



THE LARK BUNTING

QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE DENVER FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS

VOLUME 61 | ISSUE 4 | OCT 2025

DFOBIRDS.ORG

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DFO in a new century

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LAST WORD, LAST LOOK

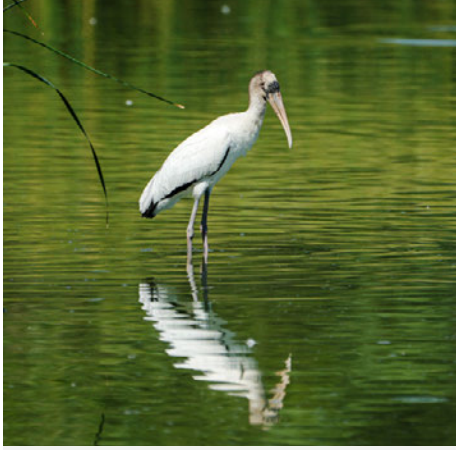
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course makes new birdies

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Wood Stork
Kenneth Stuckey
Alexx & Michael's Pond
Broomfield County

dfo
DENVER FIELD
ORNITHOLOGISTS
90th Anniversary



ON THE COVER

Nearly a century later, another Front Range visit from the stork (sans baby)



Ken Stuckey, a member of both DFO and Colorado Field Ornithologists, was introduced to the birding

world through frequent encounters with avid birders he met in the field in 2021-22. He is a retired auditor/accountant.

Patrick O'Driscoll

Not every notably rare bird that visits Colorado ends up on the cover of *The Lark Bunting*. Timing, the season of that issue of our quarterly, and the photography itself are among various factors.

But none of that mattered after the feel-good show that unfolded for three weeks this summer at a small suburban Denver pond. The surprise visit by the gawky, fuzzy-headed and charismatic young Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*) on this season's cover was simply too good to ignore.

Every rarity has its charms, and we had good ones this summer, from the Yellow Grosbeak in an Estes Park neighborhood to Colorado's first Anhinga in a Boulder County pond. But this bird made some eBirders positively giddy. From mid-August into September, MOB's flocked to [Alexx and Michael's Pond](#) in Broomfield for a species not seen in Colorado for 91 years. Local birder **Matt Hofeditz**, first to spot the pond's unexpected visitor the morning of Aug. 20, began his checklist comments with one word: "Insane."

As that day wore on, the eBird Rare Bird Alert postings got giddier. "Continuing, WOW!!!" one eBirder wrote. "Amazing rarity!" said another. "What a sight — still here @ sunset!" still another marveled. "More birders than birds!" wrote **Vicky Miles**. "I'm actually here for the waterthrush, LOL," joked **Eric DeFonso**. "Thin, spindly legs; pale, somewhat plump body; long, drooping, yellowish beak . . . but enough about me, there was also a Wood Stork!" cracked **John Arthur**.

In the first 24 hours after Hofeditz's find, 192 pond visitors checklisted "Wood Stork" on eBird. Less than a week later, the checklists had passed 500. As the weeks unfolded, uncounted hundreds of non-birders (not of few of them photographers) also visited. By the time the stork was last seen the evening of Sept. 11 by eBirder **Tim Smart**, was there any active Front Range birder who *hadn't* visited the pond to see it?

I confess I did not — because I'd already seen the bird! Three days before it landed in Broomfield, Colorado's third-ever Wood Stork flew into and out of Denver City Park, my birding patch, on Sunday morning, Aug. 17. I saw the bird for barely 2 minutes. Luckily, I had my camera. I snapped a few slightly blurry shots as proof as the juvenile stork circled over Ferril Lake, then continued northwest and out of sight.

After reporting it, I felt kind of guilty that nobody else had seen the super-rarity. So I was elated when Hofeditz re-found the bird three days later, and the parade of happy birders to Alexx & Michael's Pond got rolling.

I usually write something guidebook-y here about the species on our cover (photographed by DFO member **Ken Stuckey** the same morning the Wood Stork reappeared). I could quote *Birds of the World* that this "tactile feeder" catches its food not by sight like herons and egrets, but by feel with its long bill and "foot-stirring" in shallow wetlands. Or I could quote *Birds* that rare sightings like ours here in the West are "presumably" birds dispersing north from Mexico or Central America, not from Florida, Georgia and South Carolina, the birds' US nesting range. I could even delve into the legend of storks delivering babies (thanks to Hans Christian Andersen's fairytale *The Storks*).

But let's just celebrate our happy summer luck to have hosted this alien visitor from another habitat more than a thousand miles away and, we hope, on its way home again.

Patrick O'Driscoll, editor of *The Lark Bunting* since 2020, took up birding in his 50s. A retired newspaper journalist, he joined DFO in 2014 and became a field trip leader in 2016



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The Lark Bunting, formerly the monthly newsletter of Denver Field Ornithologists, is the club's quarterly journal and is published online in January, April, July and October.

DFO On the Wing, the club's digital newsletter, is emailed monthly to all members.

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Submit time-sensitive, month-to-month news items, tips, announcements, photos and other materials to the monthly newsletter's editor at comm@dfobirds.org.

Editors reserve the right to accept and edit suitable articles and photos for publication.



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**A community of birders,
learning and acting together
for avian wildlife**

Denver Field Ornithologists is an all-volunteer organization that conducts hundreds of free birdwatching field trips throughout the year and welcomes participation and membership by all. DFO promotes enjoyment of nature, the study of birds, and protection of them and their habitats in greater Denver and beyond.

In addition to field trips, evening programs and birding workshops, DFO conducts community science in the field, including the spring Hawk Watch raptor migration count on Dinosaur Ridge.

DFO awards grants annually for bird-related research, education and conservation projects in Colorado. For more information, visit the [Research, Education & Conservation Grants](#) page on the DFO website.

DFO is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and financial contributions to DFO's three giving funds are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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individually via the
[DFO Leadership Page](#).



FROM DFO'S PERCH

As DFO wraps its 90th year, what birding goals are in YOUR next one?

Mary Geder

By the time you read this, we will have had our first in-person DFO program meeting since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 — plus a second, within days of the publishing of this *Lark Bunting*, to celebrate Denver Field Ornithologists' 90th birthday. These September and October milestones were meant to recapture something from our more sociable past. Before Covid, Denver Field Ornithologists members shared monthly evenings together in museum and church meeting places, not in today's convenient but only digitally connected auditorium of live Zoom.

If you're new to these gatherings, we hope you enjoyed the face-to-face storytelling of birding adventures in southeastern Arizona's "Sky Islands" (DFO field trip virtuoso **Joey Kellner** on Sept. 29) and the wonders of today's eBird from *the* most knowledgeable source (co-founder and director **Chris Wood**, a DFO alumnus, on Oct. 13). There will be more opportunities for your feedback, but feel free to express your likes and dislikes now to any and all DFO Board members and to DFO friends and other birders on your next field trip. We welcome your ideas, reviews pro and con, and suggestions for future gatherings. Many thanks to all of you who attended these experimental returns to in-person programming.



Glancing at the calendar, it's hard to believe this issue of *The Lark Bunting* (now quarterly instead of monthly) is our last until 2026. With that in mind, what are you looking forward to in this final quarter of 2025 birding? These come to my mind.

- **Seasonal rarities:** As fall and winter grow colder, be on the lookout for vagrant and rare sightings of birds from the north and west. You may not head into the field thinking about loons, jaegers, unusual waterfowl, Gyrfalcons, Bohemian Waxwings or Snowy Owls, but all of them and more are possible visitors as winter deepens. That's one of the charms of birding, isn't it? YOU NEVER KNOW what you might see
- **Bird counts:** We just finished the DFO-led fall count in September — but dozens of National Audubon Christmas Bird Counts are on the horizon across Colorado, including the mid-December suburban Denver count circle organized by DFO's Kellner. They're all great opportunities to brighten your early winter (Dec. 14 to Jan. 5) with fun group efforts to record bird species diversity and numbers in a more than century-old tradition. Best of all, the Christmas counts welcome birders of all abilities and ages with a warmth of camaraderie and good humor regardless of the temperature outside

And what of 2026? You don't have to make a New Year's resolution out of it, but I like to ask myself this question when the calendar flips forward: What is the one thing I want to accomplish this year in my personal birding?

"Resolution" sounds too much like "must do," so I call this an "expansion" — looking for a new place for my birding to move into. To start your thought process, try using at least three of the old "five W's and one H" (Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?).

Continued on page 6

- **What** . . . am I looking to get from my birding? New species? More knowledge of habitats? Detailed observation of specific behaviors? Better skill at ID'ing birdsong?
- **When** . . . will I go birding? Do I want to bird more frequently? Can I make my schedule accommodate that?
- **Where** . . . can I go birding? Where can I find new places to bird? Am I looking for specific birds at specific times? Where can I safely go night birding / owling?

If you've been birding a while, you have probably done this drill many times before. Your birding habits may be well-established: lists (mental or otherwise) of what equipment for which season; smartphone with maps of the known birding world (assuming connectivity in the field); all the apps and guidebooks you need to ID the hard ones; preferred snacks, and maybe even a few dear birding buddies to go with.

Now think about that one thing you need to sharpen that new-year focus. Aside from the "YOU NEVER KNOW" aspect of unexpected sightings, keep also in mind the prospect that "THERE IS ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW TO LEARN." I've narrowed mine down to two things, but I promise to choose one before New Year's.

Here's wishing all of you a worthy focus for your 2026 birding year. May the rest of your 2025 be filled with good birds and joyful anticipation of more.

— **Mary**

Mary Geder, substitute-writing this year in the "From the President" slot, has held several volunteer posts since joining DFO in the early 2000s. She began work as a US Fish & Wildlife Service biologist before a 30-year career in the oil and gas field. Now retired, she lives in Lakewood



Snowy Owl
John C. Breitsch



Audience members at first
DFO in-person program since
the COVID-19 pandemic
Jim Esten

DFO News Notes

Patrick O'Driscoll

*Got blurbs on birds? Share with **DFO News Notes**: Colorado birding newsbits, eBird news, tales from the trail, personal birding adventures (and life birds!), milestones, etc. Email items, photos and any questions to patodrisk@gmail.com.*

NEXT ON BIRD BOMBS: "AUTUMN ID CHALLENGES" OCT. 23

After a summer break, DFO's "BIRD BOMBS" series of bird identification webinars returns on Thursday, Oct. 23, with "Autumn ID Challenges" at 7 p.m. MDT via Zoom. The program, led by DFO Field Trips chair **David Suddjian**, will focus on identification challenges special to birds migrating in the fall, including loons and scoters in the waterfowl family and most birds of prey. Previous episodes in the BIRD BOMBS series are in a 3-year video archive viewable on the [Past Programs](#) page of the DFO website. They can also be viewed on [DFO's YouTube Channel](#).



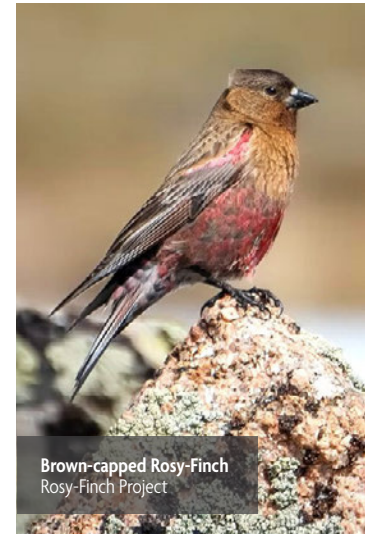
REGISTER FOR BIRD BOMBS

LOCAL TEEN'S ROSY-FINCH PROJECT PREPS FOR WINTER

A young Highlands Ranch birder's ambitious project to help preserve vital habitat and food sources for Colorado's native [Brown-capped Rosy-Finches](#) is asking Colorado birders to share their observations of the species this winter. **Grant Brandberg**, age 15, calls his community-science effort the

[Rosy-Finch Winter Project](#)

"a public online survey in which birders, feeders and community members can submit winter feeding locations and sightings." He intends for the data "to help researchers, conservationists and everyday bird lovers learn more about the species' winter ecology, identify threats to the feeding locations, and ensure these critical habitats are protected." Brandberg asks that from now through March, Colorado birders use a [survey form](#) on his website to report their observations. "Every single sighting can help fill in a missing piece of the puzzle," he adds.



He hit on the idea while brainstorming ideas in his school library for a personal "passion project" involving birds. He came across an article about the decline of the Brown-capped Rosy-Finch. "I knew immediately that I was going to help save the little rosy-brown bird," he says. In subsequent research, he discovered the bird is "one of the least-studied species in North America, mainly due to their limited geographic range and tendency to live in extremely high elevations." He quotes Bird Conservancy of the Rockies that the bird's numbers "have declined by as much as 95 percent over the past 50 years and, unfortunately, we don't know why." He intends to help answer that question, with the help of other Colorado birders.

Brandberg has been a birder for one-third of his young life. "During COVID, for my 10th birthday, I got a bird feeder," he says. "I found some bird seed, hung the feeder up, and before the chickadees had even found the feeder," a flock of tanagers swooped in. "The Western Tanager was the flame . . . that lit my passion for birding." And now the Brown-capped Rosy-Finch is sustaining the fire.

Visit Brandberg's project website for more information. If you have questions, you can contact him at colorado.birdresearch@gmail.com.

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DFO FIELD TRIPS CHAIR LEADS 600TH TRIP (AND COUNTING)

David Suddjian, chair of DFO's Field Trips Committee, reached an astonishing milestone this summer by leading his 600th DFO trip. On July 26, Suddjian and **Anne Craig** co-led six other birders on an [outing to White Ranch Park West](#) in Jefferson County. "It was a lovely summer trek, with lots of wildflowers, great vistas, sweet-scented forest air, and fun birds," David wrote later on DFO's Facebook Group page, listing bird highlights from Lazuli Bunting and Red Crossbill to Common Nighthawk and Western Tanager. He had reached the 500-trip mark just a year and three weeks earlier, on Independence Day 2024. "I'm not sure I'll make to #700, but I hope I can," he added. "#601 is tomorrow." As of this writing, he's already passed 620 trips led. Since the first DFO trip Suddjian led was in October 2016, he has averaged nearly 70 outings a year. By comparison, no other leader in DFO's "modern era" (field trips since 2014 when the club began keeping records online) has approached even 100 total trips led. Congrats to David Suddjian, Ironman of DFO field trip leaders!



Field Trips chair David Suddjian led his 600th DFO trip in July at White Ranch Park
Kelsey Robb



BIRD CONSERVANCY'S FALL FUNDRAISER OCT. 17

Silent and live auctions of art, birding and research trips in exotic locations abroad, and numerous other objects and experiences head the menu for this year's "A Night for the Birds," the annual fundraising for Bird Conservancy of the Rockies. The event on Friday, Oct. 17 begins at 6 p.m. at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science, where bird lovers, philanthropists and friends of the Conservancy gather to share their passion for birds and the wild places they call home. Subtitled "A Beacon of Hope" this year, there will be delicious food and drinks, fun and games with great prizes, and inspiring stories from special guest speakers in behalf of the Conservancy and its innovative and effective bird conservation work. For ticket information, visit Conservancy's [Night of the Birds](#).



October 13 DFO 90th birthday meeting

NOTE: DFO's in-person October program, **90 Years of Birding, 10 years Ahead: DFO in the eBird Story** (with DFO alumnus **Chris Wood**), fell too close to our deadline to cover or fully promote in this issue.

If you read this before or by **Monday, October 13**, you can still attend, at 6:30 p.m. at the Lowry Conference Center, 1061 Akron Way, Denver 80230.

Click RSVP box for details of the free event. If you cannot attend, DFO expects to post a video of the program within a couple of weeks in the DFO's website's Past Programs archive and on DFO's YouTube channel.

[CLICK HERE TO RSVP](#)



Chris Wood, director of eBird

Caught in the SNOWstorm: Collaborative Research on Snowy Owls

Scott Weidensaul, author,
SNOWstorm co-founder
Monday, November 24, 2025
7 p.m. MST via Zoom

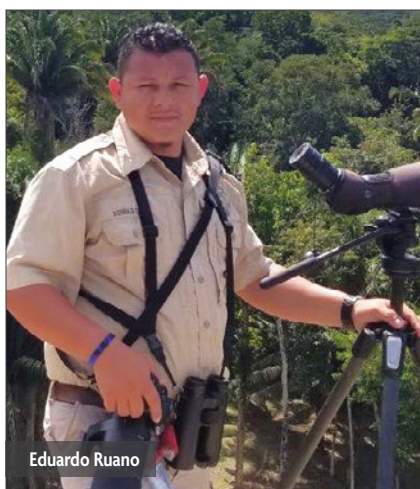
[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

The winter of 2013-14 saw the largest irruption of Snowy Owls into the eastern US in perhaps a century. It also marked an unprecedented opportunity to learn more about these mysterious hunters of the Arctic. Out of that event came Project SNOWstorm, a collaborative research effort focused on the huge but underknown raptor of the North.

Author, researcher and SNOWstorm co-founder **Scott Weidensaul** ("WHY-den-sau") will share the project's story in "Caught in the SNOWstorm," a Zoom webinar on **Monday, Nov. 24 at 7 p.m.** SNOWstorm's collaborative focus on snowy owls came together, quickly, funded by contributors from around the globe. It is now the most comprehensive study of Snowy Owls in the world.

Scientists, bird banders and wildlife veterinarians have volunteered their time and efforts. Using satellite transmitters, they have tracked more than 110 Snowy Owls from Alaska and the Dakotas to the Great Lakes, Northeast US and beyond. The project also consults with airports and airfields to prevent airplane-owl strikes.

Weidensaul presented another DFO program via Zoom three years ago, in March 2022, on global bird migration after the publication of his *New York Times* bestselling book, *A World on the Wing: The Global Odyssey of Migratory Birds*. He has written nearly 30 other books on natural history, including the Pulitzer Prize finalist *Living on the Wind*. A fellow of the American Ornithological Society, he is a contributing editor for *Audubon* magazine. Based in New Hampshire, Weidensaul is an active field researcher.



Eduardo Ruano

Birding former British Honduras? You'd Better BELIZE it

Eduardo Ruano and Ruben Arevalo,

Belizean bird guides

Monday, January 26, 2026

7 p.m. MST via Zoom

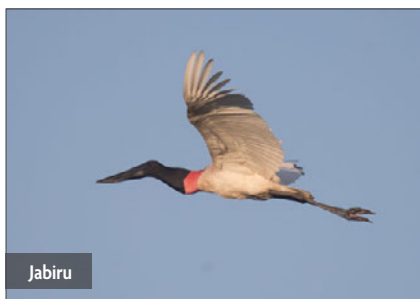
[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)



Ruben Arevalo

Formerly British Honduras until gaining independence from Great Britain in 1981, Belize is known to travelers as an English-speaking vacation mecca (also Spanish and Creole) of beaches, snorkeling and diving, rainforest adventuring and ancient Mayan ruins on the Caribbean side of Central America.

It is also dream habitat for birds. Although Belize is Central America's second-smallest country (roughly the size of Massachusetts), half of its land is covered with rainforests. More than a third of the land is under environmental protection, and it is the region's least-populated country. No wonder it is home to more than 600 species of birds, from multiple kinds of trogons, motmots and puffbirds to the Yellow-headed Parrot and the Jabiru stork, tallest bird in the Western Hemisphere. The species also include large numbers of North American warblers and flycatchers that overwinter in Belize.



Jabiru

Meet the birds of Belize and more through the eyes and photographs of Belizean bird guides **Eduardo Ruano** and **Ruben Arevalo** in DFO's first evening program of 2026. "**Birding former British Honduras? You'd better BELIZE It!**" is set for **Monday, January 26 at 7 p.m. MST via Zoom.**

Ruano and Arevalo are longtime guides at Lamanai Outpost Lodge, one of several well-known destinations on the Belize birding tour circuit. Their home base has checklisted more than 400 bird species, and the lodge is a four-time

winner of the H. Lee Jones Belize Bird-a-thon, an annual 24-hour competition named for the ornithologist-author of the *Birds of Belize* guidebook. It is also headquarters of a long-term University of Florida study of Morelet's crocodile.

Presentation topics range from the land and tree birds of Belize's inland rainforests and pine savannas to shorebirds and waders of the Caribbean coastal region, where the Belize Barrier Reef of corals, mollusks and fish is part of the 700-mile Great Mayan Reef, second longest in the world. Nighttime boat safaris may reveal Yucatan nightjars and poorwills, and tropical forest walks cross paths with Great Curassows, Ocellated Turkeys, Red-lored Parrot and Collared Aracari, a kind of toucan.



Ted Floyd

The Wonders & Glories of Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge, the Greatest Place on Earth

Ted Floyd, Colorado birder-writer-educator,
editor of *Birding Magazine*

Monday, February 23, 2026

7 p.m. MST via Zoom

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

We haven't been keeping score, but by *The Lark Bunting's* very unofficial count, Colorado birding writer-editor, educator and free thinker **Ted Floyd** has been a DFO program speaker approximately twelvety-six-birdzillion times, give or take a few. Denver Field Ornithologists keeps bringing Ted back because he *always* has fresh and provocative things to say about birds and humans, and the collective birding pastime-obsession-addiction that brings the two communities together.

If you're a regular reader of the [CoBirds email birding list-serv](#), you've also seen Floyd's occasional postings about epic birding daytrips (and nocturnal bird listening), full of granular details not only about birds but also other flora and fauna (humans included) along the way. And whenever Ted's subject is a visit to [Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge](#) — usually with a band of smart, eager young birders — it's best to drop whatever you're doing and read along.

So mark your calendar now for **Monday, Feb. 23, 2026** and Floyd's next DFO evening presentation, "**The Wonders & Glories of Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge, the Greatest Place on Earth.**" Whatever Ted decides to show and tell about that improbably rich haven for birds, bison and other critters on the edge of urban Denver, his Zoom webinar at 7 p.m. MST will be worth every minute.

As the Lafayette-based co-editor of the American Birding Association's *Birding Magazine*, Floyd needs little introduction, but in quick snapshots, he is:

- A frequent speaker at bird symposiums and festivals and a promoter-educator for young and developing birders
- Author of more than 200 bird articles and five bird books (with three more on the way) and contributor to ornithological and conservation research
- An eBirder who has filed at least one checklist a day for more than 18-1/2 years
- A photographer whose glorious bird images on [his Instagram feed](#) carry Insta-tutorials on each species

Meeting, greeting, and field tripping in a new century: ‘Bird club’ renews and refreshes its decades-old ways

Editor’s note: This year, Denver Field Ornithologists celebrates 90 years as a birding club. To mark this milestone, The Lark Bunting quarterly is publishing DFO @ 90, a new history of our club in four segments. Parts 1, 2 and 3 appeared in the [January](#), [April](#) and [July](#) issues (click links to read). Part 4 follows.

Sharon Tinianow and Patrick O’Driscoll

In the first decade of the new millennium, many members of Denver Field Ornithologists still referred to their decades-old organization in a charmingly quaint way. Former DFO president **Tamie Bulow** (2005-07) still remembers how her birding friend and mentor **Patty Echelmeyer** (president 1968-70) put it when talking about the next monthly get-together: “I’m going to bird club tonight.”

Back when “Zoom” only meant “go fast” or “telescopic camera lens,” DFO’s monthly program meetings were much-anticipated social occasions, not the physically remote, online linkups of today. Like now, there was a feature presentation by a knowledgeable speaker. But those evening gatherings were also occasions for companionship and catching up with friends old and new — face-to-face monthly check-ins in less-wired times.

“Everybody felt comfortable being there and seeing your old friends,” Bulow recalled in a recent interview. Every meeting was still held at the Denver Museum of Natural History, where DFO had met ever since its founding in 1935 as the Colorado Bird Club. Each of the monthly sessions was preceded by a 30-minute social half-hour to meet and greet, mingle, and explore the “free table” of bird-related books in back. After the evening program concluded, people tended to linger in amiable knots for more social time and casual follow-up Q&A with the speaker and each other.

On the move

Even though the museum underwent major renovations starting in 2001, the work did not disrupt the monthly gatherings. DFO president **Toni Rautus** (2003-05) arranged to move the meetings to the Denver Zoo. When DFO returned to the museum (now the Denver Museum of Nature & Science), the regular meeting place was the Ricketson Auditorium. (Another major renovation in 2019 would force DFO to leave DMNS for good.)

Continued on page 13

MONTHLY PROGRAMS

If you missed it: DFO’s September and October programs

DFO archives videos of our monthly fall, winter and spring programs. If you could not attend DFO’s first evening programs after the summer break, click the “WATCH ONLINE” link below the September title to view that program recording on DFO’s YouTube channel. The DFO website’s “Past Programs” page also contains These and numerous other DFO Programs from recent years

Monday, September 29, 2025

Trogons, Hummers, Roadrunners: Birding SE Arizona with DFO’s “Sky Islands”

Guru **Joey Kellner**
Birder, herpetologist

[WATCH ONLINE](#)





DMNS ornithology chief Garth Spellman leads vireo + nuthatch ID seminar with DFO trip leaders in 2017
Chuck Hundertmark



DFO past presidents Mary Cay Burger (2007-09) and Tami Bulow (2005-07)



Birding during COVID-19 meant mandatory masks on this DFO conservation committee outing in late 2020
Susan Blansett



Joe Roller, right, DFO president 2015-17, with Tom Behnfield at the DFO picnic
Will Burt

DFO @ 90 *cont from page 12*

Twenty-five years ago, the September 2000 membership meeting topic was “Birding in Australia,” presented by none other than **Bill Turner**, DFO’s current Programs manager and, back then, an organizer of birding tours abroad. Travel was a recurring theme that millennium year. Another trip organizer, former DFO president **Norm Erthal** (1991-93), presented twice in 2000 with “Birding in Attu” at one meeting and “Oilbirds and Mixtecs: Birding in Trinidad & Tobago and Oaxaca” at another. DFO birding ambassador and future president **Joe Roller** (2015-17) had kicked off the year with “Penguins and Ice – a trip to the Antarctic Peninsula.” Later in 2000, **Steve Jones**’s program topic was “Nebraska Sandhills: Sea of Grass.”

Such show-and-tell programs with knowledgeable narration and pictures of exotic birds and locales were popular for both avid globetrotters and armchair birders alike. But travelogues by regulars (Erthal, **Bob Richter**, **John Drummond** and others) and prominent guest speakers weren’t the only fare on DFO’s monthly menu. Presentations also included conservation, wildlife and scientific research topics. Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (now Bird Conservancy of the Rockies) supplied interesting speakers nearly every year. So did government agencies (US Fish & Wildlife Service, Colorado Wildlife and more), area universities and non-government organizations, including Colorado chapters of National Audubon.

When Colorado birding raconteur **Ted Floyd** — the Lafayette-based editor of American Birding Association’s *Birding Magazine* — presented “Advanced Warbler Identification” at the May 2004 meeting, 103 people attended. That turnout is still a DFO record for an in-person meeting. (A couple of marquee Zoom webinar presentations during the COVID-19 pandemic drew two to three times as many digital attendees.) Floyd, a frequent featured DFO speaker through the years, is scheduled once again this coming winter (February 2026, via Zoom).

Unparalleled field trips

The field trips program, always a point of pride in the club’s long history, was unparalleled in 2000 and remains so today. In the first decade of the 2000s, a birder visiting Denver on any given weekend could join in a field trip with DFO. With at least one trip each Saturday and Sunday to mostly in-state destinations nearby and farther afield, about 100 trips a year were the norm. (Today the annual count is more than twice that.) Club historian **Warren Finch** (president 1982-83) reported that in 2001 those trips were led by 57 volunteer leaders, to 64 different locations in Colorado and three in Wyoming. They observed 280 species over the course of 1,048 field-trip hours, driving 7,800 miles and walking 350 miles.

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Getting it all together back then depended on simplicity and volunteer dedication. There was no field trip committee like now — nor was there online registration for participants. A team of four schedulers, each responsible for three different calendar months, phoned trip leaders month by month to recruit them for outings. Echelmeyer, the former president, performed this vital scheduling function for 30 years (1981-2011), joined over the years by volunteer stalwarts like **Jackie King**, **Lynn Willcockson** (president 1963-66), **Diane Johnson**, **Alison Hilf**, **Meredith Anderson** and **Jill Boice** (now chair of DFO's Grants Committee). By the end of the 21st century's first decade, the scheduling job had become too much for four people. Additional volunteers stepped in to help.

Additional opportunities to enjoy birds, birding and varied writings about them were promoted in *The Lark Bunting* newsletter, which as a monthly publication continued to include field trip summaries and compilations of bird sightings. Newsletter editor **Veronica Holt**, a native of Scotland, even connected DFO with her hometown birding group, the [Angus & Dundee Bird Club](#), in 2003. She and A&DBC's president, **Bob McCurly**, set up a "twinning agreement" that linked the two organizations in field trip information sharing. There were even exchange-style visits, including a 10-member Angus & Dundee delegation's trip to Denver for two weeks in summer 2004 (with field trips and a party). Individual DFO members were warmly greeted on birding visits to the Angus & Dundee region of east Scotland's North Sea coast.

The DFO-hosted Rare Bird Alert continued to be operated by a trio of volunteers. The club participated in local circles of National Audubon's Christmas Bird Count and conducted DFO's own spring and fall counts every year. In short, DFO was humming along with interesting meetings, prolific field trips, a monthly newsletter and many other activities.

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Nature's Educators showed off birds of prey to a Hawk Watch fundraiser in October 2022
Patrick O'Driscoll



Mark Amershek, usually the picture taker, caught on camera during a 2018 DFO field trip
Diane Roberts



Trip leader David Suddjian is joined by a fellow grizzled creature on Park County field trip in October 2023
Anne Craig

Redoubled efforts

The smooth operation very nearly did not last. **Norm Lewis** (president 1996-99) sounded an unexpected alarm in the April 2001 issue of *The Lark Bunting*. In an article headlined “Could this be the end?,” Lewis pleaded for more volunteers to perform vital work of the club: lining up monthly speakers, putting out the newsletter, and organizing field trips. “It really seems a shame that a group with as long and productive a history as the DFO should have to close its doors,” he wrote bluntly. “Everyone wants to enjoy the benefits of membership, but few want to make the personal sacrifices to keep the operation running.”

The appeal had the desired effect. The next newsletter in May 2001 reported that eight members had volunteered to help. Holt became the new compiling editor of *The Lark Bunting*, and the others took on various tasks of gathering information and writing articles. The newsletter underwent a visual transformation that year, too. Under Holt’s editorship, new features were adopted: “So Sayeth the Speaker” (a review of the previous month’s evening program), “Birding 101” (advice on bird identification), and “Demeter’s Torch” (enlightening musings on birds and birding by **Mike Forster**), as well as reprints of interesting articles from other publications. When the DFO website was updated in 2003, the newsletter was posted online for the first time in the club’s history. Shortly after that, the compilations of bird sightings were moved to the website, too. (The printed-on-paper version of the newsletter became optional until declining interest led DFO to end it after December 2022.)

In 2010, another alarm sounded. The January newsletter informed donors that although DFO was a registered nonprofit corporation with the State of Colorado, the club’s standing with the IRS had not been clarified in 17 years. In effect, DFO had somehow fallen out of 501(c)(3) nonprofit status, so donations to the club were no longer tax deductible. Thanks to the work of **Bob Shade**, DFO treasurer at the time, the club’s tax status was eventually re-clarified and contributions were tax-free once more.

"Dynamic" changes loom

That was just the start of what former president **Chuck Hundertmark** (2011-15 and 2017-19) now diplomatically calls “a dynamic period” for DFO. Immediately after he took office in July 2011, a new crisis loomed. On a field trip to the Pine/Bailey area that June, participants returned to their usual parking spot — used in the past without incident — to find they’d all been towed. The meetup spot turned out to be private property, and they had to pay \$307 apiece to get their cars back.

The incident prompted Hundertmark to look more closely at field trip procedures, including its one-sentence liability waiver. He discovered many

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Mary Cay Burger and Karen Drozda staffing a DFO book giveaway at a Barr Lake bird festival in September 2020



Gregg Goodrich conducting one of his DFO field workshops for using eBird's mobile app with Chuck Hundertmark



The COVID-19 pandemic led DFO to conduct board meetings and programs on Zoom



Familiar faces in SW New Mexico on epic 2019 DFO trip by the late John Breitsch, third from left with Alison Kondler

trip leaders considered it legally worthless and had stopped asking participants to sign it. Other club guidelines for trip leaders were just as brief and only suggestions. Soon, the DFO Board surveyed the membership about field trip leadership. The responses told a blunt story: Although several trip leaders got excellent reviews, others weren't meeting basic safety standards and didn't always accommodate and serve participants with less birding ability.

Meanwhile, a new crisis rose over mishandled finances. In 1994, a generous donor had endowed a fund to support DFO grants for bird-related educational purposes. At some point before 2011, a previous DFO Board reinvested the DFO Educational Endowment Fund's \$25,000 and \$6,000 in club reserves with Bridge Premium, a Denver finance company that promised higher interest than the very low rates banks offered at the time. But in August 2012, DFO learned the Securities and Exchange Commission had charged Bridge and its owners with operating a Ponzi scheme. The Bridge group was eventually found guilty and ordered to repay investors. Despite trying for several years to recover the club's investment, DFO lost most of it.

Under Hundertmark, the board moved quickly to protect DFO's finances. A fact-finding committee led by board member **Bill Wuerthele** (not on the board when the funds were invested in Bridge Premium) dug into what happened. Meanwhile, club treasurer **Mary Geder** chaired a new Stewardship Committee that drafted policies to prevent being defrauded ever again.

The times were ripe for both soul-searching and brainstorming. In October 2012, the DFO Board held a retreat. The results were revamped communications, a stronger field trip program, board restructuring and adoption of a strategic plan. After the retreat, Wuerthele's committee interviewed board members, and at the board's November meeting, it passed measures to improve transparency, recordkeeping and board operations.



A DFO Better Birding workshop with bird photo ID quiz on a classroom screen
Patrick O'Driscoll

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About DFO @ 90



This four-part history of Denver Field Ornithologists marks 2025's 90th birthday of the club. The

project team includes lead writer **Sharon Tinianow** (DFO president), *The Lark Bunting* editor **Patrick O'Driscoll**, and club historian **Kris Haglund**, with assistance from numerous members and supporters.

Research sources include interviews with veteran members of DFO, Denver Public Library archives, and the DFO archives at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science, where the club met from its founding in 1935 through 2018. Special thanks to the DMNS Archives Department, led by **Laura Uglean-Jackson**.

DFO @ 90 cont from page 16

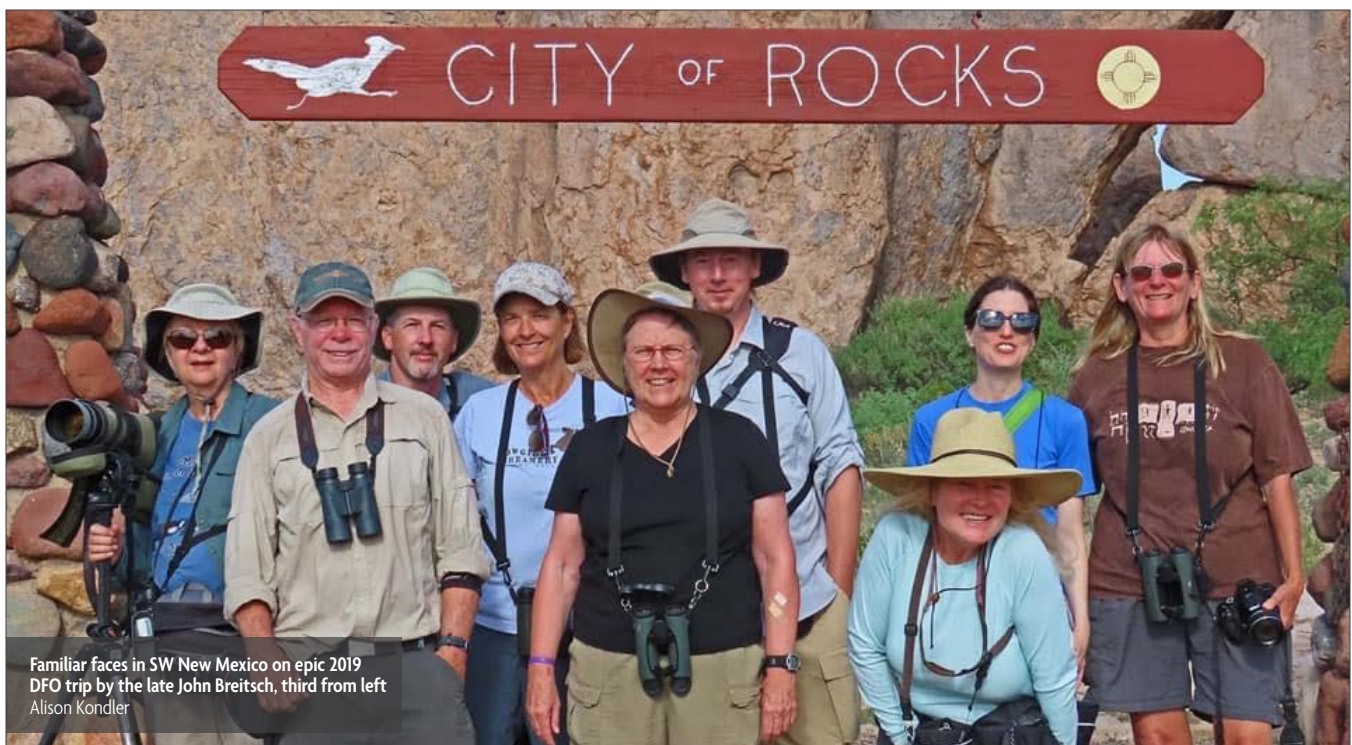
Righting the DFO ship

Throughout the transition from crisis to change in Hundertmark's "dynamic period," a new column by the president in *The Lark Bunting* kept members current. Originally labeled "How the Sausage Is Made," it evolved into today's "From the President." Thanks to Hundertmark's leadership and dedicated efforts of the board, Denver Field Ornithologists was righting itself.

By the time DFO marked its 80th birthday in 2015, the waves of change were still rolling in. A new investment policy included guidelines for handling finances, and a new (and now thriving) Research, Education & Conservation Fund rose from the ashes of the Ponzi-plundered Educational Endowment Fund. DFO formed its first Field Trips Committee, with longtime trip leader **Karen von Saltza** as director. She had led a team that drew up guidelines for field trip leaders, bringing the club into a more orderly process of creating, leading and signing up for outings. In 2014, field trip registration went online for the first time at the DFO website.

Kay Niyo, secretary of the DFO Board, became the newsletter editor and **Debbie Marshall** was hired to do the layout. **Ira Sanders** connected the club with a lawyer who drafted a more comprehensive liability waiver for field trips. **Ann Johnson** was hired to redesign the dfobirds.org website, adding the functions we enjoy today, especially easy-click online registration for field trips and one-time signing of the field trip waiver online.

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Familiar faces in SW New Mexico on epic 2019 DFO trip by the late John Breitsch, third from left
Alison Kondler

Succeeding Hundertmark as president in 2015, retired physician and leading Colorado birder **Joe Roller** was an affable, good-humored and invigorating influence who carried on DFO's recovery. He was also the club's most effective recruiter ever, buttonholing and charming numerous members into volunteer roles and tasks. When the longtime compiler of the Colorado Rare Bird Alert retired in 2018, Roller enlisted and led a circle of volunteers to keep the daily report going another year and a half. It folded only when an unexpected cancer diagnosis sidelined Roller six months before his untimely death on Thanksgiving Eve of 2020.

With field trip rules in place, birding skills enrichment followed as current leaders were certified and new leaders trained. Trip leaders flocked to workshops both indoors and out. They sharpened their knowledge in well-attended seminars, from a Fort Collins birds-and-bugs ramble with noted birder-insect expert **David Leatherman** to a Denver Museum of Nature & Science session with ornithology chief **Garth Spellman** and the museum's collected study skins of White-breasted Nuthatches and Warbling Vireos. Field Trips Committee member **Greg Goodrich** also guided trip leaders and participants alike in adopting eBird's new mobile app to record bird sightings and checklists from the field, an invaluable practice in wide use today.

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Karen von Saltza, director of DFO field trips from 2010s to 2021
Patrick O'Driscoll



Insect expert David Leatherman explaining cottonwood galls at bird workshop in Fort Collins' Grandview Cemetery ca. 2019
Chuck Hundertmark

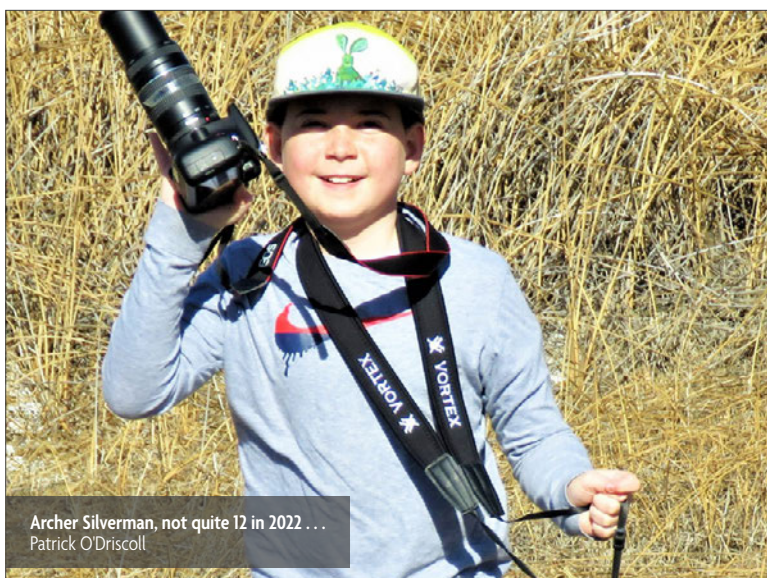


When Pueblo birding guru Brandon Percival found a Snowy Owl at Pueblo Reservoir in January 2018, Gregg Goodrich organized a DFO field trip south to see the rarity. The successful trip included, from left, Piming Kuo, Betty Glass, Prat Rudra, Catherine Olin, Screemala Das Majumder, Goodrich and Percival, Alison Kondler, Bruce Neumann, and seated in front, Edith Israel, Ann Troth, and Mark Winfrey
Mark Amershek

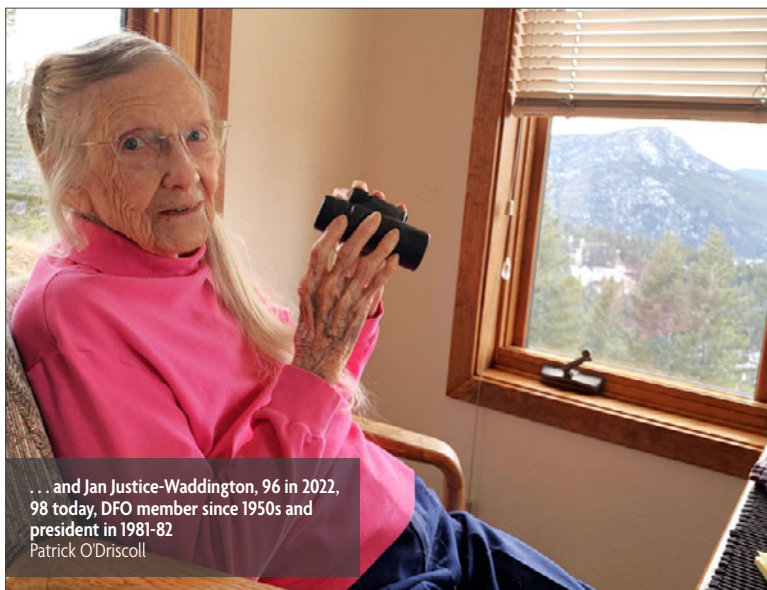
Field trips program booms

By the time von Saltza retired from field trip administration in 2021, the field trip program was robust. Under the leadership of her successor, California transplant and expert birder **David Suddjian**, the program ramped up further still: record numbers of trips annually, growing ranks of active leaders, guest-leader and co-sponsored outings with Audubon chapters, and half a dozen new enhanced trip categories, from “Developing Birder” and “Patch Birding” outings to “Birds Plus” blends of birding with side topics like local history, trees, insects, geology and many more.

Suddjian, who as of this writing has led more than 600 field trips himself, organized a DFO “Big Year” in 2018. That year-long pursuit smashed the previous best DFO year with 361 species recorded (35 of them new “lifers” for the club) on a then-record 230 club trips in 2018. (That record fell again in 2024 when DFO led 250 outings, an average of two every three days.) Suddjian also led multi-day birding excursions in 2024 to plant the DFO flag in all the remaining Colorado counties, mostly on the Western Slope, where the club had never led a field trip. On the side, he created “BIRB BOMBS,” a monthly series of season-oriented Zoom mini-webinars on Colorado bird ID. After three years, it grew to more than 35 episodes, all archived today on the [DFO website](#) and DFO’s [YouTube channel](#).



Archer Silverman, not quite 12 in 2022 ...
Patrick O'Driscoll



... and Jan Justice-Waddington, 96 in 2022,
98 today, DFO member since 1950s and
president in 1981-82
Patrick O'Driscoll

In the past 10 years, DFO membership swelled from 433 past 600. The club also assumed management of [Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch](#) and its spring migration raptor count — a complex, 10-week daily operation with professional counters supported by a cadre of volunteers. *The Lark Bunting*, meanwhile, has evolved into a well-respected online magazine that converted to a quarterly journal in DFO’s 90th anniversary year. The club’s nearly decade-old Facebook Group is thriving with more than 6,100 members, and it and our Instagram account and YouTube page reach well beyond DFO’s club membership.

Solving the COVID conundrum

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck in late winter of 2020, in-person meetings, programs and all field trips were canceled indefinitely. To regain its bearings after the initial disruption, DFO sought to keep birders in touch online and encourage individual members to practice safely masked pandemic birding. That gradually led DFO to embrace a communications technology used mainly by business, government and higher education: Live online meetings and webinars via Zoom and other platforms.

Within a few months, DFO was attracting prominent guest speakers who could present safely from afar (and without considerable club expense for travel) to members’ computers, tablets and phones: star birder-author **Kenn Kaufmann**, Australian bird guide

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Luke Paterson, and notable author-experts **J. Drew Lanham**, **Scott Weidensaul** and **Richard Crossley**, among others. With Zoom, DFO weathered the pandemic shutdown and returned relatively quickly to its schedule of eight evening programs a year. But in the years since the shutdown, Zoom webinars came at a social cost: Loss of community camaraderie built when programs were in person and members mingled before and after. Some members, tired of the distance and isolation of programs via video webinar, have advocated for a return to face-to-face, non-digital gatherings.

In DFO's 90th summer and fall, the club has returned twice, on a trial basis, to in-person get-togethers at the Lowry Conference Center in east Denver. One of them, for a 90th birthday celebration in October, would feature DFO's most famous alumnus, eBird co-founder and director **Chris Wood**, who joined the club in the late 1980s as a bird-obsessed seventh grader. If the two meetings register enough member interest, the DFO Board will explore options for live-streaming in-person sessions for those who cannot attend in person. Unfortunately, changes at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science make returning there for meetings impossible, so finding a regular and affordable location equipped for webinars would be another challenge to solve.

Quo vadis, DFO?

As we conclude this "DFO @ 90" history of Denver Field Ornithologists in four parts, an obvious question begs an answer: How will DFO navigate the future? The answer is entirely up to members of the club, but perhaps it may involve renewed outreach to the many people who took up birding in the isolation and downtime of the COVID-19 lockdown and travel restrictions.

It seems ironic now that being pandemic homebodies with time on their hands led many to discover or rediscover nature (and birds) in their yards and neighborhoods. Pandemic birding was a "safe" activity outdoors, masked or not. New enthusiasts include younger adults who are getting involved, whether on DFO's Facebook Group page or on the club's many free field trips. Every day, when members return from the field to file eBird checklists of what birds and conditions they found, researchers benefit from this basic but invaluable citizen science data. That daily merger of science and recreation echoes DFO's unchanged mission since 1935:

To promote the study and preservation of birds and their habitats

We invite you to get more involved in determining DFO's future as our club looks ahead to its centennial in just 10 more years. Visit the [volunteer page](#) of the DFO website.



For 90 years, DFO field trips have included vistas like this 2025 sunset at Lower Latham Reservoir in Weld County
David Suddjian

DFO President **Sharon Tinianow**, a member since 2016, was previously vice president (2021-23) and is a former editor of *The Lark Bunting*. She began birding in an ornithology class in college, and she retired as assistant director of CU Boulder's Museum of Natural History

Patrick O'Driscoll, editor of *The Lark Bunting* since 2020, took up birding in his 50s. A retired newspaper journalist, he joined DFO in 2014 and became a field trip leader in 2016. He is also secretary of the DFO Board

“Birdie” Hurlbutt, rescuer of Denver’s sick and wounded wild birds, was a DFO original

Patrick O’Driscoll and Sharon Tinianow

In the popular history of 20th-century Denver, a few nicknames have stuck in the public consciousness. We’ll always have “**Unsinkable**” **Molly Brown** — and “**the Donkeys**,” that love-hate-love handle that diehard football fans pinned on the hometown Broncos. The city’s Black community enshrined “**Daddy Bruce**” **Randolph** for his barbecue and philanthropy. “Governor Gloom” still recalls the famously flinty views of three-term Gov. **Dick Lamm**.



But over the last three decades or so of the 20th century, if you ever asked what to do about a sick or wounded bird, the reply was usually quick and to the point: “Call **Birdie**” — aka “**The Bird Lady**” or “**Bird Woman**.”

Born in 1913, her given name was **Catherine Alice Hurlbutt** — the middle child of three in a cattle ranching family that moved to Jefferson County from Wyoming when she was age 6. Fascinated by birds growing up, she raised her first feathered friend, a chicken named **Penny Precious**, on the family’s Shaffers Crossing homestead. She often spoke of climbing a tree as a child to “rescue” a Great Horned Owl in no need of saving.

In adulthood (presumably when she acquired her nickname), Birdie Hurlbutt became a real and celebrated savior, devoting herself for decades to the rescue and rehab of thousands of wild birds — first as an avocation (her day job for 41 years was as a stenographer for the US Bureau of Reclamation, where she kept a birdfeeder by the office) and later full time in a long and busy retirement. Overshadowed by all of that was Birdie’s longtime involvement in the local birding community from its earliest days — which were, in fact, DFO’s earliest days.

Although she never married, Hurlbutt was no shy and retiring spinster. She converted her modest 3-bedroom home in south Denver into a licensed refuge for birds to recuperate back to the wild or remain in the foster care of her resident menagerie. Birdie even made house calls, responding to every avian SOS at the wheel of her white 1975 Checker, bespectacled and beaming with a toothy smile. The words “Bird Taxi” were hand-lettered on one side, and “Bird Ambulance” on the other. (License plate: “C BIRDS.”) Local and national newspapers and broadcasters spread the story of Birdie nationwide.

“CATHERINE HURLBUTT’S FOR THE BIRDS,” Denver’s *Rocky Mountain News* headlined in 1982. “BIRD LADY OF DENVER CARES FOR URBAN FOWL,” the paper profiled 18 years later. “BIRD WOMAN,” “BIRD REFUGE,” and “BIRD LOVER,” *The Denver Post* crowed. “THE BIRD LADY OF DENVER,” *National Public Radio* chimed in.

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Far less known were Birdie's deep roots in the Colorado birding world. As a charter member of Denver's Colorado Bird Club in 1935, she helped build the organization that would become Denver Field Ornithologists 29 years after its founding. In an interview 60 years later, Hurlbutt described what so attracted her to feathered creatures.

Hers was a different urge than just to see and hear. Ever since childhood, Birdie liked being able to hold a bird in her hands. "Birds just appeal to me just by being birds," Hurlbutt, then 82, declared in a 1995 profile in *The Post*. "It's not their flying or singing; I just want to hold them. I just love their little faces."

So it made sense that the young adult Hurlbutt would join that newly formed bird club in Denver, in the depths of the Great Depression. Within a few years, she took on substantial volunteer roles. In 1944, Birdie became Colorado Bird Club librarian, caring for a collection of books and magazines that members could borrow. By 1947, she was corresponding secretary, a post she held through 1959.

In March 1960, she joined the editorial board of *Colorado Bird Notes*, the club's first newsletter. Over the years she wrote many articles for it, including a detailed 90th birthday tribute in 1955 to **Horace G. "Dad" Smith**, known then as the oldest ornithologist in the state.

Throughout her years with the Colorado Bird Club and then DFO, Birdie was a tireless advocate for bird conservation. She used her writing skills to urge elected officials to pass laws protecting birds. At a monthly meeting of the club in 1950, she noted her written advocacy for the protection of Bald Eagles and urged her audience to write letters, too. In the early 1960s, she wrote her congressman seeking support for The Wilderness Act (which passed in 1964) and urged others to do the same. In a January 1967 DFO presentation, she advocated for habitat preservation. For her many such efforts, she was awarded a life membership in DFO in 1972. She continued to be active in the club through the 1980s and into the new millennium.

Hurlbutt was also a prolific writer of bird-related letters to the editors of Denver's two dailies on topics from keeping house cats indoors to curb wild bird predation to opposing Denver's use of corn tainted with hallucinogens to sicken and drive away pigeons from downtown.

Birdie's most visible legacy was her hands-on work to save and rehabilitate injured birds. Her fascination with them had led her to keep pet parakeets, but she made home companions of other birds, too. She was particularly intrigued by how some birds can learn to "talk," parroting back human words. Not that they actually conversed with humans; she assumed they were just entertaining themselves. In March 1969, she advertised in *Colorado Bird Notes* for a fledgling crow for voice training purposes. Eventually she would write a book about this bird sidelight, *Adventures With Talking Birds*.



Birdie Hurlbutt with one of her parrots



Undated photo from her obituary of Birdie with a pheasant at her home refuge for injured birds

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Hurlbutt's first foster bird, in the 1970s, was a pet duck named Daisy that had come between a wife and husband. Word got around, and people with other injured or unwanted birds were soon at her doorstep. They included members of DFO and Audubon, Denver animal control, the US Post Office, and veterinarians. Before long, her entire house was a clinic. Severely injured birds recuperated in cages. As the wild ones became ready for release, she moved their cages to the backyard to reacquaint them with the outdoors.

All this time, Birdie had acquired a permanent posse of bird home companions. Daisy the duck would perch atop Hurlbutt's head. **Mortimer**, a long-lived starling rescued from a cat, spent six months learning to say his name in Birdie's bird speak efforts. Her longest-lived companion was the best known: **Edgar**, a moody raven rescued as a hatchling and kept in a large cage in one of the bedrooms.

Naturally, she taught him to croak the most famous word in **Edgar Allan Poe's** poem *The Raven*: "Nevermore." She let Edgar out inside the house sometimes, but he could be destructive. He hated Birdie's favorite coffee mug, which was shaped like a toucan. After he snatched the mug by its handle and cast it to the floor, Birdie waved the broken cup at him. In reply, Edgar barked like a dog. "You're bad," she scolded. "Never," Edgar replied. She eventually taught him to say, "You're a baaad boy, Edgar." Her bad boy lived past his 26th birthday.

After retiring in 1977 from the Bureau of Reclamation at age 64, Hurlbutt dedicated most of the next four decades to bird rehabilitation. She formed the Bird Rescue Association, a group of friends who helped her pick up and care for injured birds. Other organizations like the Birds of Prey Rehabilitation Foundation focused on raptors and more charismatic species. Birdie devoted hers to the common city birds no one else cared for. Typical clients were sparrows stuck with bubblegum, a woodpecker with a fish hook through its bill, birds hurt by barbed wire. But the worst injuries came from cats. "People let them run loose and they just tear birds to pieces," she lamented.

At any time, Birdie's avian guests numbered in the dozens. In its obituary after her death at age 99, *The Denver Post* reported that at one point, she had "a robin, a raven, a starling, a goose, a duck, a bobwhite, two golden pheasants, two ring-necked doves, four crows, five house finches, nine sparrows and 27 pigeons dispersed among cages in the house and yard."

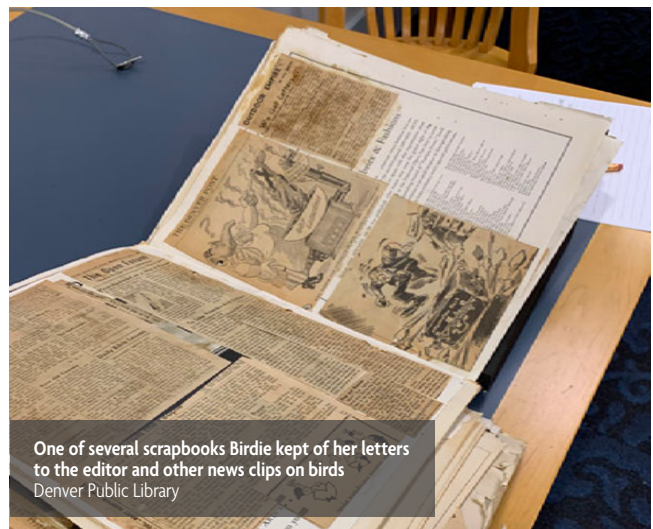
By 1990 her collection of recuperating birds had grown to 200. She became a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. "My special gift is birds, so I take care of them," she told the *Rocky Mountain News* that year. "I don't believe any civilized person should leave an injured bird flopping around." Birdie averaged 20 rescue calls a day, some of them from police departments in four surrounding counties.

She also shared her love of birds with children, visiting schools with some of her rescued birds. Her thick scrapbook (which resides now in the Denver Public Library archives) included letters from children thanking her for her classroom visits. In 1985, she received a "9Who Care" award from Denver's KUSA-TV for her work with birds. She wrote and self-published several other books including *Birds in My Life* and *Edgar And Me*.

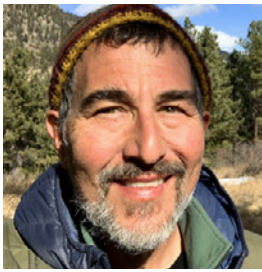
In short, Birdie Hurlbutt was a self-described eccentric, devoted activist and curmudgeonly humanitarian who believed the world would be infinitely better if we were a lot nicer to birds. "We're all given something we're supposed to do," she told one interviewer, adding that she would keep at it "as long as I can put one foot in front of the other."

In 2010 Birdie moved into dementia care and passed the baton to other rehabilitators. She died three days before Christmas 2012 at age 99, still deeply interested in birds to the end. She was buried in Crown Hill Cemetery in Wheat Ridge. In Hurlbutt's obituary, caregiver and friend **Cindy Eide** recalled one of Birdie's sayings that would have made a fitting inscription on her tombstone:

"The only thing better than one bird is two birds."



One of several scrapbooks Birdie kept of her letters to the editor and other news clips on birds
Denver Public Library



FROM THE FIELD WITH DAVID SUDDJIAN

Here's to those who lead us: the first DFO Field Trip Leader Achievement Awards

David Suddjian

Excellent field trips are the core activity of Denver Field Ornithologists. They have been since our club's founding in 1935 as the Colorado Bird Club.

Simply put: Field trips are what DFO does first and best — and we cannot do it without certified leaders who plan, coordinate and guide them. These leaders regularly perform this selfless service so that anyone can enjoy the birds and birding camaraderie of DFO outings.

Throughout our club's history, scores of members have served as volunteer leaders, and a good number of them have repeated their contribution by leading many field trips for years, sometimes seasonally or even monthly. To recognize those who have regularly led multiple outings, the DFO field trip program announces, in the club's 90th anniversary year, the first DFO Field Trip Leader Achievement Awards, a tiered set of honors for leader service.

These trip leader achievement honors include seven levels of accomplishment that reflect thresholds of cumulative trips led during each leader's involvement in the field trip program. The levels are labeled with different "totem birds" that are also iconic Colorado species (see right).

We use the year 2014 as a starting point for data on trips led because it is the year DFO began online recordkeeping of field trips. We hope one day to provide a reckoning of trips led by leaders going as far back as older, undigitized records can take us.

We begin by first saluting 22 trip leaders who have "retired" from leading DFO trips since 2014. Meanwhile, current field trip leaders who have attained any of the seven levels for achievement awards will be recognized in the January 2026 issue of *The Lark Bunting*. In addition, look for the achievements of all leaders to be acknowledged on the DFO website soon.

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Brown-capped Rosy-Finch

100+ trips



Sandhill Crane

75+ trips



Black Swift

50+ trips



Mountain Plover

40+ trips



Burrowing Owl

30+ trips



Mountain Bluebird

20+ trips



Lark Bunting

10+ trips

2025 Field Trip Leader Achievement Awards

Now-"retired" leaders (since 2014)



Sandhill Crane
75+ trips



Mark Amershek (92)



Black Swift
50+ trips



Diane Roberts (70)



Karen Drozda (63)



Karen von Saltza (61)



Gregg Goodrich (56)



Mountain Plover
40+ trips



John Breitsch (44)



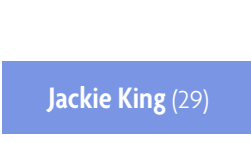
Burrowing Owl
30+ trips



Mary Cay Burger (34)



Mountain Bluebird
20+ trips



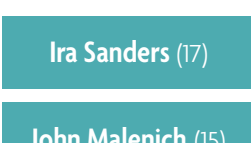
Jackie King (29)



Bill Wuerthele (21)



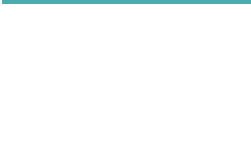
Lark Bunting
10+ trips



Ira Sanders (17)



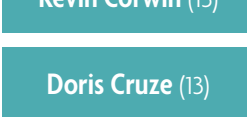
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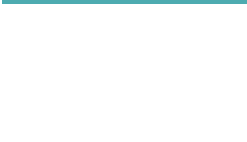
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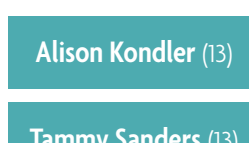
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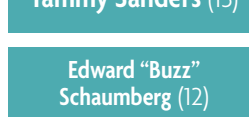
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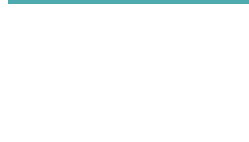
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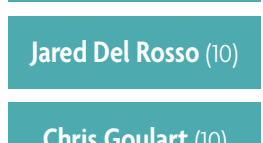
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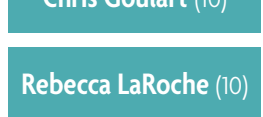
Tammy Sanders (13)



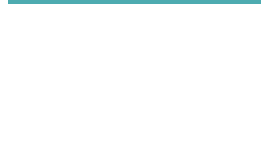
Edward "Buzz" Schaumberg (12)



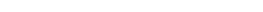
Wendy Wibbens (12)



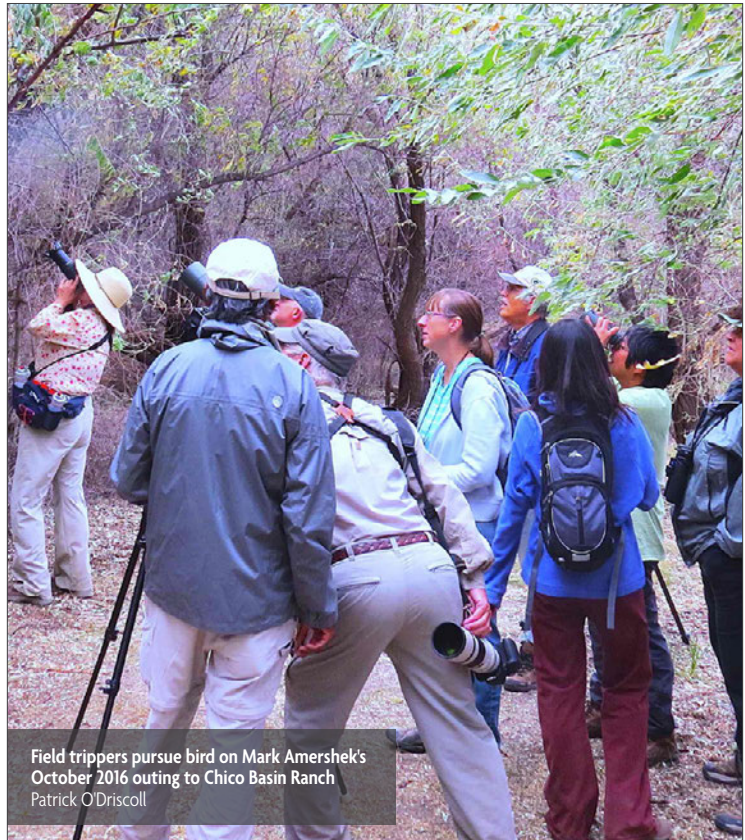
Jared Del Rosso (10)



Chris Goulart (10)



Rebecca LaRoche (10)



Field trippers pursue bird on Mark Amershek's
October 2016 outing to Chico Basin Ranch
Patrick O'Driscoll

Autumn yard prep? Doing NOTHING can boost your biodiversity . . . and birds, too

Jared Del Rosso

Here's a radical thought: This fall, commit to doing nothing . . . for your local biodiversity. As the migration season winds down, you can support backyard biodiversity by doing anything BUT what you usually do this time of year. Leave the yard alone and instead devote your time to anything else.

Still chasing rare warblers? Go birding even more! Is the new-season glut of TV premieres and live sports calling you? Binge! Are you not yet nauseated by the artificial autumnal aroma of pumpkin spice? Go get another latte!

Do anything but garden. Just don't. Don't rake your leaves. Don't pick up sticks and branches. Leave those spent wildflower blooms and stalks alone. The truth is, most other species, birds included, prefer disorderly messes to meticulously managed landscapes.

There is a host of reasons why, but they all boil down to a simple truth: Disorder is complex, and neatness is not. Complexity provides and nurtures a diversity of micro-habitats, food sources, and shelter in that untended winter garden. Simplicity's neatness denies most of that for every other species except us humans.

With this in mind, here are five things you don't have to do in your yard this fall, and why.

DON'T RAKE

Leave your leaves alone! Perhaps you've heard [this advice](#) before. It's true. Leaves feed the soil by feeding organisms that promote decay: fungi, worms, beetles, [springtails](#), and other microscopic beings. A rich layer of fallen leaves provides sheltering habitat for overwintering insects, especially moths and queen bumblebees. And they provide you, the birder, with this: a crunchy floor beneath your shrubs and trees where you'll see and hear sparrows, especially [Spotted Towhees](#), scratching for vital morsels through the winter.

Continued on page 27



Bushtit gathering spiderwebs to build nest
Dave Prentice



White-throated Sparrow and House Finch
in winter in an unraked Denver yard
Patrick O'Driscoll



Anna's Hummingbird nest woven with spiderwebs
© Richard Lee on Unsplash

I realize this no-rake advice may not work for everyone or in every part of your yard. I vacuum autumn leaves off my hardscaped front yard every year. It's a compromise that keeps my xeric garden tidy, the neighbors happy, and the cacti and yucca I grow there protected from rotting under the dampness of downed leaves.

But I keep and use those leaves. They offer high-carbon "browns" for composting to complement the nitrogen-rich "greens" of kitchen scraps. If allowed to break down into leaf mold, they also create some of the richest organic matter you'll find. While most Colorado native plants don't want or need leaf mold mixed into their soil, you can use leaf mulch in vegetable gardens or bedding of garden plants from richer habitats.

DON'T THROW OUT BRANCHES AND TWIGS

Let's face it: Our neighborhood trees aren't supposed to be here. Most are badly adapted to the difficult climate of the Front Range. Late snows in spring and early snows in autumn bring down branches. Strong winds in any season litter our yards with sticks, branches and twigs. They can even split tree trunks.

We probably have no choice but to remove large branches and downed trees. But we can still gather many smaller sticks and branches into brush piles. Although a small brush pile can't match the ecological benefit of a large, naturally formed pile in the forest, it does attract spiders, bumblebees and garter snakes to an urban or suburban yard. Like leaves, brush piles are overwinter shelter for all kinds of insects (and safe cover for small birds, too). They can also do double duty as lattices for native vines such as Thicket Creeper (*Parthenocissus inserta*) or Old-Man's Beard (*Clematis ligusticifolia*).

If your yard has room for small stick piles, your birding benefit can show up in July, when young house wrens fledge. Northern House Wren adults are voracious hunters of soft-bodied insects and spiders, and they're especially skilled at disappearing into landscape nooks including brush piles. Fledglings like them, too. While wandering around my modest suburban yard in the summer of 2024, I encountered an entire family of young wrens perched inside a stick pile, waiting safely for their parents to return with food.

DON'T BAG GRASS CLIPPINGS

Impressive but often non-native grasses are common décor in yards around Denver. Massive "[hardy pampas grass](#)" is among the most conspicuous, forming massive clumps with flowering stalks reaching up to 10 feet tall. In fact, it is a Mediterranean species and not from the Pampas of South America. I admit to a certain admiration for this grass, which on the Denver landscape is outdone by only large shrubs and trees. But the grass has a propensity to reseed itself, and removing a full grown clump may require a front end loader! To avoid this and to prevent other non-native grasses from going wild, I recommend removing the seed heads before wind and birds disperse them. But those of popular native grasses (switchgrass, little bluestem, blue grama) can and should be left for the birds.

The dried leaves of grasses become important micro-habitats for overwintering insects, including queen bumblebees. They're also popular nesting material for birds, from American Robins and House Finches to Spotted Towhees and Mourning Doves, among others. One of my favorite spring sights is of robins gathering grasses from my yard to weave into the nests they'll build there and next door.

DON'T REMOVE SPENT FLOWERS AND STEMS

The easiest way to garden is to let annuals and perennials reseed where there's space for them. Leaving their stalks in place allows that to happen. Many songbirds, of course, also feed on the seeds of our wildflowers. Wildflower stalks also benefit insects. Not all insects shelter in galls like psyllids do. Some overwinter in wildflower stems, including solitary mason bees and leafcutter bees. Still other insects, particularly weevils and seed beetles, develop inside the seeds.

Although we often think birds visit wildflower stalks to eat the seeds, sometimes they're feeding on those hidden insects. Last year, the Eastern Redbud tree in my yard avoided a late spring frost and was covered in seeds, which themselves were packed with redbud seed weevils. When the adult weevils began to emerge from the dry pods in October, Black-capped Chickadees visited daily to peck up most of them. Downy Woodpeckers are also skilled hunters of hidden insects, from [Goldenrod galls](#) to [Honey Locust Seed Beetles](#).

Continued on page 28

Birds even gather seeds for nesting material. Several years ago, I observed a pair of Bushtits collecting the feathery seeds from a neighbor's Clematis vine. Then last spring, I was surprised and somewhat confounded by a female Broad-tailed Hummingbird paying unusual interest to a Rubber Rabbitbrush, which doesn't flower until mid-to-late September. Was she foraging tiny insects? Collecting spider silk for her nest? Or might she have been after the plant's soft seeds for her nest, too? Whatever it was, I couldn't tell, but I was glad for whatever the plant provided her.

DON'T CLEAN COBWEBS

Are local children likely to think yours is the neighborhood's haunted house? Definitely! Nothing signals autumn like old spiderwebs, accruing dust and insect carcasses in window edges and around the yard. Leaving those webs alone now will prove valuable to the birds in winter and spring.

Cobwebs are virtual grocery stores for some birds. During winter, I sometimes find Say's Phoebes hunting around shopping center and office windows. I'm not entirely clear whether live insects are drawn to the warmth of the buildings, or if the birds are finding insect bodies in abandoned spiderwebs. Other birds also feed in webs, though the ornithological community hasn't given this much attention. In 1976, one bulletin article reported observations of [Cedar Waxwings hunting in webs](#). The following year, an article in the *Wilson Bulletin* reported on apparent feeding from spiderwebs by species in [five families of birds](#) — hummingbirds, wrens, vireos, finches and warblers. Keep a watchful eye on your yard's cobwebs, record any avian observations in eBird, and perhaps our citizen-science will yield some new discoveries!

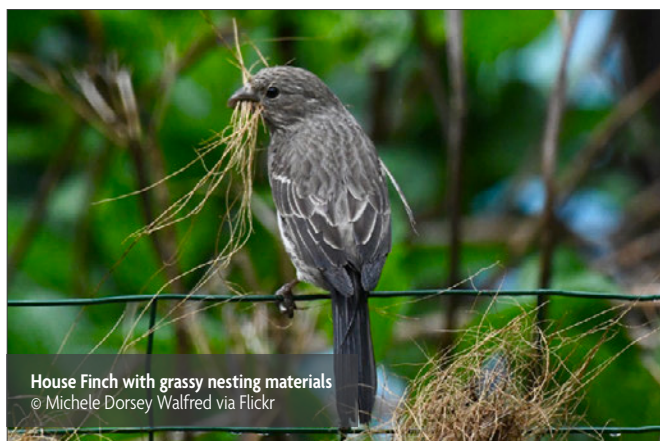
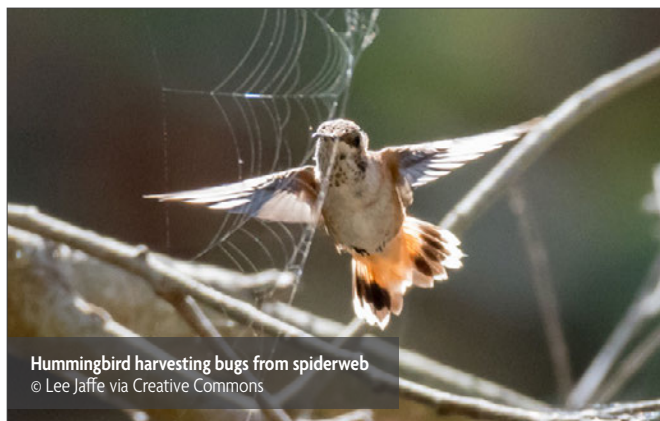
Webs are also important nesting resources. In early spring, House Finches inspect cobwebs around my back patio. I'm not sure if they're collecting the silk for nests, but many small birds do. Hummingbirds, including Broad-tailed, rely especially on spiderwebs to structure and anchor their nests. Even the big, dangling, gourd-shaped nests of tiny Bushtits are built largely with spider silk.

TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE?

Is all this really as simple as doing nothing, for the benefit of biodiversity? Almost — though there's still the work of managing invasive plants and establishing (and re-establishing) native ones. There's also the matter of neighbors skeptical about the "mess" of your biodiverse yard, though some might be placated by a prominently placed sign announcing yours is Xerces Society "[Pollinator Habitat](#)" or that you are an Audubon "[Habitat Hero](#)."

And then there's this paradox: The more nothing you do this fall, the more you'll get to watch all winter, spring, and summer. After all, who's going to eBird all the visits by winter sparrows, keep a distant but watchful eye on the spring nests of robins and finches, and listen to the summer-long hum of bees and Broad-tails?

The Lives of Birds is a recurring feature by DFO member **Jared Del Rosso**, a birder, wildflower gardener and sociologist with a special interest in urban and suburban nature. He's also writing a book about Whip-poor-wills in American culture. Read more at his blog *The Lonesome Whip-poor-will*.



Grants in action: Chickadee-focused field trip to CU's Mountain Research Station

“What a fascinating experience to see what our young people are doing in their respective avian research” — Gary Witt, field trip leader



Jill Boice

For just the second time since Denver Field Ornithologists offered grant awardees this show-and-tell option, three University of Colorado Boulder biology students hosted a DFO visit this summer to report on their field research where they did the work.

On July 12, DFO trip leader **Gary Witt** and 15 other field trippers visited [CU's Mountain Research Station](#) north of Nederland and 26 miles west of the Boulder campus. Station director **Scott Taylor**, whose students use the facility as an open-air laboratory for numerous research projects, welcomed us with a briefing about the station and its activities. Then three of his students who received DFO grants for 2025 gave presentations on their bird-related work. Afterwards, we strolled together around the station grounds to observe the local birdlife.

DFO organized this field trip to showcase the efforts of researchers who received grants from the club's [Research, Education & Conservation Fund](#). The awardees are asked to report back to us about their grant-winning projects by presenting at a DFO monthly program meeting, writing about it for *The Lark Bunting*, or leading an outing like this one.

The research station occupies an attractive location along a mountain stream inside the 190-acre Columbine Springs Reserve, a CU property for more than a century. The Mountain Climate Program, established there in 1952, has collected long-term climate data from the montane, subalpine, and alpine zones of Colorado's Front Range. At times, as many as 90 research projects have been underway at the station simultaneously. This high-elevation research campus also hosts a variety of classes and other events, including a [series of public seminars](#) on Wednesday evenings in summer.

Continued on page 30



The Taylor Lab, part of CU's Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, studies evolution, hybridization and genetics broadly, but it is especially well-known for its work on chickadees (which includes all three of these grant winners). Lab researchers also investigate how hybrid zones can be used to monitor species' responses to climate change. The lab has placed 406 nest boxes along a gradual incline in elevation from Boulder city limits to the research station. In the past six years, student researchers have banded and blood-sampled more than 1,000 chickadees and sequenced the genomes of more than 400.

This genetics-based work indicates that hybridization between Black-capped Chickadees and Mountain Chickadees is so common that every bird whose genomic data has been sampled has at least a tiny fraction of the other species' DNA. Sampling also has shown a strong link between human disturbance of chickadee habitat and where the two species cross-breed. Hybrid zones are important windows on chickadee evolution. The results of many generations of cross-breeding reveal insights into the genetics of local adaptation, barriers to reproduction, and speciation, the process of a species splitting into two or more species.

Here's what the CU researchers presented for the DFO visitors:

Chickadee incubation behavior

Undergraduate student **Nate Carley** is examining differences in the birds' egg incubation behavior, species identity, ambient temperature during incubation, and the ability of their nests to maintain stable temperature. He showed us nests he has collected from standard square-bottomed chickadee nest boxes. He found plastic containers that fit the nest dimensions exactly to hold them for further study. Some of the nests still held unhatched eggs — so tiny! Nate has also observed differences between the species in nest structures and materials, and the parasites in them. He is now reviewing and evaluating this year's data.

Spatial analysis of avian poxvirus

Also an undergraduate student, **Samantha Kruczek** is using Black-capped and Mountain chickadees from mist nets and hundreds of nest boxes to collect genetic and skin samples. In applying for her grant, she noted that "emerging infectious diseases are a growing concern in wildlife populations with significant implications for biodiversity, ecosystem stability and species conservation." She recently discovered that what was initially thought to be poxvirus was actually infestation by scaly leg mites living in the leg skin of chickadees.

Continued on page 31



Grant recipient Sara Padula in lab with feeder array for her CU Boulder chickadee research
Gary Witt

Grants needed now more than ever

This year, Denver Field Ornithologists was able to fund nine interesting projects, including the three CU research studies discussed here.

Unfortunately, CU's Taylor Lab (home for these projects), as well as student research and scientific studies of all kinds in Colorado and elsewhere, are not likely to receive federal research money for the next funding cycle in the current political climate.

That sad reality means grants from DFO's Research, Education & Conservation Fund are more important than ever. Please consider an end-of-year gift to the fund today. Thank you!

DONATE NOW!



Student chickadee researchers Nate Carley and Samantha Kruczek with inventoried nests
Gary Witt



Western Flycatcher seen on DFO field trip to CU Mountain Research Station above Boulder
Issac Ho

GRANTS IN ACTION *cont from page 30*

Genetic adaptation for remembering where food is cached

Fourth-year doctoral candidate **Sara Padula** is investigating genetic adaptations for spatial memory in chickadees at contrasting elevations. In harsh winter conditions, the birds must create cognitive maps of their food-cache locations to survive. She showed us an innovative “smart” feeder array that tests and records birds’ success at learning. Each food dispenser is equipped for radiofrequency identification. After chickadees in the study are caught and tagged with “Passive Integrated Transponders,” each feeder tracks when a bird lands on it. This triggers it to release a seed for that bird to eat or cache. To familiarize the chickadees with the process — land on a feeder, get a seed — all the feeders open to all birds with tags at first. As the experiment progresses, each feeder is programmed only to open for specific individuals, forcing each bird to remember which feeder rewards it with a seed. (Visits to non-rewarding feeders are tracked, too.) Padula is incorporating data gained from this array into genetic analysis.

After the presentations, we all went for a bird walk, taking extra care because a moose and her calf had passed through the area that morning. (We got to see the tracks they left behind.) A Western Flycatcher posed nicely and Pine Grosbeaks were above the parking lot. Taylor and his students also showed us a very young chickadee with its aluminum research tag. We also caught a glimpse of a raptor flying overhead. When Taylor said he believed it was a goshawk, that led to a spirited group discussion about identification of American Goshawks and other birds of prey.

Jill Boice joined DFO in 2001, chairs the club’s Grants Committee, and leads occasional slow field trips. She is also a volunteer raptor monitor at Cherry Creek State Park

Hawk Watch 2025 in review: Record raptor tally, new \$7,300 grant bolster program

Natalie Uschner-Arroyo

The [Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch](#) community in Denver Field Ornithologists has much to celebrate in 2025, from record-breaking numbers of migrating birds of prey to a major grant award from metro Denver's [Scientific and Cultural Facilities District \(SCFD\)](#). These milestones reflect the Hawk Watch program's dedication to bird conservation, scientific study, and community engagement.

In late summer, the DFO Hawk Watch Committee received exciting news that our application for a grant from the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District was a success. SCFD supports organizations in the arts, science and culture in seven Denver area counties with proceeds from a 0.1% sales tax in those counties. The \$7,287 award provides essential funds to sustain Hawk Watch operations, including the payroll for two professional counters who lead the count and guide the volunteers.

This year, Hawk Watch's Spring count of migrating raptors set a record, tallying 3,144 birds of prey moving north along Dinosaur Ridge, a set of prominent foothills that outcrop in Jefferson County west of Denver. This year's count total broke the previous record set in 2002. The 2025 count also logged 495 observer hours, the fourth highest amount since biologists and birders began recording raptor counts in 1990. To read the full report of the Spring 2025 count, go to the [Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch website](#).

This year's success was underpinned by dedicated professionals, headed by Lead Counter and Project Lead **Emma Riley** and Counter **Audrey Anderson**. Weekend observers **Laura Campbell** of Colorado State University and **Laura Farnsworth** of CU Denver, joined as valuable additions to staff. With the added support of high school intern **Haley Caron** of Bear Creek HS and Hawk Watch volunteers, the team maintained full coverage during peak migration periods and ensured consistent collection of raptor data.

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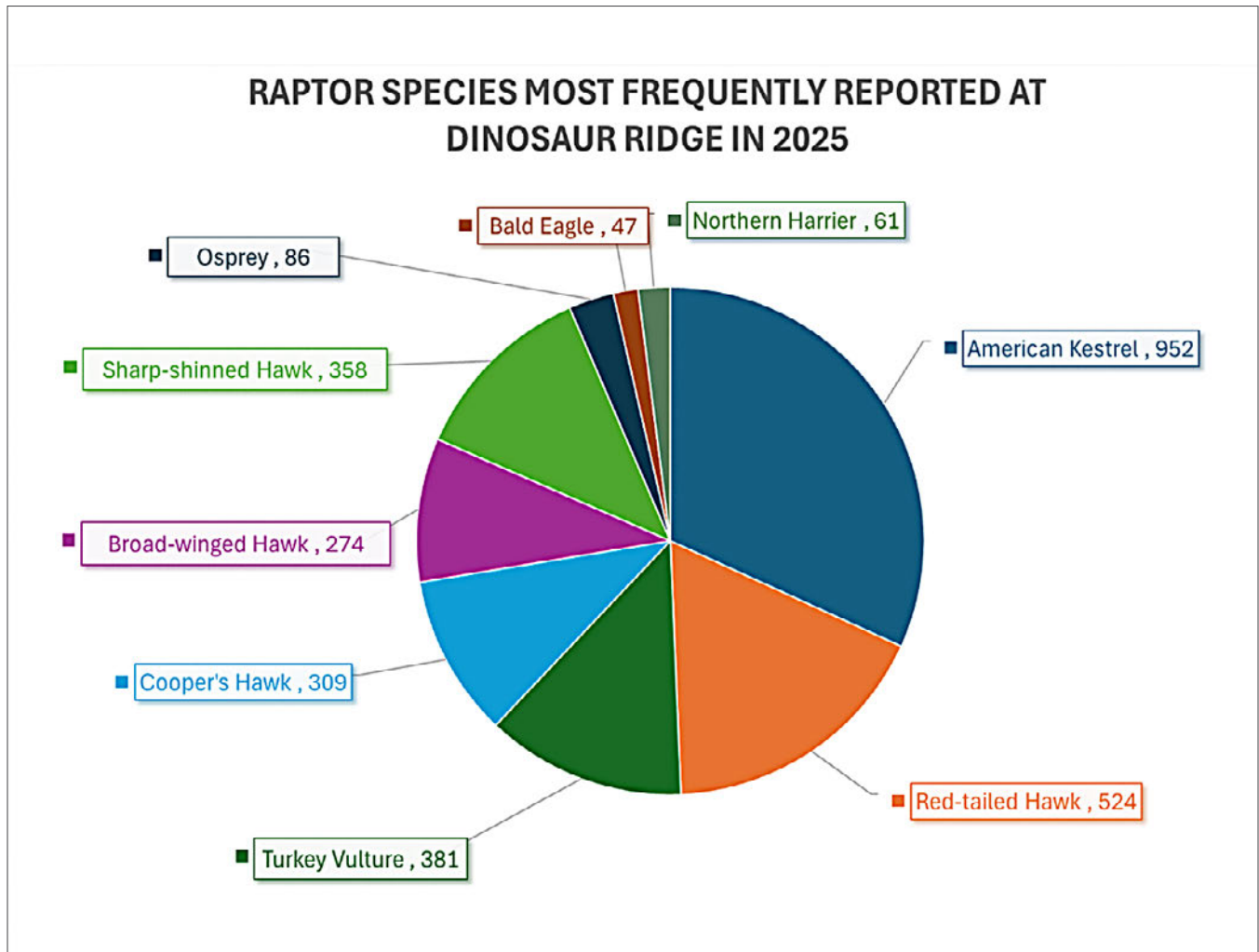


Lead counter Emma Riley, center, with Audrey Anderson, left, and Laura Campbell
Natalie Uschner-Arroyo



DFO hawk watchers scanning for raptors in 2022
Allison Peters





Some species highlights for the 2025 count:

- American Kestrel led the tally with 952 individuals, including 177 in one day
- Broad-winged Hawk sightings broke the Dinosaur Ridge record with 274 birds
- Seventeen species of raptors were recorded, including two sightings of Rough-legged Hawks, an uncommon visitor

Hawk Watch welcomed more than 1,300 visitors to the ridge, including local birders, families, school groups, and travelers. DFO's Hawk Watch Committee led three public field trips on the ridge this season, including two "Hikes for Homeschoolers" (ages 7-12) in partnership with [Denver Audubon](#), and an adult education program with the Denver & Front Range chapter of the [Feminist Bird Club](#).

Beyond the ridge, youth outreach opportunities continued to grow through Hawk Watch's partnership with Nature's Educators, Colorado's largest wildlife education organization. This year's outreach included raptor education programs at Bear Creek, Welchester and Westgate elementary schools in Jefferson County. Hundreds of K-5 students learned about conservation in our region and connected with [Nature's Educators'](#) live raptor ambassadors.

In April, Hawk Watch hosted its third annual [Mile High Raptors' Raptorthon](#), a day of camaraderie and community science that raised \$1,975 for both local raptor monitoring at Dinosaur Ridge and national hawk watch efforts through the [Hawk Migration Association](#). This year's event introduced a new "birding circle" approach to count species within a set radius around the Dinosaur

Continued on page 34

Ridge Hawk Watch site. The result: 64 total species, including 14 kinds of raptors. Highlights included the first Swainson's Hawk of the season, and an Osprey that entertained everyone by perching atop a power pole to eat a fish it caught.

Finally, data from this year's count added to Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch's contributions to the [Raptor Population Index](#), a collaboration among North American birding organizations that produces long-term species trends based on migration count data from 80 sites across the continent. With 11,000 birds of prey counted since 2021, Dinosaur Ridge is the only monitoring site in Colorado contributing data to the network.

With the 2026 season on the horizon, Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch's goals are:

- Hire two professional seasonal counters and two weekend observers
- Expand field trip offerings and volunteer training
- Increase public awareness, research opportunities, and accessibility to the site
- Contribute to Colorado Department of Transportation's (CDOT) new interpretive signage at the trailhead beginning at the Stegosaurus Park-n-Ride lot below Dinosaur Ridge

With gratitude, Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch acknowledges our partners, Aiken Audubon, Colorado Field Ornithologists (CFO), Denver Audubon, Evergreen Audubon, Front Range Birding, Hawk Migration Association, Jefferson County Open Space, Jefferson County Open Space Foundation, Nature's Educators and Wild Birds Unlimited.

We also extend special thanks for their financial support to the Aiken and Denver Audubon chapters, CFO, Jeffco Open Space Foundation, and the Three Birds Foundation, as well as to all our individual donors. Your generosity makes everything we do possible and we are immensely grateful for your belief in our mission.

One more sincere thank you to our staff, organization partners, and the dedicated group of volunteers whose time and energy helped make the 2025 season such a success. This includes the Hawk Watch leadership team — **Chip Dawes, Mariane Erikson, David Hill, Pam Moore, Janet Peters, and Natalie Uschner-Arroyo.**



Immediate need to fill Hawk Watch volunteer roles

The 2026 season of DFO's Hawk Watch spring raptor count is still several months away, but three vital volunteer roles need to be filled in advance.

If you have skills in people management, organization and oversight, we've got just the volunteer positions for you! See below, and if you're interested or want to know more, please contact Hawk Watch Committee chair and program manager **Natalie Uschner-Arroyo** at dinoridgehw@gmail.com. Thank you!

Field Staff Manager

This volunteer works closely with the Hawk Watch Committee on professional staff needs. Daily Hawk Watch sessions are led by two skilled professional counters. The manager helps hire and communicate with them in the off-season and oversees their work in-season, including payment of stipends and conducting post-season reviews of counters' performance. The manager also compiles an end-of-season field review and collects program equipment.

Volunteer Coordinator

This volunteer coordinates closely with the committee to address volunteer needs. Off-season, the coordinator organizes names and contact details in the database of previous volunteer observers who help the counters in raptor monitoring. This person also sends periodic email calls for training and other opportunities. In-season, the coordinator arranges daily volunteer coverage (March 1 through May 10) and contacts volunteers if /when weather or other factors delay or cancel a Hawk Watch session.

Volunteer Coordinator Assistant

Assists the Hawk Watch volunteer coordinator and fills in if / when the lead Coordinator is not available.

DFO AdBIRDtisements!

DFO AdBIRDtisements are FREE ads in *The Lark Bunting* to seek, sell or donate birding-related equipment, supplies, books and decorative items (works of art, photographs, note cards, posters, etc.).

- Ads must include name, email and/or telephone number, and may include a weblink if items offered online
- *The Lark Bunting* reserves the right to edit for inappropriate content or excessive length (125-word limit). ONE photo or image per ad
- Ads do not carry over each issue. To renew, resubmit by next quarterly deadline
- Ads available only to DFO members

Next deadline: Wednesday, Dec. 31, 2025

To place a DFO AdBIRDtisement, email editor **Patrick O'Driscoll** at patodrisk@gmail.com



Free to good home: New women's birding vest

Basic Options branch khaki multi-pocket outdoors vest for birding, fishing. New and unworn. Women's size Small. If interested, contact **Kathy Holland** at ksholland356@gmail.com.



Black-crowned Night Heron chicks
Patrick O'Driscoll

Welcome to new DFO members

Jill Cooper of Denver; Angela and Jonathan Hebel, Lakewood; David Hennes, Denver; Scott and Peg Roen, Parker; Diane Rouse and Julie Martinez, Aurora; Susan Simpson, Lakewood; Olivia Thornton, Romy Bernstein and Eden Bernstein, Denver

Thank you for your contribution

Research, Education and Conservation Grants Fund

Jill Cooper, Thomas "Tim" and Candice Johnson, Graham Ray

Friends of DFO

Ajit and Liza Antony, Mary Beverly, Jill Cooper, Felice Lyons (in memory of John C. Breitsch), Malcolm "Mac" Parks

DFO's Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch

Jill Cooper, Scott Ruschak





FIELD TRIPS IN FOCUS

July, August, September DFO trips *In Focus*

Field trips in the three summer-into-fall months included 84 total outings. Of those, participants on 31 of them took pictures of “birders birding” as photographic history for our 90-year-old club. If you’re on DFO trips in October, November, and December, take a few shots of your fellow birders birding and send us the best for the next issue of *The Lark Bunting*, coming out in January 2026. Send .JPG or .PNG photo files of birders in the field, with date/location of trip and any individual IDs (if needed), to editor **Patrick O’Driscoll** at patodrisk@gmail.com. Deadline for our January 2026 winter-quarter issue is Wednesday, Dec. 31. Thanks!



JULY 2

Deer Creek Canyon Open Space Park (Jefferson County)

Leader

David Suddjian

Participants

Shay Lyons, Claire Elliott, Ryan Corda, Michelle Verostko, Lynn Sauer, Melody Serra, Bruce Raff

DFO birders on Meadowlark Trail during July 2 field trip to Deer Creek Canyon Open Space Park in Jefferson County. Yellow-breasted Chats and Lazuli Buntings led the show

(David Suddjian)

CHECKLIST



JULY 3

Ken Caryl Ranch Open Space (Jefferson)

Leader

David Suddjian

Participants

Marjorie Middleton, Morgan Kahle, Ryan Corda, Sarah Feigelson, Virginia Gulakowski, Linda Purcell

Birders on trail in Bradford Park during July 3 field trip to Ken Caryl Open Space in Jefferson County

(David Suddjian)

TRIP REPORT

Continued on page 37



JULY 9

Birds + Railroad History in South Park (Park)

Leaders

David and Stephen Suddjian

Participants

Susan Suddjian, Melody Serra, Virginia Gulakowski, Linda Purcell, Susan Blansett, Chip Dawes, Isaac Ho, Mary Fran O'Connor, Robert Raker, Sue Summers

Field trippers pose in historic Como, CO, end of the mainline for the 19th-century Denver South Park & Pacific narrow-gauge railroad during a joint DFO-Denver Audubon Birds + History field trip July 9 to various birding spots in scenic South Park. Trip leader David Suddjian's son, Stephen, a fan of the DSP&P, co-led the outing

(Linda Purcell)

TRIP REPORT



JULY 13

Flying J Ranch, Jeffco Open Space (Jefferson)

Leader

Lynn Slaga

Participants

Isaac Ho, Sara Jepsen, Jodi Haller, John Batt, Cindi Inklebarger, Kelsey Robb, Ryan Janson

DFO birders pose for group shot on the trail during July 13 field trip to Flying J Ranch in Jefferson County Open Space

(Lynn Slaga)

CHECKLIST



JULY 14

Matthews-Winters Trail, Morrison (Jefferson)

Leader

Judy McKeon

Participants

Andrea Duran, Liz Cox, Isaac Ho, Joe Chen, Phil Waltz, Howard Leon Smiler

Birders in tall grass on July 14 field trip on Matthews-Winters Park in Jefferson County Open Space near Red Rocks

(Joe Chen)

CHECKLIST

Continued on page 38



JULY 16

Golden Gate Canyon SP (Jefferson)

Leaders

Ryan Dibala

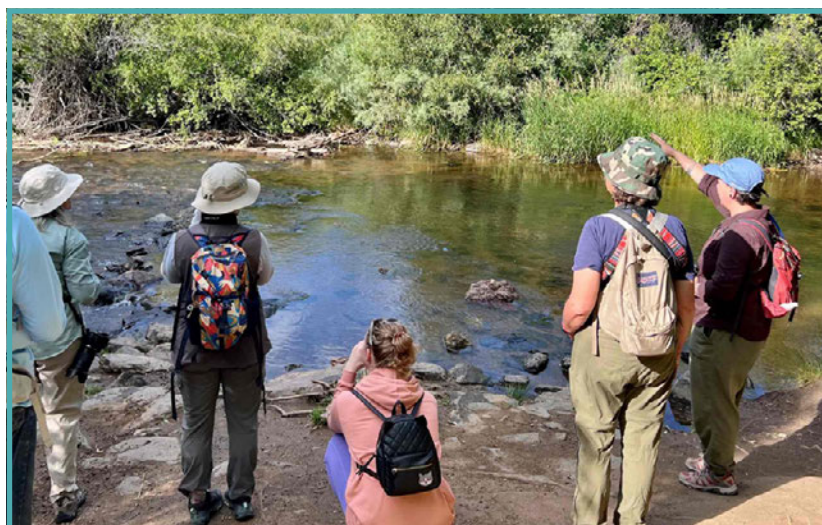
Participants

Marjorie Middleton, Melody Serra, Joe and Lucia Chen, Caroline Armstrong

Trip leader Ryan Dibala notes birdsong during July 16 field trip to Golden Gate Canyon State Park. The walk included wildflowers and good looks at MacGillivray's Warbler, Clark's Nutcracker, Williamson's Sapsucker, Western tanager, Hermit Thrush, and a Yellow-rumped Warbler feeding its offspring

(Melody Serra)

CHECKLIST



JULY 21

Lair O' the Bear Park (Jefferson)

Leader

Shay Lyons

Participants

David Suddjian, Virginia Gulakowski, Aubrey Garnett, Marjorie Middleton, John Batt, Linda Purcell

Birders along Bear Creek during July 21 field trip to Lair O' the Bear Park in the JeffCo foothills

(Shay Lyons)

CHECKLIST

Continued on page 39



JULY 23

Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR (Adams)

Leader

David Suddjian

Participants

Linda Purcell, John Whitaker, Cynthia Breidenbach, Sharon and Lance Tanaka, Linda Cunico, Marjorie Middleton

Spectacular sunrise sky greets participants in joint DFO-Denver Audubon field trip July 23 to Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR

(David Suddjian)

TRIP REPORT



JULY 26

White Ranch Park West (Jefferson)

Leader

David Suddjian and Anne Craig

Participants

Joseph Chen, Linda Purcell, Cynthia Breidenbach, Michelle Trotter, Kelsey Robb, Ryan Corda

All eyes are on a Lazuli Bunting during July 26 field trip to White Ranch Park in Jefferson County, the 600th DFO trip led by David Suddjian. The 5-mile trek featured lots of wildflowers and vistas, and fun birds: Common Nighthawk, Red Crossbill, Western Tanager, Plumbeous Vireo, Western Bluebird, piles of all three nuthatches and more

(David Suddjian)

TRIP REPORT

Continued on page 40



JULY 27

Summer Hummers, Bow Mar (Jefferson)

Leaders

Courtney Rella and Tina Jones

Participants

Sarah Feigelson, Phil Waltz, Kathy Cisar, John Batt, Andrea Duran, Joe Chen, Sharon Tanaka

Longtime DFO member Tina Jones, center with cane, hosts July 27 field trip through her gardens in Littleton. An expert in bird-friendly native plants, Jones has filled her yard with wildflowers and plants that attract hummingbirds and other pollinators

(Joe Chen)

CHECKLIST



JULY 27

Birds + Trees ID, Route 103 / Mt Blue Sky Byway (Jefferson)

Leader

David Suddjian

Participants

Mary Ramsey, Andrew Wertheimer, Lynn Slaga, Bruce Raff, Scott Hammel, Kathy Holland, Liza and Ajit Antony, Mark Winfrey, Archie Millard

Birders on DFO/Denver Audubon Birds + Trees field trip July 27 focus on five kinds of conifers at one of multiple stops along Colorado 103 from Bergen Park to Mount Blue Sky Road. Participants learned to ID nine conifer species at different elevations from 7,700 feet to 11,000 feet

(Scott Hammel)

TRIP REPORT

Continued on page 41



JULY 30

Summer Hummers and others, Pine Junction / Bailey (Jefferson, Park)

Leader

David Suddjian

Participants

Anne Craig, Virginia Gulakowski, Isaac Ho, Jason Zolle, Diane Roberts

Birders on a residential balcony-deck during a short July 30 field trip to hummingbird feeders at homes near the Jefferson County mountain communities of Pine Junction and Bailey. Besides Calliope, Rufous and Broad-tailed hummingbirds, they saw Band-tailed Pigeon and other higher-country species

(David Suddjian)

TRIP REPORT

See checklists on DFO "Past Trips" page



AUGUST 3

Staunton State Park (Jefferson)

Leader

Timothy Condon

Participants

Bruce Raff, Michelle Verostko, John Batt, Susanna Donato, Chip Dawes, Lynn Slaga, Jeanne Ladewig

Field trippers enjoy the view during Aug. 3 outing to Staunton State Park. Dusky Grouse were no-shows, but birders saw lots of others, including Brown Creepers and numerous Mountain Chickadees

(Timothy Condon)

TRIP REPORT

Continued on page 42



AUGUST 3

Summer Hummers, Ken Caryl Valley yard (Jefferson)

Leader

David Suddjian

Participants

Brady Anderson, Christine MacDonald, Jenny Germano, Jonathan Hebel, Michelle Puplava, Joy S

DFO paparazzi watching hummingbirds on Aug. 3 visit to Field Trips chair David Suddjian's Ken Caryl Valley yard

(David Suddjian)

CHECKLIST



AUGUST 4

Tucker Gulch (Jefferson)

Leader

Ryan Corda

Participants

Angela, Jonathan and Juliana Hebel, Kara Cooper, Caroline Armstrong, Isla Pohl

Zeroing in on a Cooper's Hawk during DFO evening field trip Aug. 4 to Tucker Gulch in Golden. Highlight: the sibling chatter of three Cooper's fledglings. A constant chorus of Broad-tailed Hummingbirds and Spotted Towhees surrounded the birders, who also got good looks at Western Flycatchers and Lazuli Buntings

(Ryan Corda)

CHECKLIST



AUGUST 10

Louviers and DuPont Open Space (Douglas)

Leader

David Suddjian

Participants

Lynn Slaga, Scott Hammel, Natasha and Noelle Albert, Dale Pate, Christine Macdonald, Cindi Inklebarger

Birders on DFO field trip to Louviers in Douglas County on Aug. 10 scan for birds on site of defunct DuPont dynamite factory. The group checklisted 49 species in town and adjacent Dupont Open Space

(Scott Hammel)

TRIP REPORT

Continued on page 43



AUGUST 21

Alexx & Michael's Pond Stork Chase (Broomfield)

Leader

Ryan Corda

Participants

Andrea Duran, Cynthia Breidenbach,
Erin Ridolfo, Julia Gwinn, Shelly Bleckley,
Virginia Gulakowski

**DFO birders on successful chase trip
Aug. 21 to view the rare Wood Stork at
Alexx & Michaels Pond in Broomfield**

(Cynthia Breidenbach)

CHECKLIST



AUGUST 22

South Platte Park (Arapahoe)

Leader

Cynthia Breidenbach

Participants

Julia Gwinn, Kris Saucke, Jeanne Ladewig, Steve Methven, Sandra Hoyle, Michelle Herrmann,
Lynn Sauer, Catherine Millard, Nadiyah Watts

**Birders on joint DFO-Denver Audubon field trip in South Platte Park prepare to cross
boulder field at Eaglewatch Lake. Spirited field discussions touched on Cooper's and
Sharp-shinned hawk differences, sussing out a female Wood Duck, and sorting a flock
of Blue-winged Teal**

(Julia Gwinn)

CHECKLIST

Continued on page 44



AUGUST 24

Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR (Adams)

Leader

Jason Bidgood

Participants

John Batt, Joe Chen, Matthew Fast, Joseph Margoshes, Larry Wilson, Debra Lentz, Kris Tita, Mary Fran O'Connor, Debbie Fox

Watching American Coots from the floating boardwalk across the marshy east end of Lake Ladora on DFO field trip Aug. 24 to Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR

Jason Bidgood

TRIP REPORT



AUGUST 29

Barr Lake SP banding station (Adams)

Leader

Charlie Chase

Participants

Alexander Dalton, Cynthia Breidenbach, Paula Rosson, Joe Chen, Debra Lentz, Jodi Haller, Cynthia Andreatta, David Andreatta, Joseph Margoshes, Mary Fran O'Connor, Donna Samuels, Brian Haller

Participants in Aug. 29 field trip to Bird Conservancy of the Rockies' banding station at Barr Lake SP

(Joe Chen)

CHECKLIST



AUGUST 29

Poorwill Evening at Ken Caryl Ranch (Jefferson)

Leader

David Suddjian

Participants

Chrissy Fitzsimmons, Paula Wegert, Deborah Carstensen, Deanna Beutler, Melissa Akers, Noah Rath

Field trippers on Common Poorwill Evening outing to private open space at Ken Caryl Ranch listen and look for and record calls of poorwills. Between sunset and dusk, they encountered 11 poorwills, two of them in view. For most, it was a life bird

(David Suddjian)

CHECKLIST

Continued on page 45



AUGUST 31

Prewitt Reservoir and points northeast (Logan, Morgan, Washington)

Leaders

Joey Kellner

Participants

Timothy Condon, Christopher Curwen, Bob Spencer, Julia Gwinn, Sondra Bland, David Suddjian, Cynthia Breidenbach, Michelle Trotter, John Batt, Edie Israel, Kris Tita, Joe Chen, Scott Hammel, Diane Roberts, Tim Smart, Robert Raker

Longtime DFO trip leader Joey Kellner, left, with some of the 16 participants on his annual fall daytrip to Prewitt Reservoir SWA and Jackson Lake SP in northeastern Colorado. Highlights of the 97-species outing included Red Knot, Black-bellied Plover, Caspian and Common Tern, Virginia Rail, Townsend's Warbler, Great Crested Flycatcher, Red-headed Woodpecker, Eastern Warbling Vireos and Burrowing Owl

(David Suddjian)

TRIP REPORT

TRIP VIDEO *by Scott Hammel*



SEPTEMBER 1

Poorwill Evening at Ken Caryl Ranch (Jefferson)

Leader

David Suddjian

Participants

Joy Sommerer, Peg Roen, Debby Miller, Jeremy Nichols, Mona Reed, Jason Bidgood, Linda Purcell

The poorwills only called for about 25 minutes but after the calling died down, the group spotted many poorwills on the hillside and on the trail. September 1, 2025, Jefferson, County, CO

(Jason B. Bidgood)

CHECKLIST

Continued on page 46



SEPTEMBER 5

Confluence Open Space, Aurora (Arapahoe)

Leaders

Cynthia Cestkowski

Participants

Jodi Haller, Catherine and Kevin Millard, Susan Young, JP Young, Lynn Sauer, Cassandra Callaghan

Eight birders joined this DFO trip to Confluence Open Space in Aurora, only accessible August to November because of nesting Bald Eagles. Trip highlights included the two adult resident Baldies, a beaver, a large flock of Blue-winged Teal in flight, migrant Wilson's Warblers and a Cassin's Vireo, a life bird for several

(Cynthia Cestkowski)

CHECKLIST



SEPTEMBER 8

Denver Botanic Gardens @ Chatfield Farms

Leaders

David Suddjian and Judy McKeon

Participants

Sarah Feigelson, Catherine and Kevin Millard, Kara Cooper, Kris Saucke, Melanie Helton, Sarah Steiner, Coreen Spellman, Kris Tita, Melissa Wetzig

Scanning from the road at Chatfield Farms on Sept. 8 field trip. Highlights of a 33-species outing included hummingbirds, Black-crowned Night Heron, multiple hawks, and goldfinches in the sunflowers (and a still-active American Goldfinch nest with at least one baby)

(David Suddjian)

CHECKLIST

Continued on page 47



SEPTEMBER 14

Belmar Historic Park, Lakewood (Jefferson)

Leader

Shay Lyons

Participants

Kris Saucke, Rae West, Linnea Bjorkman, Claire Elliott, Bridget Sanders, Andrea Grasso, Michale Kernan, Marie Mager

Field trippers in tall grass during Sept. 15 outing to Belmar Historic Park in Lakewood

(Shay Lyons)

CHECKLIST

SEPTEMBER 15

Chico Basin Ranch (El Paso, Pueblo)

Leader

Jessica Miller

Participants

Timothy Condon, Bridget Sanders, Sue Summers, Jonathan Whitely, Bonnie Prado, John Batt, Oliver Urdiales, Melody Serra

Looking for Ladder-backed Woodpecker in banding station grove during Sept. 15 joint field trip with Aiken Audubon to Chico Basin Ranch. The trip was a first visit to this major El Paso-Pueblo counties destination for two in the group. The day's 57 species featured excellent views of Burrowing Owls, and the plethora of other wildlife included porcupine and coyote

(Melody Serra)

TRIP REPORT



Continued on page 48



SEPTEMBER 19

Ken Caryl Ranch (Jefferson)

Leader

David Suddjian

Participants

Virginia Gulakowski, Anne Craig, Renee MacKenzie, Ryan Corda, James Henson

Participants in Sept. 19 field trip to private open space in Ken Caryl Ranch scan landscape from outcropping. Their route included a narrow gap in a bigger hogback that resembled a southern Utah slot canyon. Highlights: hummingbirds, Wilson's Warblers, Rock Wren, Vesper Sparrow, Red-naped Sapsucker and Western Tanager, turtles, frogs, a praying mantis and a bull elk

(Anne Craig)

TRIP REPORT

SEPTEMBER 19

South Platte Park (Arapahoe)

Leader

Cynthia Breidenbach

Participants

Joseph Margoshes, Kris Saucke, Jodi Haller, Evangeline Gallegos, Nadiyah Watts, Bonnie Prado, Briana Evans

Birders on Sept. 19 field trip to the south end of South Platte Park in Arapahoe County pose on the trail. Two families of Wood Ducks were a big highlight, among other species

(Cindy Breidenbach)



CHECKLIST

Continued on page 49



SEPTEMBER 20

Roxborough State Park (Douglas)

Leader

David Suddjian

Participants

Virginia Gulakowski, Bridget Sanders, Mary Ramsey, Kelsey Robb, Robert George

Joint DFO-Denver Audubon field trippers at Roxborough SP on a Sept. 20 “jay day”: 65 Blue Jays, 33 Woodhouse's Scrub-Jays and 6 Steller's Jays among many other birds (Green-tailed Towhee, Osprey, Northern Harrier, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Turkey Vulture)

CHECKLIST

SEPTEMBER 27

Colorado 103 near Mount Blue Sky (Jefferson, Clear Creek)

Leader

David Suddjian

Participants

Anne Craig, Timothy Condon, Caoimhín Perkins, Lauren Friesen, Jodi Haller, Virginia Gulakowski, Robert George

Birders on DFO/Denver Audubon “Birds Plus+ Trees” field trip Sept. 27 scan from Juniper Pass Picnic Area in Clear Creek County. While birding at a series of stops at different elevations along Colorado Highway 103, the group learned about identification of nine different conifer species (David Suddjian)

TRIP REPORT



LAST WORD, LAST LOOK

At CommonGround Golf, birdies are . . . blue? Unexpected couple finds a hole in one nestbox

Northwest side of CommonGround Golf Course,
with wetlands in back and Denver skyline beyond
Joe Jenkin, Jenkin Productions

*EDITOR'S NOTE: CommonGround Birders, an informal birding group at the golf course of the same name, was organized by DFO member **George Ho**. In this article and month-by-month photos, he shares the story of their summer-long encounter with the first family of bluebirds to take up residence there*

George Ho

On April 12, during the monthly get-together of our birding group, nine of us made a surprise discovery at our regular meeting place, [CommonGround Golf Course](#) in Aurora: [Mountain Bluebirds](#) were occupying a nest box along one of the fairways.

When we returned a month later (May 10) and again on May 25, the bluebird pair was still there, in the shade of a pine tree about 40 yards from the 17th green. We concluded that they had established a nest — not an insignificant occurrence on the edge of the Great Plains. Soon after that, we saw them feeding young. Thus began our season of monitoring the first known Mountain Bluebirds at the golf course. From April through August, we documented the pair's successful hatching, rearing and fledging of at least one and maybe two broods of young.

The course owners first placed 13 nest boxes on the property between 2009 and 2010, when work on the golf links had been completed. They attracted swallows, and still do. But after more than a decade, many of the boxes were in disrepair. So CommonGround replaced them in 2023-24. That coincided with the first regular visits by birders to the course and neighboring wetlands between it and Denver's Lowry neighborhood.

In summer of 2023, we created CommonGround Birders, a loose fellowship of birders, golfers and those who are both. With about 60 people on our email list, we host outings once a month, twice monthly during spring and fall migration. This is chiefly to visit the wetlands, which have sparked birder interest in shorebirds migrating through Denver.

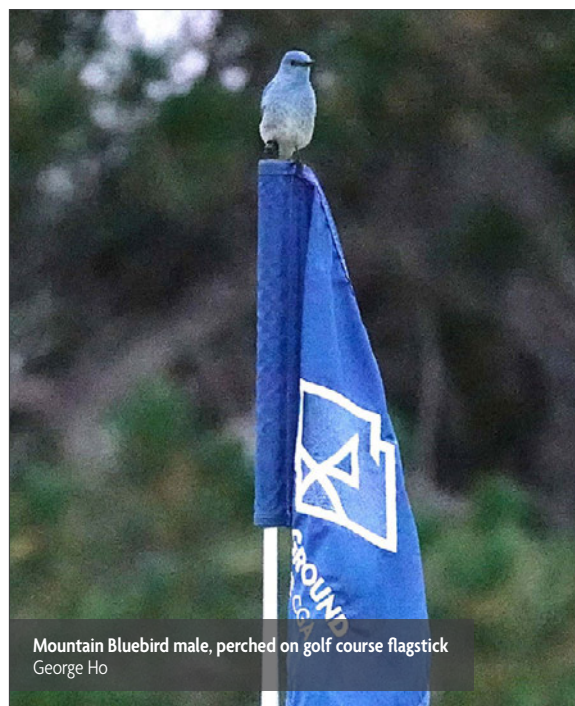
We cover the course partly by cart and partly on foot. The golf course people have been enthusiastic, interested and helpful in accommodating us. They even publish a birding map of the course, with suggested viewing points and parking spots for birders' carts.

After we saw the bluebirds, it occurred to us that CommonGround's open spaces, shrubs, trees and ponds were ideal for nesting Mountain Bluebirds — except for the elevation. Although Denver officially sits at 5,280 feet, our reading told us this species prefers higher uplands, between 7,000 and 12,500 feet.

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Nestbox (in shadow) where Mountain Bluebirds nested in spring-summer 2025 at CommonGround golf course
George Ho



Mountain Bluebird male, perched on golf course flagstick
George Ho



Male and female (below) Mountain Bluebirds in the rough at CommonGround Golf Course
Lisa Pera



Bluebirds have avian company at course, wetlands

Since beginning their monthly birdwatching outings two years ago, CommonGround Birders members have identified more than 120 species on their “home” course.

This birds-and-birdies fellowship has submitted 43 checklists to eBird since the first group visit on July 8, 2023. As of this August, they had checklisted 122 species, from American Avocets to Virginia Rails. Although the tally includes passerines, raptors, gulls and waterfowl, their primary focus is on the seasonal shorebirds that favor the wetlands between the golf course lands on the east and Denver’s Lowry neighborhood on the west.

Besides avocet, shorebirds recorded include Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Long-billed Dowitcher, Red-necked and Wilson’s Phalarope, Willet, Wilson’s Snipe, and six kinds of sandpipers (Baird’s, Least, Pectoral, Solitary, Spotted and Stilt). Waders and marsh birds checklisted include Great Blue Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, Snowy and Great Egret, White-faced Ibis, Sora and Virginia Rail.

Anyone interested in attending future CommonGround Birders outings, or in receiving emails on future events, other announcements and news about CommonGround Wetlands (formerly Westerly Wetlands) can contact **Joe McCleary** (jmccleary@coloradogolf.org) or **George Ho** (hogeorge@yahoo.com).

LAST WORD, LAST LOOK *cont from page 51*

Typically, the birds return north from wintering grounds in March or April, migrating through Denver enroute to where they get their name: the mountains. I had previously seen Mountain Bluebirds at higher elevations in Golden Gate Canyon SP, in Jefferson and Gilpin counties above Boulder, where they are ubiquitous in summer.

When we asked someone more knowledgeable if our sighting was rare, we revised our thinking. Longtime DFO member **Kevin Corwin**, emeritus chair of the Colorado Bluebird Project, said Mountain Bluebirds are increasingly common in less elevated locations where nestboxes have been placed, especially in Douglas County. The bluebird project monitors and maintains “trails” of boxes around the state.

“I am not surprised that Mountain Bluebirds nested on that golf course,” Kevin said. “They weren’t nesting there when it was actually the (undeveloped) Great Plains, but now we’ve modified the landscape to the point they can find places to live there.”

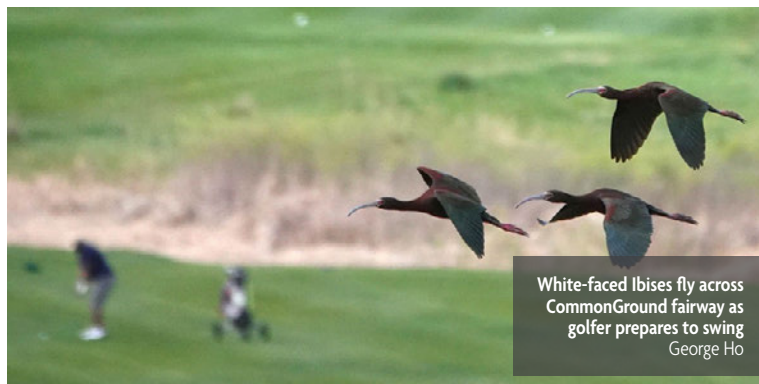
Corwin thinks our golf course breeding pair may have fledged last year somewhere nearby or along bluebird migration routes to and from winter habitat. “They are the ‘pioneers’ who travel away from their natal territories in their first spring migration north to find suitable nesting and hunting areas,” he explained.

Potentially, they could be back in 2026. “Established adults usually return to the same vicinity year after year,” Kevin told us, “often to the same nest box.”

We’ll be watching!

Nesting photo log continues on page 53

George Ho, a retired physician in internal medicine and rheumatology, joined DFO in 2025. He spends time birding, writing, and jogging. With a third specialty in palliative medicine, he also teaches courses to the lay public on end-of-life issues.



White-faced Ibises fly across CommonGround fairway as golfer prepares to swing
George Ho



◀ APRIL 12, 2025

At a fairway nest box where we previously saw only swallows, our group notices this male/female pair of Mountain Bluebirds occupying the box. On return visits May 10 and May 25, we confirm that these bluebirds are nesting

George Ho

MAY 29 ▶

Days later, we confirm that bluebird young have hatched when we see the parent birds (female left, male right) taking turns feeding hungry nestlings at the “front door” of their nest box

Sam Hying



JUNE 9 ►

We first see fledgling young in a nearby tree where the adult male Mountain Bluebird feeds two of them before flying off for more food. On this visit, we count four fledglings from the bluebird nest

George Ho



◀ JUNE 9

Two of the four Mountain Bluebird fledglings interact on a tree branch as they await another feeding

George Ho



◀ JULY 6

More than a month has passed, time enough for the fledglings to move on. But we find the adult male Mountain Bluebird guarding the same nest box until the return of the female, above. This indicates she is likely incubating a second clutch of eggs inside

George Ho

JULY 17 ▶

Although we do not see them, we confirm that bluebird young have hatched in the nest box. The adult birds make repeated trips out and back for grasshoppers (female, left), grubs (male, right), moths and other food for their young. The adults also exit carrying fecal sacs from the nest

George Ho



JULY 17 ►

Female adult leaves the nest box after delivering food to second-brood young. When we return on July 29 and August 3, we find no sign of her or of any fledged young outside the nest. (The male is on another fairway.) We surmise that the unseen nestlings fledged from the nest box while we were away

George Ho

AUGUST 17 ▼

When we return to clean out the empty nest box, we find this complete skeleton of a nestling. The adult Mountain Bluebirds are perched in a nearby tree, but we have not seen young from their second brood outside the nest. Although the status of other second-brooders from the nest box is unknown, this marks the end of our 2025 summer of bluebird monitoring at CommonGround

George Ho



Until the next Lark Bunting . . .
**HAPPY AUTUMN AND
EARLY WINTER BIRDING!**



Wood Stork, with morsel
Alexx & Michael's Pond,
Broomfield County
Gary Witt