



Canyon Wrenderings

The Journal of the Black Canyon Audubon Society

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

Fall 2026

Volume 41 Number 3



Gold Mountain Fire near Ridgway

Photo by Todd Miller

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Birds and Wildfire Smoke

By Susan Chandler-Reed and Sallie Thoreson

Since June, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment has issued multiple official public health alerts because of the danger to humans posed from breathing fine particulate matter (PM 2.5) and toxic gases. People have been urged to limit strenuous outdoor activities and to keep windows closed and to run air conditioning or an air purifier. But what about the wildlife that does not have the option of staying indoors with the air conditioning on when the Air Quality Index reaches unhealthy levels? Scientists know much less about the effects of smoke on birds than they do about the effects on humans. Because birds have highly efficient respiratory systems that allow them to take in the large amounts of oxygen that is necessary for flight, their breathing and lungs may be especially vulnerable to the airborne pollutants from smoke.

The immediate, localized danger from wildfires is, of course, flames and heat. Adult birds can often escape by flying away, but eggs, nestlings, and some adults will be unable to flee and will be killed. Birds don't have to lose their habitat or be caught in the flames to be harmed, however. Research has shown that—even far from the fire itself—prolonged smoke exposure can alter bird behavior. One of these changes seems to be decreased singing, which can affect breeding outcomes. *Continued on page 3.*

Presidents' Message

The clouds were ill-tempered, the regional jet crowded, and an odor of anxiety in the air as we double-tightened seatbelts. We were about to take-off for St John's, Newfoundland where the weather is often a bit awkward.

Then, the cockpit doors opened, the captain appeared, and chuckled at our sweating crowd saying, "No one will arrive in Newfoundland before I do!" which was met with laughter and relaxed us - some. And, in the nothing-can-go-wrong tone of seasoned pilots, he explained the crew's roles, adding, "You have a job to do too - take care of each other."

These are good words. Let's have a look at how we've been taking care of each other.

Join me in recognizing and thanking **Susan Werner** for her many years of managing, formatting and editing our long-standing, beautiful *Canyon Wrenderings* newsletter. Thank you, Susan, for your excellent care and presentation of our news and our stories! And yes, thank you for all your reminders to meet our deadlines. And, thank you to **Don Marsh** and **Dr. Alison Brody** for volunteering to carry on as our newsletter editors.

The **Montrose Area Woodturners and Woodworkers Guild of Western Colorado**, including **Dennis Murphy** and **Jon Horn**, have taken good care of BCAS too. Throughout the year, they have been designing, cutting, joining, and turning a total of **54 bird boxes and feeders**, from the simple and functional - to the extraordinary. Thanks to **Dr. Bruce Ackerman** and the **18 volunteers** who auctioned these treasures at the 2026 Montrose County Fair for BCAS educational programs for kids (see article on page 4).

Dian Torphy has earned a pat-on-the-back for guiding bird walks in Delta County and environs. After August 20, 2026 Dian will take some time off. Talk to **Don Marsh** if you'd like to guide one of the Delta bird walks.

Thanks to the small army of **Bluebird Box Watchers**, who clean, tend, and record activity observed in 80 plus Ridgway State Park and Billy Creek State Wildlife Area boxes. (see *Bruce Ackerman's article page 12*)

And, don't miss the **Fall Bird Banding** activities at **Dallas Creek, Ridgway State Park, September 1 – 12!** (see article page 3)

Now, help us share the joy! **Co- Prez Sallie Thoreson** and **Caroline Evans** will retire **June 30, 2027**. You too, can volunteer to be a member of the board, an officer, or president. Talk to any BCAS Board Member if you'd like to take part in leading this noble organization.

Sincerely,
Caroline Evans, Co-president and Program Chair

BLACK CANYON AUDUBON SOCIETY

Website: blackcanyonaudubon.org
Contact the Board of Directors using
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AD HOC COMMITTEES (ANNUAL EVENTS)

Montrose County Fair Bluebird boxes auction
— Bruce Ackerman
Christmas Bird Count Team—Missy Siders
Eckert Crane Days— Alida Franco

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

Canyon Wrenderings is the quarterly newsletter of the Black Canyon Audubon Society, **Vol. 41, No. 3**. Send submissions to wrenderingseditor@gmail.com

Wildfire Smoke (continued)

Diminished sunlight and reduced insect activity make finding food difficult during heavy smoke conditions, and displaced birds face heavier competition for limited food and water. Smoke as well as burned stopover sites force migratory birds to alter their routes, flying at higher elevations or for longer distances, which causes them to expend energy reserves.

To better understand what happens to birds in the wild, the Natural History Museum in Los Angeles is conducting "Project Phoenix." Volunteers in California, Washington, and Oregon observe birds for 10 minutes each week and report what birds are seen or heard. These observations help scientists determine where birds go and what resources they use when smoke is present. The research aims to fill in the gap about how smoke affects bird populations, different species, migration, and long-term survival. Colorado is outside of the "Project Phoenix" study area, but you can still assist with important research on the effects of wildfires on birds through eBird lists. The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology encourages you to make notes about field conditions on your eBird lists. Is it hazy from smoke? Can you smell smoke?

What else can you do? If you feed birds, it may be necessary to provide additional food and water to help birds recover. Reliable sources of food and water are especially important for providing energy for migratory birds. And don't forget to take care of yourself, staying indoors or wearing an N95 mask when air quality is poor.

BCAS Bird Banding 2026

By Sheryl Radovich

During the first two weeks of September Black Canyon Audubon Society along with Bird Conservancy of the Rockies and Colorado Parks and Wildlife will be hosting the 20th Anniversary of bird banding at Ridgway State Park. Last year that cooperative program welcomed over 400 participants of all ages and backgrounds from elementary to high school and college age students, residents from surrounding communities, senior groups and scouts to experience the wonder of migration.

Despite drought conditions, 33 different species and a total of 135 birds were netted and banded. This included rare catches like Lazuli bunting, Red-eyed Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, Northern Waterthrush and Downy Woodpecker plus a record number of Wilson Warblers.



Northern Waterthrush banded last fall.

Photo by Don Marsh

Students who came during the week and birders who visited the site at Dallas Creek on Public Banding Day watched the process of mist netting followed by the placement of a numbered identification band on the bird's leg and the recording of data for size, weight and general health. Over two decades of data has helped reveal trends in species, routes, populations and habitat conditions for long distance flyers moving through the Western Slope.

This year students will participate in bird banding activities on weekdays, September 1st-4th and 8th-11th, with Public Day scheduled on Saturday morning, September 5th for adults and families. The success of last year's program depended in large part on the 16 BCAS volunteers who contributed over 174 hours at educational stations like banding, binoculars, migration, adaptations and healthy habitats.

With the help of volunteers, we hope to inspire and inform an even greater number of participants this year about the wonder of birds in migration. Please join us during the first two weeks in September to celebrate our 20th Anniversary of bird banding at Ridgway State Park.



Boxes and feeders, Montrose County Fair

Photo by Bruce Ackerman

Blue Bird Box Auction Results

By Bruce Ackerman

Thank You to Montrose Woodworkers ---

We had another very successful year at the Montrose County Fair, in July 2026, auctioning off creative Bluebird Boxes. We had 18 Audubon volunteers who worked at our booth, at Friendship Hall. Numerous wood workers from 3 local clubs made a total of 54 very creative "Bluebird Boxes" and also some feeders and nest ledges. These clubs are the Montrose Area Woodturners, Montrose Woodworkers Guild, and Montrose Woodcarvers.

This year, we all raised about \$2300, a new record.

The number of items is also a new record. The money raised goes towards our Audubon educational programs for kids. This is our only fund-raising program for the year, so we really thank both the woodworkers and the Audubon volunteers, who make this possible.

This originally started as a contest among the woodworkers, to show off their skills and creative ideas – elegant or crazy designs, specialized woodworking tools, unusual kinds of wood, and funny found objects. Some of the woodworkers compete for ribbons at the county fair. But then the contest evolved into a fund-raiser for Audubon. Now it is on its 18th year!

Come next year to the Montrose County Fair and see what we are up to. Besides where else can you see a cow get a haircut, shampoo, and a blow dry?

Audubon Rockies Conference Report

By Janine Reid

BCAS/Audubon Colorado Council

July 20–21, 2026 Fort Collins, Colorado

The Audubon Rockies conference brought together approximately 40 participants representing nearly all the 19 Audubon chapters in Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming. It was an excellent opportunity to exchange ideas, learn from other chapters, and strengthen regional connections.

National Audubon's current priorities include native plants, dark skies, and bird-safe buildings.

Other priorities among local chapters include:

- Habitat conservation
- Bird-collision reduction
- Dark skies
- Cats – keeping them inside
- Supporting Audubon's Flight Plan 2023–2028

The conference emphasized making birding welcoming, joyful, and accessible to people of all ages. Chapters are using photography, video, books, comics, and Story Maps to tell stories about birds and conservation.

A consistent message was to be hopeful and joyful in our communications.

Audubon's Washington, D.C. lobbyist discussed current efforts to influence Congress to authorize the Farm Bill, the nation's largest investment in voluntary conservation on private lands. His message: "Politics is a marathon, not a sprint."

National Audubon provides Action Alerts for those who want to stay informed about federal legislation and policy issues.

The chapter reports were especially interesting and demonstrated the wide range of activities taking place across the region.

Examples included:

- Weminuche Audubon Society (Pagosa Springs) continues the American Dipper project begun in Durango in 2016 and has arranged trail signs along the Piedra Trail.

Continued on Page 5

Audubon Report (*continued*)

- Great Salt Lake Audubon has a Fledglings Club for children ages 4–8.
- Red Desert Audubon (Lander, WY) will co-host its local museum’s 45th annual art show.
- Grand Valley Audubon (Mesa County, CO) features a poetry page on its website and begins each monthly meeting with a poem by a Colorado poet.
- Aiken Audubon (Colorado Springs) hosts “Birds and Brews” monthly.

There are many ideas from other chapters that we could adapt locally, and I would be happy to contact individual chapters for more information if we decide to pursue any of these projects.

Marine Road Wildlife Area Trail Day

Montrose, Saturday 9/12/2026 9 am

BCAS will be performing needed trail work at Marine Road Wildlife Area on September 12, 2026. The focus of our work will be spreading mulch on the existing trails. Bring sun protection, work gloves and water. If you have a shovel, or wheelbarrow, bring it. In the past, the Grace Community Church helped us with this chore, but the church’s volunteer program has changed so they won’t be helping us.

To sign up, contact Bill Harris by text at 970.901.4022 or email trlgpa48@gmail.com.

Crane Bugling’s

By Alida Franco

Mark your calendars for this year’s sandhill crane events and consider coming out and assist the public in birdwatching.

Cranes & Cocoa 2026 --- Sat. Dec. 5th from 3-6 pm

25th Anniversary of Eckert Crane Days 2027 – Sat/Sun, March 20 and 21

Both of these events will be posted on a new interactive website called *North American Crane Festivals* put together by the National Audubon Society. This will give us national exposure.

“Pay it Forward” funding

By Alison Brody

We invite all BCAS Audubon Members to propose ideas for funding that are aligned with our mission and goals. For example, you might want to conduct research on bird breeding behavior, or enhance habitat for a specific bird species, or design and lead a public education workshop on bird conservation strategies. Most proposals will be funded for a single year and will be in the range of \$500—\$3000. The first round of proposals is due on December 1st, 2026. Future proposals will be reviewed as they are received, with decisions made at the following Board of Directors meeting. Contact BCAS Secretary Alison Brody (akbandwe@gmail.com) or other Board members if you are interested in submitting a proposal or have questions.



Marine Road Wildlife Area

Photo by Verlee Sandburg



Sandhill Cranes

Photo by Verlee Sandburg

Fall 2026 Field Trips

By Don Marsh

Please RSVP at black.canyon.audubon.fieldtrips@gmail.com and specify which trip(s) you are interested in attending.

All field trips meet at the public parking lot at the corner of north 2nd Street and north Cascade Avenue in Montrose, unless noted in the trip description. Bring snacks, water and binoculars.

September

Montrose 1st Tuesday (Montrose Co)

Tuesday 9/1/2026 8 a.m.

Bruce Ackerman will accompany the group to a nearby birding hot spot. Return should be about noon.

Public Bird Banding Ridgway State Park (Ouray Co)

Saturday 9/5/2026 7 a.m. – Noon

This is a drop in opportunity and kids are welcome. Watch a professional bird bander from the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies at work. Volunteers will be present to answer your questions. This is an excellent opportunity to see birds up close. Banding usually starts early (6:30 - 7 AM) and early morning is best. Nets are closed by noon or earlier (weather dependent).

Enter Ridgway State Park at the Dallas Creek entrance and head to the southernmost parking lot. The banding station is just over the bridge. Note: The state park charges a \$10.00/car entrance fee unless you have an annual "Keep Colorado Wild" pass.

Fruit Growers Reservoir (Delta Co)

Tuesday 9/15/2026 8 am Montrose/8:30 Fruit Growers

Don Marsh will lead a trip to Fruit Growers Reservoir to look for shorebirds and other fall migrants. Return should be around noon. Meet in Montrose at 8 a.m. or just across the dam at Fruit Growers Reservoir at 8:30 a.m.

Blue Mesa Reservoir (Gunnison Co)

Saturday 9/19/2026 8 a.m.

Don Marsh will lead a trip to Blue Mesa Reservoir to look for fall migrants. Due to the ongoing drought, the reservoir is currently only 25 percent full, which has resulted in large areas of mud and shallow water. These conditions attract good numbers of ducks, shorebirds, and gulls. Also present are raptors and sagebrush loving

songbirds. We should return to Montrose by early afternoon.

October

Montrose 1st Tuesday (Montrose Co)

Tuesday 10/06/2026 9 a.m.

Bruce Ackerman will accompany the group to a nearby birding hot spot. Return should be about noon.

Hotchkiss North Fork Miner's Trail (Delta Co)

Tuesday 10/20/2026 9 a.m.

Janine Reid will lead this trip along the North Fork of the Gunnison River. Meet in the parking lot on the west side of East Bridge Street (CO 92) before reaching the river.

Fall Colors (Ouray Co)

Saturday 10/10/2026 8:30 a.m.

Meet leader Don Marsh at the Ridgway Town Visitor Center near the intersection of Highway 550 and Highway 62. We will explore various backroads in Ouray County as we search for birds and beautiful fall colors. As weather and birds can be unpredictable in October, we will stay flexible on our options. Dress in layers and bring your camera. We will wrap up in the early afternoon.

November

Montrose 1st Tuesday (Montrose Co) Tuesday

11/03/2026 9 a.m.

Bruce Ackerman will accompany the group to a nearby birding hot spot. Return should be about noon.

Confluence Park (Delta Co)

Tuesday 11/17/2026 9 a.m.

Meet Elizabeth Ivers at Delta's Confluence Park at 9 am at the large parking lot on the east side of the lake (across from the back of the recreation center). We'll have the scope set up to view any waterfowl on the lake and then take a walk through the woods. Plan on a two-to-three-hour walk.

BCAS Monthly Meetings

By Caroline Evans

Location: Baldrige Hall, Montrose United Methodist Church, South 1st and Park Street, Montrose



*Dan digs out a cave to conduct a winter hibernacula study
Photo by Dan Newbaum*

Thursday, September 10, 7 PM

Colorado's Bats: Their Values and Challenges by Dan Newbaum

Dan will give a brief background of bats that occur in Colorado, explain their unique traits, their benefits to the ecosystem, and the challenges that arise when their world and ours overlap. Dan will describe some of the equipment used to study bats, including echolocation detectors, telemetry equipment, and mist nets. Attendees will learn about threats to bat conservation, and Dan will explain the impacts of white-nose syndrome, a fungal outbreak discovered in North American bats that recently reached Colorado.

Dan is a Species Conservation Program Manager with Colorado Parks and Wildlife, having worked with bats for

nearly 30 years. After working on field studies throughout the western United States and Australia with bats, toads, beaver, and Tasmanian devils, he earned an M.S. in Wildlife Biology working on roosting ecology and disease transmission of bats using urban areas. Dan serves as the Chair of the Colorado Bat Working Group and is on the board of the Western Bat Working Group. In his current position, he facilitates work with bats through a number of aspects including studies of roosting ecology, disease transmission, species inventory and monitoring, education, and conservation.



Gray Whale

Photo by Anne Janik

Thursday, October 8, 7 PM

Birding and kayaking in Baja Mexico by Dr. Bruce Ackerman and Susan Werner

Bruce and Susan will speak about their most recent trip to Baja Mexico, where they camped on two islands, kayaked, birded, watched Gray Whales mating, hiked, and snorkeled with Sea Lions. They love this part of Mexico so much, they have toured there four times with the same company. A combination of rocky desert landscapes and the ocean right there is very appealing during Montrose's winter months.

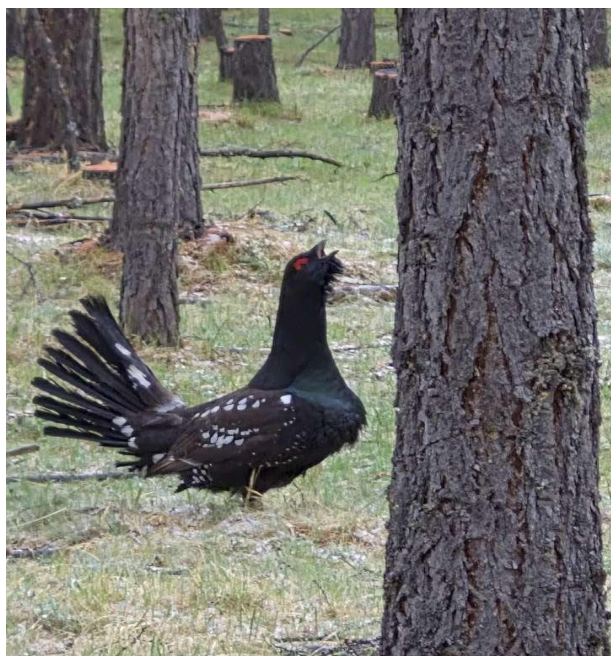
Bruce studied mountain lions in Utah, and elk in Idaho for his graduate degrees. Sometime, ask him about the old

BCAS Monthly Meetings (continued)

days when a biologist had to follow radioed animals around in the field rather than on the computer! He then went on to do manatee research in Florida. He finished his career as a biometrician in Idaho. He is now an adjunct professor at the Montrose campus of CMU.

Susan worked as a wildlife manager for the State of Colorado, both as a district wildlife manager and then as a supervising area wildlife manager. She was a jack of all trades – if a job needed to be accomplished, she did it. This included counting fish and game animals, law enforcement duties, school presentations, and critical habitat protection. While living in Idaho, she did a variety of projects for Idaho Fish and Game.

Bruce and Susan retired in 2016 and moved to Montrose. Both have been Audubon members and officers throughout their lives. They enjoy bird watching, traveling, and raising their Springer Spaniel puppy, Jasper.



Capercaillie

Photo by Jon Horn

Thursday, November 12, 7 PM

Twenty Days in Mongolia

by Jon Horn and Steve Dike

Jon Horn writes, *“Susan Chandler-Reed and Alan Reed asked Steve Dike and me to join them on a birding trip to Mongolia. How could we say no!”*

Mongolia is undeveloped for tourism, and that was much of the appeal to going there. We had a Mongolian bird guide, who spoke excellent English, and an entourage that included two other drivers and a team who set up camp nightly, prepared hot meals for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, loaded and unloaded our gear from small Russian vans that could go anywhere. We moved from camp to camp throughout the central part of the country visiting taiga forests, grass steppe lands, lakes and wetlands, river valleys, the Gobi Desert, rugged canyons, and mountainous terrain above timberline. At Ikh Bodg National Park in the Gobi Altai Mountains, we sought, unsuccessfully, Snow Leopards, but saw several high-altitude birds. At Hustai National Park, we saw Przewalski’s horses – the only true wild horses in the world – that have been reintroduced after near extinction. We saw over 200 species of birds, a wide variety of animals, including ibex, gazelle, argali (like our bighorn sheep), elk, deer, fox, marmots, gerbils, squirrels, and pika, and lizards, frogs, and toads.”

Jon Horn grew up in Northern California. As a child he was interested in birds and encouraged by a pair of uncles. But he didn’t get his own binoculars until college, when he began birding with friends around Portland, and the Malheur Wildlife Refuge in southeastern Oregon. He moved to Montrose in 1984 to work as an archaeologist. In 1987, Alan Reed, Susan Chandler, and Jon Horn started Alpine Archaeology. Jon has been a member of the Black Canyon Audubon Society since the early 1990s and has served as President, Webmaster, and as a long-term Board Member.

Steve Dike remembers as a child in Manchester, Missouri, binoculars on the dining room window sill, to be picked up for watching birds in the yard and along the creek out back. Since then, Steve has put up birdfeeders in just about every place he’s lived. He is a retired quality control inspector of large environmental cleanup projects for an international construction engineering and management company.

When Steve moved to Montrose in 2011, he joined a BCAS birding trip to Cerro Summit and became a member soon after, saying, “Good fortune brought me an opportunity to join an outing with three of the best birders in the area and we’ve continued that tradition over the years.”

Conservation Conversations

By Sallie Thoreson

Change is good when you get money back after paying in cash, but change in environmental decisions may not be so good. (OK, I need to work on my analogies!) It is a truth universally acknowledged, that news coming from Washington, DC is disheartening. We are seeing the efforts to rewrite, rollback, redirect, remove, “right size,” and reinterpret key bedrock legislation and the rules and regulations that support these Acts. I’ll mention just two of them, that are weighing heavy on my heart right now.

Recent administrative changes to the Endangered Species Act mean that:

- Those listed as “threatened species” no longer receive automatic protections, but must go through a paperwork trail.
- Agencies can more easily exclude areas from critical habitat.
- The regulatory definition of “harm” was removed, making habitat-damage harder to challenge. One explanation I read is that if your house is destroyed in a fire, but you are physically OK, there is no “harm” to you, and protections and support are not needed.

The Trump Administration has been able to shrink by 90% (over three million acres) two important cultural and environmental national monuments:

- Bears Ears National Monument has been running as a co-management agreement of five tribal nations with the federal government. The Executive Order also dismantled this Agreement. Imagine the pain when the seals of the five Nations were removed from Monument signage.
- Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, near Bryce and Zion National Parks in Utah, has been reduced from 1.7 million acres to 181,000 acres, limiting protection for this red rock country with cultural and spiritual significance to local tribes. The six tribes formed an Intertribal Coalition to continue their involvement.

There is a core legal question about whether the Antiquities Act, which allows a president to establish a National Monument, also allows a president to reduce an established National Monument.

How can our tears flow into action. The Sierra Club calls it “A Stake through the Heart of the Endangered Species Act.” We need to: stay informed, submit comments to our legislators (and places like www.audubon.org/take-action and 5calls.org – under Environment), amplify our outrage, and support state and local conservation efforts.

US Senators Ben Lujan (D-NM), Martin Heinrich (D-NM) and Dick Durbin (D-IL) led 34 senators in a letter rebuking the National Monuments rollback. Senators Bennet and Hickenlooper signed onto the letter. THANK THEM. Learn more at www.suwa.org

We can respond, rebuke, report, reaffirm, and roar. And feel free to send me your analogies.



Sabine's Gull

Photo by Verlee Sandburg



Western Sandpiper is a common fall migrant

Photo by Don Marsh

Upcoming Book Club Selections

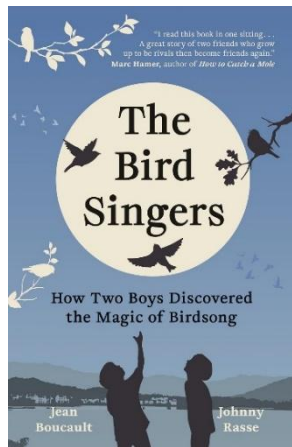
By Sallie Thoreson

The **Black Canyon Audubon Book Club** meets **the third Monday of each month** at 3:00 p.m. Meetings are virtual (usually Fall and Winter) or in-person with a virtual option in Montrose (usually Spring and Summer). **Please check the website (blackcanyonaudubon.org) as times, locations and book choices may change to accommodate the participants.** Please join us, even if you haven't read the book yet! Let Bruce Ackerman

(BruceAckermanAUD@aol.com) know if you would like to be on the separate email list specifically for the Book Club and email Bruce to get the in-person location or the Zoom link.

Also, it is time to suggest books to read for 2027. So, send Sallie (black.canyon.audubon.society@gmail.com) your 2027 book suggestions **by October 10**. Anyone on the Book Club email list will then be able to vote on the proposed suggestions. These can be fiction or non-fiction - about birds or other wildlife or plants, and can include biographies, memoirs, bird trips, natural history, ecology, climate change or other great science topics, or classic conservation literature. It's a good idea to have read the book yourself. Recent books are exciting but expensive, so a variety of publication dates are appreciated. Please include 2-3 sentences about the book.

September 21, 2026. *The Bird Singers: How Two Boys*

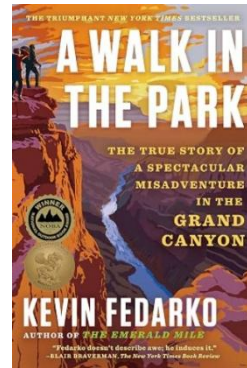


Discovered the Magic of Birdsong by Jean Boucault (2025).

This book follows two adolescent boys in France as they enter the world of bird singing competitions. The boys start as rivals, but their shared passion for birds develops into an enduring partnership to tour the world in concert as the Bird Singers. "There is poetry in the

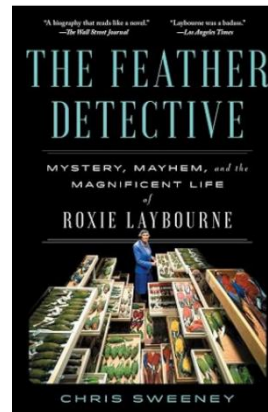
description of the different birds, from common seagulls to thrushes and bluethroats and nightingales. *The Bird Singers* is the story of an unlikely friendship, sparked by a desire to speak with the avian world."

October 19, 2026. *A Walk in the Park: The True Story of a Spectacular Misadventure in the*

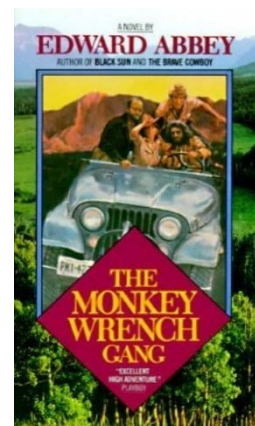


a Spectacular Misadventure in the Grand Canyon (2024). by Kevin Fedarko. The author, with his best friend, a *National Geographic* photographer, embark on an end-to-end traverse of the Grand Canyon—a journey that the friend promised, would be "a walk in the park" - NOT!

November 16, 2026. *The Feather Detective: Mystery,*



Mayhem, and the Magnificent Life of Roxie Laybourne by Chris Sweeney (2025). The fascinating and remarkable true story of the world's first forensic ornithologist—Roxie Laybourne, who broke down barriers, solved murders, and investigated death with a microscope and a few fragments of feathers.



December 21, 2026. *Monkey Wrench Gang* by Edward Abbey (1975). "A motley crew of saboteurs wreaks havoc on the corporations destroying America's Western wilderness in this 'wildly funny, infinitely wise' classic." (The Houston Chronicle).

Birds, Solar Energy, and Finding Common Ground

By Carole London
Program Coordinator, Electrify Montrose

As an avid birdwatcher, I have spent countless hours observing everything from hummingbirds and bluebirds to hawks soaring above our valleys and mountains. Watching birds connect us to the natural world in a special way and reminds us how important it is to protect the habitats they depend on. As a solar energy advocate, I am often asked whether solar arrays are good or bad for birds. The answer is more than a simple yes or no.

Like any human development, solar projects can affect wildlife. Large solar installations may alter habitat, displace some species, or create obstacles along migration routes. Researchers have also found that certain reflective surfaces can occasionally confuse birds, causing them to mistake solar panels for water. These concerns deserve attention, but they are only part of the story. Climate change remains one of the greatest threats facing birds today. Rising temperatures, changing weather patterns, drought, wildfires, and habitat loss are already affecting bird populations across North America. Renewable energy, including solar power, is one of the most effective tools we have to reduce carbon emissions and slow these trends.

The encouraging news is that solar development and bird conservation can work together. Many solar projects now incorporate pollinator-friendly vegetation, preserve natural habitat where possible, and avoid critical nesting and migration areas.

Studies suggest that the overall environmental benefits of solar energy—including reduced air pollution and slower climate change—can outweigh localized impacts when projects are properly planned and managed.

Organizations such as Audubon support the expansion of renewable energy while advocating for responsible siting and design that protects birds and their habitats. As someone who treasures both birds and clean energy, I do not see these goals as competing interests. Instead, I see them as part of the same mission: creating a healthier environment for future generations. By supporting thoughtfully designed solar projects while advocating for strong wildlife protections, we can help ensure that birds

continue to thrive while we transition to a cleaner energy future.

To learn more about the benefits of solar energy and moving to an all-electric lifestyle, visit our website at electrifymontrose.com.

Carole London, Program Coordinator, Electrify Montrose

BCAS Board Meeting Highlights

By Alison Brody, Secretary

Secretary's report of the Board meeting on June 30, 2026.

Our discussion primarily focused on finalization of 2025-2026 budget and finalizing the proposed 2026-2027 budget. We are doing well. Fundraising through membership, donations and, most importantly, the donation and subsequent sale of bluebird boxes has kept pace with spending.

We propose a new "Pay it Forward" funding opportunity available to all BCAS members for 2026-2027. An initial proposal format was conceived and written by Sallie Thoreson and further edited by Alison Brody and others. See the "Pay it Forward" announcement in this newsletter for more information on how to apply.

We have sponsored a suite of successful field trips and educational programs over the 6 months with more to come. The Birdhouses Silent Auction will return to the Friendship Hall during the annual Montrose County fair. Our BCAS chapter goals are under review and we will share them as soon as they are finalized.

Treasurer's Report

By Todd Miller, Treasurer

The BCAS expense budget for the new July 2026 - June 2027 fiscal year was developed with the help of the budget subcommittee and then approved by the full BCAS board at the 6/30 board meeting. The new fiscal year is off to a great start as BCAS raised over \$2,300 in July from the annual Bluebird Box fundraiser at the Montrose County Fair. A big thank you to the woodworkers and woodturners who created and donated over 50 bird boxes, all those who donated their time at the BCAS booth, and the winning bidders.

Bluebirds in our Boxes

By Bruce Ackerman



Western Bluebird eggs Ridgway State Park Photo by Bruce Ackerman

Have you seen those beautiful bluebirds around our area? Many of them nest in artificial nest boxes that birders have put up. There are not enough natural cavities in trees, so the bluebirds, and other species, readily use the man-made boxes. The species that use the boxes are Mountain and Western Bluebirds, Tree and Violet-Green Swallows, and occasionally House Wrens and Ash-Throated Flycatchers. These are all birds evolved to nest in tree cavities.

A team of local birders monitors the bluebird boxes all summer. There are 50 bluebird boxes in Ridgway State Park. Carrie Krickbaum and Shelby Martinez are the coordinators on these, with Bruce Ackerman, Midge Quadri, Mary and Todd Miller, Pam Rule, and finally, a group of kids, the Peace Jam kids, led by Sveri Stromsta May of Ridgway. There are 30 boxes at the Billy Creek State Wildlife Area. Susan Werner coordinates these, with Don Marsh, Janet Haws, Anne Janik. I hope I got everyone.

What do we do when we monitor these bluebird boxes? Once a week from April to July, we look quickly into every active box to see what is happening. Basically, what species of bird, did they complete a nest, did they lay any eggs, how many, did they all hatch, and did they survive to fledging? In each box, the process can take about 8 weeks, from start to finish. Most of the eggs hatch, and most of the chicks survive to fledging, but not all. We clean out the used nest after each nesting.

Most boxes get used every year, sometimes twice, even three times. Data from each observation and photographs are entered into the national Nestwatch.Org database. We had an Audubon field trip on June 27 to look in on some active nests of bluebirds and swallows. By then, most boxes are on their second set of nestlings.

Sometimes there are problems – Life is Hard. Sometimes eggs don't hatch, or chicks don't always live, and sometimes predators like snakes, raccoons and bears get them. Bears occasionally break down the nest boxes. Cold wet springs and hot dry summers can also cause failures -- if you are a species that only eats insects, that's important.

So, a big Thank You to all the volunteers who monitor these bluebird boxes. If you want to go on a tour of the boxes or volunteer next year, let me know.

DIY – Help Prevent Window Strikes

By Don Marsh

I have found a simple and effective way to prevent birds from crashing into our windows. It is called Acopian BirdSavers (a.k.a. Zen Wind Curtains). They are basically a set of nylon paracord segments spaced 4 inches apart and attached to a horizontal rod (we used scrap wood trim), which is then anchored in front of the window. They were very easy to make and we are not aware of any bird strikes at our house since they went up.



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Detail of a "BirdSavers" showing the simplicity of the system

Others have had similar results, which may be why Acopian BirdSavers were installed at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and its Visitor Center in 2022.

Check out the Acopian family's website www.birdsavers.com to learn more.

Let's all do our part to prevent bird window strikes.

Call to Action from the National Audubon Society

The Farm Bill is one of Audubon's top legislative priorities this year, as it represents the largest investment in voluntary working-lands conservation efforts in the United States. We're asking for the **Black Canyon Audubon Society's help** in getting the word out to Audubon members, supporters, and bird-lovers to let their members of Congress know how important conservation programs are. We're making it easy via **the Farm Bill Chapter Engagement Toolkit!**

From a scannable QR code to sample outreach emails, this toolkit has everything you need to support conservation funding priorities for the Farm Bill. If you have any questions, please contact campaigns@audubon.org.

See our "Current News" webpage on the Black Canyon Audubon Society website to download this toolkit.

Mongolia Photos by Steve Dike



Yarguin Gorge, Mongolia



Long-legged Buzzard Nestlings

Black Canyon Audubon Society
2520 Bridges Circle
Montrose, CO 81401



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 2026. 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 Wreanderings*, 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.

or mail your renewal to: Black Canyon Audubon Society
2520 Bridges Circle, Montrose, CO 81401