



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 2023

Volume 37 Number 1



Rare sighting of Bohemian Waxwings on Tuesday, January 3, 2023 (Photo by Don Marsh)

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Save the Dates!!

The Black Canyon Board of Directors would like to cordially invite you to participate in two exciting upcoming events!! Put them on your calendar!

Annual Banquet

Thursday, June 15, 6:00 – 9:00 PM

The Grove in Delta

Details on Page 10 & 11

Speaker Scott Weidensaul

Wednesday, July 5, 7:00 – 9:00PM

Montrose Pavilion

Details will be in the summer newsletter.

President's Message by Bruce Ackerman

It is snowing hard today and blowing. Susan and I have recently come back from trips to Tucson and Baja Mexico, and the weather was not like this at all. I hope spring comes soon!

Please read about our upcoming major events

- Eckert Crane Days, Fri-Sun, March 17-18-19, at Fruitgrowers Reservoir
- Banquet Thursday June 15, at The Grove restaurant in Delta
- Birding Author Scott Weidensaul, free lecture on July 5, at the Montrose Pavilion
- Field trips and evening lectures every month.

Crane Days -- We would love to have you come out and see the migrating cranes on one of these days, but better yet, we would love it if you would volunteer to chat with people about the birds we are seeing.

Thank you so much to our dedicated board members, who plan and lead the field trips, the meetings, and all the other events. I so much appreciate having their help.

And finally, just a reminder that our annual local membership expires for everyone in December. You can renew online or by check. \$20 for individuals or \$30 for families. When you renew, your membership will be paid through December 2023. Your National Audubon membership includes your local membership.



Western Meadowlark by Verlee Sanburg

Volunteer Opportunities!!

By Missy Siders

Black Canyon Audubon Society is looking for volunteers to help us accomplish our mission. At our June banquet, a new Board will be elected. Please consider serving on the Board to help guide our club into the future!! We will be organizing some volunteer projects on the Marine Road property later this year. Please reach out to any Board member if you have time to help!! If you have ideas for activities, contact Bruce Ackerman (BruceAckermanAUD@aol.com; 727-858-5857).

Canyon Wrenderings

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Managing editor Susan Werner at wrenderingseditor@gmail.com

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—Gayle Johnson (Montrose)
970-964-8051
Gaylejeff@yahoo.com

Past President—Jon Horn (Montrose)
970-209-5404
Jonhorn56@gmail.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kristal Stidham (Montrose) 580-919-5987
nationalparkfan1@yahoo.com

Bill Harris (Montrose) 970-901-4022
TRLGPA48@gmail.com

Carrie Krickbaum (Ridgway) 970-209-3703
carrie.krickbaum@gmail.com

Don Marsh (Ridgway) 209-256-5744
ridgwaybrdr@gmail.com

Melissa (Missy) Siders (Montrose)
970-275-6639
missy.siders@gmail.com

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Audubon CO Council rep.—**OPEN**

Education— Carrie Krickbaum (see above)

Conservation—Sallie Thoreson (see above)

Field Trips—Don Marsh (see above)

Membership—Missy Siders (see above)

Publicity—Susan Werner 970-688-0757

Programs— Kristal Stidham (see above)

Website Manager—Jon Horn (see above)

AD HOC COMMITTEES (ANNUAL EVENTS)

Montrose County Fair—Sandy Beranich

Bird Banding—Carrie Krickbaum (see above)

Christmas Bird Count Team—Arden

Anderson, Adam Petry, Amy Seglund,
and Missy Siders

Eckert Crane Days—**Open**

A note about email addresses in this newsletter: All emails have an extra space before the @ sign or “[at symbol]” in the email address to discourage spam coming from web crawlers.

See an OPEN position? Talk to an officer to see if it is a good fit for your skills and talents! We would love to have an at-large board member. Volunteers are always welcome.

BCAS Spring Field Trips

Saturday, March 25, 2023

Ridgway and Ouray County

This trip will visit locations around Ridgway, including Ridgway State Park. We will meet at the Ridgway Town Visitor Center at the southwest corner of Highway 550 and Highway 62 at 9AMAM. Dress in layers, and bring a lunch, snacks, water, and a spotting scope if you have one. We will wrap up around 1 PM. Please contact the trip leader, Don Marsh at (209)256-5744 or ridgwaybrdr@gmail.com to RSVP.

Saturday, April 15, 2023

Marine Road Park

This trip will explore this undeveloped park along the Uncompahgre River in Montrose and look for wintering waterfowl and early spring migrants. Dress in layers for the unpredictable weather. Bring drinks, snacks. We will meet at the public parking lot at the corner of N. 2nd Street and N. Cascade Ave. in Montrose at 8:30 AM and return by noon. For questions and to sign up, contact Don Marsh at ridgwaybrdr@gmail.com or 209-256-5744.

Tues/Wed, May 9 – 10, 2023

West End Field Trip

Join Black Canyon Audubon for a trip to Paradox Valley and other West End of Montrose County venues for a spring birding adventure. Expect to see close to 70 species on several short walks in good bird habitats including desert scrub, classic alpine and riparian. This allows for a rich mix of birds during spring migration. Expect to see a variety of waterfowl, Black-throated Sparrow, Vireos, Yellow-breasted Chat, Grace's Warbler, Black Phoebe, and a host of migrants. The group will meet at the Rimrock Hotel in Naturita Colo. at 9:00 AM on May 9. Participants can either camp at the UraVan Ball Park campground or stay at the Rimrock Hotel (970-865-2500) in Naturita. The hotel has a bistro for breakfast. There will be a potluck picnic dinner the evening of May 9 at the hotel. The field trip is limited to 12 participants. For questions and to sign up contact Bill Harris at TRLGPA48@gmail.com or 970-901-4022.

Fri-Sun, May 5-7, 2023

Birding the Colorado

The Colorado Canyons Association (CCA) has organized a fully supported raft trip focused on birding the Ruby/Horsethief section of the Colorado River. See [Colorado Birding Trip](#) website for more information.

Wed-Sun, May 17-21

Ute Mountain Mesa Verde Birding Festival

This southwest Colorado birding festival in Cortez offers many field trips. See [Ute Mountain birding Festival website](#) for more information.

Wed – Sat, June 7 - 10, 2023

100 Bird Species Challenge

This year BCAS is trying something a little different and is challenging interested members to spot 100 bird species in a day. The rules are simple. Look for as many species from midnight, Wednesday, June 7 until midnight, Saturday, June 10. A team can pick any 24-hour period, midnight to midnight, to bird. Members are encouraged to form teams of 3-4 people, then plan out a route. A wrap-up is planned for Sunday, June 11 at 4:00 PM. To sign up your team and for more information contact Bill Harris, TRLGPA48@gmail.com.

First Tuesday Field Trips

Mark your calendars for **March 7, April 4, and May 2**

The First Tuesday Field Trips continue! Meet at **9:00 AM on March 7 and April 4 and 8:00 AM on May 2**. We will meet at **the public parking lot at the intersection of N. 2nd Street and N. Cascade Ave. in Montrose**. A leader will accompany the group to a nearby birding hotspot. Return about noon.

We will be watching community COVID infection rates to determine appropriate protocols. Please stay home if you are ill. Contact Bruce Ackerman at (727) 858-5857 or bruceackermanAUD@aol.com or Don Marsh at (209) 256-5744 or ridgwaybrdr@gmail.com for more information and to RSVP.

Bring a snack, water, binoculars, and field guides.

Spring BCAS Book Club Selections

The BCAS Book Club formed in July 2021 to meet other birders and explore the natural world through shared experiences and literature. Here are the next three club selections. Meetings will be virtual on the third Tuesday of each month at 2:00 PM Contact Bruce Ackerman for the link.

Tuesday, March 21

Fuzz: *When Nature Breaks the Law*, by Mary Roach
Join “America’s funniest science writer” on an irresistible investigation into the unpredictable world where wildlife and humans meet. When it comes to “problem” wildlife, she finds humans are more often the problem – and the solution.

Tuesday, April 18

Of A Feather, a Brief History of American Birding by Scott Weidensaul
“*Of a Feather*” traces the colorful origins of American birding: frontier ornithologists; society matrons who organized the first effective conservation movement; and luminaries with checkered pasts, such as Alexander Wilson and John James Audubon.”

Tuesday, May 16

Tracing Time: Seasons of Rock Art on the Colorado Plateau, by Craig Childs
In “*Tracing Time*,” Craig Childs invites us to join him on a journey to visit, experience, and try to understand the ancient rock art scattered throughout the northern Southwest. He climbs desert boulders to find meaning inscribed in the rock but finds, instead, mystery. He treks through red rock canyons to see rock art, but is surprised to find himself listening instead, as the artists' voices echo through deep time.



Woodhouse's Scrub Jay by Verlee Sanburg

Spring Program Meetings

By Kristal Stidham, BCAS Board member

All meetings will be at 7:00 PM. in the Summit Room of the Montrose Field House (25 Colorado Avenue in Montrose). They are free and open to all.

Thursday, March 9

Our guest speaker will be Sylvia Taylor, manager of the Bears Ears Education Center. In 2016, Bears Ears National Monument was established to protect over 1.3 million acres of stunning landscapes in southeastern Utah. In a historic agreement, the monument is managed by the BLM and USFS with input from the five tribes and pueblos who requested that the monument be created. Taylor will be telling us all about this new monument and its recreational opportunities including – of course – the birding scene.

Wilson's Warbler by Verlee Sanburg



Thursday, April 13

MOVIE NIGHT! Join us for a screening of the PBS documentary “The Egg: Life’s Perfect Invention.” Step by step as the egg hatches, David Attenborough reveals the wonder behind these incredible miracles of nature. We guarantee you will learn and be amazed! Running time: 53 minutes. FREE Popcorn, soda, and candy.

Tuesday, May 16 **NOTE Tuesday DATE**

Nesting Biology and Migration in a Small Forest Owl: Lessons from 20 Years of Field Work and Community Science,” presented by Dr. Markus Mika of the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse. Dr. Mika studied Flammulated Owl populations in northern Utah for his doctoral dissertation. He has since returned to the area every summer in search of patterns in evolution, breeding and foraging ecology, and conservation. He has graciously agreed to stop and talk to us while traveling to his study areas in Utah and Arizona this year

Avian Ramblings

By Bill Harris, BCAS Board member

The BCAS field trip to Grand Junction in January proved to be quite interesting. The original plan was to visit the Grand Junction Wildlife Area (GJWA). That locale, adjacent to the confluence of the Colorado and Gunnison Rivers, has been an excellent place to bird in the winter. I have visited it over twenty times in the last 6 years and have spotted 92 species, including a Western Screech Owl, a Swamp Sparrow, and a Golden-crowned Sparrow.

For several days before the trip, I checked the rare bird listing for Mesa County on eBird. Trumpeter and Tundra Swans had been reported at Highline State Park, another hotspot I have frequented in the past. Our plan was to bird the GJWA, then go to Highline to see the swans.

All that changed when Lapland Longspurs and Snow Buntings were reported west of Highline and north of Mack, Colorado. Don Marsh, Judith Lopez, Jon Horn, Verlee Sanburg, Mary Costello, and I beelined it to that area with great hopes and came prepared with a couple of good scopes and three cameras. The Lapland Longspurs and Snow Buntings had been reported mixed with huge flocks of Horned Larks. Our strategy was to drive along the quiet country roads, stop every so often, then glass the farm fields for flocks of Horned Larks. Conditions were excellent for scoping the landscape - seasonably cold, but sunny and calm. We started seeing birds, including a huge gathering of Western Meadowlarks. Scanning the skies, we saw nine large white birds flying in formation. We drove towards where they dropped out of sight. Soon, we found them in a corn field: six Trumpeter and three Tundra Swans foraging on the ground. While observing the swans, we noticed several large flocks of small brown birds zigzagging across the fields. Their flight pattern was so erratic it was hard to follow them, and when they landed, they disappeared on the ground. After several minutes with six pairs of eyes scrutinizing the flocks, we decided they were Horned Larks. Alas, no sign of Snow Buntings or Lapland Longspurs. Eventually, we headed for Highline State Park. Both Mack Mesa Reservoir and the main lake had open water. The main lake is being drained so CPW can address an exotic mussel infestation. The smaller body of water worked to our advantage. Lots of Canada Geese and several species of ducks were on the lake. We then visited the park's campground. The campground is full of tall trees and holds lots of birds. Best birds in the park were Greater White-fronted Geese, Hooded Mergansers,

and a Great Horned Owl. Our trip to the Grand Valley netted 40 species – not bad for a winter's day of birding.

Christmas Bird Count Summaries

Compiled by Missy Siders, BCAS Board member

This season was the 123rd Christmas Bird Count, starting in 1900. The Black Canyon Audubon Society supports four count circles: Delta, Gunnison, Hotchkiss, and Montrose. Thanks to everyone who participated and made the counts happen! Here is a summary of this year's efforts from the count circle leaders.

December 18, 2022. Montrose. Count Leader: Missy Siders. It was a chilly day with a high of 26F. Thanks to the 29 participants who braved the cold and searched for birds. After traveling 317 miles by vehicle and 17 miles by foot, we found 69 bird species, and 13,220 individual birds. This was the lowest number of species since before 2017, but the number of individual birds was about average. We were able to add Snow Goose and Wood Duck for the Count Week. The top 10 bird species by numbers for the Montrose area were Canada Goose (4,215), European Starling (2,174), Sandhill Crane (1,739), American Crow (514), Eurasian Collared Dove (379), House Finch (315), Common Pigeon (313), Mallard (288), Ring-necked Duck (274), and Red-winged Blackbird (256). We had one rare bird: Williamson's Sapsucker (Female). In general, woodpecker and chickadee counts were low this year.

December 18, 2022. Gunnison. Count Leader: Arden Anderson. It was a cold CBC with the morning low of around -10F. But 15 hearty souls bundled up to see what they could find. Species diversity was good, but many observers noted fewer birds than usual. There was a total of 52 species on count day and 3,268 individual birds. Over the last 12 years our average count on birds has been about 4,133 individuals so this year's count is a 21% reduction from the average. Most of those lower numbers were attributable to lower numbers of Common Ravens, American Crows, European Starlings, and House Sparrows. The wintry weather may account for some of that drop, but not all. Two more species were noted in the Count Week.

December 24, 2022. Delta. Count Leader: Amy Seglund. The weather was beautiful for this Christmas Eve count with temperatures ranging from 27- 41 degrees. We had a great turnout with 17 participants. We counted 13,142 individual birds and recorded 63 species. Volunteers saw three new species not recorded previously for this area: Black Phoebe, Steller's Jay, and a Peregrine Falcon. Sandhill Crane numbers (3,299) are still extremely high for the Delta area. *(Continued page 6)*

Christmas bird count summary continued

January 1, 2023. Hotchkiss. Count Leader: Adam Petry. We had a nice turnout of 30 participants for this New Year's Day count and enjoyed unseasonably warm temperatures in the low to mid-40s. An afternoon front eventually moved in that brought some light rain and sleet. We documented 63 total bird species on the day, which was five fewer than last year. However, we recorded 5,711 total birds, which was 2,000 birds more than last year. In other words, species diversity was down slightly this year while total species abundance was up slightly, though not a remarkable shift compared to the five-year averages. We detected a lone Rock Wren and one Say's Phoebe. We had a record high-count for Western Bluebirds, which, at 112 individuals, nearly tripled the previous record high count (from last year). Meanwhile, we saw only four Golden Eagles, which was only 20% of the five-year running average of 20 and 10% of our total of 39 in 2017. We observed 20 Bald Eagles, which was also below the five-year average of 28. Of the 63 total species, four species were exclusively seen by our dedicated Feeder Watchers: Mountain Chickadee, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Lesser Goldfinch, and Pinyon Jay. We picked up a small flock of Bushtits during count-week. We also had two new outstanding section leaders. And we had a great lunch! **Thank you, Andrea Robinsong and Ellen Hutto for a delicious catered lunch!**



Sandhill Crane by Verlee Sanburg

Avian Influenza

By Carrie Krickbaum, BCAS Board member

In December, intrepid winter birders noticed dead Canada Geese lying on the ice at Otter Pond and at Confluence Park. Eventually, CPW staff was able to collect a couple of dead birds to evaluate and confirmed our suspicion that they died from avian influenza. To minimize local concentration of waterfowl, Otter Pond managers turned off the aerators which allowed the lake to freeze.

As of January 2023, Colorado's worst-ever avian flu outbreak resulted in nearly 6.4 million domestic poultry deaths and has impacted many species of wild birds. Wildlife officials say they have no way to stop the flu's spread among migratory birds. As Canada geese and other waterfowl concentrate during spring migration, mass die-offs will occur.

The outbreak of this highly pathogenic avian influenza involved a new strain of H5N1 that was first detected in northeastern Colorado in March 2022. The highest number of raptors that tested positive for the virus were Red-tailed Hawks, Great-horned Owls and a few Bald Eagles and Turkey Vultures. About 14 different species of waterfowl have tested positive with the highest numbers in Canada Geese populations. There is no cure for this virus and infections are fatal. Colorado Parks and Wildlife prepared a fact sheet detailing information as we know it about this disease. [CPW Avian Influenza fact sheet](#) website.

Citizen Science Opportunity for you!

By Kristal Stidham, BCAS Board member

For 15 years, our May speaker, Dr. Markus Mika has studied populations of Flammulated Owls, tiny insectivorous birds in northern Utah. (See page 4.) His observations are shedding light on how climatic and landscape changes are impacting the forests and resources on which these owls rely. To this end, Dr. Mika and his associates have placed motion-sensor cameras in the nest boxes in his study area. He has thousands of 10-second videos that need analysis before the next breeding season begins.

If you are interested and can stand the cuteness, Dr. Mika could use your help. He will send you a group of 200 or fewer videos to view and categorize by metrics that include which parent is bringing the food to the babies and what kind of insect it is. All your videos will be of the same nest, so once you can differentiate mom from dad, it's easy. A detailed manual is included, and he is eager to answer any questions. To get started, send an email to hiterrabio@gmail.com and mention that you are part of Black Canyon Audubon Society.

Birding Ethics

By Susan Chandler-Reed and the ABA

Conscientious birdwatching entails, most importantly, behaving responsibly and ethically towards both the birds and their habitat. Respectful, enjoyable, and thoughtful birding is also important for your interactions with other birders and the public. This column addresses ethical practices to follow when watching birds.

The American Birding Association's *Code of Birding Ethics* (<https://www.aba.org/aba-code-of-birding-ethics/> and reproduced in part here) outlines how to practice and promote respectful, enjoyable, and thoughtful birding. There are three aspects of ethical behavior: Respecting and promoting: (1) birds and their environment, (2) the birding community and its individual members, and (3) the law and the rights of others.

The ABA has the following suggestions for supporting the conservation of birds and their habitats:

- **Engage in and promote bird-friendly practices whenever possible.** Keep cats and other domestic animals indoors or controlled; act to prevent window strikes; maintain safe feeding stations; landscape with native plants; drink shade-grown coffee; and advocate for conservation policies.
- **Be mindful of any negative environmental impacts of your activities**, including contributing to climate change. Reduce or offset such impacts as much as you are able.
- **Avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger.** Be particularly cautious around active nests and nesting colonies, roosts, display sites, and feeding sites. Limit the use of recordings and other audio methods of attracting birds, particularly in heavily birded areas, for species that are rare in the area, and for species that are threatened or endangered. Always exercise caution and restraint when photographing, recording, or otherwise approaching birds.
- **Always minimize habitat disturbance.** Consider the benefits of staying on trails, preserving snags, and similar practices.

The Code also defines in detail how to interact with others and reminds birders to always bird and report sightings with honesty and integrity. It admonishes birders to never enter private property without the landowner's permission and to respect the interests of people living in the area. Birders also have the responsibility to become familiar with and follow all laws, rules, and regulations governing activities at their birding location, such as seasonal closures or licensing requirements for state wildlife areas. It is especially

important to be aware of regulations related to birds, such as closures to protect nesting areas or sensitive habitats and the use of audio or food lures. In the next newsletter, I will focus my discussion on birding etiquette.

Highlights from BCAS Board Meetings

January 19 and February 21, 2023

By Sallie Thoreson, BCAS Secretary

Black Canyon Audubon currently has 312 members from the National Audubon Society and 222 local members. There is some overlap between National members and local members. The newsletter goes to 360 people.

Kristal has an outstanding line-up of speakers through July 2023. Our annual meeting will be in June at The Grove, and Scott Weidensaul will present on July 5 at the Montrose Pavilion.

The Board continued their discussion on a program to inform the public about turning down outdoor lights during migration. Member Steve Manis gave a presentation to the Board, and we are looking at educational opportunities and collaboration with other organizations.

The Board is considering how to sponsor a Motus tower in our area. These are small radio towers that automatically track any radio-tagged animals that go by. The tiny radio-tags can be placed on birds and other creatures as small as Monarch butterflies and large dragonflies. Currently, there are a few towers near Grand Junction and some on the Front Range, but none in our area.

The Board would like to promote members participating in a project to monitor Pinyon Jays, especially in areas that CPW feels are promising habitat.

A subcommittee of the Board, under the leadership of BCAS member Sandy Beranich, continues to work with the City of Montrose on how to provide some basic amenities at the Marine Road property. The parking lot will have to be delayed until 2024, but BCAS can move forward in designing and, perhaps, installing some trails and a viewing blind. The city can provide some trees for landscaping this Spring, with help needed from volunteers to plant them.

The Board held a special Zoom meeting on February 21 to address details for the annual banquet, Eckert Crane Days, and the Scott Weidensaul visit. Here is a summary of their discussions:

Banquet: Kristal outlined the meal at The Grove in Delta. For \$35/person we can get the venue and serve a variety of appetizers. The type of items available (sliders, **Board meeting highlights continued Page 8**

Board meeting highlights continued

shrimp, etc.) and the quantity should satisfy everyone! With rising food costs, this option keeps our banquet affordable. We can bring a cake or other desserts to the venue. We will supply plates, utensils, and do the serving ourselves. Board members asked Kristal to find an engaging speaker for this event and suggested Bruce Bauerle, retired biology professor from CMU-Grand Junction. The Board preferred Thursday June 15. The Board will continue to discuss the possibility of door prizes and silent auction.

Scott Weidensaul program: Kristal discussed the idea with the Friends of the Montrose Library, and they unanimously agreed to split costs 50/50 for the event. The estimate is \$4,000 total. The library has a sales tax license, so BCAS could sell Weidensaul books at the event. The library will print 600 free tickets. The library and BCAS can distribute tickets and promote the event widely in the state. It will be a 7:00 PM program, with a one-hour lecture and then a book-signing. The library will consider a book event tie-in.

Crane Days – March 17-19 at Fruitgrowers Reservoir

BCAS staffing at the reservoir will be from 9 AM to noon each of the three days. Crane take-off is usually around 10 AM. Board will update the tri-fold brochure about cranes.

Bluebird boxes: Carrie has requests from teachers who would like to receive bluebird boxes and educational programs. The Board agreed that Jon's price estimates were very reasonable. The Board approved the construction of 10-20 boxes to donate to schools and parks.

Treasurer's report: Gayle Johnson reports that BCAS currently has \$30,516.44 in its account, with \$953 from National Audubon and \$854.07 from local membership renewals. Major expenses in this quarter included \$900 to Audubon of the Rockies, \$80 to the Montrose Recreation District for our meeting room, and \$150 to the City of Montrose to reserve the Pavilion for July 5.

Next Board meeting: March 16 from 5-7 p.m. at Gayle Johnson's house. Please contact Bruce Ackerman if you would like to attend.

MARINE ROAD PROPERTY UPDATE

By Sandy Beranich, BCAS member and Marine Road property project manager

Several BCAS members met with Dan Payne, the Montrose City Parks Project Manager, on November 17, 2022, Sandy Beranich, identified potential 2023 projects. These include construction of a bark-mulch surfaced trail to the north ponds; identification of a specific location for a simple, elevated blind that would provide views of both

north ponds; tree and shrub planting; invasive weed treatment; and tree-removal identification.

Sandy contacted Dan Payne in January to find if the City could construct a small parking lot in 2023 and if they would have staff to provide other assistance. The City is unable to engineer and construct a parking lot until January 2024. However, the City has bark mulch available (at no cost to BCAS) for trail surfacing. He also has a budget for purchasing 8-foot-tall trees this year that would be suitable for the Marine Road property and suggested partnering with scouts to do the plantings on Arbor Day, April 28, 2023. Dan indicated other ways he could be of assistance to developing the Marine Road property.

As a continuing BCAS project, volunteers will be needed to assist with specific short-term projects as well as long-term maintenance or monitoring. Please consider donating your time when you receive an email requesting assistance.

Eckert Crane Days

By Bruce Ackerman, BCAS President

Friday - Sunday March 17-19, 2023,

9:00 AM until 12:00 noon

Come to Fruitgrowers' Reservoir in Eckert, Colorado, to see Sandhill Cranes as they migrate to their northern breeding grounds.

These cranes are migrating from New Mexico to here and then further north. BCAS members will be available with spotting scopes and will answer questions about Sandhill Cranes and any other birds that are in the area. Bring binoculars and scopes if you have them. Volunteers will be set up at "Crane Point" on the hill overlooking the reservoir and along the causeway across the reservoir, depending on where the best viewing opportunity is that day.

From Delta, take Highway 92 east, and turn left onto Highway 65 towards Cedaredge and Grand Mesa. After entering Eckert, turn right just before the "Big E Market" onto North Road and proceed out to the reservoir (2 miles). Come early so you do not miss the lift-off. The cranes usually lift off between 10 and 11 AM if the weather is nice.



Northern Harrier by David Sinton

Conservation Conversations

By Sallie Thoreson

Colorado and Water legislation:

Water will be a priority issue for the 2023 Colorado legislative session. At least seven bills are on the Audubon Rockies water watch list. The three water priority areas for Audubon in the 2023 Colorado legislative session are: Stream Health, Climate Resiliency, and Water Funding & Projects ([Colorado 2023 water legislation](#) website).

Audubon Rockies is also partnering with the Colorado Department of Natural Resources to host a multi-part webinar series, *Colorado's Proposed Stream Restoration Legislation* ([2023 Proposed stream restoration](#) website).

The economic value of ecosystems:

In January, the Biden Administration publicized their plans to create a system to assess the worth of healthy ecosystems to humanity. This could help inform decision-making on regulations and policies. John Kerry, the administration's special envoy for climate change, said, "With this plan, the U.S. will put nature on the national balance sheet." Unfortunately, the White House estimates the effort to take 15 years. Hopefully, we can glean some information during the process ([Healthy ecosystems measure](#)) website.

Win for the Boundary Waters:

The magnificent Boundary Waters (the most visited wilderness area in the US!) in Minnesota will now have some additional protection. On January 26, the Department of Interior issued a 20-year ban on mining across 225,000 acres of public land near the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (www.doi.gov/pressreleases/biden-harris-administration-protects-boundary-waters-area-watershed).

Alaska - 2 wins and a push:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture published a new rule on January 25 that prohibits commercial logging in 9.3 million acres of the Tongass National Forest in Alaska. This rule also prohibits construction of roads in established roadless areas and ends large-scale logging of old growth across that 16-million-acre National Forest. Then, on January 30, the Environmental Protection Agency issued a final decision prohibiting the construction of the Pebble Mine (open pit gold mine) on Bristol Bay. This action will protect the world's greatest concentration of seabirds, water that sustains sockeye salmon, and ensure sustainable indigenous lifeways ([Tongass National Forest victory](#)) website.

However, the Biden administration on February 1 formally recommended that the Interior Department

grant partial approval to ConocoPhillips's Willow Oil Drilling Project on Alaska's North Slope, with a reduction from five to three well pads. The administration reports that this decrease will reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 9.2 million metric tons of carbon dioxide per year (still jeopardizing our chance of meeting national climate goals). The administration has 30 days to make a final decision on whether to approve, shrink, or reject the project ([Arctic Oil drilling](#)) website.

Why should we care about what happens in Alaska? The Tongass is the largest intact temperate rainforest in the world, and the Willow Project is within the National Petroleum Reserve. These northern lands harbor some of our iconic wildlife, such as reindeer, sockeye salmon, grizzly bears, wolves, and birds that migrate to six continents — and habitat for a wide diversity of wildlife. Far north forests are recognized as essential for the planet in the capture and storage of carbon.

Environmental costs of green energy

The manufacture of electric vehicle batteries requires some rare earth elements, including lithium. Lithium is particularly prized because it is lightweight, can store lots of energy, and has a long lifespan before recharging. But lithium mining can be degrading to the environment, harmful to specific wildlife and plants, and an eyesore and "earsore" to recreationists. Near Moab, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recently approved an Australia-based company's plan to explore and mine for lithium at two well sites near the entrance of Canyonlands National Park and Dead Horse Point State Park. BLM's own analysis found that the activity will intersect with bike trails, be visible from locations in both parks, and that mining operation noise could potentially be heard from at least one campground. See the details on the [Redrock report](#) website.

Australia and Chile lead the world in lithium extraction. Nevada is home to the only active lithium mine in the US: a brine-pit mine in Silver Peak. Nevada also has two proposed open-pit lithium mines. On the Nevada-Oregon border, the 18,000-acre Thacker Pass Mine would reach into ancestral lands of the Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone Tribe, the Burns Paiute Tribe, Reno Sparks Indian Colony, and the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of Duck Valley Indian Reservation. See details on the [Hidden costs of Green Energy](#) website.

In January, Tiehm's Buckwheat (*Eriogonum tiehmii*) was listed as an endangered species. The small yellow wildflower grows on just 10 acres of public land, near the proposed Rhyolite Ridge Lithium-Boron Mine Project.

Annual Banquet

Thursday, June 15th, 6:00-9:00 PM

We are pleased to announce that this year's banquet will be held at The Grove, 1970 S. Main Street in Delta. This working plant nursery is also a fantastic new farm-to-table restaurant. Come early to mingle and explore the grounds!

For dinner, the chef will be preparing a "*Small Bites Smorgasbord*" featuring a wide variety of appetizers. The options will include pork and Kobe beef sliders, teriyaki beef and chicken skewers, smoked salmon, shrimp cocktail, quesadillas, jalapeno poppers, charcuterie, hummus and crudites and fresh fruits. Cake and a selection of non-alcoholic drinks will be provided. A cash bar will be open for beer, wine, and specialty cocktails.

The Grove has ample parking and the event space can be accessed from any part of the property – park on the north and enter through the gift shop, or park on the south and enter via the patio.

At approximately 7:00, our president, Dr. Bruce Ackerman, will conduct a short business meeting reviewing the past year and previewing the next. We will also vote on new members of the Board of Directors. He will then give the stage to our good friend Dr. Bruce Bauerle for the rest of the evening. Dr. Bauerle is a Professor Emeritus of Biological Sciences at Colorado Mesa University in Grand Junction. His life has included an amazing array of professional achievements and personal adventures, among which was working as a naturalist and lecturer for thirteen different cruise lines. This evening, Dr. Bauerle will regale us with his stories and delight our eyes with a slide show featuring the *Highlights of Alaska's Ports of Call*. He has already indicated the presentation's content will be heavy on his favorite and ours: wildlife.



Dr. Bruce Bauerle on a cruise ship

The night will conclude with a door prize drawing. There will not be a silent auction this year. However, the Friends of the Montrose Library have contributed a large collection of used bird-related books that you can select and take home (cash donations gratefully accepted).

Black Canyon Audubon Society

Annual Dinner

Thursday, June 15, 6:00 PM.

We will be gathering at the lovely Grove Restaurant in Delta. The annual dinner will be a collection of delicious appetizers, served starting at 6:00 PM.

The 7:00 PM. program will be by Dr. Bruce Bauerle, retired CMU professor. Dr Bauerle is always an entertaining presenter and will give a slide talk about his side career as a naturalist to Alaskan ports on cruise ships. Lots of wildlife!

This year, we will be exploring a delicious new restaurant in our area. The Grove Restaurant in Delta is a lovely restaurant with delicious food, within a beautiful garden and plant nursery. The annual dinner fee covers the small bites smorgasbord. Soft drinks will be provided, and an open bar will be available. The location is situated for ease of travel for our members in Delta and Montrose counties. The restaurant specializes in local Farm-to-Table dishes.

Directions: The Grove Restaurant is at 1970 S. Main Street in Delta, 2 miles south of the center of Delta on the eastern side of U.S. Highway 55. It is just north of the Value Lodge Inn and the US Forest Service office. Check The Grove Restaurant web site <https://grovedelta.com/>.

Please join us for a fun and relaxing evening! It is not necessary to be a BCAS member to participate. Please invite anyone you think would enjoy the evening to join us!

Dinner Reservations:

_____ Total number of reservations, at \$35 each.

Guest name(s) _____

Phone# _____ Email address _____

Please mail your check to arrive by **June 1 to:** **BCAS, P.O. Box 387, Delta, CO 81416**

OR you can pay online by credit card at our web site.

www.blackcanyonaudubon.org/homepage

If you have any questions, please contact:

Kristal Stidham (580) 919-5987 nationalparkfan1@yahoo.com

Bruce Ackerman (727) 858-5857 bruceackermanAUD@aol.com

Want to see the color photographs in this publication?

Help reduce the use of paper and lower BCAS expenses 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!

Local memberships expire December 31. Please pay online or by check and extend your membership through December 2023. 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. If you are a member of National Audubon, you are already a member of BCAS!

(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 at: www.BlackCanyonAudubon.com.

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