



September/October 2016
Volume 13 / Issue 1

aikorns
AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

EBIRD HOTSPOTS, COOL SPOTS, AND NOTSPOTS

by *Joe Roller*
President, DFO

As eBird becomes more widely used (if you've been on a DFO field trip in the last few years, your sightings have been entered into it), it's helpful to know how this website is revolutionizing birding.

A basic feature is the eBird "Hotspot." There are over 1,400 of them in Colorado and hundreds of thousands around the world!

What is an eBird Hotspot? Hotspot is actually a misnomer. One is better described as "a public birding location created by eBird users, where birders aggregate their checklists to paint a robust picture of the avifauna there."

That's a mouthful!

"Hotspot" is shorthand for all that. Want to read more? Try this link: help.ebird.org/customer/en/portal/articles/1006824-what-is-an-ebird-hotspot

Does a hotspot have to be "hot," that is, full of great birds? The answer is no, although many are quite birdy. A lot of hotspots are small parks or ponds repeatedly checked by birders. As far as rarities and variety go, they may be lukewarm or even cool.

But information about the ebb and flow of common birds slowly accumulates in "The Big eBird Computer" at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, providing scientists with valuable data.

Must a hotspot be a "spot"? No, some "spots" are a mile or two in length, segments of hiking trails, highways, or rivers. Some are entire state parks. Someday the website's hotspot teardrop markers may be replaced by circles or polygons.

Can your backyard be a hotspot? No, it must be public and enduring—you may move to Hawaii. I'd call your yard a "notspot." But it can be set up as a Personal Location, where you can keep your own checklists. Your data for species, numbers, arrival dates, breeding behaviors, etc. will still enter the universal eBird database.

...continued on page 5

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I wonder what a "Blueberry Nutcracker" looks like. That's what two birders heard when I said the bird in question was a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. We were on the Sunday morning Pikes Peak Birding and Nature Festival (PPB&NF) field trip to the Aiken Canyon Preserve. It was pretty funny—but reminded me to enunciate and speak slower during field trips. Not everyone is familiar with bird names. The two ladies in question were fairly new birders, so they had no idea there was a bird called a Gnatcatcher, but they knew about nutcrackers. And then, when I said it was a

...continued on page 5

Coming programs

SEPTEMBER 21

Learning to Love Wasps

Eric Eaton

OCTOBER 19

Volunteering in the State Park System

Jeff Thompson

NOVEMBER 9 (2ND WEDNESDAY)

Antarctica

Bill Schmoker

DECEMBER 17

Christmas Bird Count (No program)

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!

Note: The deadline for the November/December 2016 issue of the *Aikorns* is Wednesday, September 14.

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

Inside this issue

Coming Programs	2
Field Trips & Events	3
Conservation Corner	4
Welcome Diane Luck	5
If You Were a Bird	back page
Aiken's Cancellation Policy	back page
Flores' Funnies	back page

SEPTEMBER 21 / ERIC EATON LEARNING TO LOVE WASPS

If you believe every social media meme, and your average pest control company, then you know bees are "good," and wasps are "bad," right? Nothing could be further from the truth. Wasps, both social and solitary, are of immense importance in pest control, pollination, and ethology (the study of animal behavior). So much so, in fact, that there are even insectaries dedicated to turning out tiny parasitic wasps for use in greenhouses and field crops. Meanwhile, there are wasps in your own yard and garden that go about fascinating lives that include nest architecture, and intricate predator-prey or parasite-host relationships. Learning to love wasps is easy once you free your mind from the stereotypes. Join us, and prepare to be amazed by the beauty and complexity of wasps.

PHOTO: ERIC EATON



Eric R. Eaton is principal author of the *Kaufman Field Guide to Insects of North America*. He has also been published in *Birds & Blooms*, *Ranger Rick*, *Missouri Conservationist*, *Orion*, and other popular journals. His fascination with all things "insect" is contagious.

OCTOBER 19 / JEFF THOMPSON VOLUNTEERING IN THE STATE PARK SYSTEM



Do you love beautiful scenery, getting fresh air, and that great feeling after a hard day's work? How would you like to meet friends, learn a new skill, and work together as part of a project team? Colorado Parks and Wildlife has a long and rich history of counting volunteers as valuable members of our team, with some being involved for over 20 years!

Volunteers serve in a variety of roles including hosts, naturalists, wildlife transporters, trail workers, assisting CPW staff, and much, much more. One current need is for a volunteer to manage the volunteer program!

Come find out how your birding and nature skills and knowledge can be put to use, making a significant contribution to the stewardship of our public lands and resources.

Jeff Thompson is Resource Stewardship Program Coordinator for Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Coordination of the program involves managing the State Park stewardship planning process, which includes bird surveys, herptile surveys, noxious weed inventories, rare plant and wildlife surveys, threatened and endangered species compliance, statewide volunteer raptor monitoring program, and revegetation and restoration projects at parks. His areas of expertise include native plants, bird surveys and monitoring, noxious weeds, environmental policy, and interpretation.

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.

Aiken Audubon Board Members

PRESIDENT

Rise Foster-Bruder
(719) 282-7877
Riserefb@comcast.net

VICE PRESIDENT

Frank Dodge
(719) 549-0651

SECRETARY

Debbie Barnes-Shankster
(303) 947-0566
kfoopoh@yahoo.com

TREASURER

Bonnie Morgan
compassrose360@
gmail.com

PROGRAM CHAIR

Diane Luck
luckdiane@gmail.com

CONSERVATION CHAIR

Linda Hodges
hikerhodges@gmail.com

PUBLICITY CHAIR

Christine Bucher
(719) 596-2916
baccab@aol.com

EDUCATION CHAIR

Position Open

FIELD TRIPS

Mel Goff
melgoff@comcast.net

AIKORNS EDITOR/WEB

Leslie Holzmann
(719) 964-3197
aikenaudubon@gmail.com

HOSPITALITY

Kathy Minch
(281) 435-6850
kathydaboo@gmail.com

CHRISTMAS COUNT

Tyler Stuart
(719) 661-9308
tylerhstuart@gmail.com

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, SEPTEMBER 10, 7 - 10:30 AM FOUNTAIN CREEK NATURE CENTER FALL BIRD COUNT



Birding enthusiasts of all ages and abilities are invited to participate in a citizen service project counting species and populations in Fountain Creek Park. The count is sponsored by Fountain Creek Nature Center and is listed here for your information. The park requests a \$5 donation for bird seed. Reservations are appreciated: 520-6745.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 7:30 - 11 AM ASPEN VALLEY RANCH, TELLER COUNTY

Aspen Valley Ranch, donated to the Pikes Peak Community Foundation by Gordon Jackson, is a 300-acre private ranch on the southwest side of Woodland Park. Currently serving as a site for environmental education for students in Woodland Park School District, the ranch sometimes offers public programs focused on science, arts, practical living skills, and high-altitude gardening.

Besides the stunning backdrop of Pikes Peak, Aspen Valley Ranch hosts a forest of ponderosa and limber pine, Douglas-fir, Engelmann spruce, and aspen, a greenhouse, a small events facility, and even a small pond.

Possible birds include Clark's Nutcracker, Violet-green Swallow, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Plumbeous Vireo, Western Tanager, Red Crossbill, and Evening Grosbeak. This is a **moderate to strenuous** trip; expect high-elevation hiking on dirt roads and trails, with some off-trail hiking.

There is a limit of 12 participants. Carpool leaves from the Red Rocks Safeway parking lot (on west Colorado Ave.).

To sign up, contact Tyler Stuart at tylerhstuart@gmail.com.

More trips online!

For the latest information on field trips and events:

www.AikenAudubon.com

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 6:45 AM CHICO BASIN RANCH



Chico Basin Ranch, (fee area) is one of our most popular field trips each spring and fall. Join John Drummond for a chance to see both resident birds and fall migrants at this scenic working ranch that offers a variety of habitats in both El Paso and Pueblo counties.

There is a maximum limit of 16 participants in four vehicles. Meet at the Tejon Park & Ride lot at 6:45 am to carpool, or at the Hanover Fire Station at 7:30 am.

For questions and to register, contact John Drummond at jxdrummo@aol.com.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 9, 7:30 - 11:30 AM KETTLE CREEK LAKES



Join trip leader Risë Foster-Bruder for this trip to the ponds at the south end of the Air Force Academy. Participants will have a chance to bird a variety of habitats within a relatively small area at the south end of the Air Force Academy. There are three lakes and a level trail along Kettle Creek. Sunrise is at 7:03 so it might be a bit nippy but we want to beat the fisher folk and see the early birds.

Meet in the parking lot. For more information, directions, and to sign up, contact Risë at riserefb@comcast.net or (719) 282-7877.

QUARRY CONSIDERED NEAR AIKEN CANYON

by Linda Hodges

Transit Mix Concrete has applied to mine 400 acres of the Hitch Rack Ranch, the property adjacent to, and north of, the Aiken Canyon Preserve. The Nature Conservancy (TNC), which leases Aiken Canyon, opposes the measure. Among the concerns are the “loss of species and habitat from removal of vegetation and topsoil, impacts of dust to plants, insects and small species, and disruption of migrating populations.” According to TNC, the proposed quarry site is critical habitat of the Mexican Spotted Owl, which is currently listed as a threatened subspecies.

According to the *Gazette* article of August 1, the Colorado Department of Reclamation, Mining and Safety will rule on this in November. If approved, it would go to the El Paso County Board of County Commissioners for final permission. A public hearing is scheduled for early September. Aiken Audubon is still gathering information on this proposal.

For questions or comments, email DMG_web@state.co.us

CENTENNIAL BLVD EXTENSION / SONDERMANN PARK

The expansion plans continue to evolve on this proposed 4-lane highway that will cut through a corner of Sondermann Park. On a recent field trip, interested citizens were shown how close the road/bike lane would come to the creek. It is much closer than expected—maybe 15 feet. There is concern as to how this would affect Mesa Creek and the wildlife that resides or migrates through the area. The city’s claim is that there have been no threatened species reported in the area. Regarding stormwater runoff, they plan to dig two retention ponds. In or around 2001, the Pikes Peak Chapter of the Sierra Club took a position against the extension, as they felt it would negatively impact the environment; however, the route has been altered, and they’re taking another look at it. We continue to gather input on this issue, and will determine whether or not to take an official position in the near future.

TO GET INVOLVED:

- For project e-newsletters and latest project information, email Gigi@bachmanpr.com.
- Direct comments to CentennialExtensionInfo@springsgov.com or Lisa@bachmanpr.com.

FURTHER PROTECTION FOR GUNNISON SAGE GROUSE

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recently released its Gunnison Sage-Grouse Rangewide Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment and Draft Environmental Impact Statement. There will be a 90-day public comment period, ending November 12, 2016.

According to the Associated Press, the BLM has proposed various conservation restrictions on practices including energy development, roads and grazing. The BLM states that it aims to “create a single, consistent strategy for managing public lands across the range of the species.”

To review the documents, go to www.bit.ly/gunnison_sage-grouse. To comment, visit http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/BLM_Information/newsroom/2016/blm_seeks_comments2.html, and note the caveat regarding potential sharing of your personal information.

UPDATE: KIOWA CREEK SANCTUARY

by Linda Hodges

This Black Forest 1500-acre property, owned by the National Audubon Society but currently leased to Cornerstone Meats, opted to clear-cut a swath of old-growth forest (approx. 200’ wide by .1 mile long) this summer as part of a fire break effort. Kiowa Creek was formerly overseen by Aiken members Jeannie and Ron Mitchell for a number of years, and was a special location for members to gather and bird. Concern by area residents and Aiken members caused the lessee, Cornerstone Meats, to re-think its strategies for the remaining acreage (200’ by .9 mile). In a meeting with the lessee (Audubon Rockies declined to attend, but defended its actions), the Colorado State Forest Service, Black Forest Together, Judy von Ahlefeldt (forest ecologist) and I explored alternative methods of fire mitigation with the lessee, as well as requesting that the logging occur outside the nesting season. We hope to work with Audubon Rockies as to how to best handle the controversial logging.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON National Audubon issues and actions, go to the Audubon Action Center, 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.

Hotspots... continued from front page

Must there be safe, public parking? Yes. Roadside parking is OK if it is safe.

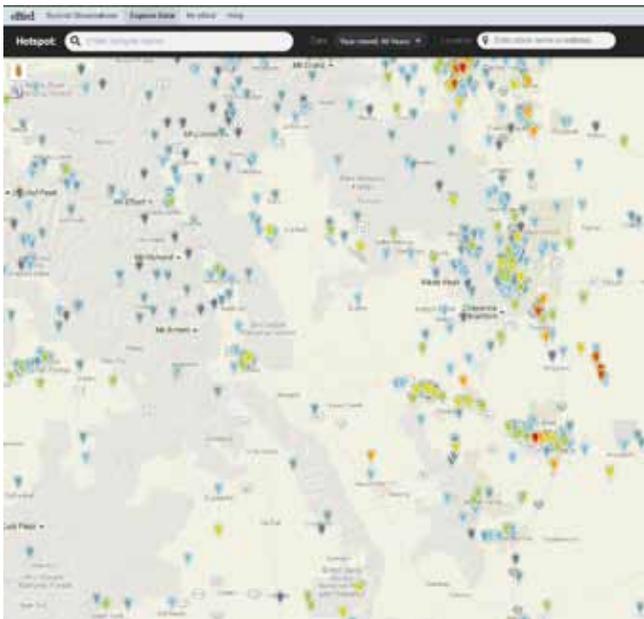
Can any eBirder suggest a new hotspot? Yes, just click the small box that appears on each eBird checklist. Each suggestion is reviewed to be sure it fits the definition and is not a duplicate. For example, don't suggest "Chatfield SP" as a new hotspot. There are a few there already.

It's best if you use eBird for a few months and get a feel for hotspots before suggesting your own. There are over 1,400 hotspots just in Colorado and hundreds of thousands around the world! Get out there and explore them!

Some hotspots have data from thousands of birding visits. For example the eBird hotspot for Cherry Creek SP has data for 322 bird species on 3,600 checklists!

At the other extreme, a new hotspot named "Mitchell Gulch trail" has only one checklist and six species so far. Over time, birders' data will accumulate.

Where are hotspots near me? First, go to the map showing all hotspots on earth: ebird.org/ebird/hotspots:



In the oval bubble in the upper right corner, type "Colorado." The map is a blur, but as you zoom down to your favorite county, individual hotspots appear as distinct little teardrops. There are enough teardrops to soak all the hankies at a big wedding.

Click on a teardrop such as the bright red teardrop for Cherry Creek SP. A lot of information pops up—the number of bird species seen there over years, the number of checklists for the park, highest numbers of individuals, bar graphs, field notes from recent visits, and more.

You can click on any eBird Hotspot to see what has been recorded there recently or what was seen in a particular month in the past. Try it out!

Not on the eBird bandwagon yet? Here's how to join and submit your first checklist: help.ebird.org/customer/en/portal/

articles/1972661-how-do-i-enter-sightings-in-ebird-?b_id=1928. You'll be an "eBirder"!

While some eBird Hotspots are "hotter" than others, they are all incredibly "cool," in that they allow us to share our bird observations at common locations.

The sightings from our birding hobby are now going into a powerful and permanent research database used by ornithologists all over the world. That's hot!

From "eBird Hotspots, Cool Spots, and Notspots" by Joe Roller, 2016. *The Lark Bunting* 52(4):2-3. ©2016 by Denver Field Ornithologists. Reprinted with permission.

WELCOME OUR NEW PROGRAM CHAIR, DIANE LUCK!



Diane Luck began her interest in bird watching when a friend asked her to join a Peruvian Amazon tour in 2000, hence she claims Hoatzin as the first bird on her life list. Since then, she has birded in 30 countries and is hoping to visit many more. Certified by the North American Banding Council as a bird bander, she volunteers for the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies at Chico Basin Ranch. During the summer Diane bands breeding birds in the Manitou Experimental Forest as part of the nation wide MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) Program.

President's Message, continued from front page

"Blueberry" something or other, they thought I was completely crazy. But then, aren't all birders a little crazy?

On behalf of the 2016 PPB&NF Committee, I would like to thank the many Aiken Audubon Society folks for their time and efforts to make the 2016 festival a success. Many of you attended or assisted a field trip, went to a workshop or the keynote, or volunteered pre-festival. The event would not happen without you and you are greatly appreciated.

Aiken Audubon also financially sponsored the festival the past two years. This crucial support helps the festival be a financial success. Planning has already begun for the 2017 event.

Welcome to another "year" of engaging programs. Diane Luck, our new programs chairperson, has already started looking for great programs. I look forward to seeing you at the next meeting.

Risë Foster-Bruder
President, Aiken Audubon Society



AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

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

President Risè Foster-Bruder

(719) 282-7877

AikenAudubon@gmail.com

www.AikenAudubon.com

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

IF YOU WERE A BIRD, WHAT WOULD YOU BE?

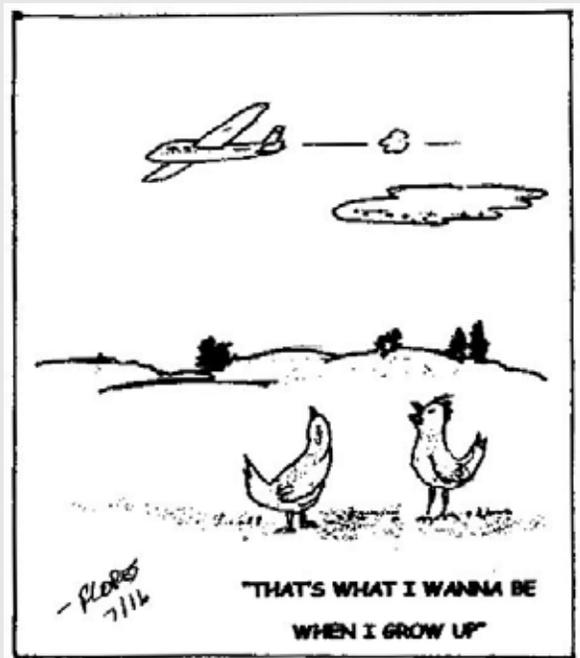
Social as a chickadee, talkative as a goldfinch, clever as a crow? The Cornell Lab Publishing Group is releasing *Am I Like You?*, a children's book with an online companion quiz to match you to your birdy alter-ego. This short quiz is a lot of fun for all ages.

Take it now: <https://comelllabpublishinggroup.com/quizzes>

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 pm 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.

Flores' Funnies



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