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**aikorns**  
AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

# LONG LEGS, COLD WATER

Story & Photos by Leslie Holzmann

**H**ave you ever wondered how sandpipers, herons, and other wading birds manage to stand around in water only a degree or two above freezing? And how are ducks and geese able to stand on ice without getting frostbite?

It turns out that there are a number of adaptations that keep heat from being lost. For starters, their skin is covered with insulating scales, a first line of defense against winter.

Then, a bird's blood circulation is arranged to keep as much heat as possible in the body. In the upper legs, the warm, downward-flowing vessels are snuggled up next to the cold, upward-flowing vessels. This allows the warm blood coming from the body to hand off its heat to the cold blood coming from the lower legs, minimizing heat loss in the extremities. The result is an impressive ability to walk barefoot on ice, as this Northern Shoveler is doing!



One way to conserve energy in our homes is to only heat the rooms that are currently in use. Birds use a similar strategy. They have separate thermostats for their bodies vs. their legs and feet. This ensures that the body, with its essential functions, stays warm—while allowing their legs to be much cooler. I thought that a restricted blood flow would injure the tissues, but again, that's not the case.



Greater Yellowlegs

Rather, bird legs operate on what is essentially a pulley and lever system. All the muscles (think drumsticks) are high up in the feathered portion of the bird. The legs contain merely bones and tendons, which have no need for an abundant supply of oxygen-rich blood. In fact, their extremities have only just enough blood

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

### RESOLVE TO BENEFIT BIRDS

Are you making New Year's resolutions this year? Beside the ever-popular goals of losing weight and getting more exercise, how about some birdy resolutions? Perhaps this is the start of a personal Big Year, or you keep a year list—and now pigeons and robins are suddenly important again, at least for the first day or two. Or, maybe this is the year you are determined to find your nemesis bird and check it off your life list.

Some bird-related resolutions help others. It's finally time to figure out eBird, so your trip lists

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### Coming programs

JANUARY 20

Raptor ID

Debbie Barnes-Shankster

FEBRUARY 17

Flammulated Owls—What's New?

Brian Linkhart

MARCH 16

Piping Plovers & Least Terns in Colorado

Duane Nelson

APRIL 20

Barn Owls

Scott Rashid

### 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!

The deadline for the March/April 2016 issue of the *Aikorns* is Wednesday, February 10.

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

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## JANUARY 20 / **DEBBIE BARNES-SHANKSTER** **RAPTOR ID**

Do you want to be able to identify that hawk 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 the Eagle Days 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.

SWAINSON'S HAWK: DEBBIE BARNES-SHANKSTER



## FEBRUARY 17 / **BRIAN LINKHART** **FLAMMULATED OWLS—** **WHAT'S NEW?**

PHOTO: LESLIE HOLZMANN



The Flammulated Owl is as small as a fist and reticent enough to disappear into the shadows of western forests.

Considered the country's leading expert on Flammulated Owls, Dr. Brian D. Linkhart has been studying the demography and habitat requirements of this small raptor on the Manitou Experimental Forest since 1981. His aim is the development of conservation plans for forest ecosystems containing this and other sensitive species. With this extended period of study, Brian has been able to uncover some fascinating secrets about this species.

Dr. Brian D. Linkhart is an Assistant Professor of Biology at Colorado College, where he teaches courses in ornithology, ecology and field biology.

**DEATH BY CHOCOLATE!** According to tradition, our February meeting includes a potluck dessert: Death by Chocolate. Bring something yummy (and preferably chocolate!) to share, and come at 6:30—early enough to sample all the goodies before the program begins at 7 pm.

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](mailto:AikenAudubon@gmail.com).

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### **SATURDAY, JANUARY 2, 8 AM – MID-AFTERNOON NEW YEAR'S RAPTOR PHOTOGRAPHY TRIP**

We'll venture out onto the plains of eastern El Paso County to look for winter raptors to photograph. This is a terrific opportunity to try your ID skills in preparation for Debbie's program on January 20.

Bring water and lunch as we will be out all day. Meet at the northeast corner of Platte and Academy: 535 N Academy Blvd., Colorado Springs. Contact trip leader Debbie Barnes-Shankster with questions and to sign up: [kfoopoh@yahoo.com](mailto:kfoopoh@yahoo.com).

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### **SATURDAY, JANUARY 9, 8:30 – 11AM FCNC 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. There is a \$5 fee (for birdseed). Reservations required: (719) 520-6745.



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### **SATURDAY, JANUARY 23, 8 AM – MID-AFTERNOON AND/ OR SUNDAY, JANUARY 24, 8 AM – MID-AFTERNOON PRACTICE YOUR RAPTOR ID SKILLS!**

This pair of field trips is very similar to the one on January 2—we'll venture out onto the plains of eastern El Paso County to look for winter raptors, this time with the aim of learning to identify them. This will be an opportunity to put into practice the field ID tips Debbie presents in her January 20 program. (Attendance at the program isn't required, but it will be helpful.) Feel free to come on one or both trips.

Bring water and lunch for all day trip, and dress for Colorado in January. Meet at Fountain Creek Nature Center to carpool. Contact trip leader Debbie Barnes-Shankster with questions and to sign up: [kfoopoh@yahoo.com](mailto:kfoopoh@yahoo.com).



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### **SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 8:30 AM – 3:30 PM 20TH ANNUAL EAGLE DAYS FESTIVAL AT LAKE PUEBLO STATE PARK**

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 Parks & Wildlife and Arkansas Valley Audubon Society's Eagle Day Celebration.



Prior years featured Air Force Academy falcons, rehab bird releases and 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. This is a great trip for beginners!

Meet in the parking lot of Broadmoor Towne Center (Nevada and Lake Avenue) near the Starbucks. Plan to return by mid-afternoon. Please call Gary Conover, (719) 635-2505 for more information. Reservations not required.

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### **SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 8 AM – MID-AFTERNOON FOUNTAIN CREEK PHOTOGRAPHY**

Spend the morning and early afternoon looking for and photographing winter birds and scenery at Fountain Creek Regional Park.

Bring water, lunch, and dress warmly as we will be outside walking. Meet at Fountain Creek Nature Center.

Contact trip leader Debbie Barnes-Shankster with questions and to sign up: [kfoopoh@yahoo.com](mailto:kfoopoh@yahoo.com).

**More trips online!**

For the latest information on field trips and events:

**[www.AikenAudubon.com](http://www.AikenAudubon.com)**

# CITY OPEN SPACE UPDATES

by Linda Hodges

In the past few weeks, the City of Colorado Springs has been addressing management plans on the following open spaces: Bluestem Prairie (Big Johnson), Stratton, University Park (part of Austin Bluffs) and Sinton Pond. Community meetings have been held to allow input.

From a cursory survey of Aiken Audubon members, it appears that the two open spaces of most concern are Bluestem Prairie and Sinton Pond, so I'll summarize those meetings for you.

## BLUESTEM PRAIRIE

As is usually the case with open spaces, controlling noxious weeds is a primary issue. There will likely be some mowing and discrete spraying, either early in the spring or in late summer. The city also plans to remove the old outbuildings (loafing barn, etc.) and windmills. Some feel that the windmills provide a roosting spot for Red-tailed Hawks, and are dismayed with this proposal.

There's a possibility that a trail will be added from the NW corner (near Bradley) into the open space to accommodate the rapidly-growing neighborhood.

The city would like to conduct Mountain Plover (May 1 – June 15) and Burrowing Owl (March 1 – October 31) surveys, though that has yet to happen in the 8 years since the last management plan. Perhaps this is a project that Aiken Audubon could take on.

## SINTON POND OPEN SPACE

Again, vegetation is an issue, in particular Siberian elms. Removal of trees will not be scheduled during the breeding season for songbirds, however. The dam on the east side



Sinton Pond, photo by Eric Eaton

of the pond is due to be repaired in order to meet code. Also along the east side, the steep social trails may be re-routed.

Also in the works is a potential parking arrangement with a neighboring company across Sinton Rd.

**NOTE:** Those wanting to comment on either of these management plans should contact Sarah Bryarly at the City of Colorado Springs' Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department: sbryarly@springsgov.com. The plans are expected to be finalized in January and then sent to Park Board for approval in February.

Learn more about Sinton Pond at <http://senseofmisplaced.blogspot.com/2012/07/sinton-pond-open-space.html>

## AIKEN MEMBER PRESENTS OPEN SPACE APPLICATION



Who would have thought there was open space potential behind the flea market east of Powers? Yet that's what member Eric Eaton believes. Our resident entomologist, Eric recently presented his application for a 24-acre east side parcel to the city's Trails, Open Space and Parks (TOPS) Working Committee. Having served on this committee for 7 years, I can assert that his was the finest open space presentation I've seen (others concurred.)

The property, which Eric says is at the eastern end of Pikes Peak Ave, and due south of the flea market, is small as open space parcels go, and has several owners, which makes negotiations tricky. Its location on the east side of town is a plus, however, as residents there have few places to choose from in which to recreate. Open spaces also serve as community buffers.

Sand Creek flows through the property, providing habitat and a watering hole for a wide variety of birds, insects and mammals. Eric showed photos of some colorful Blue Grosbeaks that he took earlier in the year.

Stay tuned for an update on this piece of land, and whether the city deems it worthy of protection. ☘

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON National Audubon issues and actions, go to the Audubon Action Center, [audubonaction@audubon.org](mailto:audubonaction@audubon.org).

## JOIN THE CONSERVATION ACTION TEAM

Are you interested in learning about regional conservation issues? Might you be willing to send off an email to a legislator to protect a property or a species that you care about? Aiken Audubon is looking to put together a list of folks who could be contacted for issues of import. No commitment required. If this sparks an interest, please contact Linda Hodges at (719) 635.5551 or [hikerhodges@gmail.com](mailto:hikerhodges@gmail.com).

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# 15 BIRDY THINGS TO DO WHEN YOU CAN'T GO BIRDING

by Leslie Holzmann

I sprained my ankle last fall. It wasn't a catastrophe, but it did keep me laid up for a couple of weeks. Instead of birding, I moped around thinking about birds. Should you at some point find yourself in a similar situation, here's my list of ways to stay engaged while you heal:

1. Comment on all the bird photos that your friends have posted on Facebook.
2. Study up on sparrow ID so you can nail those LBJs when you finally make it back into the field.
3. Read birding blogs.
4. Listen to audio files on the Cornell Lab of Ornithology website ([www.birds.cornell.edu](http://www.birds.cornell.edu)) to improve your birding by ear skills.
5. While you're at the Cornell website, check out their assortment of bird cam links. Start a bird cam life list. ([cams.allaboutbirds.org](http://cams.allaboutbirds.org))
6. Then check out the rest of their huge website. This could take hours. ([www.birds.cornell.edu](http://www.birds.cornell.edu))
7. Really clean your optics. Use lens cleaner and non-abrasive lens cloths to get them sparkling.
8. Browse bird-related items on Amazon.com and order them for yourself your birding friends.
9. Update your e-bird lists.
10. ID and label all your photographs of shorebirds and immature gulls.
11. Read a book about a famous birder.
12. Watch birdy documentaries or movies, such as *The Big Year*, *March of the Penguins*, or *Winged Migration*. While you're watching, make a list of the birds as they appear.
13. Look at the local rare bird list and see what you're missing.
14. Refill the bird feeder. Hunt for rarities among the regulars.
15. Take a nap and dream about birds.

What birdy pasttimes do *you* turn to when you can't get out to go birding? ☞

## Editor's Message, continued from front page

can provide data for scientists tracking the well-being of our bird populations. Or you might join FeederWatch, NestWatch, or another of the Cornell Lab or Ornithology citizen science projects. Closer to home, why not participate in the bird counts at our local nature centers (see page 3)? You'll meet other enthusiastic birders and have a terrific time traipsing around in the bushes.

Other actions we take can also benefit birds. Consider purchasing shade-grown coffee. Organic products decrease the pesticide load in an ecosystem. Conserving energy reduces the need for more wind farms or more natural gas and petroleum extraction. Recycling benefits everyone.

As you make your resolutions, keep the birds in mind, and have a very Happy New Year!

Leslie Holzmann,  
Aikorns Editor



Look for the  
Aiken Audubon Society  
Facebook page!

[facebook.com/pages/Aiken-Audubon-Society](https://facebook.com/pages/Aiken-Audubon-Society)

## Long Legs...continued from front page

in them to keep them alive. (Our own hands and feet operate in much the same way.)

Then there's the obvious strategy of only standing on one leg at a time, while the other is tucked up against your warm undersides. Many birds stand around on one leg, although it's a bit odd that the birds most famous for this behavior are tropical flamingos!

Of course, birds can get frostbite, just as we can. However, their metabolisms are much higher than ours, and can produce considerable amounts of heat. In fact, they start eating more long before winter arrives, storing up a layer of fat that they can draw on when needed. Plus, their down jackets are built-in. All they have to do is fluff those feathers for a toasty warm layer of insulation.

However they do it, cold water is obviously not a problem for long-legged waders and other waterfowl. That's a bonus for us birders, as many of these species hang around in winter, as long as they can find open water. We can watch them for hours—while snuggled in our fur-lined hiking boots. ☞

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## TRY THIS NEW YEAR'S CHALLENGE!

Did you resolve to lose weight, exercise more, and have more fun? This friendly little "contest" may help. According to the National Audubon website:

... [T]he Bird-A-Day Challenge is a game played every year by birders from around the country. The objective of the contest is to count how many days in a row you can find a "new" bird. (New equals recorded for the first time on your list.) The rules are: Never repeat a species, nor go a day without seeing a different one. If you do, you are out of the challenge.

How long can you keep adding a new bird every day? Rene Ebersole, author of the article quoted above, managed to keep her challenge going for over 80 days! Can you do better?

➤ To learn more: [www.audubon.org/news/bird-day-challenge-week-1](http://www.audubon.org/news/bird-day-challenge-week-1)



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

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## **AIKEN'S WEATHER CANCELLATION POLICY**

Sometimes inclement weather may cause us to cancel an Aiken meeting. If this happens, a decision will be made by 1 p.m. on the meeting date. Notification will be placed on our website, on our Facebook page and sent out through our email notification list. In addition, a message will be posted on the CoBirds Listserv, to which many of our members subscribe. If there is any doubt, please do not hesitate to contact any of Aiken board members via telephone. Always, your safety is first so use your own judgement when coming to a meeting.

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## **WE NEED YOU!**



The Aiken board has openings for Program Chair and Education Chair. Descriptions and contact information are on the Aiken website—[aikenaudubon.com/about-aiken-audubon-2/volunteer-with-aiken/](http://aikenaudubon.com/about-aiken-audubon-2/volunteer-with-aiken/). We're waiting to hear from **YOU!**

### *Flores' Funnies*



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