



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 2020

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Thursday, March 12 Program

Retired wildlife biologist Van Graham of Grand Junction will speak about his studies on Sandhill Cranes in western Colorado. Join BCAS at the Bill Heddles Recreation Center at Confluence Park in Delta at 7:00 PM. Free and open to the public. Contact Jon Horn at jonhorn56@gmail.com or (970) 209-5404 about carpooling from Montrose to Delta.

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Annual Crane Days

Marvel in the Majesty of Cranes

By Dian Torphy

Eckert Crane Days takes place March 20-22 and is hosted by Black Canyon Audubon Society. We hope you will join us in celebrating the annual migration of Sandhill Cranes from their wintering sites in Central New Mexico to various far northern locations where they will spend the summer and raise their young. The cranes can fly to speeds of 35 miles per hour and often travel 200 miles per day. Fruitgrowers' Reservoir has been a rest stop for the cranes for as long as humans have inhabited the area (perhaps much longer). It provides food (their main diet consists of grains, berries, insects, and snails)

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The Grape Jelly Incident

By Linda Hansen

Some odd years ago, I'm guessing about 10 or so, I found a hummingbird on the ground in front of my house. The tiny bird was desperately trying to fly and get away from me and all other perceived and real threats. I picked the poor thing up and inspected it. Though I knew little about birds, I did know that if this bird had been picked up by one of my many rescued cats it would have been eaten.

This was my introduction to wildlife rehab. After an exhaustive search on the internet, I contacted Brenda Miller (at that time our only local rehabber) and

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President's Message

Winter is almost over. Spring migration is already starting. Keep your eyes out for new birds arriving every day! This Audubon chapter has quite a few activities scheduled this spring, so I hope you will join in on some of them. Most prominent is Eckert Crane Days March 20-22. Join us and watch Sandhill Cranes getting started on their long migration journey far to the north.

Susan and I are travelling to Antarctica this month! It's been on our bucket list. We fly from Montrose to Dallas, Miami, to Buenos Aires. Then we fly on to Ushuaia, Argentina—the southernmost city in the world at the very tip of South America. We will bird at Tierra Del Fuego National Park, after which we will travel by ship for two weeks to the Falkland Islands, South Georgia Island, and the Antarctic Peninsula. These are places with some of the largest concentrations of seabirds and marine mammals in the world. Our wish-list is to see seven species of penguins. There are many species of seabirds, whales, dolphins, and seals that can only be seen down there. It's a trip of a lifetime. See you when we get back!

Bruce Ackerman, BCAS President

Marine Road Project Involves BCAS Representatives

The BCAS chapter has been working with the Montrose City Parks Department since 2013 to create a park for wildlife on an 18-acre parcel of city-owned property along Marine Road in Montrose. BCAS members have conducted regular bird counts (reported on Ebird) resulting in 120 species of birds being identified at the site with data for all weeks of the year. Plant data and photographs from established photo points document site conditions through a full period with additional photos taken when necessary.

After being on hold for several years, BCAS members met with the Montrose City Manager and other city staff in November 2019. Plans were made to move forward with developing the property for visitation with BCAS assistance. The goal is to see a lightly developed property with a parking area, interpretive signage, trails, and blinds at two waterfowl ponds. Access will be more restrictive than other city parks with no dogs or bicycles allowed and rather primitive improvements that maintain the character of the wetlands and minimize their disturbance by visitors.

Want to be involved on this project? Contact Krystal Cooper at nationalparkfan1@yahoo.com.

Submit Your Ideas and Articles to *Canyon Wrenderings*

Do you have an idea for a story? Would you like to submit an article or photos to this newsletter? Please contact the managing editor with suggestions.

Canyon Wrenderings

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Managing editor

Mary Menz at mary.t.menz@gmail.com

ON THE COVER

Sandhill Cranes by Justine Belson, USFWS, via Pixnio. Image is in public domain, not copyrighted, no rights reserved, free for any use. You can use picture for any personal and commercial use without the prior written permission and without fee or obligation.

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Eckert Crane Days—Dian Torphy

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AD HOC COMMITTEES (ANNUAL EVENTS)

Montrose County Fair—**OPEN**

Bird Banding—Carrie Krickbaum (see above)

Christmas Bird Count Team—Arden

Anderson, Adam Petry, Amy Seglund,

and Missy Siders (see page 3 for contact information)

Eckert Crane Days—Dian Torphy

A note about email addresses in this newsletter: All emails have an extra space before the @ sign to discourage webcrawlers from spam activities.

Upcoming Events

March 3, Tuesday 9:00 AM, First Tuesday Birding Trip. Trip to Ridgway to see Rosy-Finches and other montane birds. **See box to right for meet-up directions and contact info.**

March 12, Thursday 7:00 PM, Monthly Program. Hear Van Graham, retired CPW biologist from Grand Junction, speak about his study of Sandhill Cranes around Colorado. Meeting at the Bill Heddles Recreation Center in Delta near Confluence Park. Free and open to the public. Contact Jon Horn at jonhorn56@gmail.com or (970) 209-5404 about carpooling from Montrose to Delta.

April 18, Saturday, 8:30 AM. Ridgway State Park Trip. Join Don Marsh as we look for early spring arrivals at Ridgway State Park. Note: The park charges an \$8 dollar entrance fee per vehicle, but we'll try to minimize the number of cars and use available park passes. Meet at 8:30 AM. to get started and carpool. **See box to right for directions and contact info.** If coming from the south, meet the group at the Ridgway State Park Visitor Center at 9 AM. Return to Montrose in early afternoon.

May 5 & 6, Tuesday & Wednesday "West End" Trip. BCAS will host a field trip to Paradox Valley and other West End venues for a spring birding adventure. The opportunity to see over 70 species is very high. Expect several short walks to access bird habitat. 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 host of migrants like the black-throated sparrow, vireos, yellow-breasted chat, Grace's warbler, black phoebe, and a variety of waterfowl. Day 1 will wrap up near Naturita, so participants can stay in hotels 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 nice rooms at reasonable prices. The field trip is limited to 12 participants. For questions and to sign up contact Bill Harris at trlgpa48@gmail.com.

May 16, Saturday, 8:00 AM. Billy Creek Wildlife Area Trip. Join Don Marsh as we explore the area and look for spring migrants. See box to right for meet-up directions and contact info. If coming from the south, you may want to meet the group at La Zona Colona Coffee in Colona at 8:30 AM. Return to Montrose in early afternoon.

Check the BCAS website for more dates and trips! www.bcas.org

First Tuesday Bird Walks

Join us on the first Tuesday of each month as we visit local areas to bird and share birding experiences. We meet at 9 AM at the northeast corner of the Gold's Gym parking lot in Montrose (corner of Hillcrest and East Main St). All skill levels are welcome.

Bring a snack and water, binoculars, and field guides. Trips generally last until noon and we carpool. Contact Don at (209) 256-5744 or at ridgwaybrdr@gmail.com.

Mark your Calendars!

March 3

April 7

May (no trip first Tuesday in May)

June 2

The Grape Jelly Incident *continued from cover*

and placed the hummingmer into a very small box. I proceeded to her home up on the Roubideaux Rim. Brenda took the tiny bird from me and, after a short visit, I returned home. The following day I received a call from Brenda requesting I return to her home and retrieve the bird. To my great surprise, the lovely little hummingmer seemed as good as new. It turned out that he had become entrapped in the grape jelly I had put out in my oriole feeder. I felt like a complete idiot. All along, I thought I had been doing the birds such a big favor by placing such a treat out, when, instead, I had been doing the opposite. Live and learn.

Over the years I became involved in helping out with injured birds. Often Brenda would get a call, refer the birds to a local veterinarian and, occasionally, those birds would be referred to a long-term rehabber. When it was a bird of prey, that almost always meant a trip to Broomfield and the Birds of Prey Foundation <https://www.birds-of-prey.org/> Sometimes it was a shorter trip to Dr. Bingham in Fruita and then on to Pauline S. Schneegas Wildlife Rehab <https://www.psswf.org/> in Silt if the bird/raccoon/coyote

pup could be rehabilitated. Friend and BCAS member Terry Ryan (RIP) was often a link between Morningstar Veterinary Clinic in Montrose and my home in Paonia; from there I was on the road with the "patient."

Unfortunately, Brenda lost her home and consequently, her ability to rehab wildlife. I know she hopes to re-open someday and I believe that is something we all hope for as well. The closest wildlife rehabbers to our area are Pauline Schneegas Wildlife Foundation in Silt and Second Chance Wildlife Rehabilitation in Price, Utah <https://wildliferehabprice.wixsite.com/2ndchance>. Both of these wonderful organizations deserve our support. It isn't enough to just watch and admire birds. Birds and other wildlife sometimes need our help, and we are the ones who should make that difference.

Linda Hansen is a retired RN living in Paonia. She spends her time playing double bass, volunteering at the homeless shelter, working with hospice patients and, of course, saving wildlife.

Chapter News

Christmas Bird Count Results

Delta CBC was Sunday, December 22, 2019, and was coordinated and led by Amy Seglund. There were 26 participants. Highlights included Northern Goshawk, Ferruginous hawk, Merlins, Western Bluebird, and Chipping Sparrow.

This year they recorded the highest counts of Cedar Waxwings (193) and Lewis's Woodpeckers (9) and some low counts of Yellow-Rumped Warblers, American Kestrel, Red-Wing Blackbirds, Western Meadowlark, and Morning Doves. New species recorded this year were Northern Goshawk, Western Bluebird, and Chipping Sparrow.

Gunnison CBC was Sunday December 15, 2019, and was coordinated and led by Arden Anderson. There were 15 participants in the field and 5m ore at the feeders. Forty seven species included these highlights: Ferruginous Hawk, Long-eared owl, three species of Rosy-Finch, and Pine Grosbeaks.

Hotchkiss CBC was Sunday, January 5, 2020, and was coordinated and led by Adam Petry. There were 42 participants who saw 67 species that included these highlights: White-throated Sparrow, Black Phoebe, American Pipit, Spotted Sandpiper, Brown Creeper, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Smoke-morph Wild Turkey, and an injured Turkey Vulture. New High Counts included Lewis's Woodpecker (48), Western Bluebird (36), Lesser Goldfinch (6), Spotted Sandpiper (2), and Red-breasted Nuthatch (2).
A special thank you to Andrea Robinsong for providing the catered lunch for the Hotchkiss CBC participants!

Montrose CBC Coordinator Missy Siders and 17 other birders saw 70 species and counted 11,991 individual birds. In comparison, last year we had 82 species and 14,478 individuals. Unusual birds included the greater white-fronted goose and white-throated sparrow. This year was the highest recorded count for the Montrose Circle for northern shoveler, Sandhill Crane, Cooper's hawk, prairie falcon, American robin, American tree sparrow, western meadowlark, house finch, and lesser goldfinch. Species that seemed low this year included northern pintail, redhead, great blue heron, sharp-shinned hawk, rock pigeon, downy and hairy woodpeckers, western and mountain bluebirds, red-winged blackbirds.

In Memoriam

Evelyn June Horn of Eckert, Colorado, passed away October 13, 2019. She was 86 years old. Evelyn was very proud of the two books she published on her works on birds, especially cranes. When crane season came, she was always up and ready to count and take pictures of all the cranes and other numerous birds that came to Delta County. She was well known for her articles in the *Delta County Independent* on birds and plants. She will be remembered for her loving smile and her friendship to numerous friends.



Julie and Richard Duncan of Montrose died tragically in Texas in February. Julie often went birding with Sue



Hirshman, Pam Miller, and other Montrose birders. Said Sue on hearing the news, "Julie never met a stranger. She became such a good friend and always looked forward to a day of birding. I believe she touched everyone's heart."

"Our hearts are broken losing our dear, sweet Julie. We shared a love

of hiking slick rock and slot canyons in Utah and hours and hours of birding. She had such a wonderful loving heart, seeing the good in every situation," said Pam.

Rosy-Finch Study Continues in SW Colorado

Ornithologist Aaron Yapper continues his work collecting data for the SW Colorado Rosy-Finch Study. More than 300 birds have been recaptured since the study began in 2017.

If you'd like to see the birds up close and personal through the window of generous Elk Meadows homeowner Rebecca Kindred, contact her at rkspirit @mac.com. This is the Ridgway study site, one of six in SW Colorado.

Who was that Bird Named For?

Harris's Hawk and Harris's Sparrow; and Harlan's Hawk

By Susan Chandler-Reed

Edward Harris, Jr., (1799-1863) was a well-to-do New Jersey landowner who is said to have lived a life of leisure as a gentleman farmer and horse breeder. He is responsible for introducing the Percheron draft horse to America. Beginning as a teenager who captured and studied birds, he dabbled as an amateur ornithologist. He was introduced to John James Audubon in 1823 or 1824 and later accompanied him on expeditions to the Gulf of Mexico in 1837 and to Missouri in 1843 to study birds and mammals. Harris's major contributions to ornithology, however, came in the form of financial and personal support to Audubon at a time when Audubon had, in his own words, been reduced "to the lowest degree of indigence."

In 1819, Audubon suffered bankruptcy and was reduced to making his living drawing death-bed sketches. He began working on his landmark *Birds of America* in the 1820s, while his wife Lucy supported the family by teaching. Audubon brought his sketches to the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences in 1823,



hoping to gain support for their publication. For unknown reasons, he was met with hostility by some of the prominent members of the Academy who were followers of Alexander Wilson and his publication *American Ornithology*. George Ord, in particular, was contemptuous of

Audubon and his drawings, calling him a "back-country upstart who romanticized his subject matter." Philadelphia engraver Alexander Lawson claimed that Audubon's sketches were "ill-drawn, not true to nature and anatomically incorrect."

Denied membership in the Academy until 1831, Audubon was not allowed to study or draw the Philadelphia collection. It was at this low point in Audubon's career that Edward Harris purchased all of Audubon's paintings and gifted him an additional \$100, telling him that "men with his talent should not want for money." When Audubon later recalled this moment, he said, "I would have kissed him, but that is not the custom in this icy city." In tribute, Audubon named the Harris's Hawk (*Parabuteo unicinctus harrisi*), Harris's Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*), and Harris's [Hairy] Woodpecker (*Picoides villosus harrisi*) after "one of the best friends I have in the world."

Harris was not the only friend of Audubon at this fraught time. Dr. Richard Harlan (1796-1843) was a young Quaker physician and amateur paleontologist who took Audubon's side in the bitter Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences feud. Audubon named the Harlan's Hawk—a dark morph subspecies of Red-Tailed



Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis harlani*)—after Harlan, stating "Long before I discovered this fine Hawk, I was anxious to have an opportunity of honouring some new species of the feathered tribe with the name of my excellent friend Dr. Richard Harlan of Philadelphia. This I might have done sooner, had not I waited until a species should occur, which in size and importance should bear some proportion to my gratitude toward that learned and accomplished friend."

About these birds

Harris's Hawks are denizens of the arid Southwest and are seldom seen in Colorado. According to the Cornell



Laboratory of Ornithology, it is the most social of North American raptors and is popular among falconers. It can be identified by bold markings of dark brown, chestnut red, and white; long yellow legs;

and yellow markings on its face. The hawks cooperate at nests and hunt in groups.



Harris's Sparrows are also rare in Colorado, although the bird has been sighted in each of the lower 48 states during migration. It is the largest North American sparrow and is distinguished by its

striking black bib and a pink bill. The sparrow is the only songbird that breeds solely in Canada, wintering in the south-central Great Plains. It was ►

Who is This Bird Named for? *continued from page 5*

originally collected and described by botanist and zoologist Thomas Nuttall, who named it “Mourning Finch.”

Sources:

Harlan’s Hawk engraving <https://www.audubon.org/birds-of-america/black-warrior>

Photo of Harris: Public Domain
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=565223>

Portrait of Harlan: Public Domain,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=47549>

Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology
https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Harriss_Hawk/overview

Harris’s Sparrow photo
<https://macaulaylibrary.org/photo/37681321>

Harris’s Hawk photograph courtesy of Alan and Elaine Wilson,
<http://www.naturespicsonline.com>

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

Susan Chandler-Reed is a retired archaeologist who finds looking up at birds a nice counterpoint to her career of looking down at the ground.

Corvids Open Trash Cans and Help Pick Up Trash

Corvids are known to be clever using tools and brains both to figure out how to open trash cans on garbage day. The homeowner who leaves a plastic bag of trash out instead of putting it in a heavy-lidded trash can almost deserves to come home to a garbage-strewn yard. But crows are capable of cleaning up messes as well.

National Geographic, Smithsonian Magazine, and NPR have each covered the story of crows picking up cigarette butts and other small litter at the Puy du Fou theme park in Les Epesses, France.

Read more about corvids who clean up at
<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-4975664/Startup-teaches-CROWS-collecti-cigarette-butts.html>

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Crows like cheeseburgers, too

By Sallie Thoreson

Urban birds, including crows, are subject to some of the same temptations as humans. One study looked at the cholesterol levels of American crows in two urban settings in New York and California. Crows that were offered cheeseburgers readily took them and often fed them to their young. Nestling crows from the urban area of Davis, CA, had higher cholesterol levels than comparable rural nestlings. In the Clinton (NY) study, area nestlings with elevated cholesterol had higher “nestling body condition” (primarily due to greater weight gain, which is a good thing for young nestlings in the first months of life).



Crow unwrapping and eating a cheeseburger. Photo courtesy <http://www.wintercrowroost.com/nat-geo-crows-love-cheeseburgers/>

The researchers did not look at other factors such as the salt or sugar content of readily available urban food. Do crows worry about that holiday weight gain? How will the new plant-based Impossible Burger affect them?

Source: Townsend, A.K., H.A Staab, and C. M. Barker (2019). Urbanization and elevated cholesterol in American Crows. *The Condor: Ornithological Applications* 121:1–10. DOI: 10.1093/condor/duz040.

Volunteer Treasurer Needed

Black Canyon Audubon Society needs a treasurer —either permanent (a two-year term) or a substitute for this summer. If you have a few hours per month to spare and would like to support our local chapter efforts we would greatly appreciate your help. For more information, please contact Dian Torphy at (303) 709-4386.

Seven Simple Actions to Help Birds

By Laura Mah

Gone!

Over the last couple of decades, there have been a few bird topics that I have stuck in my mind; one being the demise of the passenger pigeon. In the early 1800s, the passenger pigeon comprised 25 to 40 percent of the birds in the US. There were billions of birds in a single flock. The passenger pigeon became extinct. Twice in the last month a factoid about the passenger pigeon has crossed my path, so I felt a need to take notice.



Red Wing Blackbird: .Blackbird family 440 Million Lost © Laura Mah

My husband Don reads many books and publications on nature. He shared with me his findings from an article in the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Autumn 2019 edition of *Living Bird* magazine titled "Vanishing." Would you believe, in the past 50 years, more than 25 percent of birds across North America have disappeared? That statistic does not include the passenger pigeon's demise, which was over a century ago. There are declines in every biome and also steep losses in major bird families.



Dark-Eyed Junco: 1 in 3 Lost © Laura Mah

These declines are documented in our own area, too. Shawn Connor, a biologist with BIOlogic and a speaker at the November BCAS meeting, reported that breeding bird surveys for Pinyon Jays show a decline of about 80 percent since 1960. So what can we do?

Living Bird magazine

presented the following steps that can be taken to reverse the trend in declines in the bird population in the United States and Canada at the government and business levels. The publication also lists "7 Simple Actions to Help Birds." Following is a summary of the actions.

1. **Make Windows Safer:** Break up reflections on the window pane by installing screens, adding specialized window covers, or attaching stickers.
2. **Keep Cats Indoors:** Humans have introduced 100 million cats in the US and Canada. Outdoor cats are the number one top source of bird loss (the second being habitat destruction). Local note: At the BCAS monthly meeting, take a brochure to educate yourself on protecting birds from our feline friends.
3. **Reduce Lawn, Plant Natives:** The 60 million acres of lawn in the US offer little food or shelter for birds and wildlife. Add native plants to your yard to provide food and shelter for birds and wildlife.
Local note: Colorado State University Extension has a Native Plant Master Program and provides publications on gardening with native plants.
<https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/natural-resources/native-plant-master-program/>
4. **Avoid Herbicides:** Household weed killers such as 2,4D and glyphosate (active ingredient in Roundup) are toxic to wildlife. Local note: Colorado State University Extension provides publications on weed management and has a master gardener program.
<https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/natural-resources/weed-management-for-small-rural-acreages-3-106/>
5. **Drink Coffee that helps Birds:** Many tropical forests have been converted to coffee plantations and were formerly habitat for migratory birds. Buy shade grown coffees with the Rainforest Alliance certification or the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center's "Bird Friendly" certification.
6. **Protect our Planet from Plastic:** Nearly 5 billion metric tons of plastic have accumulated in our environment worldwide. Avoid single use disposable plastics (bags, bottles and utensils) or at least recycle them to keep them out of the ocean. Local note: EcoAction Partners in Telluride has an experimental recycling program for plastic film through a partnership with Trex Decking.
<https://www.ecoactionpartners.org/plasticfilm>
7. **Watch Birds, Share what You See:** Monitoring bird populations is essential to bird conservation (how else did we know that 1 in 4 birds have disappeared?). Become a citizen scientist. Join a project such as eBird, Project Feeder Watch or a local Audubon Christmas Bird Count.

To read the full articles in *Living Bird* magazine, visit <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/living-bird-autumn-2019-table-of-contents>

Crane Festival *continued from cover*

and protection from predators. Most of the Cranes arrive throughout the month of March but weather and other factors can delay or hasten their fly-through.

A resident population of cranes has taken up winter quarters along the Gunnison River near Delta and, also, more recently, south of Montrose along the Uncompahgre. These flocks often leave the area around the same time that the migrating cranes pass through. The estimated count of these birds is around 3,000. Cranes migrating through number between 6,000-8,000 typically. Last year over 11,000 cranes were counted (posted on eckertcranedays.com) at the reservoir in March. Another 1,700 were counted in April. If you visit the reservoir late in the afternoon, you may witness their arrival. By 10:30 AM the following morning, most of these birds will be on their way to their next layover.

Crane species have been on this earth virtually unchanged for over two million years and are the only bird species to be able to make that claim. Numerous cultures have myths and legends associated with these birds due to their size, grace, longevity, and their lively mating dances. They are a symbol still of majesty and wildness, and we are grateful to have them visit our county for this short migratory period each year.

Crane Days Events

March 14, 3:30 PM (SATURDAY)

Clean up Fruitgrowers' Reservoir Causeway in preparation for Eckert Crane Days

BCAS will supply gloves and garbage bags and we will clean up the trash in the area. During and/or afterwards, we will watch the reservoir for possible incoming cranes and other birds as well. Meet at the parking lot just west of the reservoir. Questions? Call Dian Torphy 303-709-4386.

March 20-22, 9:00 to 11:00 AM (FRIDAY to SUNDAY)

9th Annual Eckert Crane Days Festival at Fruitgrowers' Reservoir

Come out to Fruitgrowers' Reservoir to greet the Sandhill Cranes on their annual migration to northern breeding grounds. BCAS members will be available with spotting scopes and will answer questions regarding Sandhill Cranes and other waterfowl and birds that are in the area. Bring binoculars and scopes if you have them. BCAS volunteers will be set up at "Crane Point" on the hill overlooking the reservoir or along the causeway across the reservoir, depending on where the best viewing opportunity is that particular day. Portable toilets will be on-site.

On Saturday and Sunday, coffee and baked goods will be available for sale thanks to Stacy's on Main, Cedaredge.

March 19, 6:00 PM (THURSDAY)

Flocks and Rocks: The Amazing Story of Sandhill Cranes and Fruitgrowers Reservoir

Program presented by David Noe and cosponsored by Grand Mesa Arts and Events Center, Delta Libraries, and Black Canyon Audubon Society. This is a family- and child-friendly event. David Noe is an engaging speaker with a great story to tell about Sandhill Cranes in our area.

At the Grand Mesa Arts and Events Center, 195 W Main St. Cedaredge (970) 856-9195. \$10 suggested donation.

Crane Viewing Etiquette

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 accustomed to cattle and wildlife, but are shy of people and move away when approached. The cranes need the quiet resting and feeding opportunities that Fruitgrower's Reservoir and the surrounding land provides.

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 designated parking lot. Please do not park where you will be blocking access to any ranchers' gates or driveways. Please observe all signs that have been placed for this event to help you identify the boundaries.

Crane-watching etiquette also includes attention to surroundings. North Road, along which we park to view the cranes, is a county road used by local residents and fast traffic. 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.

Directions to Fruitgrowers' Reservoir

Fruitgrowers' Reservoir is also known as Hart's Basin. It 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 (watch for the "Crane Days" sign), and proceed east on North Road until you reach the reservoir.

Generating Conservation Conversations

By Sallie Thoreson, Conservation Chair

I have been learning a lot about the advocacy process since I volunteered to head the Conservation Committee. Here is some of what I have learned so far.

Efforts at the federal level to revise important rules and regulations

There are two key federal laws right now where the administration has proposals to revise some of the important conservation provisions. The BCAS will submit comments, and we urge individuals to also submit comments.

National Environment Policy Act, or NEPA, signed 50 years ago by President Nixon, established a framework for protecting our environment by requiring federal agencies to submit environmental impact statements on their proposed actions. There is also a required process to give the public a voice in decision making. The White House Council on Environmental Quality is proposing revisions that will weaken NEPA by hampering public input and by setting new timelines and definitions for what projects require federal review. The National Audubon Society (and others) report that the “streamlining and clarification is a blatant effort to limit consideration of [cumulative] climate change impacts...” The NEPA process and the proposed revisions can get complex. One way to get information is to search Google for “National Environmental Protection Act 2020” and look for postings from news organizations and environmental organizations, such as National Audubon Society, Natural Resources Defense Council, Union of Concerned Scientists, Center for Biological Diversity, Sierra Club, and others. You can sign on at the National Audubon Society’s Action Network (www.audubon.org/takeaction) to submit comments, or you can go directly to <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/01/10/2019-28106/update-to-the-regulations-implementing-the-procedural-provisions-of-the-national-environmental>. All comments are due March 10, 2020.

The second federal law under assault is the **Migratory Bird Treaty Act**. The MBTA is credited with saving numerous species of birds from extinction, and it has protected and benefitted all birds. The Trump administration is proposing a regulatory change to ensure that companies that accidentally kill migratory birds during the course of their operations will no longer face the possibility of criminal prosecution. You can get more information and submit comments through the National Audubon Society’s Action Network (www.audubon.org/takeaction) or you go to the US Fish and Wildlife Service site (<https://fws.gov/migratorybirds/2020Regulation.php>) for

information and the portal to enter comments. All comments are due March 19, 2020

Colorado legislative issues

I listened to an Audubon Rockies webinar to get more familiar with the state-based advocacy efforts. The 2020 state legislative session runs from January 8 to May 6. Audubon Rockies has one of only two state lobbyists solely dedicated to conservation issues. Audubon Rockies is closely following seven bills, with four of them dealing with water issues. The best way to get involved is to sign up for Audubon Rockies Action Alerts (<https://rockies.audubon.org/get-involved/advocacy>).

The priority legislation right now is HB20-1157: Loaned Water for Instream Flows to Improve Environments, which would provide a voluntary and flexible option for water users to divert less or no water during dry years allowing for more water to stay in a river. Audubon Rockies encourages folks to ask their state representative to support this legislation.

Bipartisan and bicameral, not so much

I read an interesting opinion piece by the people at FactCheck.org (I’m sure they are kept busy!) in the *Montrose Daily Press* December 18, 2019. “Bipartisan bills” too often mean that only a handful of members of the other party supported the bill. In 2018, there were 28 “bipartisan” bills that passed with one to 17 Republicans joining the Democrats on a vote. The second point is that when a bill passes the House, there is no guarantee the bill will be passed in the Senate. For example, in 2018, of the 991 bills passed by the House, only 284 became law and 615 House bills did not pass the Senate in any form. Apparently, these two conditions happen routinely, regardless of party control. My take-away is that we can’t be complacent when we hear that a bill was bipartisan or feel that a House bill will do equally well in the Senate.

It’s the economy, stupid

I was recently in Denver and read the *Wall Street Journal* at my hotel. I was amazed to find there were nine articles in two days on climate change and/or energy issues. There is much that industries and investment fund companies are doing to shift to clean energy and reduce their environmental impact. Firms are making decisions on strategy and capital allocation (terms I thought I would never use!). You’ll find me at the library reading the *WSJ*.

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