



## Keeping Common Birds Common: Safeguarding Our Wetlands

Last year, Audubon released “Common Birds in Decline: A State of the Birds Report,” detailing alarming changes in bird populations in recent years. This excerpt from the EPA’s booklet, *America’s Wetlands: Our Vital Link between Land and Water*, is the last article in a 5-part series on how we, as birders, can be involved in reversing this trend.

“Wetlands” is the collective term for marshes, swamps, bogs, and similar areas found in generally flat vegetated areas, in depressions in the landscape, and between dry land and water along the edges of streams, rivers, lakes, and coastlines. Many of these wetlands are seasonal, and, particularly in the arid and semiarid West, may be wet only periodically.

Many migratory birds including ducks, herons, sandpipers, and eagles “visit” wetlands in the fall and/or spring to feed while en route to their summer and winter destinations. A large number of birds nest and winter in wetlands as well, but the greatest bird populations are recorded during migration.

The thick vegetation found in wetlands provides a safe haven and plentiful food supply for the young of many fish, crabs, and other small creatures who begin life in wetlands, remain safely until they are not so vulnerable, and move to open waters when the time comes.

Wetlands are virtual havens for the endangered species of the United States; about 35% of all plants and animals listed as threatened or endangered in the United States either live in wetlands or depend on them in some way.

Wetlands’ microbes, plants, and wildlife are part of global cycles for water, nitrogen, and sulfur. Furthermore, scientists are beginning to realize that atmospheric maintenance may be an additional wetlands function. Wetlands store carbon within their plant communities and soil instead of releasing it to the atmosphere as carbon dioxide. Thus wetlands help to moderate global climate conditions.

More than half of America’s original wetlands have been destroyed—drained and converted to farmland, filled for housing developments and industrial facilities, or used to dispose of household and industrial waste. Today, less than half of our original wetlands remain, and recent trend estimates show that wetlands are still being degraded and lost. Recent estimates on non-federal land indicate that the rate of loss is between 70,000 and 90,000 acres annually.

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### PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

New board members bring new ideas, insights and opinions. It’s always good to get new people involved in Aiken Audubon. Therefore, I’d like to welcome the new board members that we will be electing at the May 20 meeting. Thank-you for volunteering your time to help make Aiken Audubon an even better organization.

The other item I want to bring to your attention is our special June event. Nationally recognized, award winning author/photographer Paul Bannick will give a presentation on Friday, June 26. We usually

don’t meet in June, we don’t meet on Friday’s, we don’t use the Bear Creek Nature Center’s Bear Den and we usually have a social time. Please mark your calendar, and remember we are meeting at the Bear Creek Nature Center at 7:00 pm on Friday, June 26. Hope to see you there.

Keep on birding,

*Risë*

• RISE FOSTER-BRUDER  
PRESIDENT, AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

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### COMING PROGRAMS

**May 20**  
“Inside a Bluebird Journal”  
presented by Mary Taylor Young

**June 26**  
Special Event: Photographer  
and author Paul Bannick

**Summer**  
No programs during July and  
August—see you in September!

## Newsletter Articles

Items and announcements of special interest to Aiken Audubon members are welcomed for consideration. We’d love to hear from you!

Deadline for the September/October 2009 issue of Aikorns is Wednesday, August 19.

Contact the editor, Leslie Holzmann,  
at: AikenAudubon@Gmail.com, or  
719.495.8889

## UPCOMING AIKEN PROGRAM

# May 20 • Mary Taylor Young Inside a Bluebird Journal

Award-winning Colorado nature writer Mary Taylor Young will give you a glimpse inside her “Bluebird Journal” as she tells the story of her family’s bluebird trail of nest boxes they maintain on their property in southern Colorado. Through attacks by bears, invasions by mice, flooding rains and severe drought, the Young family’s bluebird trail has fledged hundreds of young birds of several species. Come peek inside the nest boxes, and inside the story of how one family helped their avian neighbors.

Mary is author of nine books, including *The Guide to Colorado Birds*, *Land of Grass and Sky: A Naturalist’s Prairie Journey* and *On the Trail of Colorado Critters: Wildlife Watching For Kids*. Many Coloradans know Mary from her “Words on Birds” column, which has appeared monthly in the *Rocky Mountain News* since 1993. Mary has written extensively for the Colorado Division of Wildlife, Colorado State Parks, US Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies and groups.



For more information: [www.MaryTaylorYoung.com](http://www.MaryTaylorYoung.com)

**Aiken Audubon programs are free and open to the public. They are held at the Colorado State Division of Wildlife building located at 4255 Sinton Road. Coffee and socializing is at 6:30 pm and programs begin at 7 pm. Please use the back entrance. Note: Sinton Road runs parallel to I-25 on the east side, between Garden of the Gods Road and Fillmore Street.**

## SPECIAL EVENT

# Saturday, June 26 • Paul Bannick The Owl and The Woodpecker

Encounters with North America’s Most Iconic Birds

Award-winning photographer Paul Bannick will take you on a visual journey of 11 key North American habitats through the needs of specific owl and woodpecker species. This stunning photographic study will be accompanied by field stories, and rich natural history derived from thousands of hours in the field. His talk will look at the way owls and woodpeckers define and enrich their habitat and how their life-histories are intertwined.

Paul’s work has appeared in *Audubon* magazine, *Sunset* magazine, *Pacific Northwest* magazine, the *National Wildlife Federation Guide to North American Birds*, *Smithsonian Guide to North American Birds* and in many other books, magazines, parks, refuges and other places in North America and Europe.

Paul works full-time as a director for Conservation Northwest, a conservation organization dedicated to protecting and connecting wild areas from the Pacific Coast to the Canadian Rockies.



See sample images and pages from his book, and early reviews, at [www.paulbannick.com](http://www.paulbannick.com)

**This special program will be held from 7 – 8:30 pm at Bear Creek Nature Center. Note: The Nature Center is located in Bear Creek Regional Park near 26th Street and Lower Gold Camp Road: 245 Bear Creek Road, Colorado Springs. Phone: 719.520.6387. From the intersection of I-25 and Highway 24, go west on Highway 24 to 26th Street, then south on 26th Street to Bear Creek Road.**

## AIKEN AUDUBON BOARD MEMBERS

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## AIKEN AUDUBON FIELD TRIPS

Everyone is welcome on Aiken field trips, regardless of experience level or membership in Audubon. Contact trip leader for details and to let them know you are coming. Don't forget to pack your binoculars, scope (if you have one), field guide, water, snack or lunch, hat, rain gear, sun screen, bug spray, camera(?), and some gas money for the drivers.

Saturday, May 2, 8 am — 4 pm

### Chico Basin Ranch

Aiken joins Arkansas Valley Audubon for this trip to one of the best migrant traps in our area. We can expect to see warblers, vireos, shorebirds, thrushes, flycatchers and sparrows, plus there are always surprises here. The day will begin at the bird banding station, then move on to the other great spots on the Ranch.

Fee: \$15.00 each to bird on the ranch. Information on annual passes: [www.chicobasinranch.com](http://www.chicobasinranch.com). Contact AVAS trip leader Donna Emmons at 719.369.9704 or [emmons7@yahoo.com](mailto:emmons7@yahoo.com). John Drummond's carpool will leave from the Woodmen Park & Ride at 7 am. Contact him: [jxdrummo@aol.com](mailto:jxdrummo@aol.com)

Saturday, May 9, 7:30 – noon

### Manitou Lake

Come enjoy the birds and the scenery at this beautiful mountain lake. Meet at the Red Rocks Safeway parking lot (on W. Colorado Ave. at 32nd St.) to carpool.

The state park charges a \$5 entrance fee per vehicle. Contact trip leader Allan Burns 719.632.2081

Saturday, June 6, 7 – 10 am

### Kettle Creek Lakes

Join us on this short and flat walk around the Kettle Creek "Lakes." Located directly adjacent to the Air Force Academy property, three ponds attract an assortment of seasonal birds. Head for the south gate of the academy, but turn right at the information center before you cross over onto air force property. We'll meet where the road dead-ends in a parking lot.

Contact trip leader Rise Foster-Bruder at 719.282.7877

Tuesday, June 30, 7 am – 3(ish) pm

### Emerald Valley

Join retired El Paso County naturalist Ken Pals in exploring the biological diversity of this alpine meadow off Stage Coach Road. Slipper orchids and other native plants will be top priority, followed by butterflies, and then birds such as Band-tailed Pigeon, flycatchers, vireos and hummingbirds. Consider bringing a camera.

We'll rendezvous at Cheyenne Mountain High School east parking lot and carpool to Emerald Valley. Be prepared to drive or offer to drive. High clearance vehicles are recommended. Passengers should contribute \$5 to drivers for gas. Bring the usual things (including the ability to ford small streams). Reservations are required. Group size is limited to 15 people as parking is limited at the site.

Contact Ken Pals to reserve a spot: 719. 520.6745, [mtnpals@q.com](mailto:mtnpals@q.com)

For the latest information on field trips and events:  
[www.AikenAudubon.com](http://www.AikenAudubon.com)

## ARKANSAS VALLEY AUDUBON FIELD TRIPS

The Arkansas Valley Audubon Society welcomes you on their field trips. Check their website, [www.socobirds.org](http://www.socobirds.org) for more information. Be sure to contact trip leaders to let them know you would like to join them.

## UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

Saturday, May 9, 7 – 11am

### Fountain Creek Spring Bird Count

Beginning-to-advanced birders are invited to observe and record the numbers of bird species and populations found in Fountain Creek Regional Park during the height of the spring migration.

Reservations required, \$5 donation "for the birds." Contact the Fountain Creek Nature Center at 719.520.6745

Saturday, May 9

### Chico Days: "For the Birds"

Bring the whole family for a day on the ranch. Events include a Tour-de-Prairie bike ride, a bird walk led by Bill Maynard, a bird banding station, nature hikes, kid's programs, a spider workshop, a horsemanship demonstration, wagon rides, and more. Stay for lunch, and enjoy a ranch-raised grass-fed beef hamburger.

For information on fees, directions to the ranch, and more, visit [www.chicobasinranch.com](http://www.chicobasinranch.com) or call 719.683.7960.

Saturday, May 16, 7 – 11am

### Bear Creek Spring Bird Count

Bird enthusiasts of all ages and abilities are invited to participate in a citizen science project counting species and populations in Bear Creek Park.

Reservations required, \$5 donation "for the birds." Contact the Bear Creek Nature Center at 719.520.6387.

Saturday, May 16, 8 am – 1 pm

### Prairie Days with Palmer Land Trust at Chico Basin Ranch

Join Palmer Land Trust and the folks at Chico Basin Ranch for a fun-filled day of bird-banding, hayrides, bird-watching, nature hikes, and branding. Due to its intact prairie landscapes, ponds, marshes and streams, the State has preserved Chico Basin Ranch as the largest parcel in its Conservation Reserve Trust. An impressive 300+ bird species have been spotted on the property, many of which are migratory songbirds.

\$10/adult; \$5/child/Volunteer Land Stewards admitted FREE. Reservations required by May 9—space is limited! Email [info@palmerlandtrust.org](mailto:info@palmerlandtrust.org) or visit [www.palmerlandtrust.org](http://www.palmerlandtrust.org) for registration information.

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# GBBC Highlights Dynamic Changes in Where the Birds Are

NEW YORK, NY & ITHACA, NY—The 12th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) featured two invasions this year: voracious Pine Siskins, and a whole new crop of citizen-science participants! Bird watchers shattered last year's record by submitting more than 93,600 checklists during the four-day event, held February 16-19. Participants also identified 619 species and sent in thousands of stunning bird images for the GBBC photo contest.

“Each year the GBBC provides the most detailed real-time snapshot of bird distribution across North America,” said Rob Fergus, Senior

Scientist with the National Audubon Society. “We can see how birds are responding to changing weather patterns, available food sources, and other factors from around the continent.”

One of the big stories coming from the GBBC this year was the massive invasion of Pine Siskins and White-Winged Crossbills over much of the eastern United States. These feisty little birds moved southward because of seed crop failures in their usual wintering grounds in Canada and the boreal forests. [Canada Goose was the most abundant species reported in Colorado, followed by

Pine Siskins, Starlings, House Finches, and Red-winged Blackbirds.—Ed.]

The GBBC continues to show declines in some common birds, especially grassland and shrubland species. Loggerhead Shrike numbers are down, and although numbers of Northern Bobwhites and Eastern Meadowlarks were both up slightly from last year, they are still being reported in fewer numbers than they were in 2004. These trends are only preliminary views of what may be going on with these populations, and they must continue to be monitored to get a true long-term view of how these birds are faring.

## • CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY

For a more detailed summary of this year's results, visit [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org). Explore 2009 data, compare with other years, and find the exact counts for each species in a particular state, province, or town.

## EARTH STEWARDSHIP: WETLANDS (CONT'D)

The federal government protects wetlands through regulations (like Section 404 of the Clean Water Act), economic incentives and disincentives (for example, tax deductions for selling or donating wetlands to a qualified organization and the “Swampbuster” provisions of the Food Security Act), cooperative programs, and acquisition (for example, establishing national wildlife refuges). You can find out more about these mechanisms by calling the Wetlands Hotline (1.800.832.7828).

Beyond the federal level, a number of states have enacted laws to regulate activities in wetlands, and some counties and towns have adopted local wetlands protection ordinances or have changed the way development is permitted.

### What You Can Do

Despite the efforts of governments and private conservation organizations, pressures that destroy wetlands will continue. The problems of degradation of wetlands from pollution, urban encroachment, groundwater withdrawals, partial drainage, and other actions also require attention. Many opportunities exist for private citizens, corporations, government agencies, and other groups to work together to slow the rate of wetland loss and to improve the quality of our remaining wetlands.

First, state and local governments need to be encouraged to establish programs to effectively protect wetlands, especially inland wetlands, within their borders. Second, because individual landowners and corporations own many of the nation's wetlands, they are in a key position to determine the fate of wetlands on their properties. Finally, all citizens, whether or not they own wetlands, can help protect wetlands by supporting wetlands conservation initiatives.



PHOTO © LESLIE HOLZMANN

### How Can I Make a Difference?

- Get involved — find out where wetlands exist near your home, try to learn more about them, and support educational efforts.
- Support wetlands and watershed protection initiatives by public agencies and private organizations.
- Purchase federal duck stamps from your local post office to support wetland acquisition.
- Participate in the Clean Water Act Section 404 program and state regulatory programs by reviewing public notices and, in appropriate cases, commenting on permit applications.
- Encourage neighbors, developers, and state and local governments to protect the function and value of wetlands in your watershed.
- Rather than draining or filling wetlands, seek compatible uses involving minimal wetland alteration, such as waterfowl production, fur harvest, hay and forage, wild rice production, hunting and trapping leases, and selective timber harvest.
- Select upland rather than wetlands sites for development projects and avoid wetland alteration or degradation during project construction.
- Maintain wetlands and adjacent buffer strips as open space.
- Learn more about wetland restoration activities in your area; seek and support opportunities to restore degraded wetlands.

See the entire booklet at <http://www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/vital/wetlands.pdf>

**EVENTS OF INTEREST (CONT'D)**

**May 14 – 17, 2009, in Cortez, CO  
Ute Mountain – Mesa  
Verde Birding Festival**

Spring migrants and early nesters attract birdwatchers from across the nation to the Ute Mountain-Mesa Verde Birding Festival. Located in the Archaeological Center of America, many of the birding field trips visit spectacular archaeological areas such as Mesa Verde National Park and the Ute Tribal Park. Enjoy this year's keynote speaker, Bill Schmoker, plus a great variety of birding opportunities: Competitive Birding, Ute Tribal Park, Mesa Verde National Park, lake birds, Swifts and Swallows, Wildhorse tour, Bike and Bird and lots more.

For more information, visit their website at [www.utemountainmesaverdebirdingfestival.com](http://www.utemountainmesaverdebirdingfestival.com)

**Friday – Sunday, June 12 – 14  
Digital Bird Photography Workshop**

Photographer Debbie Barnes invites you to join her for a fun and educational weekend improving your bird photography skills.



White-breasted Nuthatch

Do you like to take pictures of birds while out birding? Do you want to improve your techniques? Then this workshop is for you.

**Schedule:**

**Friday**, June 12, 6:30 – 8:30pm: Discuss tips and tricks.

**Saturday**, 6am – 2pm: Head into the field to put into practice what you have just learned.

**Sunday** afternoon, 1 – 3pm: Discuss post processing your photos.

**Required:**

Digital camera with a minimum of 300mm lens (but we will work with whatever you have). Don't forget to bring your sense of adventure and fun!

**Cost/Registration:**

\$30, with part of the proceeds going to Aiken Audubon. Space is limited to 12 people. Contact Debbie at [kfoopoo@yahoo.com](mailto:kfoopoo@yahoo.com), or call her at 719.

**Location:**

Friday and Sunday's meeting are to be held at NorthCreek Office Complex, Building II, 5755 Mark Dabling Blvd. / Suite 350, Colorado Springs. Call Debbie for directions. Saturday's location is still to be determined.

Contact Debbie Barnes at 303.947.0566 or [kfoopoo@yahoo.com](mailto:kfoopoo@yahoo.com)  
Also, check out Debbie's blog at <http://djbphotoadventures.blogspot.com>

*aikorns*

**Aiken Audubon Society  
Membership/Subscription**

**Sign Up For:**

- One Year \$10.00
- Two Years \$18.00
- Donation
- New Total \_\_\_\_\_
- Renewal

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail Check To:**

Aiken Audubon Society  
6660 Delmonico Dr. D-195,  
Colorado Springs, CO 80919

**JUST FOR FUN**



**The Cat-bird. The Cat-nip.**

The Cat-bird's call resembles that,  
Emitted by the Pussy Cat,  
While Cat-nip, growing by the wall,  
Is never known to caterwaul:  
Its odor though attracts the Kits,  
And throws them in Catnipion fits.



An ostrich's eye is bigger than its brain.

From "How to Tell the Birds from the Flowers: A Manual of Flornithology for Beginners," by Robert Williams Wood, ©1907.



## Aiken Audubon Society

6660 Delmonico Dr. D-195  
Colorado Springs, CO 80919

CHECK YOUR MAILING  
LABEL TO SEE IF YOUR  
SUBSCRIPTION IS EXPIRING!

President Risë Foster-Bruder  
719.282.7877

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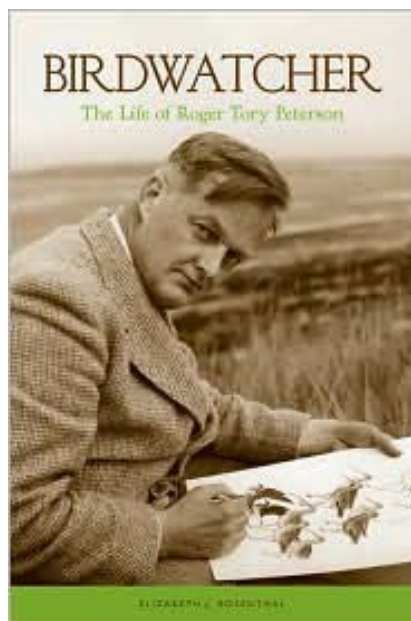
YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BE A MEMBER TO PARTICIPATE IN AIKEN'S ACTIVITIES

### BOOK REVIEW

## Birdwatcher: The Life of Roger Tory Peterson, by Elizabeth Rosenthal

Have you ever wondered, who was the man behind the famous field guide? Rosenthal's exhaustive research is evident as the reader learns every detail of Peterson's life, from his birth in 1908 to his death in 1996. Citing numerous references, and including twenty photographs, the author provides an intimate account of this boy, born to working-class parents in 1908, in Jamestown, New York., who grew to have world-wide influence as an ornithologist and conservationist.

Drawing inspiration from Ernest Thompson Seton's book, *Two Little Savages*, and urged on by a prominent nature columnist and birder named William Vogt, Peterson published his now-famous field guide at the tender age of 25. The first printing sold out the day it was released, and almost overnight, the doors of opportunity swung wide.



For more information, go to  
[www.petersonbird.com](http://www.petersonbird.com)

Audubon members will be particularly interested in the substantial role Peterson played in the organization. Even after he left his salaried position with the society, he remained an Audubon insider, serving on the board of directors, and contributing regularly to the society magazine.

My favorite parts of the book described Peterson's adventures as he traveled around the world in search of birds. For example, at one point he almost died as heavy seas swamped the small rowboat carrying him back from viewing seabirds on an island off the coast of Argentina. You are left with the impression of a man whose concern for birds far outweighed his concern for his own well-being.

Reading this book left me wishing that I could have personally known this fascinating and influential birder.

• REVIEWED BY LESLIE HOLZMANN

Have you read a bird-related book that you would like share with us? Write a short review and send it to the Aikorns editor at [AikenAudugon@gmail.com](mailto:AikenAudugon@gmail.com).