



# 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

Spring - 2018

Volume XXXI Number 1



Ross's Geese at Confluence Park: "Swimming along, side-by-side" Photo credit to Betty Fenton.

## Upcoming Events:

### March

**March 1:** Brenda Miller will speak on the issues related to rehabbing injured raptors and migratory songbirds. Until recently, Brenda was the Director of the Roubideau Rim Raptor center and is currently seeking property to continue this valuable work. She will show mounts and other information related to injured birds and their rehabilitation. Come hear her speak at 7 p.m. at the Bill Heddles Recreation Center in Delta.

**March 16 – 18<sup>th</sup>:** Eckert Crane Days at Fruitgrower's Reservoir. Join us for our annual celebration of the Sandhill Cranes. We will be observing migrating sandhill cranes and area waterfowl. Bring your binoculars; BCAS members will have spotting scopes set up and members will be present to answer questions. See article on page 3 for additional information.

### April

**April 5:** Kelly Crane of the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Department will provide an illustrated talk on bears. She will bring in hands-on displays and information. This talk will be given at the Montrose Field House located on the corner of Rio Grande and Colorado Avenue (former aquatic center) and start at 7 p.m.

### May

**May 3:** Dr. David Inouye will return to speak on "Broad-tailed Hummingbirds in Gothic: where males spend the night, and how bill size and shape influence flower choice". Meet us at Bill Heddles Recreation Center in Delta at 7 p.m. Dr. Inouye is a retired professor of biology and conducts research at the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory outside of Gothic, CO.

**May 4-5:** Black Canyon Audubon will sponsor a field trip to Paradox Valley and other West End venues for a spring birding adventure. Nucla residents and Audubon members Coen Dexter and Brenda Wright will assist the group in checking out prime birding areas. We might see over 70 species. Expect several short walks to access bird habitat. The group will meet at the Dan Noble Wildlife Area next to Miramonte Reservoir at 9:00 a.m. on May 4th. For those who want to get there a day early, there is camping and facilities at the wildlife area. Directions to the meeting site will be sent to those who sign up.

The Paradox Valley and West End areas have a great mix of habitats ranging from desert scrub to classic alpine to riparian, allowing for a rich mix of birds during the spring migration. Expect to see a variety of waterfowl, sage sparrow, vireos, yellow-breasted chat, grace's warbler, black phoebe and a host of other migrants. Day 1 will wrap up near Naturita, so participants can access either hotel accommodations or camp for the night. The Uravan Ball Park campground is open for our use, and the Rimrock Hotel (970-865-2500) in Naturita has newly renovated rooms at reasonable prices. A potluck dinner for the 4<sup>th</sup> and breakfast for the 5<sup>th</sup> will be organized for participants.

The field trip is limited to 12 participants. To sign up contact Bill Harris at 970-615-7166, or email at [trlgpa48@gmail.com](mailto:trlgpa48@gmail.com)

More events on page 5.

# PRESIDENT'S CORNER

## *Comings and Goings*

As I write this, the weather can't decide whether to be winter or spring. Yesterday was warm and sunny, today it's snowing. I hope you take advantage of the nicer days to get outside for some birding. Maybe watch the Sandhill Cranes at sunset that are wintering over in Delta or see the waterfowl wintering on a few ice-free ponds. We just completed 4 days of raptor counts in Montrose and Hotchkiss that were really great and saw many eagles, hawks, and falcons. We are starting to see some early spring birds now like Mountain and Western Bluebirds and hundreds of Red-winged Blackbirds. You might also be lucky enough to find some uncommon waterfowl like Cackling, White-Fronted, Snow and Ross' Geese.

Eckert Crane Days will be in just a few weeks (March 16-18). Join us in the morning at Fruitgrower's Reservoir in Eckert to see the Sandhill Cranes. This batch of cranes will be migrating north from New Mexico, on their way to Canada, and will just stay overnight before heading on their way. Last year we had awesome looks as they lifted up in late morning and headed north. Additional information on Eckert Crane Days is on page 3.

Have you seen any Rosy Finches? The Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies are banding some *rosies* for a research project. The Brown-Capped Rosy Finch is one species that lives almost only in Colorado. If you see any of these high-altitude birds, look for colored leg bands, and report your sighting to Amy at CPW in Montrose. We hope to have a lecture about these interesting pink-and-brown birds later this year.

We have several great field trips and evening lectures coming up. One of the goals the Board of Directors has set for ourselves is more field trips and having lectures in every month – I hope you'll join us.

We are already starting to gear up for our annual banquet on June 20th. Once again, we will be enjoying fine dining at Remington's Restaurant in Montrose. Our featured speaker this year will be Chris Parish, condor expert with the Peregrine Fund, who has agreed to join us and provide an illustrated talk about his experiences releasing condors into the wild. Following the presentation will be our annual elections, and our silent auction.

I would like to thank Jane McGarry for volunteering on the Board of Directors. She had to step down, for personal reasons. We appreciate her volunteering as the BCAS representative to the Audubon Council of Colorado for the past two years. We are looking for some additional board members, so please get in touch if you might be interested.

I hope you are enjoying our cold/warm(?) winter/spring(?), and use this opportunity to get out for some birding.

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# Eckert Crane Days: March 16-18

By Chris Lazo

It has been called one of the great wildlife migrations of Planet Earth. Every spring, hundreds of thousands of Sandhill Cranes leave their winter grounds to fly north to middle and northern latitudes in North America in search of nesting territories. Roughly 20,000 cranes travel north through western Colorado during March. The majority of these birds pass through the area covered by the Black Canyon Audubon Society (BCAS).

For the seventh year in a row, the Black Canyon Audubon Society will be hosting the viewing of Sandhill Cranes during Eckert Crane Days. On March 16, 17 and 18<sup>th</sup>, from 9 to 11 a.m., BCAS will have spotting scopes available to let you enjoy fascinating close-up views of the cranes; an information table with free hand-outs about Sandhill Cranes will also be present. In the past we have had as many as 3,000 birds in one day and as few as a single handful. BCAS is looking for volunteers to help with the information table and with the spotting scopes for all three days. There are no special skills or advanced birding knowledge needed, just a willingness to engage the public with enthusiasm about wild creatures. If you would like to participate in this rewarding event, please send an email to Chris at [2006clazo@gmail.com](mailto:2006clazo@gmail.com).

Even if you can't help volunteer with BCAS at the viewing tables, join us for a thrilling wildlife experience as these magnificent birds lift off in near-unison to soar over our heads on their way up and over the Grand Mesa. Since Saturday usually has the most people, we suggest either Friday or Sunday. The viewing location is on North Road near the causeway across Fruitgrower's Reservoir. Just drive into Eckert and turn east at North Road. Look for the directional sign near the intersection of Highway 65 and North Road. As with any wildlife activity, there is no certainty of how many birds will be at the reservoir on any given day. So dig out your spotting scopes, bring your binoculars and keep your fingers crossed in the hope that there is some water in the reservoir.



Sandhill Cranes on G50 Road: "You did what!" Photo by Betty Fenton:

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## Crane Etiquette

- 1. Sandhill Cranes tend to arrive at Fruitgrower's 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 very shy of people and move away when people approach. The cranes need the resting and feeding opportunities that Fruitgrower's 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 own and protect the land that the cranes rely on.*
  - 3. 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 designated 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.*
  - 4. Crane-watching etiquette also includes attention to your surroundings. North Road, where we park to view the cranes, is a busy 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.*
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## Lunch at Hart's Ranch (Saturday March 17)

Adjacent to the Causeway, Hart's Ranch was recently sold to a real estate investment company that is interested in supporting sustainable, environmentally friendly development of commercial and agricultural lands. The ranch was purchased as an investment property to support the local economy, promote sustainable management, and to provide for wildlife habitats. They are offering a free lunch on Saturday, March 17, to provide an opportunity for them to interact with the local community and to get conservation-minded individuals together with organizations that they can partner with to improve wildlife habitat and begin discussions about easements. The free lunch is their way to give back to the community and promote conservation and sustainable management. The lunch will start at 12:30 on Saturday and location information will be available at the BCAS information table.



## Preventable Entrapment of Birds

### Part II: Uncapped Pipes

By Mary Costello

#### The Scope and Source of the Problem

Uncapped metal and PVC pipes are ubiquitous on the landscape and are a source of mortality for birds that are attracted to the open-ended pipes. The openings can appear as an entrance to a potential nesting or roosting site, or as a shelter from inclement weather. Birds enter the pipes, but cannot fly back out and are subsequently trapped. Death occurs from stress, starvation, or dehydration. Sadly, the scope of mortality is in the millions of birds and includes bluebirds, chickadees, flycatchers, woodpeckers, sparrows, kestrels, owls, and other species. At least forty-five species have been documented in pipes. Even small lizards and mammals can become fatally trapped.

Uncapped metal and PVC pipes of various diameters are used for a variety of purposes including venting, irrigation, marking of utilities, staking of property lines, and construction of fences and road signs. Open pipes can even be found making up volleyball poles and children's playground sets. Another common use of pipes is to stake mine claims, which are found on public lands throughout the West. Unfortunately, the general public is largely unaware of the problem, but these tragic deaths are preventable if we raise awareness and take action.

#### What BCAS is doing about the Problem

1. The BCAS working group plans to create educational materials that would be distributed to members, the public, homeowner associations, builders, realtors, utility companies, municipalities, counties, ranchers, etc.
2. BCAS volunteers will assist in capping pipes at the request of property owners.
3. The BCAS working group will contact land managers to help assess and address the problem on federal and state-managed public lands.

#### What You Can Do About the Problem

1. Survey your property and remove or close any open-ended pipes with caps or insulating spray foam/sealant. Insulating foam is found in spray cans commonly available at hardware stores.
2. Be on the lookout for pipes on private and public lands that may need to be capped. Notify landowners or BCAS about uncapped, open pipes.
3. Spread the word about the problem and the ways entrapment of songbirds and other wildlife can be prevented, and recruit others to help.
4. Volunteer with BCAS by getting involved in our "open pipes" project. For more information contact Mary Costello: mc.costello5@gmail.com.

*If those of us who care most about the welfare of birds do not work to solve the problem, who will?*

## Update: Screening Vault Toilet Vent Stacks

By Mary Costello

Last issue, the entrapment of birds, such as small owls and hawks, in unscreened vault toilet vent stacks was described. Vault toilets are found in recreation sites and campgrounds maintained by federal agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service (NPS), and various state agencies.

We are happy to report that all vault toilets on BLM recreation sites at the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area, Dominguez Escalante National Conservation Area, and recreation sites along the San Miguel River are now capped! Although BCAS volunteers went through training with BLM staff to learn how to install screens, BLM volunteers were able to complete the screening project post-haste.

At this time, BCAS is hoping to assist NPS staff to address vault toilets at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Curecanti National Recreation Area that are in need of screens.

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## New Project Sponsored by BCAS

By Marcella Fremgen

Near Crawford, there is an old elk ranch with about six miles of old elk fencing that is used by Gunnison sage Grouse. Portions of the fence were built with steel pipes, which have been open for years. The fence is being replaced with more wildlife-friendly alternatives but the posts are largely uncapped. At the January board meeting, the BCAS board approved spending an estimated \$960 to provide 550 steel ball caps for capping the open fence posts in Crawford. Here is an example of a cap on a fence post. The rounded caps cover the holes and make it harder for ravens and raptors to perch there.



To install the caps on the open pipes, we would like to get BCAS members to participate. We will have a volunteer work day for interested BCAS members, when you can help install the caps on steel pipes. Please keep an eye out for this event, which will likely occur in July or August. We would love to have you there! For further information on this project, contact Marcella at [Marcella.fremgen@co.usda.gov](mailto:Marcella.fremgen@co.usda.gov)

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### NOTICE

At the January Board meeting, board members voted to increase Chapter membership dues. Effective immediately for all new and renewing members, BCAS dues are as follows: \$20 for individual membership and \$30 for family membership.

## Education Working Group In Action

By Marcella Fremgen

The education committee has a couple of school events tentatively lined up (although dates have not yet been released) for this spring. Annually, we present at the Montrose Natural Resources Festival, Paonia Conservation Days, and Family Nature Night. These events occur every spring and BCAS has been participating in these events for up to ten years. Our presentations highlight the value of migration as a life history strategy, and adaptations of birds (ranging from beak structure, to anatomy, to behaviors like migration). Each presentation is interactive and allows the children to play a game, such as the “migration challenge” or “dress like a bird”. In past years, over 300 students participated in a full day of educational activities put on by the Montrose Natural Resources Festival. Paonia Conservation Days is sponsored by Western Slope Conservation Center. In past years, over 400 children from Delta County learned the basics of bird guides and binoculars while stopping at bird identification stations along the North Fork River.

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### (Events – Continued from page 1)

**May 13:** The Black Canyon Audubon Society will host a field trip during the weekend of International Migratory Bird celebrations. Spring is the best time of year for “birding” as many species are passing through and the males are easily identified since they are in breeding plumage. This will be a day-long exploration of some habitats in Delta County. We will begin at Crawford State Park and then continue to the north rim of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison. We will meet at the visitor center of Crawford State Park at 8 a.m. on Sunday May 13<sup>th</sup>. Drivers will need to have a Colorado State Parks pass. The group will move to the north rim of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park for birding along the rim and in Pinyon/Juniper forest. At this elevation, we can see a wide variety of weather so bring appropriate clothing and a lunch. Since the trip is limited to twelve, please email Chris at [2006clazo@gmail.com](mailto:2006clazo@gmail.com) to reserve a spot

### June

**June 9:** Spring birding at the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. We'll car pool from Gold's parking lot on east Main St in Montrose at 8 a.m. Bring a lunch or snack and water. To keep the number of cars reasonable, the trip is limited to 12 people. Watch for more information.

**June 20:** Black Canyon Audubon Society annual dinner. The dinner will be hosted at Remington's Restaurant on the Bridges Golf Course in Montrose. Our featured speaker this year will be Chris Parish, condor expert with the Peregrine Fund. Chris has taken great photos of condors released into the wild. In addition to dinner, there will be the annual election of board members and a silent auction. Watch for more information in the next newsletter.

\*\*\*\*\*Global Big Day is May 5\*\*\*\*\*

## Why Birds Matter

By Sandy Beranich

Currently, our hard-fought for environmental regulations are being challenged. To meaningfully address these challenges as birders, over the next several newsletters I will summarize some of the many ways birds contribute to our economy and to our greater good. I will be using one source as my reference and it is fittingly called: Why Birds Matter, edited by Çağan H. Şekercioğlu, Daniel G. Wenny, and Christopher J. Whelan. This is an important reference for those interested in the results of ecosystem service studies that are specific to birds; all information is well referenced and documented.

Contributions of Birds of Prey: Studies are finding that birds of prey help control pests in agro-ecosystems. To recruit birds of prey: add perches, nesting platforms, or nest boxes to areas needing pest control; these provide additional sight visibility where there often aren't nearby perches. Utility companies routinely replace wooden utility poles and these are often free – just add some cross pieces near the top and place at optimal viewing points. An indirect benefit from the increased presence of birds of prey is that rodents and rabbits develop a fear mentality and will choose other more desirable habitats. An unfortunate negative benefit is that song birds may sometimes be the prey but other bird species may benefit from perceived protection.

Bird predation on insects: One study showed that bird predation on apple-damaging insects increased yield of apples by 66%.

Scavenger Services: Vultures provide what are called sanitary services. In India, vulture populations plummeted (100 to 1,000 fold) in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a result of poisoning by a veterinary drug. The result was an accumulation of organic waste followed by an irruption of feral dogs and rats, which can carry rabies. Historical data showed that approximately 20,000 people died each year from rabies. After the loss of vultures and increases in feral dogs and rats, an estimated additional 48,000 rabies-caused deaths occurred with an associated economic cost of **\$34 BILLION** between 1992-2006. On the cultural front, one religious sect in India had a long cultural tradition of leaving their dead to the vultures in what they called: “Sky Burials”; now they cannot continue with this cultural practice.

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## Selected Upcoming Birding Festivals

March 9-11: Monte Vista Crane Festival, Monte Vista, CO  
<http://mvcranefest.org>

March 22-25: Nebraska Crane Festival, Kearney, NE  
<http://rowe.audubon.org/visit/audubons-nebraska-crane-festival>

April 6-8: Nebraska Prairie Chicken Festival Burwell, NE:  
[www.nebraskaprairiechickens.com](http://www.nebraskaprairiechickens.com), (308) 346-4697

April 13-18: 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Olympic Birdfest: Sequim, WA.  
[www.olympicbirdfest.org](http://www.olympicbirdfest.org), (360) 681-4076

May 9-13: Ute Mt. Mesa Verde Birding Festival, Cortez, CO  
[www.utemountainmesaverdebirdingfestival.com/](http://www.utemountainmesaverdebirdingfestival.com/)

# The Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Year of the Bird

By Robin Nicholoff

## What's Happening

2018 is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), one of the most important laws ever enacted to protect migratory birds. The Act makes it illegal to kill, sell, hunt, or possess any of over 800 bird species or their nests, eggs, or feathers unless a permit is granted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), such as those held by BCAS for the scientific or educational use of dead birds. There are a few other exceptions to the statute such as the eagle feather law which regulates Native American tribes' legal use of eagle parts for legitimate tribal religious ceremonies. A later provision allows the USFWS to issue "incidental take permits" to companies whose otherwise lawful activities "incidentally" or unintentionally result in violations of the MBTA, provided that the companies work with the agency to implement protective measures. An example of a protective measure would be covering oil and gas open pits that may otherwise result in bird mortality. Prior to the MBTA enactment, some bird species populations had severely declined in North America or had become extinct (e.g. the Passenger Pigeon and Carolina Parakeet) and hundreds more species had been extirpated in places world-wide. The decline of most species can be attributed to human activity. The passage of the MBTA contributed to saving millions of individual birds as well as saving some species (e.g. Snowy Egret and Wood Duck), from extinction. Together with the Endangered Species Act of 1973, hundreds of Threatened and Endangered (T&E) bird, animal, fish, and plant species have been protected from extinction and been aided in their recovery: Peregrine Falcon, Bald Eagle, California Condor to name a few.

## Current Bills of Concern

The current administration and its supporters introduced bill H.R. 4239 on November 3, 2017, "Strengthening the Economy with Critical Untapped Resources to Expand American Energy Act", otherwise known as the SECURE America Energy Act. The bill was referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources for review. Subsequently, (November 8, 2017), the committee ordered the bill to be amended. In a rapid turnaround, Wyoming Representative Liz Cheney introduced Section 207 as an amendment to H.R. 4239 on the same day, November 8, 2018. Her amendment to Section 6 of the MBTA added a provision that basically interpreted the MBTA to not apply to energy-related activities so as to not prohibit incidental or accidental "take". Meanwhile, in the U.S. Senate, S.935, sponsored by Kentucky Senator Rand Paul, was introduced in April 2017 to radically weaken the Endangered Species Act of 1973 by requiring the consent of each state containing a nominated species before adding it to the list of threatened or endangered species; would end protections for certain species; and would grant any state exclusive authority to regulate and manage a species and its habitat within the state's boundaries. S.935 would also require Congressional approval in order for the entire list of T&E species to take effect.

## What You Can Do

In response to such all-out attacks on laws that protect our common resources, the National Audubon Society, National Geographic Society, Cornell Lab of Ornithology and over a hundred other organizations, including Colorado Parks and Wildlife, have declared 2018 to be the *Year of the Bird*, a yearlong celebration of birds. These organizations will engage with citizens to add to science and to promote the health and well-being of birds and their habitats. The campaign will celebrate our feathered friends and include easy but meaningful actions that anyone can take to help ensure the health of our planet and its birds. You can start by visiting National Audubon Society's Year of the Bird website <http://www.audubon.org/yearofthebird> and by following local updates and events at the BCAS website <http://www.blackcanyonaudubon.org>. Please let your Senators and Congresspersons know how you feel about their colleagues' attempts to undermine long-standing laws that protect birds and their habitats. While a direct letter is most effective, you can also sign onto Audubon actions such as <https://act.audubon.org/onlineactions/X2eSSqGMfEuGvlpUrOZ7mQ2>

## UPDATE

On December 22, 2017, the Department of the Interior (DOI) quietly revised their interpretation of the MBTA provisions related to incidental or accidental 'take'. Based on Principal Deputy Solicitor Daniel Jorjani's Opinion, it was stated that DOI would no longer prosecute oil and gas, wind, and solar operators that accidentally kill birds. Meanwhile, H.R. 4239 is still up for consideration this coming year.

*"If you take care of birds, you take care of most of the big environmental problems in the world."*

- Thomas Lovejoy, conservation biologist

## Results of Raptor Trips

BCAS members scouted up the North Fork (Feb. 10-11) and around Montrose (Feb. 17-18) looking for raptors on our annual raptor trips. The North Fork seemed to be the place to best observe Bald (21) and Golden (14) eagles. In all areas, many Red-tailed Hawks (20 in Montrose area, 30 in the North Fork area) and Kestrels (18 in Montrose area and 10 in the North Fork area) were found in abundance. A few Cooper's Hawks were seen in both areas as were Northern Harriers. Rounding out the count were two Prairie Falcons (1 in each area) and two Rough-legged Hawks (1 in each area). Thanks to North Fork trip leaders Jim LeFevre and Adam Petry and Montrose leaders Bill Harris and Bruce Ackerman. Join us next year. Photo credit to Bill Harris for Rough-legged Hawk.



*The term 'raptor' is derived from the Latin word 'rapere' meaning to seize or take by force. These birds have keen vision to detect their prey during flight as well as powerful talons and beaks.*

# Who Was That Bird Named For?

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## Gambel's Quail

By Susan Chandler-Reed

William Gambel (1823-1849) packed a lot of adventure into his short life, even managing to have three careers before his death at age 26. Some consider him to be the most important 19<sup>th</sup> century figure in California ornithology. Besides the eponymous Gambel's quail (*Callipepla gambelii*), Gambel's oak carries his name, and the specific Latin names of the mountain chickadee and subspecies of the white-crowned sparrow and the white-fronted goose are also *gambelii*.

Born near Philadelphia, as a teenager Gambel became an apprentice collector to the famous naturalist, Thomas Nuttall. After working for Nuttall in the southeastern and northeastern U.S., he was encouraged to explore the West. In 1841 he set out to California, traveling from Independence, Missouri to Santa Fe on the Santa Fe Trail with a group of merchants. He continued from Abiquiu, New Mexico on the Old Spanish Trail to Los Angeles, becoming the first naturalist to cross the Southwestern U.S. deserts. By late 1842, Gambel was in financial troubles. He was lucky to find employment with the U.S. Navy as a clerk onboard ship. He evidently was able to continue collecting species when his ship stopped at the coastal California missions, and was the first naturalist to visit Santa Catalina Island.



After several years at sea, during which time he visited ports in the South Seas as well as South America, he returned to Philadelphia in 1845. Although he had a post as assistant curator at the Academy of Natural Sciences, where his specimens still reside, Gambel decided to train as a medical doctor and graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1848. In 1849, Seeking better employment opportunities, he set out ahead of his new wife to join settlers on the California Gold Rush. Frustrated that the original party was moving too quickly for him to conduct his naturalist studies, he joined a group of settlers who were traveling at a slower pace. Unfortunately, by the time his party reached the Sierra Nevada's in October, they had lost most of their livestock and the first snows had already fallen. Gambel was one of the very few to survive the journey, but he arrived in the mining camp only to find a typhoid epidemic. While treating the ill miners, he succumbed to typhoid and died at age 26.

Male Gambel's quail (Photograph courtesy of Alan and Elaine Wilson, <http://www.naturespicsonline.com>)

### Sources:

Richard G. Beidleman, *California's Frontier Naturalists*, 2006. University of California Press.

Bo Beolens, Michael Watkins, and Michael Grayson, *The Eponym Dictionary of Birds*, 2004. Bloomsbury Publishing.

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## Some Facts and Trivia about Quail



Photo credit to David Salter

These are gregarious birds and are typically found in groups, except when nesting; after they hatch, social groups are called coveys.

The scientific name *Callipepla* comes from the Greek *Kalli* (beautiful) and *peplos* (robe).

Gambel's Quail is a member of the galliforms order and is one of the New World quail. All members have a stout, decurved, sharply pointed, chicken-like bill and most have an erectile crest on the crown. The scimitar-shaped crest of six or more tightly fitted feathers is referred to as a topknot. Their legs are well-developed for walking and running and they use three long, forward-pointing toes for scratching the ground and leaf litter when foraging. They are highly terrestrial and usually occupy brushy habitats and other low, dense foliage. Most of their foraging occurs on the ground although they will sometimes take food from trees and bushes. They eat seeds and insects. They will also tear a piece of leaves and flowers from living plants and they can jump up and grab hanging fruits and seeds. In general, quails are sedentary and thrive in habitats where summer and winter food, water, and protective cover are close. Gambel's quail are not considered at risk as a population.

Black Canyon Audubon Society  
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<http://www.blackcanyonaudubon.org>

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