



# 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

Summer 2025

Volume 40 Number 2



Yellow Warbler © Verlee Sanburg.

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## Birding Kenya

By Don Marsh, BCAS Board Member

Like many people, when I think of Africa, I think of wildlife safaris. What outdoorsperson hasn't at least entertained the thought of witnessing the vast wildebeest migration on the Serengeti plains? I have long dreamed of going on a photo safari after reading many books about African wildlife back in my youth and later having friends tell me about their travels to Africa. A common refrain was "it was the trip of a lifetime." That sounded good to me!

So last September, I got on an airplane in Montrose and flew to Kenya. Kenya is located at the equator on the east coast of Africa. It is slightly smaller than Texas, but with an elevation range from sea level on the Indian Ocean up to 17,057 feet on Mount Kenya, the second highest mountain in Africa. What might be somewhat surprising is that I signed up for a safari focused on birds, rather than the classic safari to see the "Big Five" (lion, leopard, rhino, elephant, and African buffalo). There were only three of us on the tour as "clients," along with our tour

*Continued on page 6.*

## President's Message

It is Summer? Spring? Late Winter? False Summer?

Lots of new birds are migrating in, but it has been Hot / Cold / Hot / Cold lately. I am so confused. The birds probably are too. Keep a look-out for newly arrived Bullock's Orioles, Western Kingbirds, Black-Headed Grosbeaks, and Western Tanagers.

This is my last President's Message. I am stepping down, after 8 years, but will still be active. Caroline Evans and Sallie Thoreson will be the new Co-Presidents. I know they will do a great job! Three new people have volunteered to be on the Board of Directors -- Alison Brody, Susie Buttery, and Sheryl Radovich. Sheryl is returning to the board after being away for some time. Kristal Stidham and Missy Siders are stepping down after 6 years on the board. Mary Menz will also be ending her term as our newsletter editor. Thank you all very much for your service! There are some openings for more volunteers, if you would like to ramp up your participation.

We are all looking forward to our Annual Meeting, June 5, with our celebrity guest speaker Ted Floyd, and his daughter Hannah Floyd. I have heard them speak before and we will have a good time! We are also having a workshop for Ebird users and a field trip to the Simms Mesa Interpretive Trail.

It has been an honor and a pleasure to be your chapter president since July 2017. I look forward to continuing as Past President, and working closely with Caroline and Sallie.

Bruce Ackerman

*Note: Your Black Canyon Audubon Society board member and chapter leader information on this page will be updated in the next issue. Check the website for current contact information. ■*

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### BLACK CANYON AUDUBON SOCIETY

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#### 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—**OPEN**  
Newsletter—Mary Menz 719-684-4009  
Programs— Kristal Stidham (see above)  
Website Manager—Jon Horn (see above)

#### AD HOC COMMITTEES (ANNUAL EVENTS)

Montrose County Fair — **OPEN**  
Bird Banding—Ridgway State Park  
Christmas Bird Count Team—Arden  
Anderson, Adam Petry, Amy Seglund,  
and Missy Siders  
Eckert Crane Days— Alida Franco

**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.**

Would you like to volunteer? Talk to an officer to see where we need help and where your talents can be used! Volunteers are always needed and welcome.

## Summer 2025 Field Trips

All trips meet at the public parking lot at the corner of N. 2nd Street and N. Cascade Ave. in Montrose unless noted in the trip description. Items you may want to bring along include: snacks, water, binoculars, and a field guide. Please RSVP at [black.canyon.audubon.fieldtrips@gmail.com](mailto:black.canyon.audubon.fieldtrips@gmail.com) and specify which trip(s) you are interested in attending.

### June

#### **Montrose: 1st Tuesday**

Tuesday June 3 at 8:00 AM

Leader: Bruce Ackerman

A leader will accompany the group to a nearby birding hotspot. Return should be about noon.

#### **Delta: 3rd Tuesday**

Tuesday June 17 8:00 AM

Leader: Don Marsh

Meet in Delta at Confluence Park at 8 am. Our meeting location is the large parking lot next to the lake and near the intersection of Gunnison River Drive and Kellogg Street (behind Bill Heddles Recreation Center). We will either bird around Confluence Park or drive to a local hotspot if others have reported extra bird activity in those locations.

#### **Grand Mesa and beyond. (Delta/Mesa)**

Saturday June 21 at 8:00 AM

Leader: Bill Harris.

Birding several locations on the Grand Mesa, then near Mesa to view bobolinks. Meet at usual location in Montrose, then a stop at City Market in Delta at 8:45 AM, then the food market in Cedaredge at 9 AM. This is an ALL DAY trip. Group limited to 12.

#### **Bluebirds at Ridgway State Park (Ouray County)**

Saturday June 28 at 9:00 AM

Leader: Bruce Ackerman

Meet at the Ridgway State Park Visitor Center near the Dutch Charlie entrance at 9:00 AM. We will look in a few of the Bluebird Boxes at various stages of nesting and fledging. The Park has 50 Bluebird Boxes that are monitored weekly by volunteers. Ridgway State Park in June can host a variety of migrating birds, including ducks, gulls, shorebirds, and migrant songbirds.

The park charges a \$10.00/car entrance fee unless you have an annual "Keep Colorado Wild" pass with your vehicle registration. We will try to carpool with annual pass holders to minimize expenses. Bring water and lunch or snacks, and a spotting scope if you have one. We will wrap up around noon.

### July

#### **Montrose 1st Tuesday**

Tuesday July 2 at 8:00 AM

Leader: Bruce Ackerman

A leader will accompany the group to a nearby birding hotspot. Return should be about noon.

#### **Ouray Box Canyon and Area (Ouray)**

Saturday July 12 at 8:00 AM

Leader: Don Marsh

Meet at Ridgway Visitor Center on Highway 62 near Highway 550 intersection at 8:00 AM. We will look for nesting Black Swifts near the Box Canyon waterfall and then spend time looking for other montane birds in the general area of Ouray. We will return to Ridgway around noon. Park entrance fee is \$6/person.

#### **Delta 3rd Tuesday -- Cedaredge**

Tuesday July 15 at 8:30 AM

Leader: Dian Torphy

This trip lasts about 2 hours. Bring a snack, water, binoculars, a spotting scope, if you have one. We will meet in Cedaredge at parking area along Surface Creek. From Delta, take Hwy 65 N and right on Independence Ave. (just past the Conoco). There is parking on the right just after you cross the river. Carpooling from Delta or North Fork is possible if you let me know ahead of time.

### August

#### **Montrose 1st Tuesday**

Tuesday August 5 at 8:00 AM

Leader: Bruce Ackerman

A leader will accompany the group to a nearby birding hotspot. Return should be about noon. Dave Wood Interpretive Trail (Montrose).

#### **Simms Mesa Interpretive Trail on Dave Wood Road**

Saturday August 16 at 8:00 AM

Leader Don Marsh

Meet in Montrose at 8:00 AM. We'll walk along the trail in the ponderosa pines for a mile or two. Birds we might see or hear include Red Crossbill, Red-naped and Williamson Sapsucker, Gray, Dusky and Olive-sided Flycatcher, and Black-headed Grosbeak. Although the trail is well maintained, good boots with ankle support are recommended. Also bring water, snacks and binoculars. We will return to Montrose around noon.

## Delta 3rd Tuesday – Grand Mesa

Tuesday August 19 at 8:30 AM

Leader: Dian Torphy

This trip lasts 2+ hours. Bring a snack, water, binoculars, a spotting scope, if you have one. We will meet in the gravel parking area directly north of Cedaredge Food Town, 210 SE Independence Ave., and carpool to a spot on the Grand Mesa. Carpooling from Delta or North Fork is possible if you let me know ahead of time. ▪



## WE NEED YOU!

We're looking for more field trip leaders. You don't have to be an "expert;" just someone who likes to be in the outdoors and help others do the same. We're not limited to bird trips either. If you know some good places and seasons to find butterflies, plants, flowers, etc. that would be great too. If you're interested or have questions you can contact Missy Siders at [black.canyon.audubon.fieldtrips@gmail.com](mailto:black.canyon.audubon.fieldtrips@gmail.com) or call at 970-275-6639. ▪



Lewis's Woodpecker © Verlee Sanberg.

## BCAS Monthly Meetings

### Thursday, July 10

7:00 PM, Montrose Field House Summit Room  
"Black-chinned Hummingbirds"

Catherine and Joseph Ortega are Biology PhDs, professors at Durango's Fort Lewis College, and longtime avian researchers. Joseph will discuss the breeding success of black-chinned hummingbirds in southwest Colorado. Catherine will discuss nest site selection of black-chinned hummingbirds in northwest New Mexico, and how hummingbird response to noise pollution differs from other birds.

### Thursday, August 14

7:00 PM, Montrose Field House Summit Room  
"Puffins"

BCAS members Kristal Stidham and her mother, Linda Moreland, will share photos, stories and everything they learned from their quest to see all three of the world's puffin species. In June of 2024, they had great success in southern Alaska's Kenai Fjords National Park. In June of 2025, they will spend eight days touring Iceland, home to nearly 10 million Atlantic Puffins.

### Thursday, September 11

7:00 PM, Ute Indian Museum  
"Parks, Purpose and Public Lands"

Walt Dabney, member of the Coalition of National Park Rangers, retired Canyonlands National Park Superintendent, and former Texas State Parks Director will speak about the history of America's public lands and also about their potential future. We are hosting this special community event at the Ute Indian Museum, 17253 Chipeta Road in Montrose. Attendance is free and open to all public land users and enthusiasts. ▪

## Thank You, Members, Who Assisted During the Eckert Crane Days 2025 Festival

Your assistance with guided bird watching, poster distribution, bird counts, and countless other details were invaluable. Things work best when we work together. We had a great turnout and tremendous enthusiasm with a lot of positive feedback from those who attended. ▪

Alida Franco



## Upcoming Book Club Selections

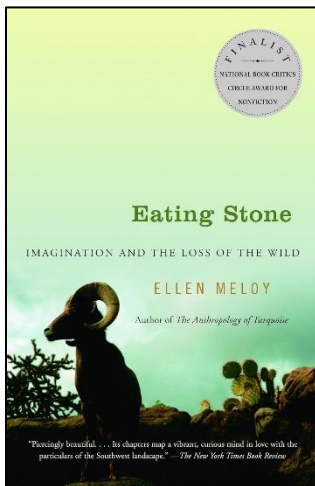
The readers in the Book Club suggested books for 2025 and then voted on their favorites (always difficult to choose!) Everyone is invited to join the meetings. We generally meet by Zoom from October to April and then in-person May to September. Check the website for any changes or contact Bruce Ackerman to get on the Book Club email list. Please join us, even if you have not read the book yet; the discussions are always lively. Here are the books for the next three months, with the full list on the BCAS website.

**Book club meetings are the second Wednesday of each month at 3 PM.**

Please let us know if you'd like to be on a separate email list just for the book club. Contact Sheryl Radovich at [sherylradovich@icloud.com](mailto:sherylradovich@icloud.com) or Bruce Ackerman at [BruceAckermanAUD@aol.com](mailto:BruceAckermanAUD@aol.com).

### June 11

*"Eating Stone: Imagination and the Loss of the Wild"* by Ellen Meloy (2006)

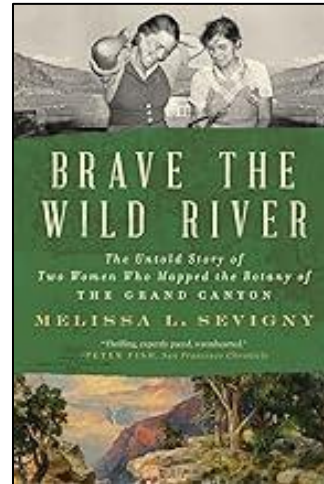


Long believed to be disappearing and possibly even extinct, the Southwestern bighorn sheep of Utah's canyonlands have made a surprising comeback. Naturalist Ellen Meloy tracks a band of these majestic creatures through backcountry hikes, downriver floats, and travels across the Southwest. Meloy

chronicles her communion with the bighorns and laments the growing severance of man from nature. Wry, quirky and perceptive, the book is a brilliant and wholly original tribute to the natural world.

### July 9

*"Brave the Wild River: The Untold Story of Two Women Who Mapped the Botany of the Grand Canyon"* by Melissa Sevigny (2023).

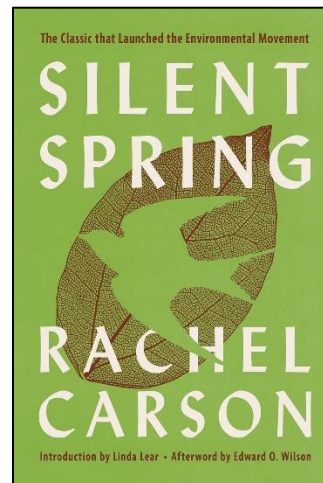


Two lady botanists travelled through the Grand Canyon in 1938. No one had yet surveyed the plant life of the Grand Canyon, and they were determined to be the first. This is the story of their daring, historic boat trip down the dangerous Colorado River and the desert plant species they discovered. They were the first women to ever float

the Grand Canyon. The author spoke in Montrose in 2024, and works for NPR in Flagstaff, AZ.

### August 13

*"Silent Spring"* by Rachel Carson (1962).



Silent Spring was widely read by the general public in the 1960's and became a New York Times best seller. The book provided the impetus for tighter control of pesticides and has been honored on many lists of influential books, including Discover magazine's list of the 25 greatest science books of all time. ■

## Birding Kenya *continued from cover*

leader and our driver. We also employed local guides in various parts of the country. I figured if I was going all the way to Africa, I didn't want limit myself to just focusing on large mammals. Most safari vehicles zoomed right past us as we viewed the smaller denizens of the Kenyan wildlife parks. When they did stop to ask what we were looking at, they quickly continued on their way once they determined "it was only a bird."

Since most wildlife action happens at night, the large predators typically rest in dense brush during the day and are therefore hard to see. Their prey—the zebras, antelope and, wildebeest—graze or rest in the open savannah during the daylight hours where they can see any predators approaching. Like all the other safari vehicles, we stopped to watch the mammal groups we found. Even when snoozing or grazing, African lions, elephants, rhinos, and giraffes are impressive animals. However, we didn't wait around for long periods of time hoping for the animals to "do something." Birds, meanwhile, were active all day long so there was always plenty to see.



**Little Bee-eater, just one of many colorful Kenyan birds © Don Marsh**

The benefit of a safari focusing on birds was that all eyes in our vehicle were looking for movement of all kinds in

all locations: in the sky, in the trees, in the low brush, in the water, and on the ground. Anything was fair game: a distant herd of elephants accompanied by their attendant flock of Cattle Egrets, a male Somali Ostrich with two female partners doing a little courtship strutting, a soaring Tawny Eagle taking advantage of the thermals as temperatures rose, two tiny Kirk's dik dik antelope courting in the brush, the eyes and nostrils of several hippos and crocodiles just visible above the surface in a waterhole. Our guides and driver were amazing at spotting the local wildlife so I suspect not many animals avoided our gaze. During my trip I recorded 42 species of mammals and 461 species of birds.



**A Secretarybird is an unmistakable bird species that hunts snakes and rodents in tall grasses © Don Marsh.**

We visited four national parks and reserves during our trip – Buffalo Springs NR and Lake Nakuru NP in northern Kenya, Nairobi NP in South Central Kenya, and Tsavo East NP in southeastern Kenya. All four of these parks encapsulate the classic image of an African safari: open, arid landscapes with abundant large mammals and many, many birds. We also visited several other habitats not on the typical safari itinerary, such as the dense wet forests on the slopes of Mount Kenya, the dry landscapes surrounding Lake Baringo, the tiny remnants of two once vast forests, the Kakamega Forest near



Uganda, and the coastal forest of the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest Reserve near the Indian Ocean.

Although I had many amazing African experiences, a couple that stand out include:



**Cattle Egrets follow a group of elephants and a warthog hoping to catch fleeing insects and rodents. © Don Marsh**

1) Driving down a two-track roadway in Buffalo Springs NR one afternoon and being surrounded by a large mix of zebras, giraffes, oryx, gazelle, impala, waterbuck, and elephants. It was the classic safari scene straight from a nature documentary.

2) Being amazed at the number and variety of raptors I saw in a country the size of Texas: 33 species including eight owl species.



**An African Golden Weaver adds finishing touches to its nest. © Don Marsh**

Although Kenya has major challenges like other countries around the world related to an ever-expanding human population and the resultant shortage of resources, I found Kenyans to be happy and friendly

to foreign visitors. School children particularly seemed to enjoy waving at our safari vehicle whenever we drove by. Smiles and laughter were commonplace.

Mid-way through my trip, I remember sitting at our table in the open-air dining room of our lodge sipping coffee and watching the sun rise over the acacia-studded savannah as three elephants browsed the trees below us. It occurred to me that this just might be “the trip of a lifetime.” ■

## Treasurer’s Report

Gayle Johnson reported expenses \$1920 to move and mount the MOTUS tower, \$91.25 for the annual PO Box rental fee, \$525 for the Chipeta Lake Osprey platform, and \$455.28 to internet services. Current assets equal \$34,981.28. ■



**Osprey nesting platform being installed by DMEA at Chipeta Lake, Montrose. Photo by Verlee Sanburg, February 10, 2025**

# BCAS Board Meeting Highlights

by Sallie Thoreson, Secretary

These highlights cover the Board meetings in March and May 2025.

- The annual meeting/banquet will take place June 5 with buffet dinner from 5:30-8:00 PM. The program will be presented by Ted Floyd on Ted's experiences birding over the decades: his daughter Hannah will provide a young person perspective They will host a workshop Thursday and a birding trip on Friday morning.
- BCAS regular projects and programs are continuing. The book club meets the second Wednesday of each month at 3 PM. The schedule of books for 2025 is on the BCAS website.
- Future birding trips are planned and publicized. Kristal and Caroline have the meeting programs booked through October 2025.
- BCAS continues to contribute an article to the Montrose Daily Press every five weeks.
- The BCAS currently has 430 paid members. A number of local members need to renew for 2025.
- The redesigned BCAS website is completed. Contact Jon when you have something to upload to the site.
- Eckert Crane Days on March 21-23 at Fruitgrowers Reservoir was a great success. Alida Franco has ideas for changes and additions for 2026 event.
- The Public Policy Committee of the Audubon Council of Colorado (ACC) monitors state legislation and receives briefings from lobbyists from Audubon Rockies. A preliminary report on the 2025 session is in Conservation Conversations.
- The Motus tower was moved to a neighborhood-friendly location. There are still bugs to work out with the WiFi at this new location.
- At the Marine Road Wildlife Area, the City of Montrose had a dedication of the bird blind as part of the Earth Day Celebration on Tuesday April 22. The City is pursuing possible grants to fund a site-specific plan for the property that meets ADA requirements. In the meantime, the City will not approve any permanent changes to the site. BCAS can continue with basic trail maintenance. The City will spray invasive weeds and water the two trees on the site.
- BCAS is starting to get requests for Spring educational programs. BCAS will participate in the 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Natural Resource Fair May 13, FOYAN Bring On The Summer- Outdoor Festival May 24, Delta Heritage

Days June 7 and RSP Bird banding educational activities in September. We can do more programs if we have volunteers to coordinate and work at the programs. BCAS is ordering educational supplies including adult and kid binoculars, bird guides, tablecloth, giveaways for kids, and educational display items.

- Don determined that we do not need a Fish and Wildlife Service permit for our bird skin collection. Don will work with RSP to inventory the collection and find a central location for frozen birds currently ready to prepare for skins. The skins will be use for educational programs and display.

**The next Board Meeting is Thursday July 17, 5-7pm.**  
**Please contact the BCAS Presidents at [black.canyon.audubon.society@gmail.com](mailto:black.canyon.audubon.society@gmail.com) for details on how to join the meeting via Zoom. ▪**



**Dedication of new bird blind at Marine Road Wildlife Area, on Earth Day, April 22, 2025. Speakers included current Montrose Mayor Dave Frank, and future mayor Judy Ann Files, Jon Horn, and Sandy Beranich. Photo by Verlee Sanburg**



# Conservation Conversations

By Sallie Thoreson

## New Colorado legislation from the 2025 session

Important water legislation was passed! Colorado lawmakers OK'd \$67 million for water programs, eliminated a sports betting tax break to generate more cash for those same programs, and created a special panel to examine better ways to fund water programs in the future. Also, there is additional legislation about non-functioning turf. State and local governments are prohibited from allowing the installation of non-functional turf—grass that is not used primarily for recreational purposes—in new governmental, commercial, institutional, industrial or common interest community property after January 1, 2028.

Transmission developers will be allowed to locate high-voltage transmission lines within a current state highway right-of-way. The bill also sets a hierarchy, requiring developers to consider existing utility corridors and highways for projects before establishing new ones. Wild bison that move into Colorado will be better protected from a bill that designates bison as a game species. This protects any wild bison that wander into Colorado from Utah.

## Federal Legislation

For state fiscal year 2025-26, the Species Conservation Trust Fund Projects appropriated \$5,000,000 from the species conservation trust fund for various wildlife conservation programs directed at conserving native species that have been listed as threatened or endangered under state or federal law or are species likely to become candidate species.

## Important Federal anti-public lands bill to watch.

Budget reconciliation and negotiations may continue into the summer. We need to keep the pressure on our members of Congress to keep the sale of public lands out of all legislative proposals associated with the budget process.

The *Fix Our Forests Act* is purported to protect forests from wildfires, but many say it has potential to harm our forest by prescribing vegetation management on our public lands without thorough planning or public input. Senator Hickenlooper has sponsored this bill as he strives for compromise.

U.S. Representative Lauren Boebert is seeing progress in her *Pet and Livestock Protection Act* to delist the gray wolf from the Endangered Species List and also prevent

judicial review of the legislative action (a dangerous precedent).

In his first four months in Congress, our Colorado Representative Jeff Hurd has sponsored: a bill that would move the BLM headquarters to Grand Junction, co-sponsored a bill that would remove the president's power to establish national monuments via the *Antiquities Act*, and co-sponsored the *Productive Public Lands Act* to revoke selected Resource Management Plans. This bill mandates that BLM either create new plans that are friendly to oil and gas development, or revert to previous outdated management plans. It would also reverse new protections for Gunnison Sage Grouse and big game habitat. Hurd says this bill aims to "unlock resource development on some of our most productive lands," meaning development of energy extraction.

On the positive side, Representative Hurd has expressed some concerns about selling public lands, and is co-sponsoring the *Colorado / Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection (GORP) Act*. Also, Republican representative Ryan Zinke (MT) has vowed to fight the sale of public lands and has launched a new bipartisan congressional caucus. ■



## How to Take Action

The National Audubon Society has a nice website where you can stay up-to-date on current campaigns, key conservation issues, and how to respond. You can also sign up to get the **Action Network** newsletter.

Action Center | Audubon

<https://www.audubon.org/takeaction>

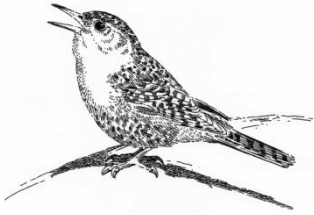
The new **Keep It Colorado** website is a good clearinghouse for information, actions, and events related to the protection of public lands. ■

<https://www.keepitco.org/>

Black Canyon Audubon Society

P.O. Box 387

Delta, CO 81416



### 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](mailto: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 2025. 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!

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

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

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Email address (Required): \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed: \_\_\_\_ \$20 for individual membership, \_\_\_\_ \$30 for family membership  
\_\_\_\_ \$10 for printed/mailed copies of newsletter.

Renew online at: [www.BlackCanyonAudubon.com](http://www.BlackCanyonAudubon.com).

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

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