



# Canyon Wrenderings

*The Journal of the Black Canyon Audubon Society*

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

Spring 2014

Volume XXVI Number 3

## Mark Your Calendar

### February

- *Saturday & Sunday Feb. 22/23*

#### Annual Winter Raptor Trips

For the North Fork area, meet both days at the Hotchkiss City Market at 8 a.m. Space is limited; call Jason Beason at (970) 310-5117 to sign up. See article on page 5.

For the Montrose area, meet at the Downtown City Market at 9 a.m. Space is limited; call Bill Harris at (970) 249-8055 to sign up.

- *Wednesday – Feb 26*

#### Talk on Whooping Cranes

Come to Bill Heddles Recreation Center in Delta to hear Evelyn Horn give a talk on *Whoopers!* Talk starts 7 p.m. See article on page 5.

### March

- *Saturday – March 15*

#### Volunteers Needed

Help clean-up the visitor trail, south end of Fruitgrower's Reservoir. Meet at 10 a.m. Bring hand tools, sunscreen, etc. More information on page 3.

- *Friday – Sunday March 21-23*

#### Eckert Crane Days

Viewing along the causeway at Fruitgrower's Reservoir, east of Eckert from 9 – 11 a.m. each day and 3 p.m. on Friday. See article this page.

- *Friday – March 21*

Presentation by Evelyn Horn on sandhill cranes, as part of Eckert Crane Days. See article this page.

### Save the Date

- *Mid-June*

Annual meeting and dinner

## CELEBRATING THE MIGRATION OF SANDHILL CRANES

By Susan Chandler-Reed

Eckert Crane Days will be held from Friday, March 21 through Sunday, March 23, 2014. This annual event is held at Fruitgrower's Reservoir east of the community of Eckert, Colorado to observe sandhill cranes that use the area as a stopover during spring migration.

Viewing will be from 9:00 a.m. through 11:00 a.m. Friday through Sunday, March 21-23, and from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Friday. Visitors should expect to see cranes lifting off in the mornings and landing in the late afternoon. Personnel from the Black Canyon Audubon Society, the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife, and the Black Canyon Regional Land Trust (BCRLT) will be on hand at the North Road viewing area to answer questions and to share spotting scopes and literature with the public.

Friday afternoon, March 21, Evelyn Horn will give a presentation about sandhill cranes at 1 p.m. at the Eckert Presbyterian Church, located at the intersection of Highway 65 and North Road. Alecia Phillips of the BCRLT will also speak about the land trust's conservation efforts in the vicinity of Fruitgrower's Reservoir. The talks will be followed by a pie and coffee social, hosted by the Ladies of Eckert Presbyterian Church as a fundraiser for renovations to their 100-year-old church. The BCRLT will also host a picnic at Fruitgrower's Reservoir from 3 to 5 p.m. on Friday afternoon. Bring a dish or drink to share.

Directions to Eckert: Take Colorado Highway 92 east out of Delta. Go 4 miles to Colorado Highway 65, then 6 miles north to North Road. The church is on the west side of Highway 65, at its intersection with North Road, and the viewing area at Fruitgrower's Reservoir is roughly 1.5 miles east on North Road.

### What Is the Black Canyon Land Trust?

The BCRLT works in partnership with families and communities to permanently conserve open spaces and the rural heritage that defines western Colorado today and for generations to come. In conjunction with its conservation partners they have conserved 47,200 acres across six counties – all made possible by over 300 donors and 250 families. As of March 1<sup>st</sup>, visit them in Montrose in the Timberline Bank Building off Oxbow Drive. Read more about them on their website: [www.bcrlt.org](http://www.bcrlt.org)

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

I am very happy to announce that Sandy Beranich has offered to be the new BCAS newsletter editor, and this is her first edition of *Canyon Wrenderings*! A lot of time and effort goes into the newsletter and we appreciate that Sandy is willing to take on the task. Thank you, Sandy!

The newsletter is our primary tool for communicating with members, but I am also happy to announce that we have now gotten the **BCAS website updated** after having sat rather idle for quite some time. Our webmaster, Yvonne McChesney of At Your Service Internet Solutions in Montrose, converted the website to a new program that is considerably easier for us to use. Yvonne trained several of us, and we have even been able to add some new features. You will find a link to the current newsletter on the front page of the website and several past newsletters have been archived and are available by way of a drop-down menu under the HOME button. Something else we have added is a "Places to Birdwatch" section under the BIRDING button. With so many good places to go bird watching in our area, we want to share them with BCAS members and visitors to our area. We have a placeholder on the website now, but will be adding content soon. If you would like to add content to this section, we welcome you to send us information. In addition to how to get to a location, what birds are likely, and the best time of year to visit, it would be important to specify if the place is on public lands and, if on or near private land, what considerations to take into account, such as if viewing should only take place from adjacent public roads or what proper contacts to make regarding access. When you have a chance, look over the revitalized website at <http://www.blackcanyonaudubon.org/> and let us know what you think!

We have some interesting events coming up that we hope you will take advantage of:

The first are our **annual raptor field trips** – two in the North Fork Valley led by Jason Beason and Jim LeFevre on February 22 and 23 and one in the Montrose Area led by Bill Harris on February 22. Space is limited for all trips. See the notices elsewhere in the newsletter for additional information and contacts.

The second event is a **slide presentation on Whooping Cranes** by Evelyn Horn at Bill Heddles Recreation Center in Delta on Wednesday February 26 beginning at 7:00 p.m. For more information, see article on page 5.

The third is the **annual Eckert Crane Days event** (March 21-23) where, if the weather and cranes cooperate, the incredible spectacle of mass crane lift-offs can be experienced. Additional information about Crane Days can be found elsewhere in the newsletter.

The Saturday prior to Eckert Crane Days – March 15 – we will be doing a **clean-up of the trail at the dam on Fruitgrower's Reservoir**. It has become overgrown a bit and has trash strewn around, so some TLC is needed. An announcement of the clean-up can be found elsewhere in the newsletter (page 3). With sufficient time and help, we would also like to pick up trash along the causeway across the north end of the reservoir in preparation for Crane Days the next weekend.

Another event to keep in mind is the **BCAS Annual Meeting**. We will once again be meeting for a wonderful dinner and informative presentation at Remington's Restaurant at the Bridges in Montrose. The date has yet to be finalized, but expect to attend in mid-June.

The BCAS Board voted to donate \$200 to the printing of the results of the **Breeding Bird Atlas II project**. Data about the distribution of breeding birds throughout Colorado was collected over a five-year period (2007-2012) and is now being compiled into a hardcover book. The donation was done under their Sponsor-a-Species program, so BCAS is sponsoring the Canyon Wren and Black Swift. Individuals can donate to the publication at a rate of \$50 per species or three species for \$100. Visit: <http://www.cobreedingbirdatlasii.org/Make%20a%20gift/Species%20Sponsorship.pdf> for more information or send your check to Lynn Wickersham, Atlas II State Coordinator, San Juan Institute of Natural and Cultural Resources, Fort Lewis College, 1000 Rim Drive, Durango, CO 81301. (*Continued next page*)

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*(From the President, Concluded)*

The **BCAS Board meets** on the second Thursday of every other month rotating between Montrose and Delta. Our next Board meeting will be on March 13 in the upstairs meeting room of the Delta Chamber of Commerce at 301 Main St. (side entrance on 3<sup>rd</sup>), beginning at 6:00 p.m. BCAS members are invited to attend. If you have a topic you would like to discuss with the board, please let me know in advance so that I can put you on the agenda. We are always looking for new board members, particularly someone who might be interested in doing some coordination so that we can have more field trips. If interested in helping out with BCAS events or simply to see what goes on at a meeting, please feel free to attend.

**Jon Horn**

BCAS President

**Volunteer Opportunity at Fruitgrower’s Reservoir  
March 15**

The BCAS is looking for volunteers to help do some clean up along the visitor trail on the south end of Fruitgrower’s Reservoir at a.m. Saturday March 15. The 850-ft-long trail has become somewhat overgrown and has accumulated some trash, so we would like to cut back a bit of vegetation and pick up cuttings and other trash so bird watchers and other trail users can have a more pleasurable experience. To reach the trail area, travel to Orchard City on Highway 65, turn south on County Road (CR) 21 on the east side of the highway. Almost

immediately, turn left (east) on Fruitgrower’s Road (CR M) and follow it to the reservoir, across the dam and to the south side where there is parking. Bring a hat, work gloves, water, eye protection, sunscreen, and wear sturdy shoes. If you have pruning shears/loppers for trimming vegetation, please bring them, along with any other tools you might find handy for removing encroaching small plants. We will provide garbage bags for trash removal. If we have enough helpers and interest, we may move over to the north end of the reservoir and pick up trash along the causeway across the reservoir along North Road in preparation for Eckert Crane days the following weekend. Who knows, we may be entertained by a crane lift-off and early migrating spring birds! Hope to see you there.

# Bird Banding at Ridgway State Park: An Educational Journey

By Sheryl Radovich

With a flash of color, the flap of a wing, and burst of flight, a bird begins the next leg of its migratory journey from the banding station at Ridgway State Park.

Each fall, the riparian area at Dallas Creek is transformed into a research site and outdoor classroom by volunteers from Black Canyon Audubon Society and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. A series of mist nets and a field lab are put in place to collect and record data on bird migrations in the Uncompahgre Valley. These studies are conducted over a ten day period under the direction of a certified bander from Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory. The bander ensures safe handling of birds as they are netted and released and logs results in a database. Information from this site helps scientists monitor migratory populations, biodiversity of species, and the effects of global change on critical habitat areas.

Bird banding combines real science with environmental education and community outreach. Over the past nine years, more than 3,000 students and area residents have participated in the Ridgway bird banding station. Though the banding takes place in mid-September, excitement begins much earlier when a team of educators from BCAS visits fourth graders in their classrooms to introduce concepts of migration. In this outreach program, students use binoculars and guides to identify birds. They compare ostrich and hummingbird eggs, human and bird heart rates, and feather collections to explore adaptations. In the final activity, children run through an obstacle course of glass windows, pet cats, storms, toxic pesticides, and towers to learn about dangers along migratory routes.

When students arrive at Ridgway State Park on field-trip day, they already have an understanding of birds and migration and are ready and anxious to put their classroom experience to work. The fourth graders are divided into groups and rotate through three stations. The first is a treasure hunt to find trees and shrubs in the riparian habitat that birds depend on as a food source during their flight south. In the second station, children use BCAS bird skins and mounts to closely observe characteristics like talons on a Great Horned Owl, the nectar-feeding beak of a Broad-tailed Hummingbird, the featherless head of a Turkey Vulture, and the brilliant colors and markings of a Western Tanager.

At the actual banding station, children add to their knowledge of migration by participating in an ongoing scientific investigation. They watch as the bander takes a live bird that has just been caught in a mist net, identifies its species and gender, affixes a sized and coded band to the bird's leg, checks molt, age, and fat stores, and records size and weight. Students learn that the band and database inform scientists who may recapture the same bird at another migratory site. The final step is a safe release, as the bird is placed upside down on the extended hands of children standing in a circle. A breath of air stimulates flight, and the bird takes off on its migratory journey.



Photo by Bill and Cheryl Day.

But it's not just the birds that begin a new journey on this day; it is the children who have made a personal connection with the natural world – a connection that may set them off on a journey of their own. For, they will become the scientists, planners, decision-makers, conservationists, and stewards of tomorrow.

Last fall, 453 students and 87 adults visited the Ridgway banding station.

## Colorado Black Swift Added to Brazilian Bird List

In 2009, Kim Potter (U.S. Forest Service), Carolyn Gunn (Independent researcher and Colorado Parks and Wildlife), and Jason Beason attached light-level geolocators to 4 Black Swifts captured in western Colorado. One year later, they were lucky enough to recapture 3 of them and successfully downloaded data that Rob Sparks (Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory) used to create maps showing where three swifts had gone for the winter and the migration path back to Colorado in the spring. The data showed that Black Swifts travel more than 4,000 miles to spend the winter in Brazil. Recently, the Brazilian Committee on Ornithological Registers added Black Swift to the official Brazilian bird list based on information from this research. The 2010 *State of the Birds Report* listed the Black Swift as one of the species most vulnerable to effects associated with climate change.



Black Swift with geolocators, Photo by Todd Patrick

For more information see *The Wilson Journal of Ornithology* (March 2012).

## Need Representative to Audubon Council

The Black Canyon Audubon Society (BCAS) is seeking a member to represent it on the Audubon Colorado Council (ACC). This position is currently filled by a BCAS member; however, the current representative would like to serve as an at-large member of the ACC board. It is important that the western slope have as many representatives as possible. The BCAS representative would need to attend one "in person" meeting each spring in different Colorado locations. This year the annual meeting will be in Pagosa Springs in late May. In addition, the ACC board also meets three other times a year; however, the BCAS representative would be able to attend those meetings via computer hook-up in their own living room. ACC has given BCAS a web-camera for the representative to use for those meetings, which typically last about two hours.

This is a wonderful opportunity to learn about what your chapter is achieving and to meet a fabulous group of dedicated individuals from around Colorado who are the "front line" for protecting Colorado's wild places and critter faces. If you would like to help the wildlife you cherish, join this accomplished cadre of conservationists. Please contact Chris Lazo at 2006clazo@myway.com or leave a message at (970) 963-8049. He will arrange to meet the new BCAS representative and help them get oriented.

ACC is also in great need for members from the western slope on three committees. We need to get our voice heard on the Conservation committee, the Policy Committee and the Water Committee. The Conservation Committee deals with Colorado issues at the national level; the Policy Committee deals with issues at the state level and state law; and the Water Committee is fighting to protect Colorado water and riparian habitats throughout the state. Again, if anyone would like to learn more about these vital efforts and how you can assist, please contact Chris at 2006clazo@myway.com or leave a message at (970) 963-8049.

## Raptor Trips

The Black Canyon Audubon Society will sponsor its annual winter raptor field trips on February 22 and 23.

North Fork area participants should meet at the Hotchkiss City Market at 8 a.m. each day to get organized and for carpooling. We need to limit participants to 12 each day for safety reasons. A \$5 per person donation is requested to help fund the BCAS/RMBP fall banding station at Ridgway State Park. Please contact Jason Beason at (970) 310-5117 or jason.beason@rmbo.org to sign up.

Montrose area participants, join Bill Harris at the downtown Montrose City Market at 9 a.m. on Saturday, February 22 to get organized and for carpooling. For safety reasons, the trip is limited to 12 participants. To sign up or request information, contact Bill at (970)249-8055.

## \*\*\*\*\*Evey Horn Talks on Cranes\*\*\*\*\*

Evelyn Horn's first love used to be plants, not cranes. But that all changed while visiting Ruby Marsh in northern Nevada and being surrounded by birds. "That's when I started getting interested in our feathered friends," she remembers. Then after retiring and moving back to Colorado in 1989, she and her husband happened to land just a half a mile from Fruitgrower's Reservoir in Hart's Basin.

"I remember in the spring of 1990 hearing and seeing the sandhills fly over and I was hooked." She has been passionate about the cranes ever since with her love of the sandhills eventually spilling over into her devotion to the endangered whooping cranes.

Come hear Evey talk on *Whoopers!* February 26 at the Bill Heddles Recreation Center in Delta at 7 p.m. and on March 21 during Eckert Crane Days in Eckert about Operation Migration leading fledgling whooping cranes from Wisconsin to Florida.

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## Christmas Count Results

Christmas bird counts were reported for Montrose, Delta, and Gunnison counties. Breakdowns for all counts can be obtained by going to the National Audubon website and searching the Christmas Bird Count menu by state and then by county. Here are some numbers: The Montrose count brought out 22 volunteers who counted 9,185 individuals with 64 species. The five most common species included European Starling (2,942), Mallard (1,182), House Sparrow, (643), American Crow (621), and Eurasian Collared-Dove (606).

Eleven Delta County volunteers reported 6,324 individuals with 59 species. The five most common species were Red-Winged Blackbird (1,500), Canada Goose (1,389), European Starling (1,060), Mallard (293), and Common Raven (210).

Gunnison County had 16 volunteers who counted 4,096 individuals and 46 species. The five most common species included Mallards (469), Common Raven (391), Horned Lark (388), European Starling (324), and Eurasian Collared-Dove (200).

Black Canyon Audubon Society  
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To help reduce our use of paper and postage and to receive photos in color, send an email to: [blackcanyonaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:blackcanyonaudubon@gmail.com) or [megrich@montrose.net](mailto:megrich@montrose.net).

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Black Canyon Audubon Society (NAS chapter C9ZD140Z)

**Membership Renewal and Application Form**

Members may participate in all chapter activities, receive the *Canyon Wrenderings* newsletter and vote on chapter issues. Annual local membership dues are \$10 if newsletter is received electronically, \$15 if newsletter is mailed. Dues remain locally.

(Check one) Renewal (see mailing label for expiration date) \_\_\_\_\_  
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*If you would like to join or donate to National Audubon Society and receive Audubon magazine, please send a check for \$20 to National Audubon Society, P.O. Box 422250, Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250. Please use this form and list Black Canyon Audubon Society/C2ZD140Z on your check so that BCAS can receive membership recruitment funds.*