students on weekdays from September 3 to 13. Banding will be open to the public on Saturday, September 7, from 7:30 AM to 12:00 PM.

The educational activities are a great outreach opportunity for hundreds of children in the area. On average, approximately 700 local fourth grade students will learn about bird migration and habitat

“Volunteers are needed to help with the student activities,” says Carrie Krickbaum, the park naturalist at Ridgway State Park. She is scheduling schools that want to attend and needs multiple volunteers. Activities and instruction are provided to volunteers by Krickbaum.

If you are interested in volunteering, contact Carrie at ridgway.naturalist@state.co.us, or (970) 209-3703.

Experienced bander Vicki Morgan has been hired by Bird Conservancy of the Rockies to band this year. She most recently has been a bander in Jackson, WY.

After two weeks of birding in Ridgway, the operation will shift to Grand Junction for four weeks with Grand Valley Audubon Society at the Connected Lakes State Park, which is also open to visitors. ■ BA

Public Banding Demonstration

If you would like to visit the banding station on September 7, go to the Dallas Creek entrance station and follow the road as far south as possible. The banding station is located across the footbridge at the parking lot. An annual park entrance pass or paid fee is required. ■



In 2018, 45 species were banded at the Ridgway Banding Station. Photo by Aleshia Fremgen Rummel.

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**Black Canyon Audubon Society (NAS Chapter D14)
Chapter Membership Form**

Local Audubon chapter members may participate in all chapter activities, receive the chapter journal *Canyon Wrenderings*, and vote on chapter issues. Annual membership dues are \$20 for individual and \$30 for family membership. Dues remain local.

(Check one) Renewal ☐ New Member ☐

Name:

Mailing Address:

City:

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Phone (Optional):

Email (Required):

Enclosed
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☐ \$30 for family membership

Mail your renewal to: Black Canyon Audubon Society, PO Box 387, Delta, CO 81416.