



# 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 2019

Volume XXXII Number 2



## Upcoming Events and Dates to Know

### JUNE

**June 6, Thursday: SPEAKER – Theresa Childers**, Wildlife Biologist with Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Curecanti National Recreation Area, will present information on the National Park Service's bird monitoring program. The program will focus on the many decades of Peregrine Falcon nests, but will also highlight eagle nest monitoring and a Great Blue Heron Rookery and Black Swift colony. Theresa will highlight park efforts to determine nest and fledgling success and how to protect these important migratory bird production areas within the Parks. Come to the Montrose Field House at the corner of Rio Grande and Colorado Avenue at 7 p.m. No charge.

**June 8, Saturday: FIELD TRIP to Black Canyon of the Gunnison.** Theresa Childers will guide us to viewing areas in the national park to see nesting Peregrine Falcons and other spring migrants. The trip is limited to 12 people who must sign up to reserve a place. Meet in the northeast corner of Gold's Gym parking area located at Hillside and East Main in Montrose. We will meet at 8 a.m. to carpool; bring lunch and water. To reserve a spot, contact [Bruceackermanaud@aol.com](mailto:Bruceackermanaud@aol.com) or 727-858-5857

**June 13-16, Thursday to Sunday:** Colorado Field Ornithologists annual conference in Montrose. For more information go to: <https://cobirds.org/CFO/Conventions/Default.aspx>

**June 26, Wednesday: BCAS Annual Dinner.** Join us for dinner at Remington's Restaurant in Montrose to celebrate the end of another year of birding. A few changes this year to the evening: to give people more time to socialize, plan to come at 5:30 p.m. Instead of a buffet, dinner will be served at each table. There will not be a silent auction. After the dinner, President Bruce Ackerman will summarize highlights of the year, which will be followed by election of new board members. Concluding the event, BCAS member Dennis Murphy will provide a PowerPoint presentation on his recent trip to Antarctica. Please register by June 16<sup>th</sup>, using the registration form attached to this newsletter, or go online to our website: [www.blackcanyonaudubon.org](http://www.blackcanyonaudubon.org). to download a separate form. See also page 3.

### JULY

**July 13, Saturday: Purple Martin field trip.** Join us on the fourth annual Paonia Ranger District purple martin field trip. Participants will meet at the Paonia River Park at 8:30 a.m., carpool up Stevens Gulch road to various sites, then out Forest Road 265 and back to Paonia on Hwy 133 (slightly less than 100 miles with various side trips). To minimize disturbance to birds, the trip is limited to 16, who must preregister with trip leader Dennis Garrison. If there is substantial additional interest, a second date will be arranged. Roads are gravel and in good shape, so most cars are fine for this trip. Carpooling is encouraged.

The trip will visit past and present purple martin nesting sites from Windy Point to Mule Park to the West Muddy Creek. We will be discussing aspen ecology, future Forest Service projects in the area, martin life history, nest boxes, and looking for any and all birds we can find along the way. Bring binoculars and a bird book, a lunch, maybe a folding chair, a jacket, and wear good shoes. There will not be a lot of hiking but we will wander off into the woods in a few places. Expect mosquitoes. We are typically done by mid-afternoon, depending on how much we talk. Contact Dennis Garrison, trip leader, at [dennisgarrison@hotmail.com](mailto:dennisgarrison@hotmail.com) or 970-985-2244 to reserve a spot. See related article on page 6.

**More events on page 3**

# PRESIDENT'S CORNER

## *Comings and Goings*

As we come into Summer.....

I am writing this on May 15, and bird migration is at its peak now. I hope you are getting out to see some fun birds. You've probably seen some hummingbirds arriving recently, and maybe swallows, orioles, tanagers, and others.

Save The Dates! – The Colorado Field Ornithologists will hold their annual meeting in Montrose, Thursday, June 13 to Sunday June 16. BCAS members can volunteer to help out, or join CFO to participate fully. <https://cobirds.org/CFO/Conventions/Default.aspx>

Sign up for our annual banquet on Wednesday June 26 in Montrose. Dennis Murphy will give a slideshow about his recent trip to Antarctica. His trip sounded so great to me, that Susan and I have signed up to go ourselves next February.

We need some additional board members, so please get in touch if you might be interested. Take your involvement with Audubon to a higher level! Two people are retiring from the board, so we will need help with the membership directory, and with organizing field trips and programs. You don't need to be an expert birder, just be interested in helping us promote Audubon's mission and help people learn about birds and nature.

I hope you are enjoying our spring weather, and use this opportunity to get out for some good birding.

### **Bruce Ackerman,**

BCAS President

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## **Audubon Council of Colorado (ACC) Meeting Notes**

By Bruce Ackerman

The most recent ACC meeting was scheduled for Fruita on 4/13/2019, the first time on the West Slope in several years. Due to snowy weather and road conditions, the meeting was changed to a phone conference. Eight Colorado chapters participated along with Audubon Rockies. BCAS president Bruce Ackerman participated on the call.

A brief summary of major concerns that were discussed at the meeting is provided below; once the final minutes become available, they will be posted on the BCAS website ([www.blackcanyonaudubon.org](http://www.blackcanyonaudubon.org))

Each chapter submitted updates on their recent activities. Several chapters are working to promote non-lead ammunition for big game hunting, to protect raptors and other scavengers. Lead ammunition contaminates soil and water as well as carcasses of animals that were shot, which results in lead poisoning and often death to the scavengers.

We discussed bills at the state legislature which was near the end of the session (adjourned on 5/3/2019). Senate Bill 19-181 (SB19-181) passed which will change the focus of the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission from promoting the oil and gas industry, to instead prioritizing environmental concerns and human health and safety. See more on SB19-181 on page 6. There also was a petition to Colorado Parks and Wildlife to end bobcat hunting in Colorado, that was later discussed at the Grand Junction meeting on 5/9/2019 (no change to regulations was made at that meeting).

A record number of people signed on to a letter to Governor Polis asking that he support Greater Sage-Grouse habitat on public lands. Audubon Rockies will be hosting a tour of leks with congressional members. Other efforts by chapters for local conservation measures were discussed.

The next ACC meeting has been rescheduled to Fruita on June 12, 2019, hosted by the Grand Valley Audubon chapter.

**NOTE THAT AN EXTRA SPACE IS INTENTIONALLY PLACED IN EMAIL ADDRESSES. PLEASE REMOVE BEFORE SENDING EMAIL.**

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## Upcoming Events, Continued from page 1

### JULY



#### **July 20, Saturday: Gunnison Valley Field Trip.**

Join naturalist and photographer Arden Anderson for birding in the Gunnison Valley. We will meet at 8 a.m. at the restroom parking area at the south end of the Lake City Bridge (Hwy 149 & Hwy 50 Junction) about 9 miles west of Gunnison. At this meeting point we will regroup to minimize cars and begin the day by driving east to Gunnison then south on the Gold Basin Road to look for sagebrush birds, including Gunnison Sage Grouse. Returning along the Gunnison River, we will stop at the McCabe Wetlands and Neversink riparian areas. Continuing west, we will check Blue Mesa Reservoir for ducks, grebes and other water birds. Depending on our luck, we should be done about 12 or 1 pm. As usual bring water, lunch, insect repellent, sunscreen and appropriate clothes for changing weather. We hope you will join us. To ensure we all have an enjoyable experience, this trip is limited to 12 people. Please contact Arden to reserve a space by emailing ([arden@gunnison.com](mailto:arden@gunnison.com)) or calling (970-901-5739) after June 19th

#### **Monday July 22 – Saturday July 27: Annual Bird House Silent Auction at the Montrose County Fair.**

The Montrose Woodworkers Guild will be donating hand-crafted bird houses to be sold by silent auction during the Montrose County Fair. All proceeds from the silent auction will be donated to the Black Canyon Audubon Society.



This generous group of woodcrafters creates unique and functional bluebird houses as a project to raise funds for the Black Canyon Audubon Society programs. BCAS members, or their friends, are also invited to construct bluebird houses to be entered in the silent auction; we especially invite entries to the youth division (under age 18).

Bring your bird houses to the Woodworkers Guild booth on Sunday, July 21 between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. or on Monday, July 22 between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. The silent auction will close at noon on Saturday July 27; all winners will be contacted after the auction closes and are expected to come and pay for their winning bird house on Saturday (unless prior arrangements have been made). The entire fair will close on Saturday, July 27<sup>th</sup>. Volunteer help is needed at the booth during the fair and to help set up the BCAS booth. See *Classifieds* on page 4.

### AUGUST

**August 1, Thursday: SPEAKER – Evan Phillips**, wildlife biologist with Colorado Parks and Wildlife, will provide a program on Bats of Colorado. Watch for more information. Come to the Montrose Field House at the corner of Rio Grande and Colorado Avenue at 7 p.m. No charge.

#### **First Tuesday of the Month Bird Walks**

Join us on the first Tuesday of the month as we visit local areas to bird and share our birding experiences. We meet at 8 a.m. at the northeast corner of Gold's Gym parking lot in Montrose (corner of Hillcrest and East Main St). All skill levels are welcome. Bring a snack and water, your binoculars, field guides, and dress appropriately for weather. The trips generally last a half day; we car pool to limit the number of vehicles. For questions, contact leader Bruce Ackerman at [Bruceackerman@aol.com](mailto:Bruceackerman@aol.com) or 727 858-5857.

**Upcoming Tuesday trip dates:** June 4, July 2, and August 6.

## For More Birding Adventures

For upcoming festivals around the country, please go to:

[https://www.allaboutbirds.org/birding-festivals/?utm\\_source=Cornell%20Lab%20eNews&utm\\_campaign=18c7068e96-Cornell-Lab-eNews-2018-08-07&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_47588b5758-18c7068e96-306385693#menu-toggle](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/birding-festivals/?utm_source=Cornell%20Lab%20eNews&utm_campaign=18c7068e96-Cornell-Lab-eNews-2018-08-07&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_47588b5758-18c7068e96-306385693#menu-toggle)

**July 27 2019 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Raptor Fest.** Come to Silt CO for this event put on by Chadd's Walking with Wildlife; for more information: [chaddswalkingwithwildlife@gmail.com](mailto:chaddswalkingwithwildlife@gmail.com)

**August 29 – Sept 1 2019. 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Yampa Valley Crane Festival.** Come to Steamboat Springs and Hayden, CO; Keynote address by Kerry Morrison, VP of International Programs for the International Crane Foundation and Manager of the African Crane Conservation Program; other presenters include nationally known birders Ted Floyd and Julie Zickefoose. For more information: <https://coloradocranes.org/2019-festival/>

## 2019 Annual Dinner

June 26, 2019

BCAS celebrates the end of their fiscal year with an annual dinner, review of the year's accomplishments, time to socialize and meet other birders and enjoy a guest speaker presentation. There will not be a silent auction this year and we will be starting earlier to allow more time to 'meet and greet'. Dinner of your choice will be served at your table. Please join us at Remington's Restaurant in Montrose on June 26<sup>th</sup>. Use the attached registration form to reserve your space and let us know your food choices – there is a menu for all food needs or choices and the chef is terrific! We must receive your payment and reservation by June 16 and cannot accept walk-in guests. Dennis Murphy, adventure traveler with an eye toward taking beautiful photographs will provide a PowerPoint presentation on his recent adventures in Antarctica. We look forward to seeing you!

BCAS members, or their friends, are also invited to construct bluebird houses to be entered in the silent auction; we especially invite entries to the youth division (under age 18).

# How Long Have We Been Fascinated By Birds?

By Bruce Ackerman

Birds have been a part of human lives, since before humans were humans.

We often talk in this newsletter about how Colorado birds got their names. But what about the basic names of birds – like duck, goose, hawk, eagle, owl, raven, or crow. Where did these names come from? How long ago? How long have humans been fascinated by birds?

Most of the larger birds would have been well known to the peoples of Europe and other continents. Some birds are shown in cave paintings and pretty feathers are found preserved in ancient graves.

Our ancestors spent almost all of their time outdoors. Ancient peoples would have carefully observed all kinds of birds and animals, just as do primitive peoples in our modern world. Larger birds were hunted for food. Others were captured for their colorful feathers, or raised as pets, sometimes for their beautiful singing.

Many kinds of birds are featured in cultures and mythology around the globe. Some birds were worshiped, like ibis in Egypt. Many gods in Persian, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman mythology sometimes appeared in the form of birds. Birds are portrayed in ancient artwork. Some constellations in the night sky were named after birds, as we learned in our May lecture, such as Aquila the Eagle.

Birds are frequently mentioned in texts from ancient languages, in the Bible, in Hebrew texts, in Greek and Roman myths, because people knew about birds. The personality of each bird was often the basis of sayings, such as *a wise old owl*. Aesop's Fables were stories told in Greece about 600 B.C., that made use of the personality of each kind of bird and animal, in ways that were already well-known, to convey a moral to each story.

The names we now use in English for these birds come from words in Greek or Latin, or Old English, Old French, or Old German. English was evolving at the same time, as a mixture of all these languages, before about 1100 A.D. Many of these ancient words described the sounds these birds made or their obvious behaviors. William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616) mentioned more than 60 kinds of birds in his works, species that were well known to his audience. Juliet tells Romeo that he is hearing a nightingale, not a lark; therefore, it must not be dawn yet (Act 3, Scene 5).

So to answer my question, where did these basic bird names come from? Here is the etymology of these names that are now in English:

- Duck comes from Old English, *duce*, a diver.
- Goose comes from Old Norse, *gas*, meaning goose.
- Swan comes from a Latin root, *sonne*, meaning a sound.
- Eagle comes from Middle English through Old French from Latin, *aquila*, which meant eagle. *Aguila* is now Spanish for eagle.
- Hawk comes from Old English *hafoc*, having or capturing. Similarly - Accipiter comes from Latin to *seize*. *Buteo* also comes from a Latin word for hawk.
- Raven comes from the Old Norse word *hrafn*, for clearing one's throat, for their raspy voice.
- Crow likewise comes from Old English *crawe*, an imitation of their voice.

## CLASSIFIEDS

Hey, we really need more helpers! You can do a lot or a little. Have fun with like-minded people. Share your passion about nature! It doesn't matter what skills you have, we can use you in some capacity. We would love to have you join us.

Black Canyon Audubon needs volunteers for the following positions. If interested, unless otherwise indicated below, contact President Bruce Ackerman at: [bruceackermanaud@aol.com](mailto:bruceackermanaud@aol.com)

**Vice President:** Assist the president with accomplishing goals. This position is a Board Member as well as officer.

**Board Members:** BCAS is a non-profit organization, run by a Board of Directors that meets six times a year. We are looking for anyone who is passionate about birds and willing to share their passion with others in the community. Come committed to attend Board meetings and some of the group's activities. We value good organizational and planning skills.

**Membership Chair:** Maintain an up-to-date roster of members with renewal dates and contact information. Send email reminders to members prior to their renewal date. Respond to membership questions. Should be able to use a database such as Excel or be willing to learn.

**Program Chair:** Contact and schedule speakers. Confirm details of the program with the speaker. Schedule the venue. At night of talk, be present to greet people, collect donations, and track numbers of people who attend. Prepare short paragraph about the program for the newsletter.

**Field Trip Chair:** Suggest great trips. Arrange trip leaders and follow-up with them as the date approaches. You do not need to be the trip leader. Provide descriptions of upcoming trips for the newsletter.

**Conservation Chair:** Track legislation of interest to the Chapter. Follow conservation issues. Write letters of support on behalf of the chapter. Report to the Board on upcoming issues. Write short summaries of conservation issues for the newsletter.

**Need Volunteers: Open Pipe Project.** Help cap open pipes to prevent birds from getting trapped. Attach screens on vault toilet vents. Volunteer for one day or stay involved. For more information, contact Mary at: [mc.costello5@gmail.com](mailto:mc.costello5@gmail.com) or Marcella at [marcella.tarantino@co.usda.gov](mailto:marcella.tarantino@co.usda.gov)

**Need Volunteers: Help locate Purple Martin nests** in July; contact Dennis at [dennisgarrison@hotmail.com](mailto:dennisgarrison@hotmail.com) See article on Purple Martins on page 6 for more information.

**Need Volunteers: Montrose County Fair, July 22-27.** Enjoy the county fair while greeting people at the BCAS booth. Encourage people to bid on bird houses. Sign up for a 3-4 hour work shift. Two people are also needed to set up our booth on Sunday or Monday, July 21-22. See page 3 for more information.

### Sources:

Wells, Diana. 2002. 100 Birds and How They Got Their Names. Algonquin Books, Chapel Hill NC.  
Dictionary online [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary)

# Co-Housing is for the Birds!

By Sandy Beranich

## Colonial Living among Bird Populations – Some Benefits and Risks

Co-housing – why live this way, and, is this similar to colonial living for birds? One of the main benefits to humans for living in a co-housing community is the economical sharing of resources with other community members. Do birds benefit in a similar way by living in a colony? One bird species in eight is a colonial nester – either with its own species, or within mixed species. One benefit for birds to live colonially is that young birds, as well as older birds less adept at obtaining food resources, are able to follow the ‘bread winners’ to learn where to find food sources. Other information related to life success is passed between birds in a colony. It is believed that young birds living in a colony benefit the most from the social interactions and information acquired (such as food availability) while older birds benefit more from the protection that the colony provides from predators. The older birds are often able to acquire nests near the center of the colony where they are most protected from predators. *Right: constructing a colonial housing complex for purple martins, photo by Bill Day*



W.D. Hamilton (*The Geometry of the Selfish Herd*) developed a model to explain why animals are found in groups such as flocks, schools, herds, colonies, etc. His model assumed that a predator would attack the nearest individual; as a result, the individual reduced its exposure to predation by joining a flock, or living colonially. For birds that live in a colony, it was found that if 10 birds are feeding together they will have at least one individual on ‘guard duty’ watching for predators 99.9 percent of the time. Living colonially reduces potential mortality related to predators.



Research has shown that there are advantages to birds that live colonially; however, if a colony gets too large, the advantages diminish and the colony may collapse. The presence of a large colony attracts more predators than small colonies or individual nests. The predator populations will increase parallel with the increases in the size of the colony that provides them convenient food sources. At some point, however, the food source for the colony is sufficiently depleted that the colony must relocate or collapse, which is followed by parallel collapses in predator populations. *Left: purple martin and house wren sharing a house, photo by Dennis Garrison*

What about disadvantages to colonial living? Although not a lot of information is available on the impacts of parasites on natural bird populations, the impacts are expected to be greater on colonial populations than on non-colonial nesters. With heavy parasite infestations, nesting mortality will increase, nests may be deserted, and entire colonies may move to a new location. What’s a bird to do? It has been found that swallows (for example) may construct new nests (rather than reuse the infected old ones) in large colonies, more frequently than in the less heavily infested small colonies. They may switch sites in alternate years – or return to the same sites less frequently,

thus leaving the parasites to starve in empty nests.

In addition to the presence of parasites, non-biological factors such as weather, fire, hydrology, or humans can influence population size and colony viability. Changes in weather may result in short-term effects such as heavy rainstorms flooding out nest sites, or late snow storms killing eggs and nestlings. Fires can improve habitat by opening up understory areas utilized by colonial – as well as other- nesters. But fires may also result in direct losses to entire colonies when nesting birds cannot leave in time, or who choose to remain with nests that contain newly hatched young. Other human factors may result in direct mortality of colonies. For example, in 2018, at a state wildlife area, unknown individuals used swallow nests for target practice.

### Sources:

[The Birder’s Handbook: A Field Guide to the Natural History of North America Birds](#), 1988. Paul R. Ehrlich, David S. Dobkin, and Darryl Wheye, [The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior](#), 2001, edited by Chris Elphick, John B. Jr. Dunning, , and David Allen Sibley.

## Thanks for your Volunteer Efforts

BCAS thanks the many volunteers that helped during the recent annual Crane Days (March 16-18) event near Eckert. The loudest thanks go to Board Member, Dian Torphy, and her husband, Burt Bjorling, for ensuring that all needed permits were obtained, getting porta potties set up, placing road cones on North Road each day and taking on the many details needed to set up and take down every day. They provided the lion’s share of volunteer efforts. Other volunteers who helped with answering questions on one or more days included Marilyn Westerdahl (who also scheduled volunteers), Fred Simon, Mary Costello, Linda Hansen, Bruce Ackerman, Judith Sikora, Penny Heuscher (who provided her photograph cards for sale as a donation to BCAS), Connie Kogler, Elizabeth Binder, Judy and Dick Bushmaier, Peggy Connolly, and Sandy Beranich. Participants who helped with removing trash along North Road before the event included Jon Horn, Alan Reed, Bill Harris, Steve Dike, Dian Torphy, and Sandy Beranich. There were almost more volunteers than cranes! An event like this can never predict weather or if the cranes would be present in large numbers. That Bomb Cyclone snow storm delayed the arrival of the cranes from New Mexico by about a week. Stacy’s on Main St. in Cedaredge provided her baked goods and coffee on Saturday and Sunday mornings - a welcome addition to those cold hours. Once again, Western States Ranches sponsored a free lunch on Saturday at the nearby Hart’s Basin Ranch and made a generous donation to BCAS. Finally, rounding out the weekend on cranes, Delta County Tourism hosted an evening reception with wine-tasting at the Graystone Restaurant in Eckert to welcome Dr. David Noe, who spoke on the annual crane migrations through the valley.

## Birding Educational Opportunities

By Marcella Tarantino

As always, spring is a busy season for the education team and by the time you read this, we will have already visited several festivals and events and shared information about bird habitats and habitat conservation. This year we visited Columbine Middle School 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes, Paonia Conservation Days, AgVenture in Gunnison, and the Montrose Natural Resources Festival. Between all of these activities, we reached approximately 1,100 students in grades 2-8 and an additional couple hundred teachers and parents. Our activities were focused on comparing good and bad habitat for sage-grouse and other ground-nesting birds. We taught children a “habitat dance” to learn the four primary components of habitat (food, water, shelter, and space) and then discussed how those four components matter to birds. Additionally, another habitat game showed how people modify habitat in ways that negatively impact birds, such as building houses, letting pets outside that might eat birds, and building trails or roads. After that, the kids learned how those degraded habitats could be improved. The photo below shows Marcella teaching 8<sup>th</sup> graders about birds and weeds during a problem-based learning event, where students learned how to write an Environmental Impact Statement and the considerations that are included in that effort.



Photo of author Marcella teaching the ‘habitat dance’ at AgVenture in Gunnison. Photo credit to Aleshia Rummel

## Bird Banding Returns in September

By Marcella Tarantino

Every year Audubon collaborates with Ridgway State Park, the Friends of Ridgway State Park, and Bird Conservancy of the Rockies to run a banding station hosted at Dallas Creek in Ridgway State Park. 2019 is our 14th year at the park, and follows an incredibly diverse banding year in 2018. The banding station will operate from September 3-6 and 9-13, [with a public viewing date on Saturday September 7](#). More information will follow in the Fall Newsletter.

These stations are entirely staffed by volunteers; if you are interested in volunteering please contact either Marcella Tarantino with BCAS at [marcella.tarantino@co.usda.gov](mailto:marcella.tarantino@co.usda.gov) or Carrie Krickbaum with Ridgway State Park at [ridgway.naturalist@state.co.us](mailto:ridgway.naturalist@state.co.us). We look forward to having you at the park, either as a visitor or volunteer!

## Environmental News of Interest

Two Colorado state bills of interest to birders were both recently signed into law by Governor Polis.

HB19-1113, subtitled *Protect Water Quality Adverse Mining Impacts*, was introduced in the House in early January. Its main intent is to establish an end date for any water quality treatment necessary to ensure compliance with applicable water quality standards. Without clean water, birds and their habitats are in jeopardy. The bill only affects future mining operations, eliminates a formerly accepted process of self-bonding for reclamation, and importantly, establishes an end date for water treatment. The bill was signed by Governor Polis on April 4, 2019. BCAS submitted a letter in support of the proposed legislation.

The second bill of importance to Audubon is SB19-181, subtitled *Protect Public Welfare During Oil and Gas Operations*. It was introduced in the Senate in March. Its main intent is to reform the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) by requiring the state to regulate oil and gas development to protect public welfare and the environment, as opposed to fostering more oil and gas development. Members on the Commission will now have backgrounds in wildlife protection, soil conservation/reclamation, and in public health and safety. The majority of the current COGCC is comprised of professionals with ties to the oil and gas industry. Another key provision is that the COGCC is no longer required to take into consideration cost-effectiveness and technical feasibility when minimizing impacts to public health, safety, welfare, wildlife and the environment. The bill was signed by Governor Polis on April 16, 2019.

## Purple Martins – A Re-Cap

Approximately half of Colorado’s Western Purple Martins (PUMA) nest in a relatively small area of pure or climax aspens in the Buzzard, Muddy, and Hubbard Creek drainages-as well as extending southeasterly towards Kebler Pass, in Mesa, Delta and Gunnison Counties. PUMA are colonial nesters utilizing cavities. In 2016, experimental PUMA nest structures were designed, constructed, and placed in aspen snag areas. Dennis Garrison, wildlife biologist with the Paonia Ranger District, yearly monitors use of the nest structures by PUMA as well as by other opportunistic cavity nesters.

Dennis recently noted that he had seen PUMA at two of the ten experimental nest boxes in the Muddy Drainage north of Paonia. He has continued to find martins in expected areas north of Paonia and on Black Mesa. He hopes to find more nests during the coming field season and invites volunteer help. Anyone interested in volunteering a day or two to help find martin nests this summer (typically in the first three weeks of July) should contact Dennis at [dennisgarrison@hotmail.com](mailto:dennisgarrison@hotmail.com)

Colony size ranges from 1 to 23 nest trees in an area. In 2018, Dennis reported that there were over 300 known nest locations on the Paonia and portions of the Grand Valley Ranger Districts north of Paonia. However, he also noted that a lot of the originally known nests are now gone and that the reported 300 nests don’t reflect active nests. Trees die and fall over. The average nest height is between 11 and 46 feet above ground with an average tree diameter of between 10.3-23.9 inches.

## Who Was That Bird Named For? \_\_\_\_\_

### *Virginia's, Lucy's, and Grace's Warblers*

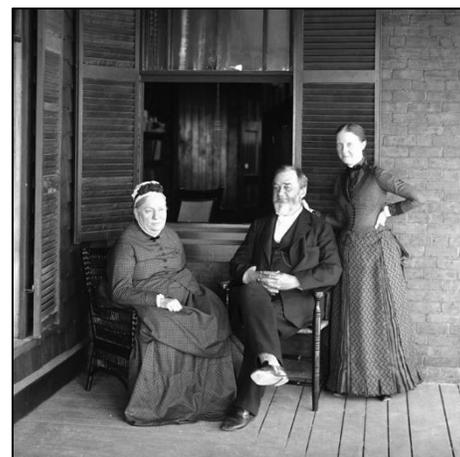
By Susan Chandler-Reed



Virginia's, Lucy's, and Grace's warblers (pictured left to right, above), all spend their summers in the southwestern United States. The warbler names also all have links to Spencer Fullerton Baird, a famous ornithologist who was profiled in the previous column. They are very unusual in that their common and species names were named for women.

Virginia's Warbler (*Oreothlypis virginiae*) is found throughout the southwestern United States—including central and western Colorado—during the summer breeding season. It winters in Mexico. The bird was discovered by an army surgeon in Fort Burgwin, New Mexico, in 1858. Two years later, S.F. Baird described and named the species and, as requested, named it for the surgeon's wife, Virginia Anderson.

Lucy's Warbler (*Oreothlypis luciae*) is the only warbler to nest in the hot deserts of the southwestern United States and, along with the Prothonotary Warbler, is one of only two warblers that are cavity nesters. In 1861, J.G. Cooper described and named the species, after Baird's 13-year-old daughter, Lucy Hunter Baird (1848-1913). The family photograph shows Spencer Fullerton Baird with his wife, Mary (sitting), and only child, Lucy (standing), on the porch of their house in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, where Baird established the United States Fish Commission Station in 1875. Cooper was a medical doctor who was indebted to Baird for obtaining him a position as a surgeon on the Pacific Railroad Survey. He and Baird later coauthored a book on the birds of California.



Grace's Warbler (*Setophaga graciae*) summers in the Ponderosa Pine forests of southwestern Colorado and winters in Mexico. The bird was named for the 18-year-old sister of Elliott Coues, Grace Darlington Coues (1847-1925). Coues discovered the warbler in Arizona in 1864 and, when Baird described the species the following year, he honored Coues's request to name the bird after his sister. After all, Coues (pronounced "cows") had already named a sandpiper after Baird!

#### Sources:

Baird family photograph [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6b/The\\_Baird\\_Family\\_at\\_Wood%27s\\_Hole.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6b/The_Baird_Family_at_Wood%27s_Hole.jpg)

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

Habitat information and warbler photographs <https://www.audubon.org/bird-guide>

**Thanks for the support!** As your newsletter editor, I am writing to let you know that this is my last newsletter for BCAS. I have enjoyed researching and pulling together information for the newsletter. However, it is time for changes and I recently resigned from all responsibilities related to the BCAS. Mary Menz will be taking over as the newsletter editor, beginning with the Fall issue. Mary brings extensive experience as managing editor of *Aquilegia*, the quarterly newsletter of the Colorado Native Plant Society.

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