



November/December 2013
Volume 10 / Issue 2

aikorns
AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

GOOD BOOKS!

by Leslie Holzmann

JUST IN TIME FOR THE HOLIDAYS, HERE ARE SOME books that would make terrific gifts for everyone on your list—from newbies to experienced birders, or even ought-to-be birders. I have suggestions for any age. After reading these reviews, I bet you'll be adding a few titles to your own wish list as well!

TAKE BETTER BIRD PHOTOS

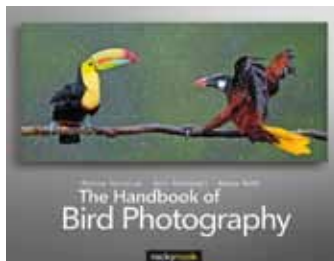
There's a new resource for bird photographers. Simply titled *The Handbook of Bird Photography*, I'd classify this book as a "must have" for anyone serious about improving their photo skills.

Three award-winning photographers collaborated on this stunning volume: Markus Varesvuo, Jari Peltomäki, and Bence Máté. As you might guess from the names, they are all Scandinavian. As the Introduction explains, each of these incredible photographers has a different background, perspective, and working style. Markus and Jari use Canon cameras; Bence prefers Nikon. Bence works with flash while Markus shoots under natural light.

The text is easy to follow, and the illustrations are both breath-taking and informative. As I read, I kept thinking, "I could do that!" They cover the basics—equipment, aperture, speed, focus, ISO, and more—but they don't stop there. I learned about my camera's advanced settings (I'm a Nikon fan), and which ones to use under which circumstances.

There are numerous chapters on composition, all inspiring. Living so far north, they are used to working under varying seasonal conditions, and provide some extremely useful pointers for dealing with snow and cold. They even have sections on finding birds, choosing locations, how to work from a blind (and how to build your own), and

...continued on page 5



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

AMONG THE LEAVES

For me, Autumn is a contemplative time leading to the colder months of the year when only the most intrepid birders go out to explore and look for the birds. The rustle of the yellow leaves of aspen and cottonwood promise colder days and nights.

I must admit I am a "fair weather" birder. When I can't (or won't) go out in the cold to look for birds amid the falling leaves, I will browse through any number of my bird books and dream of warmer weather and bright feathers.

One book that I purchased earlier this year was a large format photo book titled *Save the Last Dance: A Story of the North American Grassland Grouse*. Browsing through the leaves of this beautiful book

...continued on page 3

Coming programs

NOVEMBER 13 (NOTE DATE CHANGE!)

Birding Down Under

Presented by Diane Luck & David Elwonger

DECEMBER 14

Aiken's Christmas Bird Count

JANUARY 15

Raptor ID

Presented by Debbie Barnes

FEBRUARY 19

Flammulated Owl Research Update

Presented by Brian Linkhart

Newsletter articles

Articles, announcements, or other items of special interest to Aiken Audubon members are welcomed for consideration. We'd love to hear from you!

Deadline for the November/December 2013 issue of *Aikorns* is Wednesday, December 18.

Contact the editor, Leslie Holzmann, at aikenaudubon@gmail.com, or call (719) 964-3197.

Inside this issue

Coming Program	2
Christmas Bird Count	2
Field Trips	3
Conservation Corner	4
Flores' Funnies	back page

NOVEMBER 13 / LUCK & ELWONGER BIRDING DOWN UNDER

“Flies, mossies, and humidity!” What’s a mossie? Come on November 13 and find out!

Australia has about 800 species of birds, while New Zealand has around 170—many of which are critically endangered. Diane Luck and Dave Elwonger spent three months traveling through Australia and New Zealand, seeing and photographing many of these birds (including the Rainbow Lorikeet at right). Join us for an fascinating and entertaining evening of birds, stories, and travel adventures from their journey “Down Under.”

Diane Luck and Dave Elwonger are both well-known to the Colorado birding community, largely for their contributions to the Breeding Bird Atlas and the Western Bird Banding Association.

Please note the change of date; due to a room scheduling conflict, the meeting will be held on the *second Wednesday* of November.



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.

DECEMBER 14 SEE YOU AT THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT!

PHOTO: RISÉ FOSTER-BRUDER



The 2013 Colorado Springs Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday, December 14. Everyone is welcome to participate, whether this is your first count or your fortieth.

Start time and time spent counting may vary slightly depending on your area, but plan to spend at least the entire morning finding birds.

In the evening after the count there will be a potluck “Rally Tally” at Bear Creek Nature Center, time TBD (check AikenAudubon.com). We will share stories from the day and compile species counts.

If interested in participating, please contact Tyler Stuart at tylerhstuart@gmail.com, or Ken Pals at mtnpals@gmail.com. We’ll see you there!

“You’ll think this is a bit silly, but I’m a bit—well, I have a thing about birds.”

“What, a phobia?”

“Sort of.”

“Well, that’s the common term for an irrational fear of birds.”

“What do they call a rational fear of birds, then?”

— Neil Gaiman, *Anansi Boys*

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Aiken Audubon Field Trips & Events

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 and notices of last-minute cancellations, send your name and e-mail address to AikenAudubon@gmail.com.

A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW FIELD TRIP CHAIR, MEL Goff. We know he will be busy coordinating additional field trips, which will be added to the Aiken website as they become available.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 9-10:30 AM FOUNTAIN CREEK NATURE ADVENTURES: BIRD BEAK BUFFET

This opportunity is presented by Fountain Creek Nature Center, and is listed here for your information.

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

Reservations required, (719) 520-6745. Cost is \$4.00 per person including adults and siblings.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 8 - 10:30 AM PINELLO RANCH DUCKS

This trip is sponsored by Pinello Ranch, and is listed here for your information.

Fall means ducks at Pinello Ranch! Though there never is any guarantee in predicting their movements, we anticipate seeing some of the 18 different species of ducks that have been identified at Pinello. Based on previous November surveys, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler, American Wigeon, Blue and Green-winged Teal are all possible. Better still, the males should have recently molted and be at their feathery finest. Even more exotic are the Sea Ducks, subfamily Merginae. These marine ducks breed in the far north and some are seen this time of year at Pinello. Past visitors include: Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Common and Hooded Merganser.

Some other possible fall/winter visitors include Northern Harrier, Harris's Sparrow and even Northern Shrike in addition to resident birds.

Highlights will include tips on identifying different species, learning about behavior and habitat needs.

Pinello Ranch is at 4940 S. US Hwy 85/87, Colorado Springs, 80911.

Cost is \$9/person, \$7/student, \$5/children (children 5 and under are free). Space is limited to 15, so sign up now.

To register: www.ppcf.org/impact/pinello-ranch/birding

Questions? Visit the above website, or contact David Rudin, drudin@ppcf.org, 719-648-9324 for more information.

More trips online!

For the latest information on field trips and events:

www.AikenAudubon.com

President's Message, continued from front page

I am amazed by the deceptive beauty of these interesting birds living in seemingly desolate areas. It is one of the reminders of why I "bird"—the chance to discover a new bird in a new area.

Once the leaves have fallen and winter is here, it is time to rediscover a favorite bird in a familiar area during the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count. Please be sure to read about the CBC for this year (on page 2) and plan to participate in the count, as well as the "Rally Tally" in the evening. I hope to see many of you there!

Happy Birding!

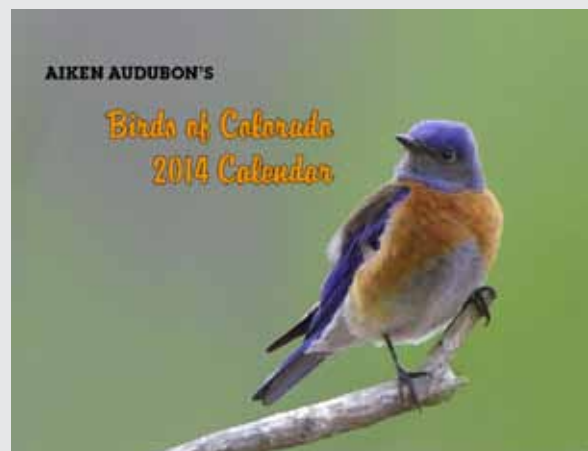
Christine A. Bucher,
Aiken Audubon President

On sale now...

AIKEN'S 2014 CALENDAR!

AGAIN FEATURING:

- /// Colorado Birds
- /// Aiken photographers
- /// Aiken-related reminders
- /// Professionally printed
and ready to hang



DEATH BY PIPE

TRAPPED IN A SMALL SPACE, UNABLE TO MOVE, WITH NO FOOD OR water, slowing dying of stress, starvation, or dehydration; most of us can't imagine a less appealing end. Unfortunately, this is the reality for hundreds, thousands, possibly millions of birds and other animals each year. Recent inspection of open or uncapped pipes has uncovered a grisly secret: countless bird and other animal carcasses collecting inside. Open or uncapped vertical pipes pose a very real hazard to wildlife, especially birds.

Cavity nesting birds, such as flycatchers, bluebirds, and woodpeckers build their nests in holes, usually within trees or embankments. From the air, an open vertical pipe resembles a cavity suitable for nesting.

A bird flies in, looking for a place to build a nest. The tight confines of the pipe prevent the bird from extending its wings to fly, the smooth circular interior is impossible to climb. Trapped in a small space with no food or water, the bird struggles until it slowly dies of stress, starvation, or dehydration. Another bird flies into the hole, and the cycle continues.



Bird carcasses retrieved from pipes.

*Photo: Christy Klinger,
Nevada Dept. of Wildlife*

IMPACTS TO WILDLIFE

Cavity nesters are not the only victims of these pipes. Migrating birds may seek shelter from the elements in hollow pipes or attempt to perch on them. According to Audubon California, nearly 45 different species of birds have been recovered from open pipes. Bird species commonly trapped include flycatchers, bluebirds, woodpeckers, sparrows, shrikes, kestrels, and even owls.

In addition to birds, lizards, snakes, small mammals, and insects have also been found inside pipes. In 2009, Audubon California removed a 20-foot tall pipe from an abandoned irrigation system. In place for 50 years, the pipe yielded the carcasses of hundreds of birds and other animals, including kestrels, flickers, bluebirds, and fence lizards.

PIPES ON THE LANDSCAPE

Audubon California has found that open vertical pipes are commonly used as sign posts, fence posts, survey markers, building plumbing vents, in irrigation systems, and as chimneys, and it is easy to find them in both urban and rural areas. There are often open pipes on top of residential and commercial buildings. California state law prohibits open-topped pipes from being used as mining claim markers, but open PVC pipes are often unlawfully used.

COVER YOUR PIPES!

There is a simple solution to this problem: cover open pipes! By capping or covering open pipes, birds, snakes, and other animals are prevented from becoming trapped. Inspect your property, identify all open vertical pipes, and close them off. The cap

or cover does not have to be expensive, but it does need to be secure and not easily dislodged by the wind or other disturbance. Pipe caps may be purchased or covers can be easily constructed. For example, a simple cement cap can be placed on an open vertical pipe.

For pipes that are in place to vent air or gas, screens can be used to prevent entry. Open pipes can also be filled with rocks or sand.

REMOVE DERELICT PIPES

Removal of open pipes is another solution to the problem, but it is important that the landowner and the purpose of the pipe be identified prior to removal. If the landowner is willing, then removal is an easy way to reduce pipe-related mortalities.

SPREAD THE WORD

Many people do not realize the hazards that open pipes pose to birds and other wildlife. Education is often the best prevention. The U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Nevada Department of Wildlife, Audubon California, and the American Bird Conservancy all have ongoing outreach efforts to inform the public of the hazards of open pipes to wildlife and have facilitated pipe removal on public lands.

Reach out to your community. Please share this information with your family, friends, neighbors, or co-workers. Encourage others to inspect their personal or commercial holdings for open pipes. Participate in coordinated volunteer efforts to remove or cover open pipes in your area. Let's work together to keep our landscape free of open pipes to prevent the untimely death of migratory birds and other wildlife. ☞

PROJECT FEEDERWATCH

A fresh new season for the Project FeederWatch citizen-science project kicks off on November 9.

Join the tens of thousands of people who keep tabs on the birds that come to their feeders from November through April. Participants submit their observations to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. These long-term data from across North America could not be gathered any other way. Observations help reveal important patterns in bird distribution and numbers that may be changing over time at a continental scale or in a participant's own backyard.

New and returning participants are urged to sign up now at www.FeederWatch.org. ☞

NEWS & NOTES:

CONSERVATION LAND AND DINOSAURS

The Marris Ranch, a 1,038 acre ranch on a windswept prairie 40 miles from Denver, will be managed as conservation land but also has an interesting sedimentary layer. Remnants of dinosaurs can be located in this layer, known as the K-T Boundary. The ranch was purchased by The Trust for Public Land and will be added to the Plains Conservation Center's West Bijou site. Colorado Open Lands will manage conservation easements on the land, ensuring its permanent protection for grazing, environmental education, paleontological research and wildlife observation. The Denver Museum of Nature and Science discovered that this ranch is one of the best sites in the world to study the extinction of dinosaurs.

CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

Mark Udall and Michael Bennett, senators from Colorado, have informative web pages about what is happening in Colorado and Washington. Both have offices in Washington, D.C. and Colorado Springs. They can be contacted at the following websites:

Mark Udall, Democrat – El Paso Colorado Springs
<http://markudall.senate.gov>

Michael F. Bennett Democrat – Denver
<http://bennett.senate.gov>

DESIGNING A WILDLIFE FRIENDLY YARD:

Go to www.nwf.org, then click on “Garden for Wildlife.” NWF is the National Wildlife Federation.

COLORADO'S WATCHLIST BIRDS

At least 39 National [Audubon] WatchList species occur in Colorado as breeders, winterers, or migrants. The coniferous forests of the Rocky Mountains harbor Flammulated Owls and Lewis's Woodpeckers. Low-lying valleys in western Colorado are characterized by sagebrush shrubland and shrub steppe habitat where the ultra-rare Gunnison Sage-Grouse occurs, as well as Greater Sage-Grouse and Brewer's Sparrows. Virginia's Warbler can be found in montane shrub habitats. Piñon-juniper forests of western Colorado support significant populations of Gray Vireos. The shortgrass prairies of eastern Colorado harbor breeding Lesser Prairie-Chickens, Mountain Plovers, Long-billed Curlews, Ferruginous Hawks, and McCown's Longspurs. ☘

Good Books, cont'd. from page 1.

remote photography. I particularly appreciated the up-to-date chapter on “Promoting and Selling your Images.”

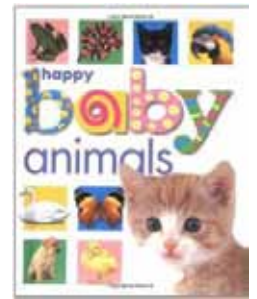


This is by far the best book on bird photography I've seen (and I've looked at a lot of bird photography books). I'm impressed with the hundreds of large color photos and concise yet comprehensive advice. The book is available from the publisher (Rocky Nook) or any bookstore.

Gray Owl photo by Jari Peltomäki, Burrowing Owl photo by Bence Máté; both excerpted from *The Handbook of Bird Photography*.

A BOOK FOR BABIES

Paper books are a bit fragile for drooling, tight-fisted toddlers, but the thick cardboard and/or plastic ones are just right. Many have animal pictures in them, but my favorite so far is *Happy Baby Animals*, by Jo Douglass and Neville Graham. Not only are the photos big and colorful, but each page spread teaches a concept, such as different places animals live, their colors and patterns, what makes them unique, what sounds they make, and what their babies look like.



A BOOK FOR PRESCHOOLERS

For kids who are a bit older—say three to six or so—*About Birds: A Guide for Children*, written by Cathryn Sill and illustrated by John Sill looks promising. It doesn't include a lot of species, focusing instead on the special qualities that make birds special—ornithology for preschoolers, if you will.

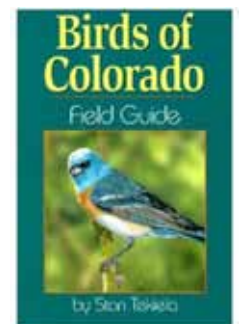


A BOOK FOR OLDER KIDS

As far as children's “field guides,” it's sometimes helpful to know what not to buy. Several books I checked out were quite out of date, and included bird names such as Common Flicker, Rufous-sided Towhee, and Northern Oriole.

Another source of frustration was the consistent focus on eastern species. When a book only contains a few “common” birds, children will expect to be able to see most, if not all, of them. A lot of western kids are going to be pretty disappointed. For example, *Beginning Birdwatcher's Book* by Sy Barlowe contains 48 species, but at least a dozen—one fourth of the contents—are not normally found in the northwest, where my granddaughter lives.

In light of these problems, I think the best thing is to just go ahead and get a “real” field guide. Kids are often smarter than we think! The books in the state field guide series by Stan Tekiela (such as *Birds of Colorado*, shown here) might be best for younger readers—each page has a large photo, and you don't need to know taxonomy to find a bird, you can simply flip through the book. However, as these small volumes contain only common species, it would be a good idea to have a complete guide available for those special sightings.



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You do not have to be a member to participate in Aiken's activities.

Good Books, cont'd. from page 5.

NEW EDITION OF A BIRD BOOK CLASSIC!

Last Spring (in the March/April 2013 Aikorns) I reviewed a pair of books by Ben Sill, Cathryn Sill and John Sill, about *Little-Known & Seldom-Seen Birds of North America*. Late this summer I was contacted by the publisher, who wanted me to see their new, improved 2nd Edition. Both books are now combined into one volume with some new species, added illustrations, and additional text.

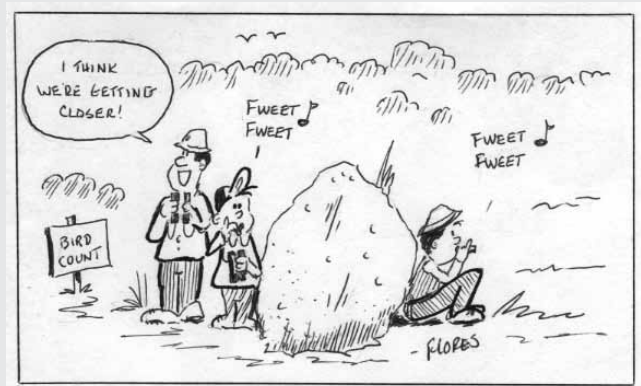
If you know a birder with a sense of humor, I guarantee they will love this book, and at only \$11.95 it's definitely a bargain.

PREVIOUS SUGGESTIONS

Check out back issues of the Aikorns (available at AikenAudubon.com) for more book reviews. Titles include *The Owl and the Woodpecker*, by Paul Bannick (11/08); *Outwitting Squirrels*, by Bill Adler, Jr. (5/08); *Brushed by Feathers*, by Frances L. Wood (1/09); *A Guide to the Birds of East Africa*, by Nicholas Drayson (3/09); *Birdwatcher: The Life of Roger Tory Peterson*, by Elizabeth Rosenthal (5/09); *Wesley the Owl: The Remarkable Love Story of an Owl and His Girl*, by Stacey O'Brien (11/09); *What Bluebirds Do*, by Pamela F. Kirby (11/11); and *The Bluebird Effect*, by Julie Zickefoose (5/13).

Have you read a terrific bird-themed book? Would you share your opinion with us? Contact the Aikorns at AikenAudubon@gmail.com and let us know. ☞

Flores' Funnies



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



**Look for the
Aiken Audubon Society
Facebook page!**

facebook.com/pages/Aiken-Audubon-Society