



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

Winter 2019

Volume XXXIII Number 4



Upcoming Events

Raptors, waterfowl, and Rosy Finches! Check out the chapter field trips planned for winter on page 3. All skill levels are welcome.

Check the always-current listings of events are at www.bcas.org.

Inside this issue

- 2 President's Message
- 3 Upcoming Events
- 4 Members in the News
- 5 Who Was that Bird Named for? Brewer's Blackbird and Sparrow
- 7 Generating Conservation Conversations
Celebrating Terry Ryan
- 8 Bird Behavior: Clark's Nutcracker
- 9 Audubon Colorado Council Report

Taking the Next Step

From Tag-along to Beginning Birder

By Laura Faye Mah

In the fall issue, Laura wrote about her adventures tagging along with her birder husband. An avid photographer for 35 years, Laura is now honing her own bird ID skills. MM

On our way to California, my birder husband Don realized he left his binoculars at home. I suggested to him that he buy binoculars for me and then use them during our trip. At Cabela's Don purchased Vortex Diamondback HD 10x42 binoculars. They were not too expensive, good enough quality for him, and easy for me to use as a beginner. With this purchase, I committed myself to learn how to be a birder. So I'm learning about binoculars, calls, lingo, habitat and time of year, and field marks.

Continued on page 6

120th Christmas Bird Count

Join thousands of birders across North American in December to count bird populations. This year marks the 120th consecutive Christmas Bird Count since its inception in 1900. It is the longest-running citizen science project to date.

The annual Christmas Bird Count started on Christmas day in 1900 when ornithologist Frank M. Chapman, an early officer in the relatively new Audubon Society, suggested counting birds during the holidays. In those days, feather and fur hunts were a holiday tradition and Chapman was at the forefront of conservation. His aim was to count birds, rather than hunt them.

Continued on page 3

President's Message

Is it winter yet? As I write this, in mid-November, it is beautiful Indian Summer, warm and sunny. Hard to believe that it is more than half-way through November. But we are getting closer to the time for Christmas Bird Counts, and I am sure it will be cold by then. Our four local counts will be between December 15 and January 5 this winter. See more details on the cover and page 3 of this issue.

I *really* would like to thank six new people who have stepped up to help direct your chapter. We have five new members of the BCAS Board of Directors this year -- Kristal Cooper, Carrie Krickbaum, Don Marsh, Melissa (Missy) Siders, and Sallie Thoreson.

Don Marsh has taken on the job of Field Trips Chair and has laid out a good list of field trips for the next few months. Missy Siders is the new Membership Chair, keeping track of your member subscriptions and address changes. Carrie Krickbaum is the new Program Chair, working on preparing an interesting series of lectures for the coming year. Sallie Thoreson has agreed to be both Secretary and Conservation Chair. Besides taking minutes at our meetings, she will provide updates on local conservation issues and write comments for the chapter on pressing conservation concerns. Kristal Cooper has taken on working with the city of Montrose about the Marine Road property. Mary Menz is the new editor of the newsletter and I think that she has done a great job with her second issue, and expanding it to 10 pages.

I hope you are enjoying our beautiful weather and will use this opportunity to get out for some birding. The birds are out there—any day, any time, “weather” or not!

Bruce Ackerman, BCAS President

Ridgway Banding Station Netted 33 Species

By Carrie Krickbaum

The annual fall banding station at Ridgway State Park netted a total of 229 birds of 33 species this year. The station is always open ten days each fall, starting the day after Labor Day.

BCAS volunteers for the two-week event included Anita Evans, Gwen Harris, Richard Hippio, Marti Isler, Laura Mah, Don Marsh, Ann McGrath, Mary Menz, Eva Parr, Sheryl Radovich, Gail Rust, and Kathy See.

The station hosted 25 attendees on the public day, which is always the first Saturday after Labor Day. The other days are set aside for student education.

Continued on page 9

Canyon Wrenderings

The quarterly journal of the Black Canyon Audubon Society. Vol 33. No 4.

Managing editor

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

ON THE COVER

“Which White Goose?” See page 6. Photo by Laura Faye Mah.

BLACK CANYON AUDUBON SOCIETY

OFFICERS

President—Bruce Ackerman (Montrose)
(727) 858-5857

Bruceackermanaud @aol.com

Vice President—**OPEN**

Secretary—Sallie Thoreson (Montrose)
(970) 249-1869

salliet900 @aol.com

Treasurer—Dian Torphy (Cedaredge)
(303) 709-4386

bcas.torphy @gmail.com

Past President—Jon Horn (Montrose)
(970) 209-5404

Jon_horn @alpinearchaeology.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kristal Cooper (Montrose)

(580) 919-5987

nationalparkfan1 @yahoo.com

Mary Costello (Montrose)

(208) 610-4896

mc.costello5 @gmail.com

Carrie Krickbaum (Ridgway)

(970) 209-3703

ridgway.naturalist @state.co.us

Don Marsh (Ridgway)

(209) 256-5744

ridgwaybrdr @gmail.com

Melissa (Missy) Siders (Montrose)

(970) 275-6639

missy.siders @gmail.com

Marcella Tarantino (Gunnison)

(970) 964-3594

marcella.tarantino@co.usda.gov

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Audubon CO Council rep.—**OPEN**

Education

Marcella Tarantino (see above)

Sheryl Radovich (970) 240-3788

canyon.creek @bresnan.net

Conservation—Sallie Thoreson

Robin Nicholoff (970) 527-3997

robgret @tds.net

Field Trips—Don Marsh (see above)

Membership—Missy Siders (see above)

Publicity—Susan Werner (970) 688-0757

susanw@springsips.com

Programs—Carrie Krickbaum (see above)

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—Arden

Anderson, Adam Petry, Amy Seglund, and

Missy Siders (see page 3 for contact

information.

Eckert Crane Days—**OPEN**

Upcoming Events

December 12, Wednesday, 7:00 pm: Monthly program. "Gunnison Sage Grouse." Join Allison Vendramel of the US Fish & Wildlife Service for this talk. The program is at the Montrose Field House on the corner of Rio Grande and Colorado Ave in Montrose.

Raptor Runs

February 8 and 9, Saturday and Sunday 9:00 AM North Fork Raptor Run. Join biologists Jim Lefevre and Adam Petry as they search the North Fork area of the Gunnison for winter raptors, including Eagles as well as Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks. Meet at the City Market in Hotchkiss @ 9 AM. Trip should conclude around 2 or 3:00 PM. These trips are limited to 12 participants each day. For more information contact Jim at jimlef@paonia.com.

February 15 and 16, Saturday and Sunday 9:00 AM Montrose Area Raptor Run. Join Bruce Ackerman and Bill Harris as they search the Montrose area for winter raptors, including Eagles as well as Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks. Meet at the northeast corner of the Gold's Gym parking lot (the corner of Hillcrest Dr. and Highway 50) at 9:00 AM to get started and carpool. Trip should conclude in early afternoon. These trips are limited to 12 participants each day. To reserve a space on Saturday's trip contact Bill at TRLGPA@gmail.com. To reserve a space on Sunday's trip, contact Bruce at (727) 858-5857 or at bruceackermanaud@aol.com

Open Water Trips

January 25 and February 22, Saturday 9:00 AM Open Water Trip. Don Marsh will be leading a birding trip to somewhere near Montrose in search of ice-free water and the birds that depend on it. Meet at the northeast corner of the Gold's Gym parking lot (the corner of Hillcrest Dr. and Highway 50) at 9:00 AM to get started and carpool. Return to Montrose will be around NOON. For more information contact Don at (209) 256-5744 or at ridgwaybrdr@gmail.com.

Rosy Finch Trips

Starting in February or March we will again be scheduling some trips to observe Rosy Finches. Dates and details will be available online, on the Facebook page, and in the next newsletter.

Christmas Bird Count *continued from cover*

Since then, observers have counted birds and provided the data to researchers and the public. Sponsored by the National Audubon Society, bird counts are now common in many countries around the world. The data helps researchers study long-term trends in bird populations and wintering locations. Every Audubon chapter selects one or more days within the annual date range to conduct its count. In Colorado alone, there are approximately 45 CBC locations in Colorado. Some counts start at midnight!

Four counts are held in the BCAS area (centered in Montrose, Delta, Hotchkiss, and Gunnison) between Dec 14 and Jan 5. **Everyone is welcome to participate! Beginners are paired with more experienced birders.** Remember to dress for the variable weather and a long day in the field. And bring binoculars!

Dec 28 Saturday Montrose Count Area: Meet at 8:30 AM at the Centennial Building on Centennial Plaza. Bring a lunch and be prepared for a full day of birding around Montrose.

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 until NOON and we carpool. Contact trip leader Bruce Ackerman at BruceackermanAUD@aol.com or (727) 858-5857.

Mark your Calendars!

December 3
January 7
February 4
March 3

The group will meet at Two Rascals Brewing afterward to go over results. For more information, contact count leader Missy Siders at missy.siders@gmail.com.

Dec 15 Sunday Gunnison count area: Meet at 7:30 AM at Hurst Hall, Room 130 on the Western Colorado University campus to get organized. At the end of the day's birding, we will gather to compile our results over a chili potluck. For more information contact count leader Arden Anderson at arden@gunnison.com.

Dec 22 Sunday Delta count area: Meet at 8:30 AM in the Delta City Market parking lot. Questions? Contact count leader Amy Seglund at amy.seglund@state.co.us. Amy will provide maps and data sheets and lunch at her house afterwards.

Jan 5 Sunday Hotchkiss/North Fork count area. Meet at 8:00 AM in the Hotchkiss City Market parking lot. Participants will survey in small groups until late afternoon. Please bring lunch. Coffee will be provided. Contact count leader Adam Petry for more information or to RSVP to him at petry@westernbiology.com.

Members in the News

First Tuesday Field Trip

The first Tuesday field trip in October provided attendees the opportunity to see a Black Phoebe along the Uncompahgre River in Montrose (see photo below).



Left to right: Judith Lopez, Bruce Ackerman, Terry Ryan, Don Marsh, Geoff Tischbein, and Loretta Banner. Missing in photo is Sandy Beranich (taking photo) and Janet Haw.

Dennis Garrison Leaves Colorado

By Sandy Beranich

Past BCAS board member Dennis Garrison recently left the North Fork area to work with the Forest Service in Northern Minnesota. His new digs feature a variety of loons, ghostly wolves competing with their cries at night, and, I am told,



large fish and hungry large mosquitoes!

Dennis led many trips on behalf of BCAS to educate birders on purple martins up the North Fork drainages and was always willing to answer questions about the birds in his area and involve people who wanted to help with his Purple Martin studies. In the past, Dennis constructed one of

the first Purple Martin condos used in the North Fork area to study their colonial lives and co-inhabitants. This photo shows Dennis at work on one of his colonial living quarters (Photo credit to Bill Day). Dennis, you will be missed! Best wishes to you.

BCAS Work in Progress

BCAS members have been busy! Several new efforts are underway:

- Dian Torphy is working with Delta County to help update very faded information signs in the Fruitgrower's Reservoir causeway.
- Linda Hansen is helping identify a landowner so that BCAS can assist in replacing a failing osprey nesting platform in Delta.
- Kristal Cooper is leading an effort to explore BCAS assisting the city of Montrose in preserving the wetlands between Marine Road and the Mayfly building.
- Mary Costello and Marcella Fremgen have developed a brochure to educate people on the perils of birds that fall into open pipes, such as the stacks on top of vented pit toilets in numerous locations. BCAS has pipe covers.
- Elaine Probasco and Carrie Krickbaum are looking for an instructor to lead a session on preparing bird skins, so that members can add to the chapter's education study skin collection as specimens become available.

Sue Hirshman and Carolyn Gunn Recognized by BCR for Work with Black Swifts



For more than two decades, Sue Hirshman and Carolyn Gunn (pictured receiving the award from Karen Levad, center) have been tireless champions of Black Swifts and efforts to conserve this mysterious species. Combined, these two women have logged thousands of hours studying and observing Black Swifts and sharing their passion for birds with others through outreach, engagement, and presentations at professional meetings.

Sue and Carolyn were major contributors to the 2012 discovery of the wintering destination of Black Swifts—the rainforests of Brazil—which was previously unknown to ornithologists.

Who was that Bird Named For?

Brewer's Blackbird and Brewer's Sparrow

By Susan Chandler-Reed

Thomas Mayo Brewer (1814-1880) was born in Boston. His father was an early American patriot who took part in the Boston Tea Party, and his older brother was a prominent Boston merchant. Brewer graduated from Harvard Medical



School in 1838 but soon switched from medicine to a career in publishing and ornithology. He published Alexander Wilson's *Birds of America* as well as several volumes of his own work, *North American Oology* (1857). Brewer is best known, however, as the co-author of the three-volume *History of North American Birds* (1874),

which he wrote with Spencer Fullerton Baird and Robert Ridgway.

Unlike many nineteenth-century naturalists, Brewer had no love of exploration. Disdainful of field ornithologists, he believed the study of bird skins in museum collections to be superior to the study of live birds. Brewer is also infamous for his part in "The Sparrow War," defending the House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) against moves to eradicate it. Noting that the sparrow had been introduced to the United States in the mid-1800s and was spreading faster than anticipated, Elliot Coues and other American ornithologists argued for its elimination.

Brewer was a contemporary and companion of John James Audubon, who named the Brewer's blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*, first described by Wagler in 1829) after his friend. Audubon also named a hybrid Mallard and Gadwall duck (*Anas breweri*) and a mole found on Martha's Vineyard after Brewer. Cassin described and named the Brewer's Sparrow (*Spizella breweri*) in 1856. As another sign of their friendship, Brewer named his only daughter, Lucy, after Audubon's wife. The Lucy's [Honduran] Emerald hummingbird (*Amazilia luciae*) was subsequently named for Lucy Brewer by a friend of her father's, George Lawrence.

Glossy black with a distinctive light eye (males), Brewer's Blackbirds are year-round residents in the lower elevations in Colorado. The blackbirds expand their range into the mountains during the summer breeding season and move into the southern U.S. and Mexico during the winter. They

are social birds, nesting in colonies of up to 100 individuals. Although common, the species is considered to be in sharp decline.

Brewer's Sparrows breed in Colorado and the western United States and winter in northern Mexico. According to the Cornell Lab, their nondescript plumage is so unremarkable looking that it is remarkable, leading them to be called "the bird without a field mark." The sparrows are closely associated with sagebrush and, in winter, with desert grasslands.



Sources

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

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Brewers_Blackbird/overview

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Brewers_Sparrow

Bird images courtesy Alan and Elaine Wilson

<http://www.naturespicsonline.com>

Photograph and biographical information

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Mayo_Brewer

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Brewer_Thomas_Mayo_1814-1880.jpg

Susan Chandler-Reed is a retired archaeologist who finds looking up at birds a nice counterpoint to her career of looking down at the ground.

Tag-along *continued from cover*

Binoculars I have been a photographer for over 35 years. Like with my cameras, I found binoculars to be very personal. They need to be set for my eyes, vision, and glasses and also feel right in my hands. With my cameras, I close my right eye and use my left eye to see and to focus. With my binoculars I need to do a sight check to make sure I am lined up with both my eyes and that both eyes are open!

Finding the birds Over the years I have learned to look where Don is not looking. This way, there are two sets of eyes looking for birds. I look for movement, colors and shapes that stand out from the background, or a change in pattern. Light-colored rocks and small stumps across the pond can masquerade as shorebirds. Don can bird by ear. Now, I need to learn to listen, too.

The lingo Since Don came into my life, so has confusing bird jargon. When tagging along on birding field trips or sitting at meals with Don's bird friends, I have tuned in enough to learn a few things.

Geographical location and time of year In Colorado, more than 500 species of birds have been documented. To make identification less overwhelming, I am focusing on being able to identify birds that are common for our area in winter or are permanent residents. Based on checklists for our area, this narrows identification down to thirty to forty birds. I'm making flashcards, if anyone is interested!

Habitat Preferred habitat for a bird can assist in identifying the species. For example downy woodpeckers prefer deciduous trees and hairy woodpeckers prefer conifers. Both have black and white patterning with a spot of red on their head.

Field Marks Use features to visually identify the bird. Once down to the species level, Don looks for at least two field marks that identify the bird as option 1 instead of option 2. These are the characteristics I look for:

- Size: relative to other known birds, to the other birds in a mixed flock, or relative to similar looking birds;
- Color: body, wings, tail, feet, head, eyes, and beak while looking for plumage iridescence; and
- Pattern: look for the patterns of light and dark and their locations on body, wings, tail, head, and beak.
- Shape: body, wings, tail, and head and beak;

Adding to the confusion, male and female birds have different field marks. Molting birds look different than freshly feathered birds. Field marks of birds change as they age and mature.

For more information, check out these resources

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org> – The Cornell Lab of Ornithology – Articles on identifying birds and a great many other topics related to birds.

<https://coloradocountybirding.org> – Birding checklists by county, sites to visit and unusual bird sightings from E-bird.

<http://coloradobirdingsociety.net> – Birding sites by county, locations and last sightings in Colorado, and photo library

Laura Faye Mah is an award-winning photographer, an extremely patient birding tag-along, and wife of BCAS board member Don Marsh. Her photos appear below and on the cover of this issue of Canyon Wrenderings.

Laura asks: “Which White Goose?”



I knew this was a white goose in the center photo. But which kind? I saw this bird at Delta's Confluence Park on November 6, 2019. Based on my Delta county checklist, I figured it was a Snow Goose, a Ross's Goose, or a Domestic Goose. Both the Snow Goose and Ross's Goose have black on their wings (primaries), but the Domestic does not. The Ross's bill is less pointed and is solid colored. The Snow Goose has a dark area on the bottom half of the bill, also known as a “grin patch.” Aha! I can identify all three! Left to right: Domestic Goose, Ross's Goose, and Snow Goose.

Generating Conservation Conversations

By Sallie Thoreson, Conservation Chair

ANWR legislation. Every state in the US has birds that rely on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for part of the year. The Bureau of Land Management is proceeding with the ANWR Coastal Plain Oil & Gas Leasing Program and will release the Record of Decision at some point (it was expected on Oct 22), before the first lease sales. The National Audubon Society and other groups expect challenges to the leasing program and any sales. Two national ANWR bills to watch are:

- **HR 1146 - Arctic Cultural and Coastal Plain Protection Act** would repeal the ANWR oil & gas program. The bill passed in the House on Sept 12. It goes to the Senate next. Co-sponsors from Colorado include Representatives Crow, DeGette, Neguse, and Perlmutter.
- **S 2461 - Arctic Refuge Protection Act of 2019** designates the coastal plain portion of ANWR as wilderness. The bill was introduced in the Senate on Sept 11. Sen. Bennet is a cosponsor.

Energy storage legislation

Colorado Sen. Gardner is one of the Senate's bipartisan supporters of the Better Energy Storage Technology (BEST) Act legislation (S. 1602). This legislation would support large scale grid energy storage research and up to five storage demonstration projects. The legislation has also been introduced in the House (H.R. 2986) without any Colorado co-sponsors.

CORE legislation

Colorado Sen. Bennet and Rep. Neguse are sponsors of the Colorado Outdoor Recreation & Economy Act to protect and improve recreation and conservation on public lands in specific areas of Colorado. The legislation has passed the House (HR 823) and Sen. Bennet is optimistic about the bill's prospects in the Senate.

Gunnison sage-grouse. The US Fish and Wildlife Service released the Draft Recovery Plan for Gunnison Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus minimus*), listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The document presents the government's recommended framework for species recovery in the eight small populations of the bird in western Colorado and eastern Utah. BCAS will be preparing comments on the Recovery Plan, due December 31, 2019.

Local land use/restoration. A group from BCAS is in the initial stages of meetings with the City of Montrose about restoration and public use of wetlands on Marine Drive near the Mayfly complex. This area is adjacent to a river section where the City recently received \$500,000 for river way restoration. BCAS prepared a document in 2015 outlining this wetland area as an important habitat for birds and other wildlife.

Important reports

Audubon bird report: NAS reports in *Survival by Degrees: 389 Bird Species on the Brink* that two-thirds of North American bird species are at risk of extinction from climate change. You can view the report and some fascinating graphics at www.audubon.org/climate/survivalbydegrees.

Climate Watch report: NAS also issued a separate *Climate Watch* report for seven target species (bluebirds and nuthatches) throughout the US, with data coming from volunteer community scientists who monitor specific blocks of habitat. This report looks specifically at shifts in bird distribution due to climate change. The report for 2016 – 2018 is available at www.audubon.org/climate-watch-results

Any members interested in more information or getting involved in BCAS responses to these issues can contact chapter president Bruce Ackerman or conservation chair Sallie Thoreson. Refer to the masthead on page 2 for contact information.

Celebrating the Life of Terry Ryan

Mention bluebirds and Terry Ryan comes to mind. For more than 20 years Terry and his wife Cheryl donated countless hours monitoring 22 bluebird boxes at Ridgway State Park as volunteers for Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

Their work began each year in March with cleaning and repairing nest boxes, monitoring nest success through the summer, and cleaning out the boxes in the fall. Terry provided programs for Ridgway State Park and BCAS about Mountain and Western Bluebirds that are found locally.

He was a participant on many BCAS bird walks and his love of photography showed through in the excellent photos he

used for his programs and provided for the BCAS newsletter.

Terry and Cheryl also helped with transporting injured birds of prey for CPW to another volunteer, Linda Hansen, in Paonia who then transported them to the Front Range for care.

BCAS will miss Terry joining us on field trips and quietly sharing his experiences about birds. Terry died November 6, 2019, at the age of 74. He is survived by wife Cheryl.

Bird Behavior: Clark's Nutcrackers and Pinyon Pines

By Don Marsh

On any given day in Fall when wandering in a Pinyon Pine forest in Colorado, you are likely to encounter Clark's Nutcrackers (*Nucifraga columbiana*) busily harvesting Pinyon seeds. These jay-like birds at times seem to be behave more like a Chickadee or Nuthatch, hanging upside down off the



tree to harvest the tasty and nutritious seeds. If you watch for any length of time, you may wonder how the bird can eat so many high calorie seeds and not be as fat and round as a beach ball. The fact is that after the Nutcracker has eaten 5-10 seeds, it has satisfied its immediate caloric needs. But while it seems to still be eating like there's no tomorrow, it is actually storing the dozens of seeds in an expandable pouch located beneath its tongue, referred to as a sublingual pouch.

After the pouch has been filled with upwards of 70 seeds, it will fly off into the forest to cache these seeds for future use. The birds will bury clusters of two to five seeds in the soil and fly off to another location and repeat the process. Seeds may be cached up to 15 miles away from the source tree. The bird may store upwards of 50,000 seeds each autumn, which translates to 10,000 to 20,000 different seed cache locations!

Thinking about this massive seed storage, you might ask yourself two questions: 1) Why store so many seeds? and 2) How do they keep track of all those seed cache locations?

First, the why. Clark's Nutcrackers have no way of determining how long winter will last and they hope to have additional mouths to feed soon. Clark's Nutcrackers belong to the Corvidae family, which includes Crows and Jays. Nutcrackers and other corvids are often elevational migrants, meaning they typically tough out the winter by moving out of the highest reaches of the mountains to the lower forested slopes. Similar to Pinyon Jays, Clark's Nutcrackers are early nesters and they may start nesting as early as January with the prospect of snow covering the ground for many more months. Unlike most corvids, both parents develop brood patches, so the male can keep the eggs and young warm while the female flies off to get seeds from her caches. The young are fed mostly seeds, unlike most other song bird young that rely on animal proteins (e.g., insects) to achieve their rapid growth in order to fledge.

Now, the how. Just how do Clark's Nutcrackers keep track of and find their thousands of seed caches? Scientists who have studied Clark's Nutcrackers have determined that they use their "spatial memory" to locate their caches. The birds can remember the cache locations up to nine months, although their accuracy starts to diminish after about six months. Portions of their brains (primarily the hippocampus) actually swell as they create their caches in the fall and then slowly reduce back to their summer size ▶



as they tick off those caches that they have recovered. Scientists determined that the birds used landmarks to keep track of cache locations.

In one controlled experiment, after a scientist allowed two of his nutcracker subjects to make more than 100 caches in one area of the cage, he moved all the landmarks eight inches to the right. When the birds were allowed back into the section, both birds had difficulty finding their caches, because the landmarks had been moved.

Studies of caching have now documented similar, though more limited, abilities in other birds, especially Pinyon Jays and other corvids. Those pine seeds never recovered by the corvids contribute to the dispersal of pine trees, which, in the long run, benefits both the pines and the nutcrackers.

If you are interested in seeing foraging Clark's Nutcrackers up close, Elk Ridge Campground in Ridgway State Park is an excellent location in late September and October since the birds are quite comfortable with the presence of people.

Don is the BCAS Field Trip Chair and an avid birder involved in many bird related citizen science projects. He photographed the Clark's Nutcrackers on page 7.

Banding *continued from page 2*

Fascinated children extended their hands at the banding station and shared "releasing birds" like this Wilson's Warbler photographed by CPW educator Anita Evans.



More than 815 students and adults participated from Delta, Montrose, Hotchkiss, Cedaredge, Ridgway, and Ouray schools.

During the two weeks of the

Migration Celebration, the state park brought in Nature's Educators to give a live presentation to an audience of another 105 people

Volunteer banding aid Mary Menz said "We banded 229 birds compared to 214 last year, but saw only 33 species compared to 45 last year. The differences year to year are likely attributed to timing—the weather was warm, and while insects and fruit were abundant, the big migration push hadn't really started yet. Every year is different and that's what makes it most interesting."

Report to BCAS Members

By Bruce Ackerman

The Audubon Colorado Council is a state-wide committee with members of all of the Audubon chapters in Colorado. We met in person on Oct 5 at the Fountain Creek Nature Center, in Fountain, CO (south of



Colorado Springs). Ten of 14 chapters in the state were present., including a new student

chapter from Colorado College in Colorado Springs. It is very gratifying to have the first student chapter in Colorado.

The treasurer reported a balance of \$732, and an annual audit was performed.

We discussed many conservation actions that are happening around the state, including:

- Whether to advocate that the Colorado Parks and Wildlife add some scientists on their governing commission, and use the best science in decisions.

- A draft Environmental Assessment about USDA Wildlife Service's Bird Damage Management in Colorado. This plan would re-authorize use of lethal and non-lethal methods to prevent bird-related problems. Their frequent use of lethal methods to address bird issues is troubling; in particular, use of a slow-acting poison, which has proven to be ethically and biologically ineffective. ACC subsequently submitted official comments on this proposal on October 23 (and BCAS did so separately on October 24).

- The future of the Chico Basin Ranch in El Paso County. This 87,000 acre grassland is owned by the State Land Board, but could be privatized in 2024.

- An ongoing program to promote the use of non-lead ammunition for big-game hunting in Colorado.

Delia Malone, a representative of the Roaring Fork Audubon chapter, gave a presentation on the possible re-introduction of wolves in Colorado. She presented on behalf of the Sierra Club. This could appear as a statewide ballot initiative on the 2020 election. The next meeting is a conference call scheduled for Saturday, January 4, 2020.

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



www.blackcanyonaudubon.org

Want to see the color photographs in this publication?

Help reduce the use of paper and lower BCAS postage costs by receiving this publication in color via email. Send your request for electronic delivery in PDF format to blackcanyonaudubon@gmail.com.

Please remember to renew your membership in December or January!

Dues paid to the Black Canyon Audubon Chapter stay in the chapter and help fund activities, public outreach, and more!



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

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

Renew online or mail your renewal to: Black Canyon Audubon Society
PO Box 387, Delta, CO 81416.