



January/February 2015
Volume 11 / Issue 3

aikorns
AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

COUNTING ON CAPE MAY: THE FALL RAPTOR MIGRATION

Story and photos by Nancy Bentley

THIS PAST OCTOBER, MY HUSBAND AND I TRAVELED to Cape May, New Jersey, to combine a visit with my mother who lives along the Jersey shore, with one of the nation's great bird phenomena: the fall raptor migration. It had been two years since I'd last been to New Jersey and during that time, Hurricane Sandy had barreled across the state scouring the coastline, toppling homes, and breaking up boardwalks. Miraculously, Cape May was relatively unscathed.

"At night, when a heavy flight is under way, the calls of the arriving migrants may be heard indoors by residents of the village, and the uncertain calling of Night Herons, and flock notes of passerine birds are almost as incessant as the rumble of the surf. These bird sounds, coming with the first cold drafts from the north and northwest, are as stirring as the roll of drums, and eloquent of the whole magnificent pageantry of bird migration."

—by Roger Tory Peterson and Robert P. Allen, 1938. Quoted in *Birds and Birding at Cape May*, by Clay & Pat Sutton

Perched on a peninsula on the southern most tip of New Jersey, Cape May sits on a migration flyway where the Delaware Bay meets the Atlantic Ocean. It is this unique geography plus the prevailing winds that cause huge waves of migrating birds to pause on the peninsula before flying across the Bay and heading south.

A lovely Victorian town, Cape May boasts a mild climate, a scenic lighthouse, and a colorful history of pirates, privateers, fishing, and a robust birding community. Summer tourists gather by the tens of thousands to enjoy the beach, but the spring and fall seasons are mostly populated by year-round residents and birders who come to watch the spectacle of thousands of birds migrating in long ribbons across the sky.

Because of this annual phenomenon, Cape May hosts an annual Birding Festival in October. The peninsula's varied habitat includes ocean beach, rock jetties, dunes, fresh-water ponds, fresh-water marshes, salt marshes, deep water harbors, swamps, forests, and open fields. Such variety provides a multitude of bird species as well as

...continued on page 5

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

There is a saying "time flies when you are having fun." I must be having a lot more fun than I think, because it is hard to believe that we have begun a new year. But, with the New Year there is excitement and anticipation of things to come.

First, Aiken Audubon is on the steering committee for the 1st Annual Pikes Peak Birding and Nature Festival which will be happening on Mother's Day weekend this year. Ted Floyd will be the keynote speaker at the Saturday evening banquet and many field trips and seminars are planned for the event. The goal of the festival is introduce birding to individuals and families while also appealing to intermediate and advanced birders as well. Visit Pikespeakbirdingandnature-festival.org for more information.

Second, we are in conversation with Audubon Rockies regarding Kiowa Creek Sanctuary. Alison, the Executive Director, has been working

...continued on back page

Coming programs

JANUARY 21

Raptor ID

Debbie Barnes-Shankster

FEBRUARY 18

Photographing Birds

Leslie Holzmänn

Newsletter articles

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

Deadline for the March/April 2015 issue of *Aikorns* is Wednesday, February 18.

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

Inside this issue

Coming Programs.....	2
Field Trips & Events.....	3
Conservation Corner.....	4
Speaking "Twitcher" Quiz.....	5
Letter to the Editor.....	5
Flores' Funnies.....	back page

JANUARY 21 / DEBBIE BARNES-SHANKSTER RAPTOR ID

WANT TO FIGURE OUT WHICH hawk that is in your backyard? How about the hawk along the highway? Colorado has 18 non-rare species of diurnal raptors.

Debbie Barnes-Shankster will be presenting an information-packed program explaining how to identify Colorado's eagles, hawks, falcons, and kites. Debbie has been studying the identification of these birds for ten years and has developed a program to help separate the various species. Here is your chance to learn the tips that will greatly improve your skills. Don't miss this outstanding program.

Then, you can put your new skills into practice by signing up for the Raptor ID field trips in January and June, and the Eagle Day trip in February.

Debbie has been birding and photographing birds for over ten years. She is currently a member of the board, program chair, and a field trip leader for Aiken. In addition, she volunteers for Colorado State Parks. She teaches raptor identification classes at Cheyenne Mountain State Park, has spoken at meetings of the Colorado State Parks Raptor Monitors, and taught a birding class at Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument.



PHOTO: DEBBIE BARNES-SHANKSTER

FEBRUARY 18 / LESLIE HOLZMANN PHOTOGRAPHING BIRDS

VIEWING BIRDS THROUGH your binoculars is exciting. We enjoy their shapes and colors, the way they tilt their head, hang from a branch, or dart after bugs. But have you ever wished you could keep the memory of each bird you see? Photography allows us to do just that.

Learn how bird photographers capture the images you see in the Aikorns, on our website, and in our yearly calendar. What equipment do you need? What makes for a good composition? How about exposure, depth of field, light, and action? You'll look at birds a whole new way.

Come to our program, then join us on the following Saturday, February 21, for a photo field trip to Fountain Creek Nature Center to put your new skills into practice. The field trip will be led by excellent photographer Debbie Barnes-Shankster.



PHOTO: LESLIE HOLZMANN

Aiken Audubon programs are free and open to the public. They are held at the Colorado Parks and 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 & 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. Remember 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.

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.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 10, 8:30 - 11 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.

/// Sponsored by Fountain Creek Nature Center, \$5 fee (for birdseed), reservations required, 520-6745.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 24, 8 AM - 3 PM RAPTOR ID

Attend Debbie's Raptor ID program, then put your new skills to work in the field. Bring lunch, water and snacks. Scopes helpful. Meet at Ruth Holley Library (685 North Murray Blvd., Colorado Springs).

/// For more information and to RSVP, contact trip leader Debbie Barnes-Shankster at (303) 947-0566 or kfoopooh@yahoo.com.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 24, 10 AM - NOON INTERPRETIVE VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION

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 volunteer opportunities and see if the nature centers are the right fit for you.

/// Contact Paula at 520.6387 or email bcfcvolunteers@gmail.com for an application.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 8:30 AM - MID-AFTERNOON EAGLE DAY AT PUEBLO STATE PARK

Caravan south through the grasslands east of I-25 hunting for raptors, eventually arriving at Pueblo Reservoir. There we'll join the activities of Eagle Day, presented by the Colorado Division of Wildlife and the Arkansas Valley Audubon Society. Schedule in the past has included: US Air Force Academy Falcons Flight Demo, Raptor Release, and Pueblo Raptor Center Live Birds by Diana Miller. And yes, we will scan the area for Bald Eagles, often present at Lake Pueblo this time of year.

Bring a sack lunch (food also available at the reservoir), full tanks of gas and plan to be outside for short periods. You can stay all day

More trips online!

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

or go home anytime. Meet at Broadmoor Towne Center (Nevada and Lake Avenue) east of Starbucks. State Parks Pass (daily pass or yearly pass) required on all vehicles.

/// For more information and to RSVP, contact trip leader Gary Conover at (719) 635-2505.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 8 AM - 3 PM ELEVEN MILE CANYON

(Rescheduled from December 29)

Bundle up in your warmest winter gear and venture out for photography and birds. Targets include American Dippers and both eagle species. While this trip is geared toward photographers, with time for lots of picture-taking, non-photographers are welcome. We will not be hiking very far from the vehicles. Photographers bring tripods and long lenses; digiscopers are welcome.

Meet at Red Rocks Safeway. In addition to gas costs, there is a \$5 per car fee to enter Eleven Mile Canyon.

/// For more information and to RSVP, contact trip leader Debbie Barnes-Shankster at (303) 947-0566 or kfoopooh@yahoo.com.



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 7 - 10:30 AM PHOTOGRAPHING BIRDS

This trip is specifically aimed at photographers. We'll learn from one another as we put into practice the tips we learned at February's program. (Program attendance is helpful but not a requirement.)

Dress warmly and meet at Fountain Creek Nature Center just after sunrise to make the best use of the early morning light.

/// For more information and to RSVP, contact trip leader Debbie Barnes-Shankster at (303) 947-0566 or kfoopooh@yahoo.com.

COMING MAY 8 -10, 2015



BUILDING ARTIFICIAL WETLANDS

by Jackie Heyda

THROUGHOUT THE WEST, ALMOST A THIRD OF THE RIVER and stream miles are in very poor condition often due to fertilizer runoff from fields and feedlots. In 2013, the Environmental Protection Agency reported that 85% of lakes in the Northern Great Plains lack healthy ecosystems. Our country and other countries are sacrificing water at a fast rate.

According to an article in *High Country News*, “Scientists have long understood that natural wetlands act as landscape sponges, filtering sediment, nutrients and waste from rainwater and snowmelt.” Many acres of swamps and marshes on every continent have been drained and converted into farmland.

Engineers are attempting to reconstruct what nature has lost. Is this a way to save the West’s water and the water in other parts of the country and elsewhere? According to the article in the HCN newsletter, wetlands have been built from the Arctic Circle to the tropics, from deserts to rainforests.

The article in the HCN describes what Bruce Kania, a biomimicrist, has built at an experimental ranch in Montana. To read more about this experiment, go to the *High Country News* website, below. The article is quite detailed and very interesting.

http://www.hcn.org/issues/46.20/can-biomimicry-tackle-our-toughest-water-problems

NEWS & NOTES

by Jackie Heyda

COLORADO WATERSHED ASSEMBLY—RIVER WATCH

River Watch is a statewide volunteer water quality-monitoring program operated by the non-profit Colorado Watershed Assembly in cooperation with Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW).

River Watch began in the spring of 1989 with two-hour trainings at six schools along the Yampa River. It was started by teacher Ed Hayne from Oak Creek, Colorado.

"The Rivers of Colorado Water Watch Network" was created with the philosophy of training private and public school teachers and students to collect and analyze water samples. There are approximately 120 organizations actively participating in the program and new groups are added each year.

For more information about this program, go to www.coloradowater.org/RiverWatch.

BROWNS CANYON—A NATIONAL MONUMENT & WILDERNESS?

U.S. Senator Mark Udall would like to designate the 16 square mile Browns Canyon as a monument and wilderness area. Four hundred interested people came to a meeting in Salida to discuss this potential national monument. Senator Udall and Senator Michael Bennett have asked President Obama to establish the Browns Canyon National Monument using his authority under the Antiquities Act. Congressional legislation has stalled even though many people have attended public meetings.

An article in the Sunday, December 7 Denver Post mentioned the widespread interest in this legislation. The Browns Canyon National Monument would be managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service.

Hopefully this legislation will be passed

and Browns Canyon will become a national monument and wilderness area.

THE SAGE GROUSE

The 1.1 trillion dollar funding bill passed. One of the riders is about the Sage Grouse and other endangered species. According to an article in Everett, Washington's newspaper, *The Herald* (see below), this rider "says 'no' to putting the greater sage grouse and three related birds [including the Gunnison Sage Grouse—Ed.] on the endangered species list. Environmentalists say time to save them is running out as their sagebrush habitat disappears. But oil and gas companies and other businesses argued that protecting the chicken-sized birds on Western lands would hurt business and local economies."

http://www.heraldnet.com/article/20141213/NEWS02/141219518

BLM MAPPING

Wild Connections is a group that has worked in Colorado for 20 years. They have developed “into a conservation group that is the only locally based organization in central Colorado whose primary mission is to establish a wildlands network of core reserves and connecting wildways”.

This group has been mapping BLM lands with wilderness characteristics for the past 2 years. They have inventoried almost 280,000 acres of BLM land managed by the Royal Gorge Field Office. Almost 230,000 of these acres have wilderness characteristics encompassing about 25 potential wilderness areas in central Colorado. Most of these areas are in the Arkansas Canyonlands – Browns Canyon (read article above), Badger Creek and Table Mountain. These areas include mixed elevation forests and wildlife habitats.

In addition to mapping BLM lands, Wild Connections has been assessing BLM land for wilderness characteristics for a new Resource Management Plan (RMP) that will begin shortly in the Royal Gorge Field Office’s region.

The group wants to encourage the public to take action. You can go online at www.wildconnections.org to read the article and make any comments about these potential wilderness areas. ☘

SPEAKING TWITCHER

by Leslie Holzmann

ARE YOU A BIRDER? DO YOU SPEAK English? I would have answered “yes” to both questions, until I saw some lists of British birding terms.

I’m know a “twitcher” is a seriously (some say extremely) competitive birder who keeps a life list (and probably several other lists as well). And I’ve heard the word “jizz” (which comes from GISS, as in General Impression of Size and Shape) used to describe a way of quickly identifying birds. But, I had no idea what most of these words meant, at least in the context of birdwatching.

Here's a list of a ten British birding terms. How many can you correctly define? No cheating by using the internet! And by the way, some of these terms are no longer in general usage, although my sources online didn't mention which ones are obsolete.

1. BLOCKER
2. BOGGIE BIRD
3. BOP
4. CERTS
5. CRIPPLER (OR KRIPPLER)
6. DIP OUT
7. DUDE
8. DUFF GEN
9. GET GRIPPED OFF
10. OLD BADGER

Good luck! The answers will appear in the next issue.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Aiken Audubon,

I live out by Calhan which might become the site of a new wind farm. Wind farms kill birds and birds are important because the small birds eat insect pests and the large ones eat rodents. Insects and rodents can carry disease.

Globally billions of birds are killed by wind farms. Can you imagine a world with hardly any birds. It would be a nightmare.

Cape May, continued from front page

migrating Monarch butterflies and dragonflies which coast in billowy waves overhead. But mostly, people come in the fall to watch the great Hawk Migration Count.

For 38 years, the Cape May Bird Observatory has conducted a seasonal hawk count between September 1 and November 30. Volunteer counters continuously scan the sky from the Cape May Point Hawk Watch Platform. As Pete Dunn says, “Anything with feathers is considered fair game...” and is counted.

According to Pete, early September is the time for Bald Eagles and American Kestrels; late September and early October one sees Merlins and Peregrine Falcons. October is the month for Sharp-shinned and Cooper’s Hawks, and November is the time for Northern Goshawks, Golden Eagles, Turkey and Black Vultures.



Banding a Cooper's Hawk

he gently placed it behind a bush. It was gone when we returned, hopefully rested enough to resume its travel.

Birds migrate through in such great waves it is no surprise that renowned birders such as Sibley and Crossley have chosen to live in Cape May while writing their books. It’s a place where “I don’t go to the birds, they come to me,” says naturalist Mark Garland.

Are you wondering where you might go for your next birding trip? If you haven’t been to Cape May, add it to your list. For me, the journey to Cape May may well become an annual migration. I can feel its pull even now. ☘



Cape May counters

Songbirds migrate at night under the protection of darkness, raptors migrate during the day. The perfect time to witness this phenomenon is at sunrise. Each day, we walked to the beach and raised our binoculars to watch scores of exhausted yellow-rumped warblers flying straight in from the sea in search of food and protection from the migrating predators.

One morning as we walked out of our hotel, our guide picked up an exhausted hermit thrush lying on its back, its legs in the air, presumably dead. It had just managed to make it to land. It revived in his hand and after a moment he declared it alive, barely. Knowing its chances for survival were slim,

I want to send you a link to a petition site. The petition is aimed at local Colorado government. There is a box for comments within the petition. Please use it and please send the petition to other members with my text in it:

<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/529/721/453/calhan-wind-fraud-this-wind-farm-plan-does-not-benefit-anyone-inclusive/>

Thanks for your time,
Alan Raycraft





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

President's Message, continued from front page

to develop ideas on how the property can be used profitably while honoring the conservation restrictions. We anticipate the possibility of Aiken field trips on the property again in the spring.

Third, some great programs have been planned through May by Debbie and I know Mel is working on field trip offerings. As always, check our website for updated information.

Finally, I look forward to sharing unusual birding stories and sightings with all of you throughout 2015.

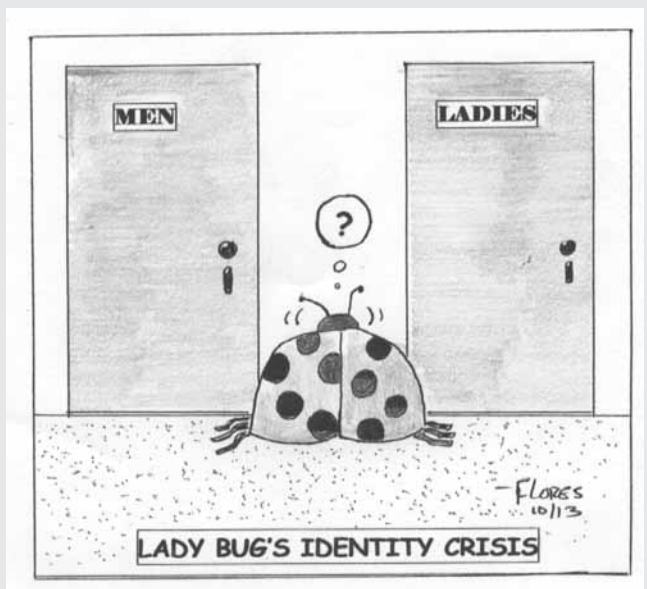
Wishing everyone a happy, healthy, and birdy 2015!

Christine A. Bucher,
Aiken Audubon President



**Look for the
Aiken Audubon Society
Facebook page!**
facebook.com/pages/Aiken-Audubon-Society

Flores' Funnies



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