



Canyon Wrenderings

The Journal of the Black Canyon Audubon Society

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

Summer 2013

Volume XXV Number 4



Mark your Calendar

June

Colorado Land Conservation Appreciation Week

Mon. the 3rd to Sun. the 9th

A variety of events will be held throughout Colorado, aimed at promoting appreciation, understanding, and stewardship of our natural resources and landscapes.

Birding Hotchkiss Wetlands

Sun. the 9th

As part of the Colorado Land Conservation Appreciation Week, BCAS is teaming up with the Black Canyon Regional Land Trust to host a bird outing at a new conservation easement with excellent wetland habitat. The event will take place 9AM to 12PM at the property of Kevin & Jackie Parks (12472 3700 Rd, Hotchkiss 81419), To sign up, email Alecia Phillips at: alecia@bcril.org

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Celebrating Cycles

2013 Eckert Crane Days draws devoted crowd

By Chris Lazo

For the second year running, BCAS took the lead to get Eckert Crane Days off the ground. This year the intent was to encourage “locals” to come out and view this wonderful spectacle.

In keeping with that goal, Friday March 15 was geared toward group field trips. The Montrose Over 50 group attended as well as a number of the members of Eckert Presbyterian Church, the venue for the afternoon lecture.

Present at Evelyn Horn’s presentation about the first few months of a Sandhill Crane’s life were forty crane enthusiasts. Friday morning saw a lift off of roughly eighty birds, and about forty came in to Fruitgrower’s Reservoir for the evening.

Our numbers were down for both Saturday and Sunday. A combination of less than stellar weather forecasts and some mis-information given to the regional newspaper led to fewer than normal viewers.

The number of Sandhill Cranes was also low with just about forty birds on both Saturday and Sunday. Perhaps they didn’t receive the Eckert Crane Days schedule via email.

See Crane Festival, Page 2

Calendar

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June (continued)

General Meeting

Thu. the 13th

The 2013 general meeting will be held at the Remington Restaurant at the Bridges Golf Course. Leigh Robertson, coordinator for the Gunnison Sage-Grouse Working Group, will be this year's speaker. *For details about her talk, and for a banquet reservation form, see page 7.*

Silent Auction at the Annual Meeting!

If you have an item to donate to the silent auction, please call Geoff Tischbein, 249-5215, or Loretta Banner, 249-7897, to let them know the item and its value. Thank you in advance for the donation. We'll all enjoy the opportunity to bid!

July

Tour of Box Canyon

Mon. the 8th

Sue Hirshman is offering a tour of Box Canyon in Ouray to see nesting Black Swifts. Space is limited, so sign up soon to reserve a spot. A second tour will be offered in August. Meet at 10 a.m. at the parking lot of the Box Canyon Visitor Center. To sign up, or for more information, call Geoff Tischbein, 252-5215, or Elaine Probasco, 252-0918.

August

Tour of Box Canyon

Sat. the 3rd

Sue Hirshman will be leading a second tour of Box Canyon for those who were not able to make it in June. *For contact information, see July.*

Crane Festival

Continued from Page 1

As a result of the mention in the regional newspaper, there was much discussion about the overwinter flock of Sandhill Cranes just north of Delta.

BCAS would like to acknowledge the support of Kelli Hepler, Eckert Presbyterian Church, The Wildfire Pizzeria and Wine Bar, Montrose Over 50 Club, Bill Heddles Recreation Center, Colorado Parks and Wildlife Volunteers and Evelyn Horn for their vital contributions.



The **Sandhill Crane** relies on open fields with plentiful food during migration. Hart's Basin, where Fruitgrower's Reservoir is located, is an ideal place for Sandhills to stock up.

Photo by Peter Barth.

Notes on Spring Crane Migration

By Evelyn Horn

What an unusual migration, but I say that every year! By March 10, we had two small flocks totaling 39. And we had a pair of cranes that were consistently seen by themselves from February 5 until March 6. Then things changed: we saw a gradual increase each day with anywhere from 10 to 100, so by the end of March we had counted about 12,000.

So far, not that unusual. The first weeks in March we usually have a few birds and then during the latter part of March and the first week into April the larger flocks arrive. And it's usually all over by early April. But this season, they just kept coming! By April 10th we had 14,229 cranes and I decided to *END* the count. But they kept coming: by the end of April we had an additional 500 cranes.

So the grand total is 14,793. There were over 2000 sightings of cranes in flight and reports of very large numbers near the Escalante State Wildlife Area (near the Delta County Detention Center). And this morning I just had a report of a lone crane at Hart's Basin! So if you see or hear them ANYWHERE, please do call me (835-8391). I thank Jim and Dee Wallace for their help in this spring's counting. Couldn't have managed without them!

Thanks to Peter for the photo taken at Hart's Basin. And thanks too to our "Crane Friendly Businesses" during Eckert Crane Days.

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President's Corner

The BCAS annual meeting dinner will take place Thursday June 13 at 6:00 pm at Remington's Restaurant at the Bridges in Montrose. This is in the upstairs meeting area and has a wonderful view of the San Juans. We are hoping to have a strong turnout, particularly because our speaker will be Leigh Robertson, who is the coordinator for the San Miguel Basin Gunnison Sage Grouse Working Group.

Considering the proposed listing of the grouse as an Endangered Species, her talk is quite timely and is expected to provide important information about how local citizens, groups, and federal agencies have been working together over the past many years to promote preservation of the Gunnison Sage Grouse in hopes that listing might not be necessary.

The annual meeting is open to everyone – you do not need to be a member of the BCAS to attend – so encourage anyone who might be interested to join us. All that is needed is to make a reservation with us by completing the form at the end of the newsletter by June 4. In addition to our speaker, we plan to have silent auction items available for bidding and Jason Beason will have some awards to present resulting from the highly successful studies of the Black Swift.

Related to the annual meeting, we will be having three board members ending their terms. These are Martha Grewal, who has served in a wide variety of capacities over many years for the organization; Theresa Childers, who has been our representative from Gunnison; and Chris Lazo, who has coordinated the reinvigoration of Eckert Crane Days during the Sandhill Crane spring migration. We appreciate all of your hard work on behalf of BCAS and know that you will continue to be active in the organization.

Amber Carver is also planning to return to school, so will be at a greater distance than before, but still active. I wanted to thank her for all that she does – particularly with the newsletter, arranging public speakers, and participating in public events!

In order to keep BCAS vital, we need to replenish our board with new members. Please jump right in and tell us you are interested. Being on the board is fun and flexible. If you have ideas for field trips, events, education activities, or just have an interest in birds, please join us! Don't be shy – we are just like you – we enjoy birds and want to help others enjoy them, too. Please call me at (970) 249-6761 x 14 if you would like to be a board member or to find out more about it. Or call or talk to any of the other board members, too.

Jon Horn

BCAS President

Recent Events

Mixed Results in Gunnison



Chris Lazo's interactions with children and adults helped draw attention to our table and encourage an interest in local birds. *Photo by Amber Carver.*

On April 13th, Chris Lazo and I represented BCAS at the annual Gunnison Sage-Grouse Festival, and we both walked away with conflicting feelings about this important event.

The festival—held each year during the sage-grouse leking period—is a great opportunity to draw attention to this imperiled species, as well as to educate the community on birds in general. The event includes booths for many local organizations, as well as a race and live raptor demonstration.

While at the event, Chris and I talked to many adults and children about our work and about birds. Children were particularly interested in the skin collection, and the Bullock's Oriole turned out to be an overwhelming favorite.

I was slated to lead a morning bird walk around the campus, but there were no takers. The time for the walk came and went, with no one showing up to attend.

Chris and I were left feeling that while this event attracts a number of families and joggers, the potential for teaching about birds or increasing membership is limited. We feel that it is important to participate in Gunnison events, since this is an underserved section of our chapter area; however, we will have to take a creative approach if we want to have a meaningful role at this event in the future.

Educating Paonia Students

On May 2nd and 3rd, four BCAS members traveled to Paonia to participate in an event put together by the Western Slope Conservation Center.

This organization, whose motto is “working for healthy rivers, healthy lands, healthy lives,” set aside these two days for local school children to visit the Paonia River Park, where they could learn about restoration and attend workshops.

BCAS conducted workshops on migration, bird habitat, and the importance of avian diversity. The educators in charge of the Thursday session were Sheryl Radovich and Marti Isler. Jason Beason and Amber Carver took the reins on Friday.



Sheryl Radovich worked her magic, inspiring another group of potential ornithologists. *Photo by Brian Amstutz.*



The plant sale was a chance to connect with local gardeners on bird-friendly yards. *Photo by Amber Carver.*

Montrose Botanical Society Yearly Plant Sale

Saturday, May 9th was a perfect day to be outside. It was sunny and mild, with a slight breeze, and conditions couldn't have been better for the Montrose Botanical Society annual plant sale.

Three BCAS members who also volunteer with the MBS attended this event and helped in different ways.

For the first time, BCAS had a table at the event, where it distributed information on bird-friendly gardening. Much of this information was provided by the National Audubon Society. To see some of these documents, visit the Audubon At Home website at: <http://athome.audubon.org/>.

A Day with Cedaredge Students



Mary Jane Masters is pictured presenting the birdskins to a group of home schooled children. The meeting took place in Cedaredge on March 11, 2012. *Photo by Loretta Banner.*



New Logo!

Perhaps you noticed that the newsletter sports a new Canyon Wren logo. Many thanks to Don Radovich for allowing BCAS to use his pen and ink drawing! Don is a highly talented artist with many published illustrations of birds to his credit. We very much appreciate Don and Sheryl Radovich's long-term dedication to BCAS and this wonderful update of our mascot.

Banding Doldrums

Spring banding proves frustratingly slow, despite action elsewhere

By Amber Carver

My ambitious attempt to train West Slope birders on the basics of banding birds was made difficult by the fact that we caught so few birds this spring.

This pilot project had the dual objectives of teaching prospective volunteers about bird banding, while investigating spring migration in the Uncompahgre Valley. We had much more success in the latter goal.

Since 2006, BCAS has been running a fall migration banding station at the Dallas Creek Day Use Area of Ridgway State Park, just north of the town of Ridgway. Using this traditional site, I borrowed hardware from the state park and banding gear from the Grand Valley Audubon Society. Bands were provided by the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory.

After announcing the training course online, I received emails from several people who were interested in being trained. Because I was working alone, I limited the number of trainees that I would take on, and in the end there were two people—Betty Fenton and Paul Tickner—who enrolled in the program for the duration.

The spring banding season started off slow... and got slower. After catching seven birds on the first day—which is slow by any standard, we proceeded to catch only a few birds each day, and sometimes none at all. Despite the tedious pace, Betty and Paul showed up nearly every day that I operated the station, and I trained them as best I could in the absence of birds to demonstrate with.

Ultimately, I cut back my banding effort, thinking this would allow us to save our energy for more fruitful days later in the season. Yet, the capture rate never picked up and we ended up running the station for only 10 days. In that time, we caught 22 new birds, for an average of fewer than three birds per day. We did catch three birds that

already had bands on them, one of which had been banded in 2008. These were all birds that had been banded at that station, and it proved that many birds return to the park year after year.

There were likely many factors involved in the low capture rate, including timing, weather, and geography. Although many migrants were appearing in other parts of the state, this was likely too early to expect a high volume of migrants in the upper Uncompahgre Valley. Furthermore, the willows that are so attractive to both migrant and local birds had yet to leaf out by the time I closed down the station.

Thank you so much, Betty and Paul, for attending the training course and for being so patient during some very boring days!



We caught very few warblers this spring at Ridgway this spring, though many showed up in the area. This **Yellow Warbler** provided relief from an otherwise dull banding session. *Photo by Amber Carver.*

Black Canyon Audubon Society Annual Dinner

Thursday, June 13, 6:00 p.m.

We will be gathering once again at the Remington's Restaurant at The Bridges Golf Course in Montrose. This year's meeting will include a delicious dinner and a talk by Leigh Robertson about recent developments concerning the Gunnison Sage-Grouse. Leigh is the coordinator for the San Miguel Basin Gunnison Sage-Grouse Working Group. Considering the proposed listing of the Gunnison Sage-Grouse as an Endangered Species, her talk promises to be quite interesting and informative.

Banquet Reservation Form

Indicate choice and number of entrees, all priced at \$30, including tax and gratuity:

_____ Pork Tenderloin on a bed of Black Cherry Salsa and roasted red potatoes.

_____ Stuffed Chicken Breast - Chevre cheese, roasted poblanos, roasted red pepper coulis, served with southwest rice pilaf

_____ Fresh House Made Eggplant Parmesan with Marinara Sauce with pasta

Includes: Coffee, iced tea, and water Chef's Created Dessert Nibbles

Cash bar available and be prepared for delightful silent auction items.

_____ Total number of reservations, at \$30 each.

Your name _____

Phone# _____ Email address _____

Mail your check to arrive by June 4 to: BCAS, P.O. Box 387, Delta, CO 81416

Directions to Remington's: Take East Oak Grove Road east from South Townsend Avenue (US 550) (This is the intersection with a light with Walgreens on the corner.) East Oak Grove becomes a wide, divided road after a bit. Turn right on Bridges Circle to the Bridges clubhouse where we will be upstairs.

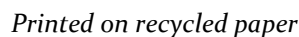
If you have any questions, please contact:

Elaine Probasco at 252-0918 or Jon Horn at 249-6761 x 14



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Black Canyon Audubon Society (NAS chapter C9ZD14oZ)

Membership Renewal and Application Form

Members may participate in all chapter activities, receive the *Canyon Wreanderings* 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) _____
New Member

Name:

Mailing Address:

City:

State: Zip:

Phone (optional):

Enc: _____\$10 for email newsletter.

Email address:

_____ \$15 for U.S. mail/print subscribers.

Mail your renewal to:

Black Canyon Audubon Society, 14967 Rolling Hills Drive, Montrose, CO 81403.

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.