



Susan H. Craig on

Loggerhead Shrikes

The High Plains east of Colorado Springs (6500 – 7500ft.) represents a harsh, unforgiving habitat where extremes of weather visit their wrath on the landscape. Loggerhead shrikes, a declining species in other parts of the US, nest in significant numbers in eastern El Paso County, where I have conducted banding studies for nearly 20 years. The harsh dry habitat of the high plains helps to create a perfect habitat for shrikes. Grasshoppers, a primary prey item, thrive in drier grasslands. Since shrikes get all the fluid they need from their prey, they don't miss the rain at all.

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA COMMONS



On the eastern plains, Colorado birders may encounter loggerhead shrikes in any month of the year. However, greatest numbers appear from mid-March, at the beginning of spring migration, through mid-October, when northern breeders are moving south. While a few shrikes may spend the winter in southeastern Colorado, most of Colorado's breeding shrikes migrate south after breeding to spend the winter in Oklahoma, New Mexico and Texas. Those hardier birds that dare to winter in Colorado are the first to be found in eastern El Paso County in late February and March. Longer-distance migrant shrikes from farther south also begin to pass through at this time, bound for unknown points farther north.

Shrikes are well known for their early nesting practices. Sometimes a deceptively warm March will inspire egg-laying, but their clutches are frequently lost to adverse weather. Since shrikes are dedicated breeders, they will re-nest several times in order to produce a brood.

April brings more locally breeding shrikes from further south, as birds reclaim nesting territories used in previous years. Once the nest is completed, most high plains shrikes produce eggs during the first 2 weeks of May. Shrikes commonly lay 4-7 eggs, with the record being 9. Incubation for an

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings and welcome to another issue of the Aiken Audubon's newsletter, Aikorns. The Aiken board members have worked hard arranging informative and interesting programs for our upcoming meetings. Please mark your calendar and plan to attend the special screening of "Ghost Bird," a movie about the "re-discovery" of the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker, on Friday evening, September 24 at the Bear Creek Nature Center. Please note reservations are required and there is a requested \$5.00 donation. Contact information can be found on page 3 and on our website at www.AikenAudubon.com. It should be a fun evening and hopefully we will have an interesting discussion following the presentation.

On the business side of things, Aiken Audubon has a new treasurer, Arlene Sampson. I would

like to say "thank-you" to our outgoing treasurer, Gail Biedronski, for her many years of dedicated service.

We are still in need of a Conservation chair, and recently our Field Trip coordinator decided to step down. Cyndy is currently organizing our fall field trips and if you are able to lead one, please let her know. Her contact information can be found inside the newsletter. We are always open to new field trip locations so if you have a spot in mind—let us know.

I look forward to seeing everyone at a general meeting or field trip,

• RISÉ FOSTER-BRUDER
PRESIDENT, AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

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COMING PROGRAMS

September 15

"Small Mountain Owls"
presented by Scott Rashid

October 20

"Flycatchers De-mystified"
presented by Bill Maynard

November 17

"Vulture Conservation
in South Africa"
presented by Jenyva Turner

December 18

No December program. See you
at the Christmas Bird Count!

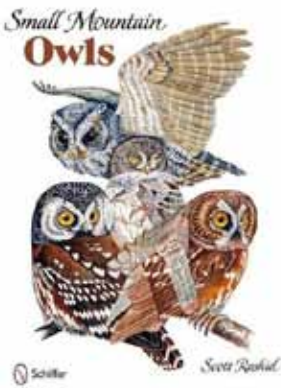
Newsletter Articles

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

Deadline for the Nov./Dec. 2010 issue of Aikorns is Wednesday, October 20.

Contact the editor, Leslie Holzmann,
at: AikenAudubon@Gmail.com, or call
719.964.3197

September 15 • Scott Rashid Small Mountain Owls



When we picture an owl we often conjure up an image of a large majestic bird like the Great Horned Owl. Did you know that the Rocky Mountains are home to owls so small they could easily use a pencil as a perch? Four species of small owls are found in Colorado's mountains: the Flammulated Owl, Northern Pygmy-Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, and Boreal Owl. Spend the evening with Scott Rashid, author of *Small Mountain Owls*, and learn about the lives of these tiny predators that are at home in our local forests.

Small Mountain Owls is a fascinating and beautiful guide providing detailed information and over 160 striking photos and drawings about the lives and ranges of these tiny predators. The book ends with a useful glossary of scientific names and a detailed bibliography. This book will be a treasured reference for anyone interested in the avian

world. Autographed copies will be available for anyone who wishes to purchase one.

Scott Rashid has been passionate about owls ever since the early 1980s and has been involved in wild bird banding and rehabilitation for many years. After moving to Colorado in 1989, he began banding, researching, and photographing several avian species.

October 20 • Bill Maynard Flycatchers Demystified

Bill Maynard will entertain and educate us with his program, "Flycatchers Demystified." Even experienced birders will benefit from his helpful hints on identifying all of Colorado's flycatchers by both sight and sound.

Bill moved to Colorado in the '80s and founded a wildlife art gallery with his sister-in-law, Virginia. A real bird job, an avian analyst variability research project with Dr. Jared Verner, led him to California with its endemic birds; to Mt. Graham, Arizona, surveying for the endangered Mt. Graham red squirrel, and more birds; on to New Mexico, coordinating the statewide search for the endangered Southwest Willow Flycatcher for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish; back to Colorado, as a biologist on a large military reservation, and then on to the American Birding Association, as Field Programs Manager. Bill is currently editor of "Winging It," the Association's publication.



PHOTO: LESLIE HOLZMANN

Bill's main interests involve learning more about bird taxonomy and vocalizations, the finer points of bird identification, digiscoping, and travel anywhere; but especially to The Bird Continent. Knowing next to nothing about seabirds, Bill hopes to one day go on multi-day pelagics, following ocean wanderers across an unexplored frontier.

Bill is a Colorado Field Ornithologists' Bird Records Committee member, plus he can perform a mean rendition of a Lesser Prairie-Chicken's lek display; thankfully, failing miserably at the female's vocal "bubbling, hooting wamp, wodum, wodum" and other wild clucking, with exaggerated jumps and strutting of the male.

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.

AIKEN AUDUBON BOARD MEMBERS

President

Risë Foster-Bruder
719.282.7877

Vice President

Frank Dodge
719.548.9863

Secretary

Christine Bucher
719.596.2916
baccab@aol.com

Treasurer

Arlene Sampson
719.574.6134

Program Chair

Debra Barnes
303.947.0566
kfoopooh@yahoo.com

Conservation Chair

(Position open)

Publicity Chair

Christine Bucher
719.596.2916
baccab@aol.com

Education Chair

Michael E. Whedon
719.243.2083
MEWhedon@gmail.com

(Acting) Field Trips

Cyndy Kulp
KulpC@aol.com

Aikorns Editor/

Webmaster

Leslie Holzmann
719.495.8889
AikenAudubon@gmail.com

Hospitality

Arlene Sampson
719.574.6134

Christmas Count

Ben & Sally Sorensen
719.635.1716



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.

Note: In cases of extreme weather, trips may be cancelled. If this might be a possibility, please contact the trip leader an hour before the scheduled meeting time.

To receive e-mailed reminders of upcoming field trips, send your name and e-mail address to AikenAudubon@gmail.com.

Sunday, September 19, 8 am – 2 pm

Chico Basin Ranch

Birding guide extraordinaire John Drummond will be leading this trip to the ever-productive Chico Basin Ranch. Trip limited to 16 birders.

Meet at 7 am at the Woodmen Road Park and Ride Lot to carpool, or at 8 am at the Chico Basin Banding Station. Driving directions can be found at www.chicobasinranch.com.

Cost is \$10 per person, and a liability waiver must be signed for each participant.

For more information, and to sign up, contact John at jxdrummo@aol.com

For the latest information on
field trips and events:
www.AikenAudubon.com

UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

Saturday, September 11, 1 – 3:30 pm

Naturalist Docent Volunteer Orientation

Naturalist docents play a key role in providing visitor services at Bear Creek and Fountain Creek Nature Centers. Come to this orientation to learn more about being a visitor information receptionist and see if the nature centers are the right fit for your volunteer time. Volunteers must be 18 or older and complete an application.

Reservations required. Call Paula at 719.520.6387 for more information and an application, and to reserve a spot.

Saturday, September 11, 7:30 – 11 am

Fountain Creek Fall 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 fall migration.

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



Friday, September 24, 7 – 8:30 pm

Ghost Bird Movie

"Ghost Bird" tells the timely story of the Ivory-billed woodpecker's miraculous rediscovery in 2005. The bird's resurrection was heralded around the world as proof that conservation efforts on behalf of threatened species were making the critical difference between life and death. While the fate of Ivory-bills remains uncertain, there is no question the vital role local conservation efforts play in reversing the planet's extinction crisis. Discussion will follow the screening.

Sponsored by the Aiken Audubon Society and Friends of El Paso County Nature Centers. Held at Bear Creek Nature Center, 245 Bear Creek Road, near 26th Street and Lower Gold Camp Road.

Reservations required, \$5 minimum donation per person is requested. Contact the Bear Creek Nature Center at 719.520.6387.

Saturday, September 25, 9 am – 4 pm

Family Stewardship Day

Both Bear Creek and Fountain Creek Nature Centers invite families of all sizes and ages to work for an hour, or all day during the National "No Child Left Inside Day." Join us as we give back to the parks by planting trees, cleaning the creek, removing invasive weeds, working in the native water-wise gardens, and renovating trails. Tools, a light lunch, and a wrap-up barbecue dinner will be provided.

This event is co-sponsored by REI.

Reservations required, 520-6745 (Bear Creek) or 520-6387 (Fountain Creek). This event is free.

November 11-14, 2010

Audubon Round-Up 2010

Join other Auduboners for an unusual learning experience in the high Sonoran Desert along the beautiful Salt River. The purpose of this event is to present learning opportunities to benefit your chapter's projects and your chapter's sustainability, networking, "down time" for fun and relaxed friend-making and excellent Sonoran Desert birding.

More information: www.sonoranaudubon.org

September 25 is
"No Child Left Indoors Day"

A letter from Audubon's new President/CEO, David Yarnold

Boots on the Ground

“Look, up there, on that peak,” our guide said. And through a borrowed spotting scope, I saw the pair of Gyrfalcons. Erect, watchful, the personification of “raptor.” We’d just come from the Latrabjarg Bird Cliffs on the western-most point of Iceland—and Europe. The cliffs, as many of you know, are home to hundreds of thousands of Atlantic Puffins, Razorbills and Murres. I’d never seen an avian blanket on such a massive piece of landscape.

That’s my highlight reel—the best I can offer as a novice birder. I have a lot to learn about birds and I’d like to ask your help: Set me on a birding path worthy of Audubon. After an initial week in New York in September, I want to go birding with you. I’m going to spend most of that month—my first real month on the job, learning in the field. I can’t think of a better way to tap into your passion and get to know your issues and your thinking.

While I’m a budding birder, I’ve run an environmental NGO for almost 5½ years and I’m a life-long outdoorsman. I know that, like the people at EDF, Audubon’s staff and its volunteers are there to help the planet thrive.

As I’ve talked to friends about Audubon in recent weeks, I’ve told them this: “In journalism, we learned to ‘follow the money.’ In conservation, it’s ‘follow the birds.’ I’m thrilled to represent an organization that believes that by focusing on birds and IBAs, we get a clear view of the health of nature’s ecosystems—the systems that benefit humankind and birds alike.



I’ve learned a couple of things in the process of becoming your new President and CEO. First, I’ve come to

understand that Audubon doesn’t belong to the New York home office. And while the state offices do tremendous work, they represent something larger. The chapters and their volunteer leaders do Audubon’s grassroots work. But the fact is—and I will keep this thought at the center of my work as your new President—we are all Audubon.

Here’s the other thing I’ve learned. While I’ve always associated birds with special moments (I’ll tell you about the Blue Herons at Merwin Lake—in search of the legendary

D.B. Cooper sometime), I’m just beginning to see and appreciate them. I was going on last week with a friend about “heroic migratory songbirds that shed ¾ of their body mass during their migration,” and he said, “wow, they really do have you, don’t they?” From the canopied running trail where I put in five miles each morning to a peak overlooking Hong Kong to the Brown Pelicans in Louisiana’s Barataria Bay, birds have moved to the front of my awareness in the past three months—and are no longer part of nature’s background imagery. I’m guessing that’s an early stage of a birder’s evolution, so rather than being shy about admitting it, I’m proud to be on the road to discovery.

I’ve always enjoyed nature. I put myself through college working at a backpacking store. I’ve hiked most of the John Muir trail, backpacked in the Cascades and up Mt. Whitney and kayaked from Alaska to Quebec to the Colorado River—and on the Hudson River I see from my home.

But something’s different now—it’s all about the birds.

You’ll be hearing more about how we’ll organize the logistics of my boots-on-the-ground month in the field. I’d appreciate your help and I’m looking forward to getting to know you.

CITIZEN SCIENCE

Are You Part of a Birding Couple?

Aiken Audubon recently received an email from a PhD. student in Australia. She has requested help with her research. You can make an important contribution by filling out her online survey. Here is a summary of her letter:

For the last eighteen months I have been researching the characteristics of American couples that travel internationally to watch birds. My desire to carry out this research was driven by my 27 years experience as a guide in the Top End of Australia. Few local tour operators had the skills or interest to be able to fulfill the desires of serious birders, while international bird tours appeared to be the domain of serious birders. Yet couples I met often had different interests, and wanted an experience that would suit them both. One, for example, might be a lister, while his/her spouse might wish to photograph birds, or even just enjoy being in a natural setting.

Serious birders, according to the research, are mainly men, while women are reportedly mostly casual and novice birders (although there is evidence that women are becoming more serious). Given these gender-based differences it seemed likely that couples would demonstrate different levels of participation and commitment to birding, one spouse or partner being more dedicated to the activity than the other. I wanted to find out whether this was a common feature of birding couples, but soon discovered there was no research.

My research, so far, has found that couples do often differ. It also appears that birders of both genders prefer to watch birds and

travel internationally with their spouse or partner even when their level of dedication to birding, their skills, or even interests, differ.

To carry out in-depth analysis, I need more respondents. I am not trying to change the world, but with this research I hope to be able to influence some in avitourism to cater better to a group of travelers that have been largely ignored.

Would your members be able to help by filling out my questionnaire? The URL is www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=h3NCqTwur3H_2bPlbFtk_2bSpw_3d_3d. I would particularly love to hear from couples who have travelled to other countries.

Yours sincerely,
Denise Lawungkurr Goodfellow

There is a link to the survey on the homepage of the Aiken website: www.AikenAudubon.com

Do you blog about birds?

A number of Aiken birders have mentioned that they have personal blogs relating to birds and birding. Well, we'd like to know about them! If you'd like to share your blog with Aikorns readers, please send an email containing your blog's web address and a brief blurb description to AikenAudubon@gmail.com. A list will be maintained on the Aiken website, and new additions will be published periodically in the Aikorns.

Here are a few to get us started:

BrdPics

<http://brdpics.blogspot.com>

This is Bill Schmoker's Nature & Birding Blog. While Bill isn't an official member of Aiken Audubon, he is kind enough to be a regular speaker here. If you enjoy his programs (and who doesn't?), be sure to visit his birding and photography blog.

DJB Photo Adventures

<http://djbsphotoadventures.blogspot.com/>

Be sure to enjoy the photos Debbie Barnes posts on her bird photography blog. She writes, "I am a amateur photographer, birder and learning to band birds. These are some of my adventures!"

Melissa Walker's Nature Blog

<http://naturenarratives.com>.

Melissa posts several articles per month of nature writing from her own "archives" plus new experiences. Discover or review the flora, fauna, geology and ecology of the Pikes Peak Region and Colorado in only a few paragraphs at a time.

Melissa would like to especially highlight her article on swift migration, which happens every year in September. You can find it at <http://naturenarratives.com/migration-drama-of-the-swifts#more-4>.

Mountain Plover

<http://blogs.icta.net/plover>

This is a shameless plug for Aikorns Editor Leslie Holzmann's birding and gardening blog. You might recognize a few of the articles that have been reprinted here, but there are plenty more besides. Photos are in the linked gallery at www.mountain-plover.com.

SHRIKES, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

individual egg takes 17 days, but because the hen begins brooding before the last egg is laid, not all eggs hatch at the same time. Hatching rate is good, but usually only 3 or 4 chicks survive to fledge. Again, the harsh habitat of the high plains is often to blame. When periods of bad weather reduce foraging success for the adults, smaller shrike chicks weaken and are fed to the older, more robust chicks. However unpleasant we may find this fact of nature, "brood reduction" ensures survival of at least some of the chicks.

Shrike chicks fledge at around 17 days, but because of the staggered hatching schedule, all chicks do not fledge on the same day.

aikorns

Aiken Audubon Society Membership/Subscription

Sign Up For:

One Year \$10.00

Two Years \$18.00

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New Total _____

Renewal

Name _____

Address _____

Mail Check To:

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

Typical of most passerine fledglings, shrike chicks cannot fly for the first few days, spending most of their time hiding in brush or other dense foliage. Their calls bring parents with food, but may also attract predators; this flightless period is a perilous time for young shrikes, accounting for significant mortality.

Fledgling shrikes typically spend several weeks with the adults in their natal territory before migrating. The parent birds continue to feed the youngsters as they mature and become more proficient at capturing prey items such as grasshoppers, beetles and other insects.

Many shrikes hatched on the high plains of Colorado are not so fortunate. Their post-fledging education must be learned "on the road". A significant number (+/-50%) of breeding shrikes depart the natal area during the first week in July, shortly after the chicks have fledged. Family groups can often be found as they travel along together, foraging from fence and utility wires beside back roads and pastures. Usually only one of the parent birds is present (often the male), feeding the chicks as they move south. Many of these young shrikes have not yet completed growth in the wings, tail, or bill, which is still soft, and their skull muscles have not yet developed the strength required to kill prey.

Despite these handicaps, Colorado's high plains loggerhead shrikes represent a healthy population. My banding studies indicate a high rate of return for birds hatched the previous year (40-45%). Looking ahead, the prospect for continued reproductive success in high plains shrikes is very good. While many states list this species in serious decline, Colorado's shrikes continue to prosper and thrive in their unique, arid habitat.

Acknowledgements: Summer field work has been made possible thanks to grants from Aiken Audubon Society and Colorado Field Ornithologists.



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

CHECK YOUR MAILING
LABEL TO SEE IF YOUR
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President Risë Foster-Bruder
719.282.7877

www.aikenaudubon.com

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

THE BACK PAGE

National Audubon names new President/CEO

JULY 29, 2010, NEW YORK, NY: The National Audubon Society has announced that David Yarnold has been named its new President and CEO, giving new momentum to efforts to connect people with nature and their power to protect it. A passionate conservationist, Yarnold currently serves as Executive Director of the Environmental Defense Fund and President of the Environmental Defense Action Fund. Prior to that, he was a Pulitzer Prize-winning editor at the San Jose Mercury News.

“David brings proven leadership in the for-profit and non-profit sectors to Audubon at a time when efforts to protect birds, habitats and the resources that sustain us are needed more than ever,” said Holt Thrasher, Audubon’s Board Chair. “His leadership ability, his passion for conservation and grassroots action, his communications skills

and his organizational expertise all make him the perfect fit for the Audubon of 2010 and beyond.”

“David is a boundary-crosser, the kind of flexible thinker and values-based executive that a complex conservation and fundraising landscape demands right now,” Thrasher said. “He shares Audubon’s traditional passion for birds and its visionary understanding that helping people to protect them will safeguard our own future as well. I have no doubt that David will lead Audubon in expanding its reach to new audiences and elevation its conservation successes to new heights.”

Yarnold has been at EDF since April 2005, where he is responsible for all operations, from programs to development and marketing/communications. He helped expand EDF’s innovative corporate partnerships work, focused

on EDF’s international programs, particularly in China, and helped the organization grow from \$52M to \$117M in revenue. He is also President of the organization’s Action Fund, its political action arm.

“Audubon’s mission has never been more relevant. From the grassroots to state houses to national and regional policy, its wingspan is unparalleled,” Yarnold said. “I’m excited by the opportunity to work with a nationwide network of Audubon Chapters and Audubon Centers that combine local concern, knowledge and action to equal conservation that makes a difference on a grand scale. It will be an honor to lead an organization whose name has meant ‘trust’ and ‘conservation achievement’ for more than a hundred years.”

Yarnold will assume the Presidency of Audubon on September 1.

Be sure to read Yarnold’s letter to Audubon members on page 4.