



# Canyon Wrenderings

*The Journal of the Black Canyon Audubon Society*

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

March 2015

Volume XXVII Number 1

## Eckert Crane Days

### Mark Your Calendar

• *March 13 - 15*

*32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Monte Vista Crane Festival*

Viewing, tours, speakers For more information, see article on page 5

• *March 18*

*Gardening for Birds*

Pete Loncar, experienced birder and gardener, presents gardening tips for those with a birding interest.

Provided by the Montrose Botanical Society; meet at 7 p.m. Centennial Room off Centennial Plaza, Montrose, No charge.

• *March 20 – 22*

*Eckert Crane Days*

Viewing, presentations and more. Sponsored by the Black Canyon Audubon Society. See schedule of events, this page and articles this issue.

• *April 24 – 25*

*Wings N Wetlands Festival*

Bird Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge near Great Bend, Kansas. For more information 1-877-243-9268

• *May 8 – 9*

*Birding the West End*

Birding areas include the San Miguel River and Dolores River valleys. More information page 5

*For more upcoming events:*

[www.blackcanyonaudubon.org](http://www.blackcanyonaudubon.org)

### Friday, March 20, 2015

Viewing at Fruitgrowers Reservoir along North Road, 9-11 a.m. to watch liftoff. Speaker: Van Graham, "Colorado Sandhill Crane: Rocky Mountain Population." 1:30 pm to 3:00 pm, Cedaredge Community Center, 140 NW 2<sup>nd</sup> St, Cedaredge. Mr. Graham is a retired wildlife biologist with Colorado Parks and Wildlife who developed Colorado's Greater Sandhill Crane recovery plan.

### Saturday, March 21, 2015

Viewing at Fruitgrowers Reservoir along North Road, 9-11 a.m. to watch liftoff. Speaker and pie social: Evelyn Horn, "Cranes, the Symbol of Survival" (video). 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm, Eckert Presbyterian Church, 13025 Highway 65, Eckert. Evelyn Horn is a local educator, naturalist, and author who is a self-professed "Craniac."

### Sunday, March 22, 2015

Viewing at Fruitgrowers Reservoir along North Road, 9-11 a.m. to watch liftoff.

### Directions to the venues:

**Fruitgrowers Reservoir** (also known as Hart's Basin) is located east of the community of Eckert, Colorado. From Delta, drive 4 miles east on Highway 92, then turn north on Highway 65 and drive 6 miles to Eckert. Turn right on North Road at Big E Market, across from the Eckert Presbyterian Church, and proceed east until you reach the reservoir.

Volunteers from the Black Canyon Audubon Society and Colorado Parks and Wildlife will be set up either at "Crane Point"—the hill overlooking the reservoir—or along the causeway across the reservoir, depending on where the best viewing opportunity is on that particular day. Please park off the road, and be careful to also watch for traffic when watching the birds. Delta County has constructed a new parking area near the causeway for our use this year, and a portable toilet will also be available at that location.

**Cedaredge Community Center** is at 140 NW 2<sup>nd</sup> St. in Cedaredge. From Eckert, continue north 4 miles on Highway 65. Turn left on Main St. and then right on NW 2<sup>nd</sup> St. The community center will be on your left. The 1:30 p.m. program will be held in the dining room. (Continued on page 3)

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

### *Comings and Goings*

After such a warm and dry fall and winter, snow and colder weather has finally arrived that looks to have hopes of reducing fears of too little snow in the mountains and drought in our future. Hopefully, the snow will accumulate and cooler weather and an absence of dust storms will allow its melting to dribble downslope rather than pour off in torrents this spring and summer. This time of year is when we look forward to returning migrant birds, many of which we catch a glimpse of as they pass through and others that are welcome summer residents that we thoroughly enjoy seeing where we live and where we venture. Our annual celebration of spring migration is Eckert Crane Days at Fruitgrowers Reservoir in Delta County. If our timing is right – and it is completely in the control of the birds – it will be an unparalleled spectacle of sight and sound. More information can be found in this newsletter and on our website. We hope you will join us! The new parking area at Fruitgrowers Reservoir is virtually complete, so please use it when visiting. Many thanks to Delta County and the Bureau of Reclamation in collaborating on that effort!

Since the last newsletter, we have had two excellent public presentations. We hope you were able to come out and enjoy Paul Tickner's talk on birding in Costa Rica and Brenda Miller's talk on bird rehabilitation. Brenda operates Roubideau Rim Wildlife Rescue, a non-profit near Olathe and does wonderful work with injured and sick wildlife of all sorts. For more information, visit their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/RRWildlifeRescue> and consider a donation.

Our need for new board members is becoming more and more critical, so we hope that you will consider stepping in. The time commitment is whatever you would like it to be, but we have upcoming needs for help in basic recordkeeping tasks that are integral to any organization. Most pressing is for someone willing to keep track of membership and someone to be the recording secretary at our board meetings. Soon, Elaine Probasco's term as Treasurer will come to an end and we will need someone to take over that role. Please call or email me or any of the current board members to let us know that you would like to keep this terrific organization on track. If you like to have fun, like to help others enjoy birds, want to do something that helps birds, would like to see BCAS remain vital, or all of the above, don't be shy, we would like you to join us.

**Jon Horn**  
BCAS President

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**Eckert Presbyterian Church** is at 13025 Highway 65, at the northwest corner of Highway 65 and North Road. The 1:00 p.m. talk and pie social will be held in the church meeting hall, at the lower level. The entrance is at the rear of the building.

## 2015 Eckert Crane Days Speakers

**Van K. Graham** is a retired wildlife biologist who worked for the Colorado Division of Wildlife (presently Colorado Parks and Wildlife) for 32 years. His interest in Sandhill cranes began while working in Steamboat Springs where the core population of nesting and staging cranes was located. Sandhill cranes were listed as a Colorado state endangered species in 1973. By the mid-1970s, research on cranes had intensified, primarily to gather baseline data and begin development of management plans and programs. Throughout his career he assisted with annual work plans, inventories, field studies, and development of a Greater Sandhill Crane recovery plan. He worked with CDOW wildlife managers based in northwest Colorado and collaborated on plans with the U.S. Forest Service.

Van currently lives in Grand Junction, Colorado, where he works for Wildlife West LLC as a private environmental consultant, primarily in western Colorado. He maintains a deep interest in Sandhill cranes and enjoys traveling to various locations to observe, photograph, and enjoy the Rocky Mountain population of Greater Sandhill Cranes.

Van's presentation is at 1:30 p.m. on Friday, March 20 at the Cedaredge Community Center. A PowerPoint slide program primarily addressing the Rocky Mountain population of Greater Sandhill Cranes in Colorado, the program will include historical information, the decline of crane populations in the 1800s and early 1900s, crane biology, crane management studies in Colorado, recovery of crane populations in Colorado, and the annual cycle of life from reproduction through annual migration.

**Evelyn Horn** is an educator who has been monitoring the Sandhill cranes from her home in Hart's Basin since 1995. Horn, who considers herself more of a botanist than a birder, has published three books dealing with Sandhill cranes and natural history:

- *Following the Sandhill Cranes in Colorado: Enticed into Birding*
- *Still Following the Feathered and Flowered*

- *Intriguing Discoveries with the Naturalist-in-Training.*

A member of the Black Canyon Audubon Society board of directors, Evelyn is a familiar face on the lecture circuit. This year, she will be speaking at the Eckert Presbyterian Church at 1 p.m. on Saturday, March 21. Evelyn's program will include a brief video, "Cranes" the Symbol of Survival," which tells about the International Crane Foundation's work to secure these rare species in the wild around the world. Her talk will be followed by a coffee and pie social, hosted by the EPC Ladies Hospitality Group.

### Volunteers Needed for Crane Days

The Black Canyon Audubon Society (BCAS) will serve as the "hosts" for Eckert Crane Days. Please join us for Friday, Saturday, and/or Sunday mornings to share your spotting scope, to talk about birds with visitors, or to take a shift at the BCAS information table, where we will have information available about sandhill cranes, about BCAS, and about the Crane Days programs.

We need you – it's easy, fun, and a great opportunity to share your enthusiasm for birding.

Please contact Jon Horn to let him know how and when you can help: 249-5404 or (jon\_horn@alpinearchaeology.com)

## Counting Cranes – Hotline Available

In past years, Jim Durr has posted daily tallies of cranes arriving each evening at Fruitgrowers Reservoir on his Eckert Crane Days website (<http://eckertcranedays.com/>). As of February 15, it still shows crane counts for 2014 and earlier years.

The Hart's Basin Crane Hotline (970-835-8391) operated by Evelyn Horn is another source of daily crane counts.

## Cooper's Hawk Transport Needed

A ride is needed for a Cooper's Hawk from the Durango Vet Clinic to Brenda Miller at the Roubideau Rim Wildlife Rescue in Olathe as soon as possible. If you can help, please contact Brenda at [rrwildliferehab@gmail.com](mailto:rrwildliferehab@gmail.com) or (970) 209-5946.

# Crane Etiquette

(Adapted from the Eckert Crane Day website)

1. Sandhill Cranes tend to arrive at Fruitgrowers Reservoir in the afternoons and early evenings. They stop to feed and rest on their journey north in the spring and on their journey south in the fall. They are used to cattle and other wildlife but are shy of people and move away when people approach. The cranes need the resting and feeding opportunities that Fruitgrowers Reservoir and the surrounding lands provide.

2. The Bureau of Reclamation controls the Reservoir and its shoreline. The surrounding land is privately owned and entry is prohibited without landowner permission. These landowners enjoy the cranes and they provide and protect the land that the cranes rely on.

Generally speaking, if you cross a fence or go through a gate to look at the cranes, you have gone too far! If possible, please park in the designating parking lot. Please do not park where you will be blocking access to ranchers' gates or driveways. Please observe all signs that have been placed to help you identify the boundaries.

3. Crane watching etiquette also includes attention to our surroundings. North Road, along which we park to view the cranes, is a county road used by local residents to commute from place to place. Park in the parking area or along the shoulder, not on the road. Don't open your car door or step out onto the road without looking. Please be attentive to the traffic while you watch the cranes!

## Boating on Fruitgrowers Reservoir????

Some questions have been raised regarding boating on Fruitgrowers Reservoir. Kent Van Roosendaal, Resource Management Specialist with the Bureau of Reclamation, provided this response in an e-mail to BCAS.

*In answer to your question, the reservoir is closed to boating and fishing, this has been in effect for many years. The reservoir is also closed to skin contact water activities such as wading, swimming, fishing, water skiing, drinking, etc., due to water quality concerns. The reservoir was closed to skin contact water activities by the Delta County Health Dept. We support this closure for public health and safety reasons. Please also note that since we do not have a recreation managing entity or partner the recreational activities at Fruitgrowers Reservoir are limited.*

*Boating is of special concern. Since we don't have a recreation manager at Fruitgrowers we have no one available to manage or monitor recreational boating whether motorized or non-motorized. We are also concerned with the possible spread of aquatic nuisance/invasive species (ANS/AIS such as quagga and zebra mussels) to Fruitgrowers. Boats that do not go through the State's inspection process for ANS are a major factor in the spread of ANS/AIS between bodies of*

*water, not just mussels but also invasive water vegetation, etc.*

*The reservoir area (Reclamation property) is also closed to OHV's, ORV's, ATV's, etc., all off road vehicles. The only exception that our Office has approved is the Water District's administrative use for project purposes, and Reclamation's approved use by certain contractors for controlling the spread of noxious weeds, or boundary fence repair or replacement.*

*No camping is allowed and no camp fires are allowed. No shooting is allowed other than for water fowl using a shotgun during the legal hunting season.*

*Another problem has been illegal dumping of animal carcasses, garbage, and other items. Dumping is certainly not allowed.*

*What is allowed are activities such as watchable wildlife & bird watching, hiking, picnicking, and waterfowl hunting with a shotgun.*

*We hope to get new signs installed around the reservoir area this spring, including a new replacement sign for the main parking area. The problem we've had in the past is visitors like to shoot the signs we install as well as many other things so we're a little hesitant in buying and installing new signs.*





## Results of the Annual Raptor Field Trips

By Jon Horn

Jason Beason, Jim LeFevre, and Bill Harris conducted three individual raptor field trips this year in Delta and Montrose Counties. The raptor field trips have become an annual event in February of each year and are well attended. This year, they were conducted on three consecutive Saturdays. The first two, February 7 and 14 led by Jason and Jim, covered wide swaths of Delta County, and the final field trip, on February 21 led by Bill, was in the Montrose area of Montrose County. The Hotchkiss-Crawford area is consistently a hotspot for wintering raptors, and did not disappoint again this year. The Montrose area has diverse habitat and consistently has a wide variety of raptors present, but not in the numbers encountered in Delta County. Usually, some Rough-legged Hawks are found during the count, but this year they were entirely absent, perhaps reflecting the unusually warm weather and lack of snow cover we have experienced. Many thanks to Jim, Jason, and Bill for doing the annual field trips again this year, and thanks to those of you who participated! Here are the results:

### Delta County February 7 (6 species, 78 birds)

Bald Eagle 17  
Golden Eagle 12  
Red-tailed Hawk 38  
Northern Harrier 9  
Prairie Falcon 1  
Merlin 1

### Delta County February 14 (8 species, 105 birds)

Bald Eagle 24  
Golden Eagle 7  
Red-tailed Hawk 39  
Northern Harrier 14  
Cooper's Hawk 1  
Prairie Falcon 2  
Kestrel 17  
Northern Shrike 1

### Montrose County February 21 (7 species, 36 birds)

Bald Eagle 4  
Golden Eagle 2  
Red-tailed Hawk 10  
Northern Harrier 1  
Sharp-shinned Hawk 1  
Kestrel 16  
Great-horned Owl 2 (on and near nest)



*Cooper's Hawk. Photo by Arden Anderson*

## Audubon Colorado Council

By Chris Lazo

The winter meeting of Audubon Colorado Council (ACC) was held via telephone on Saturday Feb. 7<sup>th</sup>. Since the Black Canyon Audubon Society (BCAS) no longer has a representative to ACC the western slope had minimal representation in this essential grassroots voice for wildlife conservation in Colorado. The "flipside" of that loss is that BCAS no longer has direct understanding of what ACC is accomplishing to protect Colorado wildlife and habitats at a statewide level. The BCAS board of directors is maxed out with what they can take on and no currently serving board member can undertake another commitment. Any BCAS member who can help in this role would be greatly appreciated. Representing BCAS to ACC involves four meetings per year: two via telephone in the winter and summer and two in person in the fall and spring. If you are interested in helping please contact any BCAS board member. Also remember that this role could easily be shared by two members. Sooo! Why not ask a friend?

Please mail your check to:  
Black Canyon Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 387  
Delta, CO 81416



<http://www.blackcanyonaudubon.org>



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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 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) \_\_\_\_\_  
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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.*