



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

Spring 2019

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Spring is surely on the way. Photo of American Robin taken on January 7, 2019 at Marine Road Park in Montrose, by Sandy Beranich

Upcoming Events and Dates to Know

March

March 7, Thursday: SPEAKER – Van K. Graham, retired wildlife biologist from Grand Junction, will provide a PowerPoint Presentation on the Rocky Mountain population of Greater Sandhill Cranes in Colorado. His program will include historical information highlighting the decline of the crane populations in the late 1800's and early 1900's and recent increases; crane biology and management studies, and the annual cycle of life from reproduction through annual migration. Cranes migrate north through western Colorado and BCAS celebrates their return with a Crane Festival in Eckert (see below and page 3). His program will be held at the Bill Heddles Recreation Center in Delta, starting at 7 p.m. There is no charge.

March 15 – 17th, Friday-Sunday: Annual Eckert Crane Days Join us at 9 a.m. each day in Eckert, as we celebrate the annual migration of Sandhill Cranes. We will be watching for the cranes to lift off and viewing other area waterfowl. Bring your binoculars and spotting scopes if you have them; BCAS will provide spotting scopes and will have information and members present to answer questions. See article on page 3 for more information and schedule.

March 21, Thursday: SPEAKER – Mary Menz: Native Plants are for the Birds! Native plants are a critical part of the food chain for both resident birds and native pollinators. This program focuses on native plants for birds and birders as part of the food chain. The same plants that attract birds also attract insects and pollinators that the birds eat. Presenter Mary Menz lives in Ridgway and is a Colorado Native Plant Master® who co-teaches the Colorado State University Extension Service's Native Plant Master Program on the Western Slope. She has also been a bander's aide at migratory bird banding stations for nearly 10 years and has seen the benefits of native plants in action at those sites. This program will be held at the Montrose Field House, at the corner of Rio Grande and Colorado Ave in Montrose starting at 7 p.m. There is no charge to attend.

APRIL

April 4, Thursday: SPEAKER – BCAS President Bruce Ackerman and Susan Werner will provide a PowerPoint presentation on the over 300 bird species they saw on a recent trip to Ecuador. Aplomado Falcons, over 40 kinds of hummingbirds, 70 kinds of tanagers, and even one sloth were just some of what they discovered in the rainforests of Ecuador. Join us at the Montrose Field House, corner of Rio Grande and Colorado Ave in Montrose at 7 p.m. No charge.

April 27, Saturday – FIELD TRIP – Join us as we return to Fruitgrowers Reservoir, to view ducks, shorebirds, and search for returning warblers. We will meet at Gold's Gym in Montrose at 8 a.m. located on the corner of East Main and Hillcrest.

More events on page 5.

The last full moon of the winter, on March 21, is known as the Worm Moon. It is named after the earthworms that emerge this time of the year. There are about 6,000 earthworm species world-wide; more than 180 species occur in the US and Canada. 60 species are considered invasive.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Comings and Goings

As we come into Spring.....

Winter is starting to wind down. Birds are starting to migrate north. Did you know that "Spring" Migration actually starts in February and ends in June? Watch for some early birds already arriving here and then heading on farther north. As I am writing this in mid-February, I've recently seen Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintails, and Redhead ducks that are probably moving north already.

March is the month for Eckert Crane Days. I hope you'll join us March 15-17 to watch the cranes migrating north. See schedule of activities on the next page. The cranes are travelling from their wintering spots in New Mexico to the far north. Winter is usually just barely finished here when they start going. Some sandhill cranes in the west travel north to northern Canada, Alaska, and some on over to Siberia. After several years of coordinating the Crane "Daze" event, Chris Lazo and Carole Scott have stepped down and board members Marilyn Westerdahl and Dian Torphy have picked up the leadership roles. Thanks to all of these leaders!

Save The Dates! – The Colorado Field Ornithologists will hold their annual meeting in Montrose Thursday, June 13 to Sunday June 16. BCAS members can volunteer to help out, or join CFO and participate fully. <https://cobirds.org/CFO/Conventions/Default.aspx>

We are always looking for some additional board members, so please get in touch if you might be interested.

I hope you are enjoying our cold/warm(?) winter/spring(?) weather, and use this opportunity to get out for some good birding.

Bruce Ackerman,

BCAS President

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Audubon Council of Colorado (ACC) Meeting Notes

By Bruce Ackerman

The most recent ACC meeting was held on January 12, 2019 and was attended by BCAS representative Bruce Ackerman. A brief summary of major concerns that were discussed at the meeting is provided below; once the final minutes become available, they will be posted on the BCAS website (www.blackcanyonaudubon.org)

Common chapter issues that were discussed included how to engage more active and younger members, how to use social media effectively to reach interested people, and how to raise money and invest it effectively. Let me know your ideas!

Several chapters continue to work on incentives for hunters to use non-lead ammunition for deer hunting. An issue related to guns is that unsafe shooting is happening in the Pawnee National Grasslands, a birding hotspot.

The ACC, through each chapter, supports a full-time lobbyist. We talked about upcoming legislation in Colorado and U.S. legislative sessions. The ACC will push for more conservation actions by the State Land Board, not just oil and gas leases. Some oil and gas leases are close to Lesser Prairie Chicken leks in southeast Colorado. We are also hoping for better success at the federal level, for protection of the Greater Sage Grouse, endangered species, and renewing federal funding for conservation (Land and Water Conservation Fund, Recovering America's Wildlife Act, see related article on page 3.)

The next ACC meeting will be held in Grand Junction on April 13, 2019, hosted by the Grand Valley chapter. Elections will be held at that time.

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Celebrate the Returning Sandhill Cranes at Fruitgrowers Reservoir

By Dian Torphy

March 2019 is the 8th consecutive year that BCAS will be hosting Eckert Crane Days. This event welcomes the annual migration and stopover of Sandhill Cranes in Delta County. Although a resident population of Cranes has taken up winter quarters along the Gunnison River near Delta, the cranes that come to the Eckert area are flying from Central New Mexico to various breeding destinations north of here. Fruitgrowers Reservoir provides food and a resting area for them on their way. Several thousand cranes fly through our area each year; most of the cranes fly over or rest at the reservoir during the month of March. Last year, 6,000 cranes were counted over a three-week period. They generally arrive in the late afternoon and stay only one night. Their honking and behavior is fun to hear and see and the highlight is their liftoff in the morning, usually occurring between 10:00 and 11:00 a.m. Temperature and weather greatly influence both the number of birds coming in and the time of take-off the next day. We will be watching other birds and waterfowl in the area as well so there is always something to see.

Parking is available at a pull-off on the north side of North Rd. just west and at the top of the hill from the reservoir. BCAS members will be set up there and available to answer your questions. Additional parking is also available at the bottom of the hill in a small parking lot. In addition to answering questions about the cranes, BCAS members will also be on the causeway to help identify ducks and answer questions.

In addition to watching the cranes and ducks on the reservoir, come join us at other planned activities related to cranes.

Schedule of crane-related activities

March 7, Thursday: Come to Bill Heddles Recreation Center in Delta to hear Van Graham, retired wildlife biologist formerly with Colorado Division of Wildlife, who helped to develop the initial recovery plan for Sandhill Cranes. He has devoted years to studying and photographing cranes. See more information about his presentation on page 1. His program will start at 7 p.m. No charge.

March 9, Saturday, 2:30-4:00 p.m.: Join us as we clean up the area around Fruitgrower's Reservoir and do some early spring birding as well. Trash bags will be provided. Please bring gloves and wear some bright colors as we will be along the roadway. Bring binoculars!

March 15, 16, and 17, Fri.-Sun., 9-11 a.m.: BCAS members and some scopes will be set up to watch the Cranes take off. Birds normally come into the area around 5 p.m. if you care to return to see them in the evening. Stacy's on Main St. in Cedaredge will have coffee and baked goods for sale on Saturday and Sunday. On Saturday, there will be a free luncheon at Hart's Basin Ranch, opposite the reservoir. The lunch is sponsored by Western States Ranches. Once finalized, details will be posted on the BCAS website: www.blackcanyonaudubon.org.

March 15, Friday, 7-9 p.m.: Wine and Appetizer reception at the Graystone Restaurant in Eckert (on North Rd., just east of the intersection with Hwy 65). Dr. David Noe of Paonia will be speaking on topics related to why the cranes choose to stop over at Fruitgrowers Reservoir to rest and feed. There is a \$20 charge to attend. SPELL Please call 970-874-9532 by March 10 to make your reservation.

Hope for 2019

By Bill Day

After two years of consistent bad news for wildlife and conservation, 2019 has begun with one pretty positive action in the US Senate and hopes for another one.

The well-publicized, bipartisan compromise Senate Bill 47, known as the National Resource Management Act (NRMA), which includes more than 100 individual pieces of legislation, has already been passed by the Senate, 92-8. Components of the act include the permanent funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (which President Trump had wanted cut by 95%), four years of funding for the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, expansion of five National Parks, and the creation of 1.3 million acres of new Wilderness.

At least partly because none of the wilderness created by the NRMA is in Colorado, Sen. Michael Bennet and Rep. Joe Neguse have introduced the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE) Act. CORE is a combination of the following previous proposals:

- San Juan Mountain Wilderness Act, which creates 31,725 acres of designated wilderness.
- Continental Divide Recreation, Wilderness, and Camp Hale Legacy Act.
- Thompson Divide Withdrawal and Protection Act.
- Curecanti National Recreation Area Boundary Establishment Act.

The San Juan Mountain Wilderness Act part of CORE has been worked on by local residents and Senator Bennet's staff for years, and enlarges existing wilderness areas in the northern San Juan Mountains. The Thompson Divide Withdrawal and Protection Act protect parts of the North Fork of the Gunnison River that lie in Gunnison County, as well as parts of Pitkin and Garfield Counties from energy development.

Please thank Senator Bennet for his work on this by calling his west slope offices at 970-259-1710 or 970-241-6631. It is also important to thank Sen. Cory Gardner (970-245-9553 or 970-259-1231) for supporting the NRMA legislation, and especially to ask him to support Sen. Bennet's CORE act. And ask Rep. Scott Tipton (970-241-2499 or 970-259-1490) to support both pieces of legislation in the House of Representatives.

Events (Continued from page 1)

MAY

May 2, Thursday: SPEAKER – Jeremy Springfield with the Black Canyon National Park is our featured speaker for May. He will talk about the constellations and nebulae that are named after birds, the mythology behind the names, and which ones we can see in our area. Do you know what the Milky Way “Bird Pathway” is? There are over eight constellations named after birds (e.g., Cygnus the Swan) and over five Nebula that are also named after birds (e.g., Running Chicken Nebula). This program will be held at the Montrose Field House on the corner of Rio Grande and Colorado Ave in Montrose. Join us at 7 p.m., there is no charge.

May 18-19, Saturday-Sunday, WEST END FIELD TRIP – BCAS will sponsor a field trip to Paradox Valley and other venues at the West End of Montrose County for a spring birding adventure. The opportunity to see over 70 species is very high. Expect several short walks to access bird habitat. We will meet at the Dan Noble Wildlife Area next to Miramonte Reservoir at 9:00 a.m. on May 18th, near Norwood. For those who want to get there a day early, there are camping facilities at the wildlife area. Directions to the meeting site will be sent to those who sign up.

The Paradox Valley and West End areas have a great mix of habitats ranging from desert scrub to classic alpine to riparian, allowing for a rich mix of birds during the spring migration. Expect to see a variety of waterfowl, sage sparrows, vireos, yellow-breasted chats, Grace’s warblers, black phoebes and a host of migrants. Day 1 will wrap up near Naturita, so participants can access either hotel accommodations or camp for the night. The Uravan Ball Park campground is open for our use, and the Rimrock Hotel (970-865-2500) in Naturita has nice rooms at reasonable prices. A potluck dinner is planned for the evening of 18th. This trip is limited to 12 participants. For questions and to sign up contact Bill Harris at trigpa48@gmail.com

JUNE

June 6, Thursday: SPEAKER – Theresa Childers, Wildlife Biologist with Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Curecanti National Recreation Area, will present information on the National Park Service's bird monitoring program. The program will focus on the many decades of Peregrine Falcon nests, but will also highlight eagle nest monitoring and a Great Blue Heron Rookery and Black Swift colony. Theresa will highlight park efforts to determine nest and fledgling success and how to protect these important migratory bird production areas within the Parks. Come to the Montrose Field House at the corner of Rio Grande and Colorado Avenue at 7 p.m. No charge.

June 8, Saturday: FIELD TRIP to Black Canyon of the Gunnison. Theresa Childers will guide us to viewing areas to see nesting Peregrine Falcons and other spring migrants. The trip is limited to 12 people who must sign up to reserve a place. Meet in the northeast corner of Gold’s Gym parking area located at Hillside and East Main in Montrose. We will meet at 8 a.m. to carpool; bring lunch and water. To reserve a spot, contact Bruceackerman@aol.com or 727-858-5857

June 26, Wednesday: BCAS Annual Dinner. Join us for dinner at Remington’s Restaurant in Montrose to celebrate the end of another year of birding. After the dinner, President Bruce Ackerman will summarize the highlights of the year and member Dennis Murphy will provide a PowerPoint presentation on his recent trip to Antarctica. With 4,000 slides to choose from, you will be sure to see dramatic scenery, birds, wildlife, and hear of his interesting trip. More details will follow after the menu is finalized. Mark your calendars for 6pm June 26.

First Tuesday of the Month Bird Walks

Join us on the first Tuesday of the month as we visit local areas to bird and share our birding experiences. We meet at 9 a.m. at the northeast corner of Gold’s Gym parking lot in Montrose (corner of Hillcrest and East Main St). All skill levels are welcome. Bring a snack and water, your binoculars, field guides, and dress appropriately for weather. The trips generally last a half day; we car pool to limit the number of vehicles. For questions, contact leader Bruce Ackerman at Bruceackerman@aol.com or 727 858-5857.

Upcoming Tuesday trip dates: March 5 will be the final trip to see Rosy Finches and look for banded birds outside of Ridgway. Future Tuesday trips will be on April 2, May 7 and June 4.

For More Birding Adventures

For upcoming festivals around the country, please go to:

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/birding-festivals/?utm_source=Cornell%20Lab%20eNews&utm_campaign=18c7068e96-Cornell-Lab-eNews-2018-08-07&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_47588b5758-18c7068e96-306385693#menu-toggle

May 4, Saturday, Global B Day: Once again, Cornell University sponsors this international day of birding challenges. How many species can you identify over the 24-hour period on May 4? You must enter them in eBird. Last year, over 30,000 people from 170 countries set new records. People individually or in groups set out to challenge each other or themselves by roaming the forests, rivers, mountains, local parks, or other locales. In 2018 more than 7,000 species were identified. For more information go to: www.ebird.org

May 11, Saturday, World Migratory Bird Day in the Americas celebrates “Protect Birds: Be the Solution to Plastic Pollution” and the actions you can take 365 days of the year. For daily suggestions, go to: <https://www.migratorybirdday.org/calendar/> The United Nations supports and observes World Migratory Day, which was first launched in 2006.

Brown-capped Rosy-Finches: *Movement and Survival in the High Alpine*

By Bruce Ackerman

Brown-capped Rosy-Finches are a small passerine bird of the Rocky Mountain West known for their dusky pink plumage. It is one of Colorado's highest-breeding alpine birds and the only one of the three species of Rosy-Finches that occurs almost exclusively in Colorado. The other two species, the Black and the Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches, winter here but breed in states farther to the northwest.

Very little is known about the elusive Brown-capped Rosy-Finch (BCRF) due to their nomadic nature in winter and tendency to nest in steep, inaccessible cliffs in summer. Most of these birds winter above 8,000 feet in Colorado, and breed at elevations above 12,000 feet.

Photo below of BCRF by Bruce Ackerman.



Concerns about BCRF population declines caused by climate change have sparked research groups to explore how Rosy-Finches move around the state in the winter, as well as assess survival during the harsh winter months.

The Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) State Wildlife Action Plan identifies the BCRF as one of 107 species of 'greatest conservation concern' in Colorado. CPW and the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, with other collaborators, are studying this species. Amy Seglund, a CPW researcher in Montrose, is in charge of a multiyear study in southwest Colorado projected to take at least one more year.

The BCRF project uses a wire trap containing sunflower seeds to capture the birds for study. The birds are quickly removed and numbered and colored metal or plastic bands are secured to their legs. Before releasing each bird, it is weighed and measured. Over 1,500 birds have been banded over the last two winters, and over 300 of them have been recaptured.

Through color banding and citizen science efforts to recover banded birds at private bird feeders, CPW has begun to piece together how Rosy-Finches from various parts of the state intermix. These winter efforts, combined with summer breeding surveys, are leading to a clearer understanding as to how these gregarious yet seldom seen birds interact and mingle on local and statewide scales.

If you have Rosy-Finches coming to your bird feeders, watch for ones that are banded. Report the date, your location, and the color of the bands to Rosyfinchreports@gmail.com. Most sightings will be at higher elevation towns like Gunnison, Telluride, and Silverton.

Join BCAS on March 5 to see BCRFs and look for banded birds on a private property outside of Ridgway. Meet at Gold's Gym in Montrose at 9 a.m.

Upcoming Education

By Marcella Tarantino

The education committee has several school events lined up for April and May. Annually, we present at the Montrose Natural Resources Festival, Paonia Conservation Days, and Family Nature Nights in Ridgway and Paonia. These events occur every spring and BCAS has been participating in these events for up to ten years. Our presentations highlight the value of migration as a life history strategy, and adaptations of birds (ranging from beak structure, to anatomy, to behaviors). Each presentation is interactive and allows the children to play a game, such as the "migration challenge" to learn about the challenges birds face during migration or "dress like a bird" to learn about bird anatomy and adaptations. *Above photo of a student playing a migration bean bag toss – they have to correctly navigate to the habitat their bird uses and follow the flyway as they migrate north using bean bags (Montrose Natural Resources Festival 2016).*



In past years, over 300 students participated in a full day of educational activities put on by the Montrose Natural Resources Festival. Paonia Conservation Days is sponsored by Western Slope Conservation Center and typically over 400 children from Delta County learn the basics of bird guides and binoculars while stopping at bird identification stations along the North Fork River. For the Family Nature Nights, we have been presenting information on Gunnison sage-Grouse biology to about 100 people (families with children of all ages) in Ridgway and Paonia. This is the busiest time of year for school presentations and festivals for our education committee. If you are interested in environmental education, please contact the Education Committee (contact information on page 2) to learn more about how you can help!

Pinyon Jay Nesting Study in Colorado

Keep an eye out for nesting Pinyon Jays this spring. Pinyon Jay (PJ) populations have decreased by more than 50 percent between 1968 and 2015. CPW is designing a study to identify known PJ nesting colonies and spring 2019 is considered a pilot season for the study.

Pinyon Jays are important because they cache seeds and have a beneficial relationship with piñon-juniper woodlands. PJs carry seeds in their expandable esophagus and bury them in the soil or loose litter under the trees or will travel miles to cache them in adjacent areas. Not all seeds are recovered as food, which results in reforestation of piñon-juniper woodlands.

Current management direction for piñon-juniper woodlands protects and creates sagebrush scrubland to benefit Greater Sage-Grouse, reduces wildfire risk, benefits the livestock industry, and restores landscapes to previous conditions. Management of piñon-juniper ecosystems to benefit Pinyon Jays and other woodland-associated wildlife is a secondary goal.

Report nesting PJs to: evan.phillips@state.co.us

Unexpected Sightings on the Western Slope

Trumpeter Swans. In late January, Mike Henwood, Eileen Cunningham, and Kathleen McGinley discovered a Trumpeter Swan along the Colorado River between DeBeque and Palisade and posted their sighting on WSNB. Subsequently, a pair of Trumpeter Swans were found at Highline Lake during a Grand Valley Raptor trip. Meanwhile, there continue to be sightings of a Trumpeter Swan west of DeBeque. The Trumpeter Swan is the largest of our wild fowl and is considered a rare sighting, likely because: *"It is the largest and most conspicuous of waterfowl. Wherever, in settled regions, Swans were seen to alight, every kind of a firearm that could do duty was requisitioned and all men turned out to hunt the great white birds"* (Edward Howe Forbush, *Birds of America*, 1936). Photo of trumpeter swans at Highline Lake taken by Debbie Turbidy Feb 10. Swans may live over 23 years.



Cold winter temperatures will bring out other unexpected visitors. **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** and **Bewick's Wrens** were seen at suet feeders in Montrose. **Bewick's Wren** was also found in a thicket area off one of the main trails in Confluence Park. **Ferruginous Hawks** have been sighted northwest of Mack. Ferruginous Hawks are uncommon anytime of the year. In 1998, it was reported that the region's breeding population was probably fewer than 10 pairs.



White-throated and Harris's Sparrows have been reported frequently at the Grand Junction Wildlife Area and by Coen Dexter and Brenda Wright in Nucla this winter. The **White-throated Sparrow** is similar in appearance to a White-crowned Sparrow, with a difference – the white throat and yellow lores. It was historically known as the Peabody Bird (named after its call), Cherrybird, Nightingale (in Manitoba), Peverly Bird (after a farmer named Peverly), or Canada Sparrow. It is considered an eastern bird and in addition to eating wild berries and insects, it also consumes weed seed. The photo at the left was taken by Debbie Turbidy of Grand Junction at the Grand Junction Wildlife Area.

Harris's Sparrow is another unexpected visitor this winter and has been seen at the Grand Junction Wildlife Area and also reported by Coen Dexter and Brenda Wright in the Nucla area. Historically, you might have known this bird by its other names: Hood-crowned Sparrow or Black-hood Sparrow. The black hood that extends down its throat is a distinguishing feature. It is another mid-western bird that is not typically seen west of the Rocky Mountains. Also seen at Maria Rodriguez's house in Hotchkiss.

This winter has been colder than we've seen in many years and has resulted in frozen ponds and lakes. Nevertheless, ducks of all varieties have been seen around the valley. Unusual for Montrose was an observation first by Betty Fenton at Baldridge & Ute Parks of a **Wood Duck**, not a typical winter or summer visitor to Montrose but is generally found in the Grand Junction area. Other historical names for Wood Duck include: Summer Duck, The Bride, Wood Wigeon, Acorn Duck, and Tree duck.



Over the past several months both the **Myrtle** (left) and **Audubon varieties of Yellow-rumped Warblers** have been seen around Montrose and also in the Grand Junction area. What is a warbler doing during the winter in the Montrose area? On a sunny day in early January, the Myrtle variety was reported sallying around the top of Russian Olive trees in Marine Road Park by Sandy Beranich (her photo left) and, then about two weeks later again seen by Sandy in Cerise Park, also in Montrose. Subsequently, Betty Fenton reported seeing a Myrtle individual in Baldridge & Ute Parks. An Audubon variety (right) has been seen this winter in Confluence Park and also in Baldridge & Ute Parks. Photo right of Audubon variety by Betty Fenton. Both varieties have yellow rumps and a yellow



shoulder patch; however, the Myrtle variety has a white throat that wraps around a dark cheek patch and has a white eyebrow. Audubon's variety has a distinct yellow throat and if you can see them, more white spots under its tail. The Myrtle variety gets its name from its favorite food of Myrtle berries, which is a waxy berry that few birds can digest. The Myrtle variety is known for living east of the Rocky Mountains, so it is a really rare visitor not only in the winter but also this far west.



Finally, there are always unusual and unexpected birds to see if we keep a look out. Left is a photo of several unusual birds – can you identify them? Note the large bills with gaping between the upper and lower mandibles and dark brown feathers around the neck. Facial features are quite varied but all included prominent eyes. Although duck-like, these birds were walking upright in a line.

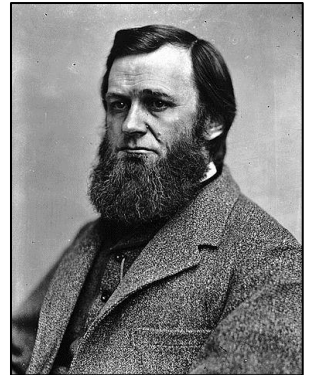
This unusual sighting prompted crowds to gather and speculate if this were a new species or part of the extinct Great Auk species thought to be restricted to Funk Island. Hint, these birds were seen far to the east of the Rocky Mountains during the summer and seemed to be moving in a line (photo credit to Jon Horn)

Who Was That Bird Named For? _____

Baird's Sandpiper

By Susan Chandler-Reed

Spencer Fullerton Baird (1823-1887) was an American vertebrate zoologist. He served as the second Secretary of the Smithsonian Museum. A renowned collector who was an important figure in American ornithology, he was also an ichthyologist and was appointed by President Ulysses S. Grant to be the first commissioner of the U.S. Fish Commission.



Born in Pennsylvania, Baird began his university studies at Dickinson College at age 13. As a young student, he began a correspondence with John James Audubon in 1838 and the two men became friends. After graduating from college when only 17, and with informal instruction from Audubon to whom he sent some of his specimens, Baird taught himself to be a naturalist. He went on to teach at Dickinson College. When offered the job as the first curator of the National Museum in 1850, he arrived in Washington, D.C. with two railroad cars containing his personal collections. Baird wrote a *Catalogue of North American Birds* in 1858 and was instrumental in organizing expeditions and greatly expanding the nature of the museum's collection. He became Secretary of the Smithsonian in 1878 and oversaw construction of the new national museum, which opened in 1881. [The old red brick building is still on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.] He was a leader of the Smithsonian Museum for 47 years.

As expressed by one of Baird's biographers, "His most lasting memorials, however, are those living monuments which commemorate the activity of naturalists - the animals which are named for them by their disciples." More than 40 animals bear Baird's name, including a tapir, a dolphin, and an octopus. Audubon was so impressed with the young Baird that he named two birds in his honor: Baird's Cormorant (now known as Pelagic Cormorant) and Baird's Sparrow. Other ornithologists also honored Baird, naming Baird's Creeper, Baird's Flycatcher, Baird's Junco, Baird's Trogon, Baird's Wren, and Baird's Sandpiper.



Of these bird species, Baird's Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*) is most familiar to western Colorado birders. Baird's Sandpiper is a long-distance migrant that nests in the Arctic and winters in South America. Unlike many migrating shorebirds, the Baird's Sandpiper migrates along an inland route and is thus one of the few migrating shorebirds that stops at lakes in the mountains of Colorado.

Sources:

Spencer (name changed from Samuel) Fullerton Baird photograph by William Bell - http://siarchives.si.edu/collections/siris_sic_9587, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=19196579>

Baird's Sandpiper photograph courtesy of Alan and Elaine Wilson, <http://www.naturespicsonline.com>

Bo Beolens and Michael Watkins, *Whose Bird: Common Bird Names and the People They Commemorate.* Yale University Press.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) History: *Giants of Science: Spencer Fullerton Baird.* <https://www.history.noaa.gov/giants/baird.html>

Join Us for Crane Days at Eckert – schedule on page 3



Sandhill Cranes on G50 Road in Delta: "You did what!" Photo by Betty Fenton:

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<http://www.blackcanyonaudubon.org>

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

Members may participate in all chapter activities, receive our chapter newsletter, *Canyon Wrenderings*, and vote on chapter issues. Annual Chapter membership dues are \$20 for individual and \$30 for family membership. Dues remain local.

(Check one) Renewal ☐ New Member ☐

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone (Optional): _____

Email (Required): _____

Enclosed

_____ \$20 for individual membership

_____ \$30 for family membership

Mail your renewal to:

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