

ROARING FORK RAPTORS

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SOCIETY

www.roaringforkaudubon.org

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MAR-MAY 2011

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

- Roaring Fork Audubon seeks a new program chair and newsletter editor. For programs, please call Ann Johnson, 970-963-0661; for newsletter, Jan Fedrizzi, 970-328-6961. There are also openings for other board members. Please volunteer!
- A public meeting and pizza party will be held to discuss the future course of Roaring Fork Audubon at the Carbondale Town Hall, May 4, 2011, at 5 p.m. For Roaring Fork Audubon to be viable and to continue, we need your help! RSVP to birder@sopris.net or smnharris@gmail.com, so that we can order enough pizza.

Programs for March and April, 2011

- March 16, 2011~~Beaver: Nuisance or Opportunity?
Sherri Tippee
- April 20, 2011~~Birds and Their Habitats—a Key to ID in the Field
Janis Huggins

Don't miss these!! Program information in more detail on p. 4.

Please note: Roaring Fork Audubon programs are held on the third Wednesday of the month, 7 pm, at City Hall, 511 Colorado Avenue, in Carbondale. Dessert potluck accompanies program.

Upcoming Roaring Fork Audubon Field Trips and Events

April 30-May 1, 2011—Northwest Colorado Grouse—This overnight trip usually produces Greater Sage Grouse, Sharp-tailed Grouse, and Dusky Grouse, and more. Plan on meeting at the Glenwood Springs Mall parking lot and leaving from Glenwood at 10 am. Carpooling is planned. While birding our way to Craig, we will visit spots in the Piceance Creek basin and Rio Blanco Lake SWA (no fee.) Saturday night we will stay at the Holiday Inn in Craig, leaving early Sunday morning from Craig to see the grouse near Hayden. Plan on being home by dinner time. Contact **Tom McConnell** first, but make your own hotel reservations.

May 7, 2011—Spring Trip to Hart's Basin, Delta County—All kinds of migrating waterfowl, shorebirds and passerines are assured on this trip to Fruitgrowers' Reservoir, aka Hart's Basin, and other spots in Delta County. This all day trip—which will depend on good weather—is a fixture on our field trip calendar because of the abundant and dependable bird life there. Bring lunch and other necessities; be prepared to drive, if needed. Contact **Linda Vidal**.

May 10-11, 2011—Possible trip to Pawnee National Grasslands—If there is any interest in an overnight trip to the Pawnee National Grasslands in the middle of the week, Linda will lead a field trip. Pawnee is one of those places that every birder should see, according to nationally-known birder Pete Dunne. This trip doesn't work on weekends due to the campground being full, busy and noisy. Call **Linda Vidal**—she must have commitments by **April 15**.

May 14, 2011—Installing signs at Spring Park Reservoir—work day—see page 7.

June 11, 2011—Atlas Block work—Join Linda Vidal, Coen Dexter, and Brenda Wright—all birders extraordinaire—to work the Basalt Atlas Block. (The 2007-2011 Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas II project observes breeding birds in Colorado for research purposes. The information gathered will be compared to the 1987 Breeding Bird Atlas results, allowing for a long view of bird breeding, behavior, sightings, migrations, etc. See <http://www.cobreedingbirdatlasii.org/>) While the intent is to bird about 3/4 day, the Basalt block may be perfect for night observation of Flammulated Owls, also. If we do attempt owling, we will break mid-day, then meet again for an evening outing. Please be flexible. Call **Linda Vidal** if you'd like to participate.

June 12, 2011—2nd Annual Basalt Mountain owls, poorwills and pizza—Join Coen, Brenda and Linda on this trip. We'll meet for pizza early evening, then proceed up Basalt Mountain. Last year we saw a possible Common Poorwill and two Flammulated Owls—and this year we'll try again! Please contact **Linda Vidal** for details.

~field trip info~

Dave Clark

970-963-3479

Tom McConnell

(970) 379-7356

immac@rof.net

Linda Vidal

(970) 704-9950

birder@sopris.net

**Everyone is
welcome on RFAS
field trips:**

**You need not be a
RFAS member for
most trips. For
field trips, bring
your binoculars,
field guides, wa-
ter, snacks and a
lunch, and plan
for changing
weather.**

**Please notify
leader 3 days
before trip of your
intention to
attend. If you have
questions regard-
ing a trip, need
additional infor-
mation, or would
like to lead a field
trip or hike,
please contact
Linda Vidal or
Tom McConnell.**

Roaring Fork Audubon 2011 field trips *continued...*

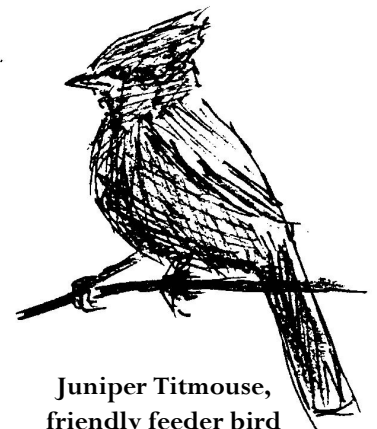
June 18, 2011—Express Creek, up Castle Creek, near Aspen—This is a great opportunity to see high-elevation birds. This will be an early morning trip up the Express Creek road, walking down looking for birds. Space will be limited, so make your reservations with **Linda Vidal** early. Lunch at the Pine Creek Cookhouse (remember, it's all about lunch!). This is one of Linda's Atlas Blocks (see Atlas info in June 11 field trip description).

June 25, 2011—Thompson Creek—Join Linda for a repeat of this great trip near Carbondale. Linda says, "This is a busy time of year for birding, but I had such a good time on this trip last year, and we saw so many birds that I'm looking forward to leading it again." We should see many migrant and resident birds. This will be a 1/2 day trip, finishing when the weather heats up mid-day. Please be prepared to car-pool, bring lunch and other needs. Final details will be in the June newsletter. Contact **Linda Vidal**.

July 16-17, 2011—Black Swifts in Ouray—This will be a weekend trip, driving over to Ouray, birding along the way, overnighting in Ouray. We'll plan on seeing the swifts in Box Canyon behind the waterfalls Sunday morning, after which we'll bird our way home. Because of logistics, e. g. motel reservations, the **registration deadline is May 28**. Information re lodging will be available from Linda by the cutoff day, with final details in the June Raptor. Call or e-mail Linda after May 1 for more information. **Linda Vidal** and **Tom McConnell** will lead this trip.

August TBA—Wet Mountain Valley with Arkansas Valley Audubon—For the past 26 years Arkansas Valley Audubon has done an August trip to the Wet Mountain Valley near Westcliffe. Birds and scenery are great, with the Sangre de Cristos to the west and the Wet Mountains to the east. Typically this trip produces over 100 bird species, thanks to the varied habitats found in this area. Overnight trip—details to come, in June Raptor. Contact **Tom McConnell**.

If you are a "Friend" of Roaring Fork Audubon, please check the expiration date next to your name on every newsletter label and renew your membership if it is about to expire. Please renew with our chapter by sending a check designated "Friend of RFAS." RFAS does not send renewal reminders. (see p. 5 for renewal coupon).



Juniper Titmouse,
friendly feeder bird

Courtesy Kirsten Munson

March and April program descriptions, continued from p. 1— Sherrie Tippee:

RFAS welcomes back Sherri Tippee for another Roaring Fork Audubon presentation. Tippee—as she prefers to be called—has been a fan of beavers since 1985. Beaver are more than humble rodents—Tippee will explain why she thinks that they are the answer to many of the ecological problems in the arid west.

Tippee, who has been seen on Animal Planet and Wildlife Rescues, will give a slide presentation and discuss why beaver are a “keystone” species. She will explore conflict solutions that allow beaver to stay where they belong—in our waterways—for the benefit of water quality, habitat, wildlife and livestock. Founder of the non-profit, Wildlife 2000, Tippee is internationally recognized for her efforts in live-trapping and relocating beaver.

Tippee spoke to RFAS a couple years ago and was roundly received and enjoyed! For a wondrous explication of beaver, their habitat and challenges, don't miss Sherri Tippee!

Janis Huggins:

Janis is author of *Wild at Heart ~ the Plants, Birds and Mammals of Snowmass/Aspen and the Colorado Rocky Mountains*, first published in 2005. Hailing from the Snowmass/Aspen area, she has guided naturalist tours, worked as a freelance botanist, and taught skiing and windsurfing. She received her B. S. in Natural Science (emphasizing botany) from the University Without Walls at Loretto Heights College in Denver in 1981. She has a particular passion for birds and their songs.

Janis's book was an extraordinary undertaking in natural history and is appropriate for use throughout the Colorado Rocky mountains. It covers the fauna—animals and birds—and flora of this region, and in so doing, is a handy one-volume field guide. Janis will have her books for sale, also, at the presentation.

Join RFAS for a peek into the world of a consummate naturalist at our April program: explore local high country habitats and discover which birds and wildflowers are most characteristic of each habitat.

Finding Magic in the Mountains

by Mary Harris

A great yogi once said that if you stand still and wait, a bird will land on your head. Well, that's not exactly how it happens, but last summer I discovered it does come close.

It began when Tom McConnell “volunteered” me to work on the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas, (see June 11, 2011 field trip description, p. 2, for info on Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas).

I was given two blocks, each 3 miles square. I was nervous to start because I had never done anything like this. I am an amateur birder, and although I have hiked many miles in Colorado, I had encountered relatively few nests. The trepidation worsened in mid-May, a few nights before I was to begin. I read the last surveyor's report, done 20 years ago. It was filled with breeding

confirmations of Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks, Kestrel, Common Nighthawk, Swainson's Thrush, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Band-tailed Pigeon, Great Horned Owl, Black-chinned and Broad-tailed Hummingbirds, Dusky Grouse, and at least 55 more species! My data would be the first record since the early 1990s, and the results would reflect the “health” of a large population of birds.

I thought about how much the Roaring Fork Valley had changed over the past 20 years and how significant this survey could be. What if my results showed a large decline in nesting birds just because I couldn't find them? I felt doomed to failure, but I was already committed so decided to at least try my best.

Part of the commitment was to rise at 5:00 a.m. and head out ASAP to catch the morning activity. While I can't recommend hiking alone to others, I found that the birds weren't intimidated by a lone observer. They were often so overwhelmed by the morning feeding frenzy that they paid no attention to the “*Magic*” continued p. 5

“Magic” continued

quiet lady with large binoculars pressed firmly against her face. And that’s when the magic began!

I became part of a secret world that I have only seen on Planet Earth DVDs. Birds that had recently flown from as far away as Argentina were right in front of me working on nests, frantically feeding babies, with males putting on great sexual displays for the females and rival males. A handsome Dusky Grouse put on a very sexy display, inflating his bright red air sacs, raising his electric yellow eyebrows while shaking and moaning. *(I was sure it was just for me).*

The thrill of discovering nests quickly became addictive. Over the course of 6 weeks I found over 25 nests, another 23 species of parents frantically feeding their newly fledged, and multiple males singing and defending territories.

Of course when you’re quiet, watching for birds, you reap other rewards as well. I enjoyed watching a Black Bear eating twinberries, marveled at eagles and hawks in aerial fights, found a gorgeous Bushtit nest carefully decorated with lichen, and with Goshawk research student Grant Frank, Chalesse Carson and I tracked down an incredible Northern Goshawk nest with juvenile, watching the male deliver food to the female in a dramatic mid- air collision. With Phil Nyland from the Forest Service, we found an entire intact mountain lion skull and endemic penstemon.

May’s fear of failure melted away and was replaced by a realization of how lucky I was to have witnessed the summer’s breeding activity at such close range; all just by being persistent and present. I missed my blocks when I needed to tend to real life, and would wonder what *my* birds were doing.

Breeding season will be here before long, with new magic and marvels. Grab a friend and get out to witness what we have right in our own back yards.

It is very rewarding to know that you are helping with an important and needed conservation tool that can eventually aid the protection of Colorado’s breeding birds. I know there are some Atlas blocks still available if you are the kind of person that has

knowledge of birds and wildlife, enjoys the outdoor life and has time to donate to this project. You can contact Project Coordinator Tom McConnell at immac@rof.net or go to the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas site, www.birdatlasing.org/Atlas/CO/.

Thanks to Mary Harris, Roaring Fork Audubon Society

Visit roaringforkaudubon.org

**ROARING FORK AUDUBON
LOCAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Please enroll me/us in the Roaring Fork Audubon Society. I/we may participate in all chapter activities, as well as receive the Roaring Fork Raptor newsletter. Dues are used for local chapter activities.

Date _____

Individual (\$20) _____

I have included an additional donation of

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (optional) _____ Email (please) _____

I do not want solicitations from National Audubon

**Enclosed is my check payable to: Roaring Fork Audubon
P. O. Box 1192
Carbondale, CO 81623**

If you would like to join or donate to the National Audubon Society directly and receive the award-winning Audubon Magazine, use chapter code DO87XCH and call 1-800-274-4201.

Book Review

The Ties That Bind: Birds, Nature and Us

by Mike Foster

Ed. Note: William R. Rosenberg, a high school science teacher at Eagle Valley High School, kindly agreed to review The Ties That Bind, published in 2010 by AuthorHouse, \$13.99. Many thanks to William for his review.

Mike F. Foster, a former history professor at DU, writes as a naturalist in his new book, *The Ties That Bind: Birds, Nature, and Us*. Much of what he writes has been discussed by many other writers before him, but he does add a fresh perspective to many of his topics. Foster writes about how we are responsible to nature and a part of nature, using his understanding and love of birds as a tool to encourage us to assess our attitudes and behaviors toward nature. Biology and ecology are not the foundation of this book, but when assessed, his reasoning is sound and the material is not overwhelming.

The introduction of one of the new theories of causes of mass extinctions shows that he is interested in keeping the science current. It is obvious that he has come to science late in his life, and it is not a natural part of his thinking. He does take the use of scientific knowledge and reasoning seriously, though.

If one expects the reading of this text to flow smoothly, it should be noted that it is a collection of essays, thus it does not have the flow of a single crafted work. The book is loaded with obscure and dated metaphors and academic vocabulary that makes the material less accessible to the reader. Perhaps it is from this perspective that it seems that he is condescending or even preaching to his reader.

The writing reflects the thoughts of a man nearing the end of his days and communicating about what is personally valuable using written language that is familiar and comfortable to him. It expresses who the writer is and is written more for the writer than for the reader, but it gives us a new lens through which to view the world. Read the essays as single units or related essays (by title), and the book gains life. Make sure to have time to sit and think as you read. What is said and the nuances behind what is said are valuable, so take the time to decipher the obscure metaphors and academic vocabulary.

William R. Rosenberg (MS Biological Sciences, MA Educational Psychology), science teacher at Eagle Valley High School and Colorado Mountain College (adjunct), has taught courses in environmental science, ecology, agriculture and biology for the past 13 years at the high school and college level.

Hummingbird feeders and self-stick decals for windows to prevent birds from colliding with your windows are available through RFAS. Please support our fundraising efforts. Call Mary Harris, 970-963-0319 or Linda Vidal, 970-704-9950 (after May 1) for details, or visit roaringforkaudubon.org, click on "Marketplace."

Informative and attractive
Spring Park Reservoir signs
to enhance special area

An important RFAS work day to install interpretive signs at Spring Park Reservoir IBA is scheduled for May 14.

In 2003, a committee from Watchable Wildlife, headed by John Gray, then a DOW Watchable Wildlife regional coordinator, undertook a project to raise awareness of watchable wildlife opportunities in Colorado. Linda Vidal was part of this committee. The result of her efforts on this committee was to have Spring Park Reservoir, north of El Jebel, in Eagle County declared an Important Bird Area (IBA).

The IBA program is a global effort to identify and conserve areas that are vital to birds and other biodiversity. By working with Audubon chapters, landowners, public agencies, community groups, and other non-profits, Audubon endeavors to interest and activate a broad network of supporters to ensure that all Important Bird Areas are properly managed and conserved. (More info at: <http://web4.audubon.org/bird/iba/>).

Spring Park Reservoir was designated an IBA for its importance as a stopover for birds migrating through the Cottonwood Pass-Spring Valley area. In bad weather, especially, there is all kinds of bird traffic. According to Vidal, "When you see 10,000 ducks on the pond, you know it is an important refuge." This is one of the most significant resting and feeding reservoirs on the Western

Slope for migrating waterfowl, and has a number of shorebirds which use the area for resting and feeding, as well.

Since 2003, Vidal has saved money from an annual birdathon to purchase interpretive signs for Spring Park Reservoir. Now the signs have been fabricated; on May 14 they will be installed, and we're looking for volunteers to help install them. Please call Mary Harris at 970-963-0319 or Linda Vidal at 970-704-9950 if you can help and for details. If there is inclement weather that day, the work day will be rescheduled.

The Reservoir is an irrigation reservoir owned by a non-profit reservoir company consisting of 56 parties. It was built in 1912 and has never allowed public access. Also, it has never been hunted or fished or allowed recreational boating; therefore, the waterfowl have used the reservoir as a stopover resting place during migration for generations. A county road parallels the western side of the reservoir, where the new interpretive signs will be located.

Colorado now has 54 IBAs, consisting of over 1,200,000 acres of protected land and water. Some of the more common IBA sites are Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado National Monument, Mesa Verde National Park and the Pawnee National Grasslands, to name a few. All of the IBAs in Colorado are monitored closely with the help of state agencies, conservation organizations, volunteers, avid birders and the general public—with an interest in conserving these precious areas.

RFAS considers the Spring Park IBA to be a gem; It is important to our migrating birds, as well as one of the few IBAs in our area. The interpretive signs are the finishing touch! Join us for a satisfying work day! (See roaringforkaudubon.org to view signs on-line.)

Save Trees for the Birds

Find out about programs and other activities of Roaring Fork Audubon Society (RFAS), which is initiating an e-mail-based notification system to inform members about RFAS's offerings. Please send your e-mail contact information to cobirder2002@yahoo.com, including your name for confirmation purposes.

We are also looking for additional active members who share our enthusiasm for our natural community. Please contact us through the above e-mail or visit our website, roaringforkaudubon.org.



—Stephen D'Amato

Roaring Fork Audubon
Box 1192
Carbondale, CO 81623

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

Join us!

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Roaring Fork Raptor

This newsletter is published September, December, March, and June by the Roaring Fork Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society. Members are encouraged to submit original articles or art. Please state if the item has been published elsewhere, requiring publisher's permission. The editor reserves the right to edit and to select suitable articles for publication.

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