



An Anthropologist's View of Birders

Anthropologists, being scientists, are good at taking complex topics and breaking them down into manageable pieces. Whereas my husband views birders as nice-but-slightly-eccentric people, our anthropologist daughter dissects us into pieces—clothing, rituals, language, and the like. There isn't room for her complete analysis here, but you can read about all of her observations on my blog, <http://blogs.icta.net/plover>.

Clothing

The first thing most “normal” people notice about a group of birders is what we're wearing. A floppy hat is essential for keeping the sun out of our eyes and preventing sunburn. Beige or green pants and shirt are popular, as are vests with lots of pockets. Tennis shoes are fine, comfortable hiking boots are preferred. A t-shirt with a bird on it is good, and you get extra points if the design is funny.

Loosely collected under this topic are birding status symbols. No one would actually brag about their optics, but you can be sure everyone is checking out everyone else's scopes and binos. This is much more intense in the subculture of birding photographers. Lens envy can strike at any time.



Language

Any interest group will have its own special vocabulary, and birders are no different. For example, there's a difference between birdwatchers, birders, and listers (or twitchers, if you're British). Birders also have their own not-so-secret code. If you know what a MODO or a LEGO is, you're probably a birder.

Other words take on special meaning in our vocabulary. There are tits and boobies, and we all hope to get good looks at them. “Eclipse” has nothing to do with astronomy and much to do with ducks.

Continued on back page

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy 2012. I hope everyone had a joyous and relaxing holiday season. Two things come to mind when I see the year 2012: My youngest son's graduation from the USAFA in May, and the supposed end of the world in December.

I realize those two events have nothing in common and both are totally non-bird related but that's just what comes into my head. I'm also scheduled to go birding in Peru in August so I guess that will be my “down time” after the hectic graduation activities and my last hurrah a few months before the December demise.

With all the misguided hype about computers crashing, etc. when 2000 arrived, you'd suppose

no one would think twice about an ancient Mayan calendar. And when will the “end of the world” discussion begin anew—midway through the year at the summer solstice, or possibly sooner?

Personally I don't believe the world will end in December 2012 but just in case, I think I should get out and bird as much as I can. All this excitement will just help make my tentative, 2013 trip to India all that much better.

Risë

• **RISË FOSTER-BRUDER**
PRESIDENT, AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

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COMING PROGRAMS

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Raptor ID
Debbie Barnes

February 15

Birds of South America
Eric DeFonso

March 21

South African Vultures
Jenyva Turner

April 18

Kiowa Creek Sanctuary
Your Aiken Board

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 March./April 2012 issue of Aikorns is Wednesday, February 15.

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

January 18 • Debbie Barnes

Raptor ID

PHOTO: DEBBIE BARNES



Want to figure out which hawk that is in your backyard? How about the hawk along the highway?

Colorado has 23 species of diurnal raptors. Debbie Barnes will presenting an information-packed program explaining how to identify Colorado's eagles, hawks and falcons.

Starting with our traditional program created by Steve Vaughan, Debbie has added her own expertise, along with many of her stunning photographs.

Here is your chance to learn the tips that will greatly improve your skills. Don't miss this outstanding program. [You can put your new skills into practice by signing up for one of the raptor-viewing field trips in January or February. —Ed.]

Debbie Barnes is an avid photographer and birder. She teaches the raptor identification programs at Cheyenne Mountain State Park (see the Events section) where she has been both an employee and a volunteer.

February 15 • Eric DeFonso

Birding Peru

With a checklist of about 1,800 species, including 103 endemics, Peru is a destination on many world-birders' minds. Peru is a large country with a staggering array of habitat types and elevations, ranging from dry tropical forests to moist montane forests, vast intermountain valleys, high-elevation puna grasslands, and rocky coastal breeding grounds among the richest oceanic surface waters in the world, to the legendary lowland Amazonian rainforests.

In 2011, northern Colorado birding regular Eric DeFonso embarked on a year-long journey through much of tropical South America, and spent over three months in Peru. While there he explored these highly diverse habitats, learning about the birdlife firsthand and often alone, and also serving as a volunteer for 2 months at a private reserve not far Manu National Park.

He will share his remarkable experiences in Peru as he searched for birds typical of the region as well as rare and localized endemics, and will also discuss the conservation challenges in a country feeling immense pressure to develop yet so rich in natural treasures.

Eric DeFonso began birdwatching 18 years ago as a casual hobby, but his interest has now turned into a consuming passion. He has a Masters degree in Atmospheric Science from the University of California, Davis, and worked in the private sector in computing for several years before changing course and following his love of birds wherever it leads him. He has since become a certified Master Naturalist for the City of Fort Collins, served on the Board of Directors for Fort Collins Audubon, worked as a volunteer educational bird handler at the Rocky Mountain Raptor Program, and in addition to photography he also has become an experienced bird-sound recordist, logging recordings of over 400 species in just the past year.

PHOTO: ERIC DEFONSO



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.

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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. No dogs are allowed on Aiken trips.

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.

Saturday, January 7, 10 am – Noon Homestead Ranch Winter Walk About

Come see what Homestead Ranch Regional Park has to offer on this naturalist-guided hike. We'll search for animals and their signs and explore this beautiful park in winter.

Meet at park entrance: from U.S. Highway 24, go 6 miles east of Falcon, go north 5½ miles on Elbert Road, east 2¼ miles on Sweet Road, north 1 mile on Gollihar Road.

This outing is sponsored by Bear Creek Nature Center.

\$3.00/Nature center member, \$4/Nature center nonmember, reservations required, 719.520.6387.

Saturday, January 21 and again on Saturday, January 28, 8 am – 1 pm

Winter Raptors

We will search Eastern El Paso County for Winter Raptors. This trip is limited to 6 people. Two cars max. I have room for two people. The second car would need to hold four people.

Meet at Fountain Creek Nature Center.

Contact Debbie Barnes, kfoopoo@yahoo.com, 303.947.0566 if you have any questions and to RSVP.

Saturday, January 21, 8:30 am – Noon Hawk Identification Field Trip

Wonder what that large bird was soaring high above or perched on a utility pole? Maybe an eagle or a hawk or a falcon, but how can you tell? Join a naturalist birder on a field trip through El Paso County to see and identify winter resident raptors. Bring binoculars if you have them. Sponsored by Fountain Creek Nature Center.

\$5.00/ Nature center member, \$6.00/Nature center nonmember, reservations required, 719.520.6745.

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

Saturday, February 4, 8:30 am – 3:30 pm Eagles!

Join us for the annual Audubon trip to Pueblo Reservoir in search of our national bird, the Bald Eagle. We will explore back roads in search of Golden Eagles, Ferruginous, Red Tailed and Rough-Legged Hawks, Merlin, Kestrel and Prairie Falcons on the way to Pueblo.

At the Reservoir, we will take some time to enjoy activities at the Division of Wildlife's and Arkansas Valley Audubon Society's Eagle Days Celebration: Air Force Academy falcons, rehab bird releases and maybe a visit to the Pueblo Raptor Center.

Please bring a sack lunch and a full tank of gas. We will be outside for short periods with a few short walks if the weather is bearable. A great trip for beginners!

Meet at Broadmoor Towne Center.

Contact Gary Conover, 635-2505 for more information. Reservations not required.

Saturday, February 11, 7 am – late afternoon La Veta Rosy Finches

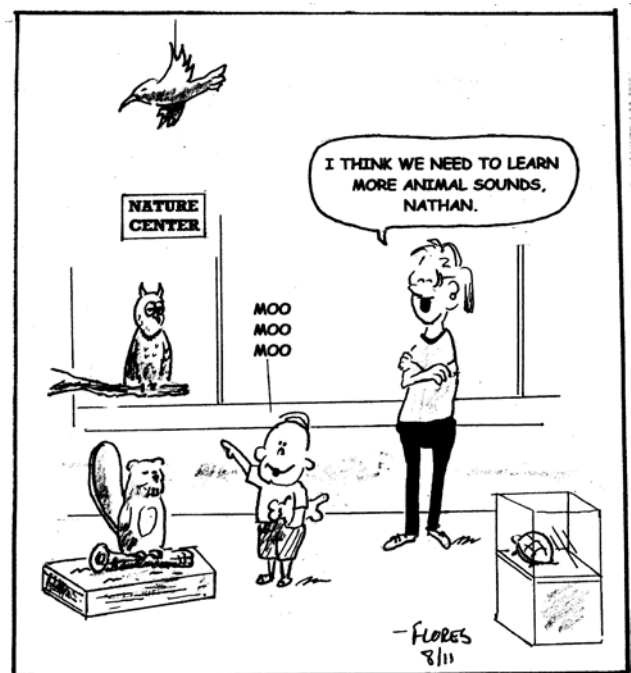
We will drive down to La Veta and visit a couple of residences in hopes of finding all three species of Rosy-Finches, Pinyon Jay and whatever else is around. Past trips have produced excellent birds!

This trip will offer lots of time to sit and observe bird behavior. Buy lunch in La Veta or pack your own.

Meet at the Park & Ride at Tejon & I-25, under the highway.

Contact Debbie Barnes, kfoopoo@yahoo.com, 303.947.0566 if you have any questions and to RSVP.

FLORES' FUNNIES



Artist Rick Flores, a Nature Center volunteer, enjoys sharing his views of happenings at Fountain Creek and Bear Creek Nature Centers.

Join Us for the Audubon/Sierra Club 2012 Legislative Forum!

Date: Saturday, February 4

Time: 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Cost: \$12 per person in advance, \$15 at the door.

Place: First Plymouth Church
3501 S. Colorado Boulevard, Denver

The Audubon Society of Greater Denver and the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Sierra Club would like to invite you to attend the 2012 Legislative Forum in Denver. We especially encourage members of other Audubon chapters and local Sierra Club Groups to join us for this always-entertaining and informative event!

Audubon Colorado Lobbyist Jen Boulton and Sierra Club Lobbyist Chuck Malick will go over this session's environmental bills, we'll hear from speakers on several of the key issues, and at lunch we'll talk with several Colorado legislators.

A continental breakfast and lasagna lunch are provided.

The hot topics for this year include the merger of the Colorado Division of Wildlife with the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation; oil and gas regulation changes; diversion of GOCO funds, and the proposed transport of water from the Green River to the Colorado Front Range.

To register in advance, call the ASGD office at 303-973-9530 to give your name and contact information.

For more information contact Polly Reetz, 303-333-2164 or reetzfam@juno.com

Great Backyard Bird Count Perfect for New Birders

15th annual count takes place Feb. 17-20, 2012

The annual Great Backyard Bird Count is the perfect opportunity to try counting birds for the first time. The event is hosted by Audubon, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and Canadian partner Bird Studies Canada. The results provide a snapshot of the whereabouts of more than 600 bird species. Anyone can participate in this free event and no registration is needed. Watch and count birds for at least 15 minutes on any day of the count, February 17-20, 2012. Enter your results at www.birdcount.org, where you can watch as the tallies grow across the continent. The four-day count typically records more than 10 million observations.

"When thousands of people all tell us what they're seeing, we can detect patterns in how birds are faring from year to year," said Janis Dickinson, director of Citizen Science at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.



"The Great Backyard Bird Count is a perfect example of Citizen Science," says Audubon Chief Scientist, Gary Langham. "Like Audubon's Christmas Bird Count, volunteers help us with data year after year, providing scientific support that is the envy of many institutions. It's also a lot of fun."

More FeederWatchers Needed

ITHACA, NY—When thousands of Americans begin tallying birds at their backyard feeders next month for Project FeederWatch, they will launch the 25th season for this popular citizen-science program.

The information reported online from across the continent helps scientists at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology track changes in the numbers of birds and the distribution of species.

Anyone with an interest in birds and nature is invited to learn more about the project and become a "citizen scientist." The current FeederWatch "season" began November 12, but participants can join at any time.

To learn more about joining Project FeederWatch and to sign up, visit www.FeederWatch.org or call the Cornell Lab toll-free at (866) 989-2473. In return for the \$15 fee participants receive the FeederWatcher's Handbook with tips on how to successfully attract birds, an identification poster of the most common feeder birds, a calendar, complete instructions, and Winter Bird Highlights, an annual summary of FeederWatch findings.

The 2011 GBBC brought in more than 92,000 bird checklists submitted by participants from across the United States and Canada. Altogether, bird watchers identified 596 species with 11.4 million bird observations.

Results from the 2011 GBBC included:

- Increased reports of Evening Grosbeaks, a species that has been declining;
- A modest seasonal movement of winter finches farther south in their search for food;
- The Eurasian Collared-Dove was reported from Alaska for the first time, more evidence of an introduced species rapidly expanding its range.

Although it's called the Great "Backyard" Bird Count, the count extends well beyond backyards. Lots of participants choose to head for national parks, nature centers, urban parks, nature trails, or nearby sanctuaries. For more information, including bird-ID tips, instructions, and past results, visit www.birdcount.org. The count also includes a photo contest and a prize drawing for participants who enter their bird checklists online.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, January 14, 10 am – Noon Photography Seminar with Mark Kirkland

International award-winning photographer Mark Kirkland will discuss equipment, tactics, and the do's and don'ts of digital wildlife, nature & macro (close-up) photography. Enjoy some of Mark's spectacular photographs. BYO cameras and questions. Sponsored by Bear Creek Nature Center.

\$3.00/Nature center member, \$4.00/Nature center nonmember, reservations required, 719.520.6387

Saturday, January 28, 9 – 11:30 am Interpretive Volunteer Orientation

Interpretive volunteers 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, complete an application and interview.

Call Paula at 719.520-6387 for an application. Reservations required.

Thursday, January 5, 10:00 – 11:30 am Fountain Creek Nature Adventures: Owl-ology

Children ages 3-6, with an adult, will enjoy puppet shows or stories, crafts, hands-on activities, and discovery time on the trail.

\$4.00 per person, reservations required, 719.520.6745

Saturday, January 14, 8:30 – 11:00 am Fountain Creek Winter 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.

\$5.00 donation for birdseed, reservations required, 719.520.6745

Identifying Birds of Prey

Selected Sunday afternoons:

Owls, February 26, 1 – 2 pm
Eagles & Others, March 4, 1 – 2 pm
Buteos, March 11, 1 – 2 pm
Falcons & Accipters, March, 18, 12:30 – 2:15 pm

Cheyenne Mountain State Park presents photographer and expert birder Debbie Barnes in this four-class series. She will share her photos and birding skills to help improve your ability to identify soaring and perching birds of prey. Learn to use field marks and behaviors to distinguish between the many species of raptors that live in and around the Pikes Peak Region. Recommended for adults and children 12 years and older.

This free program will be conducted at the park visitor center and no parks pass is required.

aikorns

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

New Study Reveals Gunnison Sage Grouse Nest Site Preferences

When it comes to nesting, birds are no different than people—they want the best for their young, places with abundant food and shelter and a safe place to successfully raise their young. For the imperiled Gunnison sage-grouse, the more lonesome the nest site the better, according to a joint study between Colorado State University, the USGS, and the National Park Service just published in the *Journal of Wildlife Management*.

Previous research has documented that loss and fragmentation of sagebrush landscapes has resulted in a drastic contraction of the bird's range and population numbers. Only seven disconnected populations of this unique bird remain in Colorado and Utah, six of which are small and at great risk of local extinction, though all seven populations have declined over recent years. The chicken-sized bird is being considered for listing as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act.

“We learned that these birds elect to nest in large, uninterrupted tracts of sagebrush several miles from roads and human structures,” explained Cameron Aldridge, a CSU assistant professor and lead investigator who works collaboratively with the USGS. These nesting models are foundational tools for resource management agencies working to minimize impacts to the imperiled Gunnison sage-grouse.

ARTICLE BY USGS

For more information, see <http://warnercnr.colostate.edu/~aldridge/> and <http://www.fort.usgs.gov/Staff/staffprofile.asp?StaffID=463>



Aiken Audubon Society
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CHECK YOUR MAILING
LABEL TO SEE IF YOUR
SUBSCRIPTION IS EXPIRING!

President Risë Foster-Bruder
719.282.7877

www.aikenaudubon.com

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

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

Additional birding terms for the uninitiated to ponder include: lifer, binos, trash bird, and jizz. (If you are from Britain, the vocabulary is totally different.)

Along with the jargon comes arcane knowledge: birders know there are no such creatures as seagulls, most ducks do not quack, and it's nest box, not bird house.

Rituals

Many birders commemorate adding a new bird to their life list in some way. My friend Debbie does a "Lifer Dance," jumping and flapping like courting Sandhill Cranes! Milestones, such as reaching 400, 500, or more birds, deserve even more of a celebration.

Specialized Behaviors

Birders tend to rise before dawn—the early bird might get the worm, but it's the early birder who gets the birds. In fact, birders will go to great lengths to get a bird. I've camped at 8,500 feet elevation in the Rocky Mountains in February, hoping to see some owls. Given that it was eleven degrees, the owls were probably holed up in a tree cavity, much warmer and more sensible than I was.

Birders also go great distances to add a lifer. Since any exotic sightings are quickly posted to an online bulletin board, people can rush to the scene hoping to catch a glimpse. They'll drive hundreds of miles, or even fly across the country, if the bird is rare enough.

The extreme version of all this is the Big Year, popularized by the recent movie with the same name. Thousands of dollars are spent, thousands of miles are traveled, just to beat out the current record-holder. Unless you can include at least one trip to the western Aleutians and another to the Dry Tortugas, you aren't even in the running.

Taboos

The Code of Birding Ethics (<http://aba.org/about/ethics.html>) is essential reading for every birder. Some topics covered include the excessive playing of recorded bird sounds (or playing these recordings at all, in many places), disturbing nesting birds, trespassing, and other ways of being considerate to the birds and to one another.

Wearing white is frowned upon. It scares many birds, thus annoying many birders. The same thing applies to loud noises. Most birders talk in hushed voices, at least while on the trail.

Another no-no seems to be asking how many birds someone has on their life list. While some are happy to tell you, others react as if you'd just asked how much money they make, how large their ranch is, or how old they are!

Although she is not a birder, I think my daughter knows us pretty well. What do you think?

• LESLIE HOLZMANN