



Canyon Wrenderings

The Journal of the Black Canyon Audubon Society

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

Summer 2021

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Diversity and Nature go Hand in Hand Through Reading

By Sallie Thoreson

Rodney, Lola, Kulu, Ava, Mustafa, Anana, Ruby, Wren, Poppy Ann. These are the names of some of the characters in nature books for kids. These kids are Black, Indigenous, Latinx, or Asian—what we now call BIPOC (Black Indigenous, People of Color). These particular characters are the heroes of some nature books for kids that are now circulating in libraries in the seven-county area where the Black Canyon Audubon Society (BCAS) has members.

The BCAS board of directors decided to offer funding to nine libraries (or library districts) so they could expand their picture book collection for young children or early readers. All the libraries had some diverse nature books on their shelves, but were happy to add even more. The project led to the purchase and circulation of more than 60 books for libraries in the BCAS region.

Librarians were enthusiastic about the project. They echoed the idea that all kids need to see themselves in outdoor settings, and it's important to see all types of kids enjoying nature and observing wildlife: whether it's birdwatching, hiking, or exploring in the backyard or in a national park.

This project really hit home for me when I found an article titled "Where is the Black *Blueberries for Sal*?" Of course, *Blueberries for Sal* was one of my

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President's Message

I hope you are enjoying our spring weather. It was extremely blustery today. But there are lots of good spring migrants arriving in our area now. One of my favorites is the Yellow-Breasted Chat. Get out and find some!

Our chapter has taken on additional bluebird boxes at Billy Creek State Wildlife Area. If you would like to volunteer, or go along to see what happens, now's the time. Many of the nests have baby bluebirds in them now. Carrie Krickbaum is the coordinator.

If you would like to receive email notifications from me about local bird sightings, please let me know.

We are always looking for some volunteers. Soon we will be nominating candidates for the Board of Directors. Would you like to learn more about what we need? Please get in touch with me.

BCAS still needs a new treasurer. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Bruce Ackerman

BCAS Participates in 4th Grade Natural Resources Festival

BCAS members Marcella Tarantino, Sheryl Radovich, and Carrie Krickbaum hosted a "Migration Game" activity at the 2021 4th Grade Natural Resources Festival. This annual event took place at Riverbottom Park in Montrose on the May 10-11. More than 320 students participate in the event.



Sheryl Radovich answers questions about bird migration.

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ON THE COVER

Summer tanager © Cliff Utech.

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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.

Diversity and Nature *continued from cover*

favorites, as I followed the adventures of Sal and her mom collecting blueberries in Maine, getting intertwined with a berry-picking mama bear and her cub in the same woods. I could relate to Sal as a child, but I don't remember reading nature stories about kids who didn't look exactly like me, but liked to do the same things I did. Hence this project. We know that the outdoors belongs to all of us, but not everyone feels safe and welcoming there. The journey outdoors, or the spark to explore, may start in a library. When you look for them, there are now many books featuring Rodney, Lola, Kulu and others. The BCAS asked local librarians to use our list of books (and what fun it was to read the books or watch read-along videos on Youtube) or come up with their own book selections.

Here are a few examples of the books reviewed:

Where's Rodney? by Carmen Bogan is about a city boy who experiences the calm of nature and the joy of discovery in a National Park.

My Friend Earth by Patricia MacLachlan, where Mother Earth is a girl of color who talks about the seasons and nature.

Over and Under the Rainforest by Kate Messner, where a boy and an adult explore the canopy of the South American rainforest.

The Hike by Allison Farrel follows three girls (Wren, El, and Hattie) on a hike in woods, and includes sketchbook pages.

Sweetest Kulu by Jennifer K. Mann is an Inuit poem from a mother to her newborn about the gifts that flow from Arctic animals.



Books purchased by BCAS and donated to the Montrose Public Library.

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First Tuesday Field Trips

Mark your calendars for **July 6, August 3, and September 7**

Meet at 8 AM at the northeastern corner of the Gold's Gym parking lot in Montrose (corner of Hillcrest and East Main St). All skill levels are welcome. Carpooling is available.

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

Summer Field Trips

June 24, 2021—Grand Mesa

Led by Bill Harris

The Grand Mesa has a wonderful array of birds during the summer that include Lincoln sparrow, Swainson's hawk, American three-toed woodpecker, hermit thrush, pine grosbeak, red crossbill to name a few. We will be stopping along highway 65 at several points, going for short hikes to view birds. Hiking distance will be around 3-4 miles total. This will be an all-day trip, so bring lunch, snacks, water, and clothing to deal with cooler, inclement weather. Group limited to 10 people. Meet at the parking lot behind Hartman Bros. along N. 1st at 8:00 AM. Contact trip leader, Bill Harris at (970) 901-4022 with any questions.

Date TBD—Mule Park Important Bird Area, Paonia

Watch your email inbox for date!

Led by Don Marsh

Mule Park is located in the mountains above Paonia and has been designated an Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society. Participants will explore the area and hope to see several nesting Purple Martins and other birds taking advantage of the large mature stands of aspen and open park lands. Meet at Gold's Gym parking lot at 7:30 AM or Paonia River Park at 8:30 AM. This will be an all-day trip, so bring lunch, snacks, water, and clothing to deal with cooler, inclement weather. Participants should be back in Paonia around 3:00 PM and Montrose around 4:00 PM.

August 21

Ouray and Box Canyon

Led by Don Marsh

Meet at Gold's Gym at 8:00 AM or Box Canyon Park in Ouray at 8:45 AM. We will look for nesting Black Swifts near the waterfall and then spend time looking for other montane birds in the general area of Ouray. ■

Diversity and nature *continued from page 3*

There are other books on birdwatching (*Ruby's Birds* and *Bird Count*), discovering gardening (*A Garden to Save the Birds* and *Lola Planta un Jardin*), exploring in the backyard or park (*Hank's Big Day* and *A Way with Wild Things*), hiking with a family (*Hiking Day*), learning from elders (*A Day with Yayah*), or protecting the environment (the Caldecott Medal winner *We are Water Protectors*). And returning to Maine, *The Snail and the Whale* by Julia Donaldson features a diverse group of kids and their neighbors who help a whale and a small friend as they end their worldwide adventure.

“Since Silverton is surrounded by public lands, we try to get kids and adults out into nature. The issue of diversity is one that I hope everyone is considering. This is a marvelous way to bring it up at an early age,” said Terry Kerwin, a member of Friends of the Silverton Public library. ■



Books purchased by BCAS and donated to the Ouray Public Library.

Marine Road Open Space Update

The City of Montrose has engaged a student group to design a plan for the Marine Park Open Space/Wildlife Viewing Area. Some BCAS members met via Zoom with Christopher Endreson from the University Technical Assistance program at the University of Colorado Denver. Five students in the Architecture and Landscape Architecture programs at UCD were on the call. Jackie Bubenik from the City of Montrose expressed that the city is looking for a low-cost and low-maintenance project with a small parking lot, opportunities for birdwatching, and limited trails. BCAS reiterated its concepts of birdwatching and wildlife viewing trails with some blinds and decks for viewing and maintaining the ponds on the property. We are all looking forward to working with the students on their concepts and design.

Ouray Birding Team Shines

The Colorado Field Ornithologists (CFO) recently ran a Colorado Birding Challenge on May 8, 2021, and the winner in the automobile observation category was a team of three birders in Ouray County—Don Marsh (on the Black Canyon Audubon Society Board), Cliff Utech (a high schooler from Ouray) and Kent Nelson (long time birder). They counted 92 species in one day in Ouray County!

The CFO used a “par” system (percentage of the total number species expected in each county in May) to even out the county size and existing birds for each county. The Ouray team was very close to finding ALL possible species in Ouray for May! Congratulations! ■



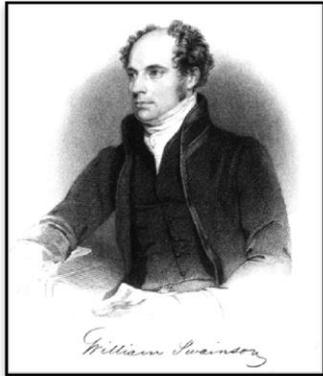
Male Lewis's Woodpecker photographed in Don Marsh's backyard © Don Marsh..

Who was that Bird Named For?

Swainson's Hawk and Swainson's Thrush

By Susan Chandler-Reed

William John Swainson (1789-1855) was a British naturalist and artist known for his brilliant illustrations, sketchy science, and poor, but prolific, writing. Though he had little formal education, he was a Fellow of the Linnean Society and of the Royal Society. Swainson conducted his first work as a naturalist at age 17, drawing and collecting specimens in the Mediterranean while working for the British Army's supply corps in Sicily. At the close of the Napoleonic Wars in



1815, he returned to England and retired from the military in poor health at age 26.

The following year, he joined a party of German and Italian naturalists to explore the interior of Brazil, where he collected vast numbers of specimens, many of which were sold to museums in Europe and England. Upon his return in 1818, he learned lithography and wrote numerous monographs. It was at this time that he became a proponent of what has been called a "false, almost mystical" system of taxonomy.

Under this "Quinarian" (or "circular") system, all plants and animals were grouped into multiples of five: a taxonomy that was thought by its adherents to have been ordained by God. This was a turning point in Swainson's life. He was ridiculed, then widowed in 1835, and his investments in Mexican mines collapsed. He married his children's



governess and emigrated to New Zealand in 1841. His belongings, including his books and illustrations, were lost at sea during the voyage. His life in New Zealand was a difficult struggle and he was lonely and disillusioned. The collections he had not sold or lost ended up decaying. Swainson's attempt to classify the trees of the area identified over 1,500 species of Eucalyptus, which was later characterized by botanists as "reckless species-making." He died at age 66. According to one biographer (Bob Brockie,

<https://www.nzgeo.com/stories/william-swainson/>), "Swainson's science may have failed him, but his wonderfully delicate, painstakingly executed illustrations show us where his true genius lay. His reputation as one of the world's most eminent nature illustrators has not diminished with the years."

In all, 17 bird species were named in Swainson's honor. Two are summer residents of western Colorado: Swainson's



Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*) and Swainson's Thrush (*Catharus ustulatus*). Swainson's Hawks like open country, perching on fence posts. When not breeding, the hawks subsist on a diet of insects. They have one of the longest migrations, traveling in flocks of thousands as they travel 12,000 miles

from their wintering grounds in Argentina to as far north as the Arctic Ocean during breeding season.

The Swainson's Thrush is more often heard than seen, as it is a denizen of the forest. Like the Hermits Thrush, it has a beautiful, melodic song. This medium-sized brown bird is identified by its large buffy eye rings, pale underparts, and a spotted chest. It winters in Mexico and Central America and breeds in the Rockies, Canada, Alaska, and the Pacific Coast.

References

"The Decline and Fall of William Swainson"
<https://www.nzgeo.com/stories/william-swainson/> (accessed May 18, 2021).

Drawing of Swainson by E. Finden (lithographer)
Taxidermy; with the biography of zoologists, and notices of their works, Public Domain,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=89619>

Swainson's hawk photograph:
<https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/swainsons-hawk#photo3>

Swainson's Thrush photograph courtesy of Alan and Elaine Wilson <https://www.naturespicsonline.com/galleries/89#33> ■

Generating Conservation Conversations

By Sallie Thoreson, Conservation Chair

Gray Wolf reintroduction

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) is responsible for coordinating wolf reintroduction in Colorado. CPW has hired Keystone Policy Center as the facilitator for public engagement and two advisory groups will be appointed around the beginning of June - the Stakeholder Advisory Group (over 150 citizens applied) and the Technical Advisory Group. CPW is responsible for the reintroduction efforts, with input from both of these groups as well as the public, the commissioners, federal partners and other stakeholders. Major issues are where to place the wolves, coexistence efforts with ranchers and livestock owners, and how to pay for the reintroduction efforts. CPW maintains wolf reintroduction news at

<https://cpw.state.co.us/learn/Pages/CON-Wolf-Management.aspx>.

Western Purple Martin

Members of the BCAS Board met with Ben Katz of the Western Slope Conservation Center regarding Mule Park Important Bird Area, as a part of the Grand Mesa-Uncompahgre-Gunnison (GMUG) Forest Plan revision. The Mule Park IBA is of extreme importance for cavity nesting birds, in particular western purple martins. BCAS will prepare a letter to the US Forest Service asking them to include clear conservation protections for Mule Park before the Draft Forest Plan is released sometime this summer.

Yellow-billed cuckoo

In April 2021 the US Fish and Wildlife Service released the Final Rule on the *Designation of Critical Habitat for the Western Distinct Population Segment of the Yellow-Billed Cuckoo*. In all, 300,000 acres in 63 units across seven Western states were designated as critical habitat for the bird during the breeding season. Two areas were designated in Colorado - 3,137 acres of a 25-mile segment of the Colorado River in Mesa County and 2,326 acres along 16 miles of the North Fork of the Gunnison River between Hotchkiss and Paonia in Delta County. The BCAS Board, with assistance from member Robin Nicholoff, submitted comments in 2020 on the draft rule.

Critical habitat designation should lead to more federal protection for the designated units. However, the NAS also notes the need for a strategy to identify additional areas leading toward “protecting, creating, restoring, and reconnecting habitat that will contribute to species recovery, adaptation, and resiliency.”

30 By 30 Initiative

30 by 30 is a national, state and local initiative to conserve at least 30 percent of our lands and waters by 2030. On May 6,

2021 the Biden administration released a report from four federal agencies laying out the framework for the “America the Beautiful” campaign. A set of six guiding principles serve as the backbone of the report:

- Pursue a collaborative and inclusive approach to conservation,
- Conserve America’s lands and waters for the benefit of all people,
- Support locally led and locally designed conservation efforts,
- Honor tribal sovereignty and support the priorities of tribal nations,
- Pursue conservation and restoration approaches that create jobs and support healthy communities,
- Honor private property rights and support the voluntary stewardship efforts of private landowners and fishers.

<https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/report-conserving-and-restoring-america-the-beautiful-2021.pdf>

More information on Colorado’s Pathways to 30X30 is available at Conservation Colorado and the Western Resources Advocates: <https://conservationco.org> or <https://westernresourceadvocates.org/lands/30x30/> 30X30 is an effort where we can all participate to protect habitat and species in our yards, communities, private lands and through our support and advocacy with public land managers.

Sage-grouse

Over 350 species of plants and animals live in the sagebrush ecosystem. Sage-grouse are iconic species as they depend heavily on sagebrush (*Artemisia* spp.) for food and cover and help shape the ecosystem. Greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) are distributed across portions of 14 states in the Western US. Our Gunnison sage-grouse (*C. minimus*) is now found exclusively in eight, small populations distributed across eight counties in Colorado and one county in Utah. More conservation and education details on the sagebrush steppe can be found through the Audubon Rockies Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative at <https://rockies.audubon.org/sagebrush>.

Gunnison Sage-grouse

In October 2020 the US Fish and Wildlife Service issued the *Final Recovery Plan for Gunnison Sage-Grouse (Centrocercus minimus)*. The document provides the recovery vision, recovery criteria, site-specific management actions, and estimates of time and cost. Recovery actions need to include population augmentation (through translocations or captive rearing), habitat protections, habitat improvements and regulatory certainty in the form of

Federal land use plans, county regulations or mitigation processes, conservation agreements, and broad stakeholder collaboration. BCAS provided comments to the draft Recovery Plan in 2019.

Greater Sage-grouse

In 2015 stakeholders worked with the federal government to complete a strong conservation plan for the Greater Sage-grouse. The provisions in that report have often been ignored, through increases in leasing and drilling allowed in sage-grouse habitat. Lawsuits brought by environmental groups, reports from the US Geological Survey and conservation groups (including the National Audubon Society -NAS) detailing a decline of 80 percent in sage-grouse numbers since 1965, and administrative changes, have finally led to some good news. The NAS recently reported that, “The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announced May 11, 2021 that it would begin an effort to restore previous plans [from 2015] to conserve Greater Sage-grouse populations.” BCAS has over the years signed on with NAS to letters of support for the 2015 plan and to point out the encroachment of energy development on sagebrush habitat.

Birds make us feel good – really they do

We all know that birdwatching makes us happy; it’s nice to know that science backs that up. A recent study of 26 European countries found that the number of bird species in the local environment is positively related to life-satisfaction across all countries studied. In fact, an increase of about 14 bird species in the environment gave a rise in life satisfaction equal to an increase of income of 10%. Another good reason to get out there birding, and to work to protect and advocate for birds.

Methhorst, J., Rehdanz, K., Mueller, T., et al. 2014. The importance of species diversity for human well-being in Europe. *Ecological Economics* 181.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2020.106917> ■

Do’s and Don’ts for Posting Bird Photos on Social Media

One of the best parts about bird photography is sharing your snaps with others—and social media allows you to do this with ease. Gabrielle Saleh, former Walker Social Media Fellow, compiles some tips from her experience at Audubon, including “telling a story with your captions.” Read more about her do’s and don’ts at <https://www.audubon.org/magazine/spring-2021/follow-these-dos-and-donts-show-your-bird-photos> ■

Ten Bluebird Boxes Replaced at Billy Creek SWMA

BCAS member Jon Horn recently built ten new bluebird nesting boxes for a portion of the Ouray County Bluebird Trail located within the Billy Creek State Wildlife Management Area (see article in the Spring 2021 issue of *Canyon Wreanderings*). BCAS members Carrie and Bruce Krickbaum replaced or repaired 15 of the 24 boxes.

There are three groups of volunteers monitoring the bluebird trail, including members of BCAS and the Northern San Juan Broadband chapter of Great Old Broads for Wilderness. An additional 32 boxes are monitored by BCAS members at Ridgway State Park. ■



Bruce Krickbaum replacing birdboxes in Billy Creek SWMA © Carrie Krickbaum.

Audubon Book Club

Sheryl Radovich would like to start an Audubon Book Club. Topics such as birds, migration, nature, and climate change. Are you interested? Contact Sheryl at canyon.creek@bresnan.net to hear about plans for an initial meeting

Black Canyon Audubon Society
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www.blackcanyonaudubon.org

Due to the evolving COVID-19 restrictions, all in-person programs and meetings are on hold. Watch your email and visit the website often to see when monthly programs start up again.

Want to see the color photographs in this publication?

Help reduce the use of paper and lower BCAS expenses by receiving this publication in color via email. Send your request for electronic delivery in PDF format to blackcanyonaudubon@gmail.com.

Please remember to renew your membership

Local memberships expire December 31. Please pay online or by check and extend your membership through December 2021. Dues paid to the Black Canyon Audubon Chapter stay in the chapter and help fund activities, public outreach, and more!



Black Canyon Audubon Society (NAS Chapter D14) Chapter Membership Form

Local Audubon chapter members may participate in all chapter activities, receive the chapter newsletter *Canyon Wrenderings*, and vote on chapter issues. Annual membership dues are \$20 for individual and \$30 for family membership. These annual dues remain local.

(Check one) Renewal New Member

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone (Optional): _____

Email (Required): _____

Enclosed

_____ \$20 for individual membership

_____ \$30 for family membership

Renew online or mail your renewal to: Black Canyon Audubon Society
PO Box 387, Delta, CO 81416.