

Roaring Fork



Raptor

Published by

Roaring Fork Audubon Society (RFAS)

Jan/Feb 2009 Vol. 12 No. 3

To promote the enjoyment, conservation and understanding of birds, other wildlife and their habitats through birding, education, advocacy, and fellowship in Eagle, Garfield, and Pitkin Counties

www.roaringforkaudubon.org

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## Upcoming RFAS Programs

January 20, 2009~~“Protecting Colorado’s Natural Treasures”

Brian Kurzel

Many would agree that Colorado is unique and special because of the fantastic natural diversity found within its borders. Where else can you flit from a morning watching prairie chickens to an afternoon looking at alpine wildflowers and then to an evening watching the sun set over canyon country? Only in Colorado.

Because of the uniqueness of its natural features, the state of Colorado has a program aimed at identifying and protecting our natural treasures—the Colorado Natural Areas Program

Established by statute in 1977, the Colorado Natural Areas Program (CNAP) plays a unique role in Colorado as a state agency focused on the recognition and stewardship of areas that contain at least one unique or high quality feature of statewide significance. Such features may include:

- rare animal or plant habitat
- unique or pristine ecosystems,
- geologic formations or
- paleontologic localities.

Brian Kurzel, Coordinator of the Natural Areas Program, will introduce some of Colorado’s designated Natural Areas, including those in Garfield County, and highlight conservation efforts that are taking place in the state. Overseeing a wealth of diverse areas, CNAP has something in its system that will pique your curiosity. Join Roaring Fork Audubon for this exploration of Colorado’s natural treasures and volunteer opportunities to help conserve them.

February 17, 2009 ~~“Living with Emperor Penguins and other Antarctic Adventures”

Dick Filby

During every Antarctic summer for the past 18 years, Dick Filby, who resides in the United Kingdom during the summer months and in the Roaring Fork Valley in the winter, has led adventure tour groups to Antarctica. One of his recent trips with Wild Wings Tours included camping in a huge colony of Emperor Penguins for several days, during which the penguins barely noticed the campers and continued life as normal. Dick’s photographs of the camp, surrounded by thousands of penguins, are stunning. Other of Dick’s Antarctic summer adventures include icebreaking ships, viewing icebergs, whales, porpoises, seabirds and many other species of penguins. Wildlife and all adventure lovers will enjoy this photo extravaganza, as well as Dick’s inimitable narrative! Join Roaring Fork Audubon for this feature!

Meetings are held at the Glenwood Springs Community Center, 100 Wolfsohn Rd. ~~ 7 p.m.

Beverages and a dessert potluck accompany the program.

## Roaring Fork Audubon Field Trips and Special Activities ~~~ Please join us!

Enjoy natural places! Savor fellowship!  
See new sights and sites!



Kirsten Munson

### Field Trip Leaders

Tom McConnell (970)379-7356

immac@rof.net

Linda Vidal (970)704-9950 birder@sopris.net

Dave Clark (970)963-3479 clark@sopris.net

### January, 2009

- **Saturday, January 17—Winter Raptors in the North Fork Valley**—Black Canyon Audubon will host this trip in the North Fork Valley. Raptors dominate the landscape during the winter months. Also expect to see an abundance and variety of water birds. Contact **Tom McConnell**.

### February, 2009

- **Saturday, February 7—Tumacacbac**—Tumacacbac is an annual field trip to the Grand Junction area focusing on raptor identification, with eagles, hawks, and owls the prime targets. Tumacacbac is hosted by Grand Valley Audubon and is always exceptional. For trip info and to reserve space, contact **Dave Clark**.

#### EVERYONE IS WELCOME ON RFAS FIELD TRIPS

- You need not be a member. For most trips, bring your binoculars, field guides, water, snacks and a lunch. Dress for changing weather.
- If you have questions regarding a trip, need additional information, or would like to lead a field trip or hike, please contact Linda Vidal or Tom McConnell.

**LET US KNOW YOUR INTENTIONS!** Please contact the field trip leader at least 3 days in advance if you intend to participate in a RFAS field trip. In some cases, field trips visit areas where the number of participants is

limited. In all cases, knowing the number of participants in advance helps the leaders plan the best possible trip and ensures that you are aware of where/when to join the trip and other important information. Please

arrive no later than the scheduled meeting time; leaders may not be able to delay departure for late arrivals. In case of inclement weather, it is the responsibility of the participant to check with the leader to see if the trip will be cancelled.

# Affordable Housing Returns: RFAS Bluebird Nest Box Project Underway

by Dee Malone



The shimmering and unmistakable blue of mountain bluebirds is a breathtaking sight! Fortunately, the mountain bluebird population is increasing, due to successful nest box programs which have helped reverse declining populations of mountain bluebirds since 1966.

Roaring Fork Audubon will be sponsoring three free bluebird nest box building projects in different locations in 2009. Our first building project will held be at the Marble Charter School on Friday, February 6, starting at noon. The Marble undertaking is for students—older students will assist younger; and some (15-20) of the boxes will be given to senior citizens in Marble.

Another building day—for families—will be at Rock Bottom Ranch in Carbondale on Saturday, March 14, from 10:00 am –2:00 pm. A third will be in cooperation with the Gore Range Natural Science School in Eagle County (date and place are yet to be determined).

In preparation for the actual construction of boxes, Auduboners and helpers will be “pre-fabbing” the nest boxes by pre-cutting and pre-drilling the nest box pieces prior to the box construction. Several folks are committed to helping with this, but we could certainly use a few more construction-savvy and packaging volunteers! We are aiming to prepare 150 nest box kits, so there will be plenty of work to go around.

We'll be doing the “pre-fab” work on Saturday, January 17. If you can help with either the preliminary prep or on a box building day, please call or email Dee Malone for details—970-963-2143 or [deliamalone@earthlink.net](mailto:deliamalone@earthlink.net). Lunch will be provided at the “pre-fab” site.

## Programs and Special Events Calendar ~Jan-May 2009

See [roaringforkaudubon.org](http://roaringforkaudubon.org) for last minute changes. (Changes have been made since last newsletter.)

- January 17—Volunteers “pre-fab” nest box kits, Redstone
- January 20—**Brian Kurzel**—“Colorado Natural Areas” Program, Glenwood Springs
- February 6—Nest box building, Marble School
- February 13-16—Great Backyard Bird Count (see p.7)
- February 17—**Dick Filby**—“Living with Emperor Penguins/Antarctica” Program, Glenwood Springs
- March 14—Nest box building, Rock Bottom Ranch, Carbondale
- March 17—**Liz Roberts**—“Lynx in Colorado” Program, Glenwood Springs
- April TBA—Nest box building, Eagle County
- April 21—**Sherry Tippy**—“Beavers” Program, Glenwood Springs
- May 19— **Nicola Ripley Johnson** of Vail’s Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, “The Dirt on Colorado Flora: a Look at Native Plant Collections, Monitoring Native Plants,” Program, Glenwood Springs

# Wild Horse Gather Thrills Spectators—field trip report

by Jennifer Long



On Oct 17, 2008, an overnight Audubon trip to northwest Colorado provided a wonderful opportunity to observe a wild horse gather conducted by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in the Sand Wash Basin range west of Craig. The outing was organized by Jan Fedrizzi, whose brand new daughter-in-law, Heidi Hopkins, presented background information about the horse gather and an overview of the status of U. S. wild horses. Heidi, a former BLM employee who now works for the Humane Society of the United States, spoke about the BLM wild horse management program, and in particular, the contraception research that she now oversees through a grant administered by HSUS.

Saturday morning, at the crack of dawn, we gathered at an old corral in Sand Wash Basin, northwest of Craig, where the wild horses were to be contained. Ironically, we were herded into a corral ourselves, where we would not startle the horses as they approached.

As the cowboys set up the approach funnel and the “Judas” horse took his place at the open end of it, the herding helicopter took off to find the first band of wild horses. When the band of a dozen galloped over the hill, expertly directed by the helicopter pilot, a cowboy slapped the Judas horse on the rump, and it led the band towards the corral--veering off at the very last minute--allowing the band to be lured into the corral.

Cowboys employed by a BLM contractor loaded the horses one-by-one into a chute, where they were aged, sexed and sorted into different corrals by BLM employees, based upon their final destination. About 60 mares were to be contracepted and released. Heidi’s team concentrated on identifying individual horses, noting coloring, scars, and associations in order to gather data for the contraception project.

The gather lasted 10 days (though we were there only one) and in this instance, of about 375 horses gathered from the range, 118 were returned to Sand Wash; 3 were sent to the Spring Creek herd near Dolores to insure genetic diversity in that band; some colts were headed directly to an adoption auction the following week (11 were adopted); and 243 of the young adults were shipped to the Canon City State Correctional Facility, where prisoners train the horses in hopes of improving their prospects for adoption. The total count after the gather for the Sand Wash Basin herd was 160 horses, considered the minimum desired population. Because wild horse herds typically double every four years, it is hoped that the HSUS contraception program will help slow that growth and reduce the frequency of gathers.

The BLM’s goal is to keep the wild horse populations at the level necessary to maintain a healthy herd. Currently there are about 33,000 wild horses on federal lands, and an additional 30,000 in holding facilities, where they may spend many years and consume a large part of the BLM’s horse management budget. The BLM has recently received an offer of help from Madeleine Pickens, wife of oil magnate T. Boone Pickens, who is negotiating to create a 1,000,000-acre horse refuge and to adopt nearly all of the 30,000 horses currently in holding pens.

## Other People's Birds—field trip report by Tom McConnell

Roaring Fork Audubon had a November waterfowl trip on Sat., November 1. As only four of us showed up, we decided to skip the local puddles and look for other people's birds (OPBs) that had been reported to the west of us. (See article below for how Tom finds OPBs.)

Over the hill from Silt we re-found the Surf Scoters seen earlier this week by Larry and Andrea at Vega Reservoir. Also at Vega, four Common Loons, a lone Western Grebe, Ruddy Ducks, and a handful of Horned and Eared Grebes. The only gulls of the day were here also, a dozen or so Ring-bills and one California Gull. We drove around the Grand Mesa to Cheney Reservoir in hope of finding Tundra Swans, instead finding a lake full of coots. If I have done my math right, Cheney Reservoir is about 5 acres and I figure around 7,500 coots. That translates to around 1,500 coots per acre (CPA). Also there were a female Red-breasted Merganser, a male Bufflehead and three Mallard decoys.

On to Sweitzer Reservoir near Delta, where we missed Jacob and Andrea by about an hour. The Red-throated Loon was loafing around on the north side of the lake, also another female Red-breasted Merganser. Nothing to report from Delta's Confluence Park and little water with lots of beach at Fruitgrowers near Eckert. Nice trip with unbelievably warm weather.



Home Base for All Seasons...

Yahoo Group for Western Colorado Bird Sightings

Pssst!! An unrivaled favorite birding tip! For a small time investment and no \$\$\$, rev up your birding IQ on a continuing basis. Visit and subscribe to the Colorado western slope birding group's website, <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/wsbn/>, Western Slope Birding Network, or WSBN. The site has subscription information and one may view some sample posts.

Many people from all over Western Colorado post bird sightings and other interesting bird lore, such as migration patterns and where to locate certain species. Take a gander!

For more information, call Tom McConnell, 970-379-7356.

~~~~~RFAS' classifieds~~~~~

A-1 Hummingbird Feeder—Delight any bird lover with this easy-to-clean hummingbird feeder. The A-1 hummingbird feeder is now available in this region exclusively through Roaring Fork Audubon Society. Feeders make thoughtful gifts that give back to wildlife. *The feeders, \$15.00, are available at the RFAS meetings at the Glenwood Springs Community Center. If you're unable to make the next meeting, please call Linda at 704-9950 to buy feeders.*

~~~~~Buying these products helps support our chapter!~~~~~

Subscription to Roaring Fork Audubon's bi-monthly *Roaring Fork Raptor*—\$15.00 per year—stay current on Pitkin County, Garfield County, and Eagle County Audubon events, birding, and environmental advocacy. *Inscribe check to Roaring Fork Audubon Society, Box 1192, Carbondale, CO 81623*

Shade Grown Coffee—see p. 6 for details

# Aspen's Government Nicks Away at Greenhouse Gases

by Allen Best

ASPEN, Colo. – For the third year running, Aspen's city government has made good on its vow to reduce its responsibility for emissions of greenhouse gases.

The reduction so far is 23.7 percent, of which 8.8 percent occurred in the last year. All the efforts are being measured against a 2004-2005 inventory.

The larger part of the most recent cutback resulted from less coal and natural gas being burned to produce electricity, city officials tell *The Aspen Times*. The city government gets electricity from two utilities, Holy Cross Energy and the city's own utility department. Both have been buying more wind-generated electricity.

City employees are flying less often, and less natural gas is being used to heat buildings. As well, energy-saving improvements were made to the Aspen Recreation Center and solar panels have been added to a water treatment plant, reducing the need for coal-fired electricity.

The recorded reductions are for city operations, but not for the broader community. Through various forums, including the Mayors' Agreement on Climate Change and the Canary Initiative, Aspen has vowed dramatic reductions for the community overall, and is in the forefront of ski areas' reduction of greenhouse gases.

“Pussy said to the owl, ‘You elegant fowl...’”

(Edward Lear, *The Owl and the Pussycat*)

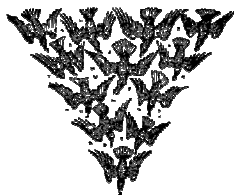
Attendance at the RFAS November “What a Hoot” owls program, presented by Jason Beason of Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, was off the charts! Over 60 people were enthralled—thanks to Jason and to all attending!



Kendall Henry is selling shade-grown, organic, fair-trade coffee for our chapter.

- You may select whole bean or ground.
- \$ 10.00 for a 12 oz. bag of breakfast, rainforest, French roast, or decaf.
- Please send order to [kendall@sopris.net](mailto:kendall@sopris.net) or call 970-928-8358 by the 7<sup>th</sup> of each month to pick up at the next Audubon meeting or to arrange a pick-up.

## Join the Great Backyard Bird Count



Count for Fun, Count for the Future—[www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org)

February 13-16, 2009

New York, NY and Ithaca, NY—Bird and nature fans throughout North America are invited to join tens of thousands of bird watchers for the 12<sup>th</sup> annual **Great Backyard Bird Count** (GBBC), February 13-16, 2009. A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, this event is an opportunity for people of all ages to discover the wonders of nature in backyards, schoolyards, and local parks, and, at the same time, make an important contribution to conservation. Participants count birds and report their sightings online at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

“The Great Backyard Bird Count benefits both birds and people. It’s a great example of citizen science. Anyone who can identify even a few species can contribute to... knowledge that is used to... to protect birds and biodiversity,” said Audubon Education VP, Judy Braus. “Families, teachers, children and all those who take part in GBBC get a chance to improve their observation skills, enjoy nature, and have a great time counting for fun, counting for the future.”

From novice bird watchers to experts, anyone can count birds for as little as 15 minutes or longer on one or more days of the event and report sightings online at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org). Participants can also explore the birds others are finding in their backyards, whether in their own neighborhood or thousands of miles away.

Additional online resources include tips to help identify birds, photos, and special materials for educators.

Regular free monthly Audubon meetings and programs are held the third Tuesday of every month, September through May, with the exception of December.

We meet at the Glenwood Springs Community Center at 100 Wolfsohn Rd., 7:00 pm.

A dessert potluck follows program.

Everyone is welcome;  
join us and bring a friend!

### National Audubon Society Chapter Membership Application

Yes, I'd like to join. Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and my local chapter.

I have enclosed a check payable to:

**National Audubon Society, Roaring Fork Chapter**

I have enclosed \$20 to begin a new membership

I have enclosed \$20 for a regular membership,  
**but I do not want the Audubon Magazine**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Send to:

National Audubon Society

Membership Data Center

P.O. Box 51001

Boulder, CO 80322-10017

**DO8**

**XCH**

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## Roaring Fork Raptor

This newsletter is published bi-monthly, September through May, by the Roaring Fork Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society. Members are encouraged to submit original articles, photos or art. Please state if the article or art has been published elsewhere, requiring publisher's permission. The editor reserves the right to edit and to select suitable articles for publication. Please feel free to reproduce and distribute all or any part of this publication. The deadline for the newsletter is the 1st of the month prior to publication. Please send copy to editor no later than this date. Send to Roaring Fork Audubon Society, % Jan Fedrizzi, Box 487, Eagle, CO 81631 or [dfnajt@yahoo.com](mailto:dfnajt@yahoo.com). A subscription to this newsletter (newsletter only, not a membership) is \$15/year. Make checks payable to Roaring Fork Audubon Society, send to Roaring Fork Audubon, Box 1192, Carbondale, CO 81623.

Early March—next Raptor in your mailbox! ~  
RFAS early 2009 calendar, p. 3

**Have questions about your membership or address change??? Call 1-800-274-4201.**

Roaring Fork Audubon  
Box 1192  
Carbondale, CO 81623