



THE LARK BUNTING

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE DENVER FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS

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DFOBIRDERS.ORG

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Looking at 2020 with
20/20 Vision

UPCOMING PROGRAM

The History and Future
of Waterfowl Conservation
in Colorado

SUPPORT DFO

Books, books . . .
More Books!

FEATURED ARTICLE

Birding Close to Home:
Love Letter to Denver
City Park

PHOTO OF THE MONTH >>

American Kestrel

📷 Jim Esten
📍 Littleton, Colorado



MONTHLY PROGRAM



The History and Future of Waterfowl Conservation in Colorado

Monday, January 27
Matt Reddy

Denver Field Ornithologists' monthly evening program series resumes in January after the holiday break with guest speaker Matt Reddy, regional biologist for Ducks Unlimited (DU). Reddy, a University of Northern Colorado graduate, has worked for DU for 25 years, mainly on projects of land acquisition and habitat improvement in Colorado and Wyoming.

Ducks Unlimited is dedicated to the conservation of wetlands and associated upland habitats for waterfowl, other wildlife, and people. It has about 700,000 members, mostly in the United States, Canada and Mexico. Since its founding in 1937, DU has completed more than 20,000 projects, conserving more than 14 million acres of land.

Matt will discuss his work across the region, including DU's Heartland and Heritage Initiative. Conservation work under this initiative focuses on continentally significant migration habitat along the Platte River system in Nebraska, Colorado, and Wyoming, in Nebraska's Rainwater Basin, and on publicly managed wetlands in Kansas.

"Because it bisects both the Central and Mississippi flyways, the Platte is very important to the migration of waterfowl," Reddy once told *The Denver Post* in an interview. "Our goal is to conserve shallow wetlands that can be flooded during spring and fall migration."

7 PM | Free and open to the public
Unity Spiritual Center of Denver
3021 S. University Blvd.
Denver, Colorado

The Lark Bunting is the official newsletter of the Denver Field Ornithologists. It is published monthly except for August. Submissions of original articles should be made to the editor at sharontinianow@gmail.com. Image files of photos of birds or of bird outings should be made to the photo editor at jcsten@gmail.com. The editors reserve the right to select suitable articles and photos for publication and to edit any selected materials.

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BOOKS, BOOKS . . . MORE BOOKS!

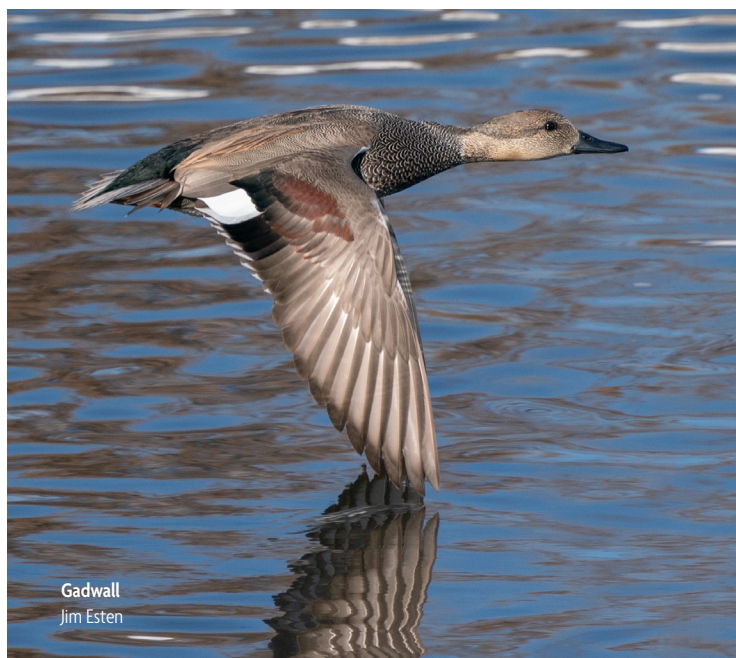
Mary Cay Burger

From time to time, Denver Field Ornithologists receives contributions of bird and wildlife-related books from members, former members and other friends of DFO. For a modest and voluntary donation of your own choosing, DFO makes them available to you and all members.

Our collection of printed avian miscellanea is ever-changing, but at any time it includes wonderful books about birds both foreign and domestic – reference works, histories, birding guides, picture books, and location-specific volumes about where to go birding and what you may find there. We display these second-hand treasures in the vestibule outside the meeting hall at every monthly evening program, as we will for the one scheduled on Jan. 27.

DFO charges nothing for these books. We ask only that you consider a donation to DFO for what you might pay for such volumes if they were offered at a garage or yard sale.

All contributed funds for these books are added to the DFO Grants Fund to support bird-related research, conservation and education projects in Colorado.



Welcome to new DFO members

Ira Baline, Englewood; Tom Booth, Littleton; Marie Boylan, Aurora; Scott Caruso, Lakewood; Nancy Donovan, Highlands Ranch; Ruth Gabreski, Centennial; Joseph Margoshes, Denver; Senja and Mark Meiklejohn, Littleton; Kate and Kyle Sandersen, Denver; Michelle Stringer and Brian Stringer, Wheat Ridge; Sally Waterhouse, Nathrop; Julie Zahniser, Boulder

Thank you for your contribution to the Research, Education, and Conservation Grant Fund

Christie Owens in memory of Richard Mendez
Mary Beverly
R. Dale Brown
Dale Campau
Linda and C. Raymond Clark,
Colin Deihl and Dina Clark
Jean and Charlie Curlee
Mary and Dave Driscoll
Laurie Duke
Kristine Haglund
J.B. Hayes
Jan and Doug Hodous
Marjorie Jannotta and Chuck Hundertmark
Roger Koester
Kristina Koff
Judy Lane
Linda MacIntyre
Senja and Mark Meiklejohn
Greg Mihalik
Jim Petri
Tom Parchman
Pat and Barney Poole
Ben, Soren, and Orion Dinsmore and Tracy Rackauskas
Polly Reetz
Kate and Kyle Sandersen
Lynne Scholfield
Paul Slingsby
Sondra Bland and Bob Spencer
Peter Stoltz
Karen Strong
Sue Summers
Ronald Villiotti
Jan Justice Waddington
Ken Wat
Laura and Wayne Wathen
Karen and John Weslar
Robyn and Jeremy Winick
Suzanne and Bill Wuerthele
Scott Yarberry
Mary Zick



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Looking at 2020 with 20/20 Vision

Dave Hill, President

Another wonderful year is now underway for you with Denver Field Ornithologists!

Our signature guided birding trips will not only continue, they will expand to include new opportunities for families and young adults. Efforts have begun to revise field trip leader training, which will make our avian explorations better than ever as they stretch to the outer reaches of the Denver metropolitan area – and beyond.

Two things atop our planning list for 2020 are to integrate conservation into everything we do and to rekindle our partnership with the Denver Museum of Nature & Science. This is DFO in action. Watch, participate, learn and appreciate!

As members, you are part of a marvelous, first-class organization of generous and involved birders. DFO is where you meet like-minded individuals – whether your motivation is to find, identify and record bird species on our unparalleled field trips, or to learn new skills to better appreciate, track and account for birds, from eBird expertise to Better Birding workshops. It's a cliché to say it, but DFO really *does* have something for everyone: monthly evening programs, *The Lark Bunting* newsletter, volunteer opportunities and more.

And yes: We do all of it with volunteers – I call them DFO's superpower! They allow us to keep the cost of membership reasonable, and our programs and outings free and open to all so non-members can test-drive DFO before joining. It also allows every one of us to invest in our passion in small but meaningful ways. As far as I know, this kind of opportunity in the birding world exists virtually nowhere else on the planet. So come on: Climb aboard the DFO bandwagon! Be bird social, invite your friends – seats ARE available!

If you have been a DFO member awhile, perhaps you're ready to get involved beyond a field trip or an evening program. I encourage you to [fill out the volunteer form](http://dfobirds.org/DFO/Volunteer.aspx) on the DFO website (<http://dfobirds.org/DFO/Volunteer.aspx>). In giving a little of your time to volunteer work for DFO, you may find yourself growing in ways you hadn't thought possible. Our mutual interest in birds and birding connects us all in so many ways.

With 20/20 vision, we look forward to the year 2020. Let's all strive to provide the best birding experience possible both to our members and our communities – to do everything we can to protect the birds we enjoy so much.

Happy New Year, and welcome to all in 2020!



BIRDING CLOSE TO HOME

Love Letter to Denver City Park

Patrick O'Driscoll

My eBird tells me I have birded 200 times within your urban boundaries – but those are just the times when I uploaded a list. I live about a mile east of you, and my companion Patricia lives three blocks west of you. So we had already strolled through your century-old groves and around your lakes almost every weekend for more than 5 years – half-consciously admiring your many wild things with wings – before I first wrote down and filed what I saw.

I think that day – Sunday, April 21, 2013 – was when I really became a birder, thanks to you. In a way, you fledged me, like one of the cormorants at your Duck Lake nursery. You may not be my birthplace, Denver City Park, but you are my home patch.

Humans were probably saying “Familiarity breeds contempt” long before the medieval poet Chaucer first wrote down that phrase in 1386. But for me and Denver’s own kinda-sorta Central Park, it’s the opposite. I still get a thrill every time I set foot in Denver City Park.

If it’s early February, will the first returning Double-crested Cormorant be parading around Duck Lake, his breeding

plumage “crests” flying? If spring, will the Black-crowned Night-Herons and Snowy Egrets be nesting at Ferril Lake? Come summer, will there be a coyote for the Black-billed Magpies to mob as it lolls on the museum lawn? If early fall, will I catch a pulse of Wilson’s Warblers or a stray Western Kingbird or Hermit Thrush stopping in en route south? And if it’s winter, will a Snow or Greater White-fronted Goose stand out among the thousands of Cackling and Canada Geese? Or will red foxes cross the ice onto the island in Ferril Lake to get a better crack at a goose dinner, as I’ve seen them try twice in the past 4 Decembers?

According to eBird, 174 avian species have been recorded in this unlikely wildlife refuge in the heart of the city. I have been lucky to see 125 of them. So never mind the background urban bustle and hum . . . or the every-spring/summer/fall-weekend charity runs, festivals, and concerts . . . or even the can’t-find-a-place-to-park scrum when crowds overflow at the Museum of Nature & Science and Denver Zoo. I’m happy to share the park with all of them, because in spite of it all, the birds of Denver City Park keep returning.

Or, sometimes, they don’t leave, even when they should. Defying death by winter cold their species cannot long endure, four young Double-crested Cormorants – hatched and fledged last summer on the Duck Lake nesting island – were somehow still there this New Year’s Day. It was the species’ first record in the park in January, save for a high, passing flyover last year by a lone bird.

I say it whenever I lead a DFO field trip there: City Park always seems to surprise. Three Aprils ago, it was the park’s first-record Red-naped Sapsucker, drilling sap wells in a pine tree. Three Decembers ago, it was a Common Redpoll. Almost every visit, something delights – even if it’s just a rare meet-up between the park’s two enormous Graylag/Swan Goose domestic hybrids, longtime year-round residents who seem to hang with their own cliques of resident Canada Geese. I still marvel that City Park supports one of the largest cormorant colonies in the state. The loud, crazy summer scene on Duck Lake’s island has more than 200 nesting pairs and hundreds more offspring at its peak.

I came late to birding, first paying casual attention in my late 40s. But after reading Chuck Hundertmark’s CO-Birds email account of a City Park field trip on April 20, 2013, I couldn’t wait to go out the next day with his list as my guide. “My

Continued on page 7



Black-crowned night herons on nesting island in Ferril Lake
Patrick O'Driscoll (May 2017)

BIRDING CLOSE TO HOME *continued from page 6*

best birding day ever!" I gushed later into my page-a-day journal. "Twenty-eight species, about 10 of them new to my life list, modest though it may be . . . Yeah!" Below my scribble, I even listed them all, from avocets to woodpeckers (Downy, Hairy and Northern Flicker).

Inevitably, upon training to become a DFO field trip leader 3 years later, where else would I lead my first outing but in my backyard patch? And those colonial waterbirds were so charismatic, I couldn't help volunteering for DFO's citizen science project to study the breeding colonies of cormorants, herons and egrets there and in other metro Denver parks.

As much as I enjoy showing off Denver's oldest park to others, give me a morning alone in City Park with binoculars and camera any day. I'll wander happily from the park's oldest groves (west of the tennis courts) to the shores of Duck and Ferril Lake to the "pinetum" ("pine-E-tum," the wonderfully archaic name for an arboretum of conifers) beneath the south wall of the museum. For these places and the many birds they harbor within you, thank you, Denver City Park.

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Have you adopted a local birding spot that has become your own "home patch"? Please share! Future issues of The Lark Bunting will feature DFO member stories about the places they come back to again and again. If you have one, send it to Sharon Tinianow, editor of The Lark Bunting, at sharontinianow@gmail.com

FEBRUARY FIELD TRIPS

Register for DFO field trips on the [website](#) or contact the leader directly. Dress for the weather. Directions and detailed descriptions of each trip can be found on the website. March field trips will appear on the website on February 1. Please be considerate and delete your reservation if you are unable to attend a trip for which you have registered.

Aurora Reservoir and Cherry Creek State Park

Monday, February 3
7:00 AM - 12:00 PM

David Suddjian
Email: dsuddjian@gmail.com
Phone: 831-713-8659
Trail Difficulty: Moderate
Maximum Participants: 12

We'll seek interesting geese, gulls, ducks and other waterbirds, as well as raptors and whatever we can find! Be ready for some discussion of gull ID, if they present themselves well for us. Bring a scope, if you have one. We may walk up to a couple miles at each location.

South Platte River Trail at E 88th Ave and I-76 **Saturday, February 8**

8:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Mark Amershek
Email: mammershek@msn.com
Phone: 303-329-8646
Trail Difficulty: Easy
Maximum Participants: 16

We will see lots of ducks, a few raptors, and some hardy winter residents. Hike along paved trail and occasionally in the adjacent mud for up to 3 miles.

Cherry Creek SP Wetlands Loop (Arapahoe County)

Sunday, February 9

9:00 AM - 1:00 PM
Patrick O'Driscoll
Email: patodrisk@gmail.com
Phone: 303-885-6955
Trail Difficulty: Moderate

For DFO's 85th anniversary year, we are reviving this monthly half-day of walking -- led for several years by Karen von Saltza -- through most of the important habitats in Cherry Creek State Park, Denver's "backyard." With a year-round progression of species and seasons, this will be an ideal monthly trip both for beginners and for veteran birders. Come, learn, enjoy! Be aware that in winter trails can be slippery or muddy. Expect to walk about 3 miles along level paths. Bring your friends!

Southeastern Colorado **Tuesday, February 11**

5:00 AM - 6:00 PM

David Suddjian
Email: dsuddjian@gmail.com
Phone: 831-713-8659
Trail Difficulty: Strenuous
Maximum Participants: 8

This trip is planned to focus on Otero and Crowley Counties, but this could change to include other adjacent counties. We will seek interesting raptors along back roads, check out cemeteries and state wildlife areas, ponds and feed lots, and see what we can learn about the winter avifauna in these areas. Good for county birding. Expect some long drives down and back.

South Platte River at West Florida Avenue **Saturday, February 15**

7:00 AM - 12:00 PM
John Breitsch
Email: jbreitsch@hotmail.com
Phone: 303-588-0552
Trail Difficulty: Easy

We will walk along the Platte River Trail covering two or three eBird hotspots along the way. The trail is level but can be icy.

Walden Ponds Wildlife Habitat/Sawhill (Boulder County)

Sunday, February 16

9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Laura Steadman
Email: lauramsteadman@gmail.com
Phone: 843-319-5086
Trail Difficulty: Easy
Maximum Participants: 10

The trip will involve walking 2-3 miles on level ground. We will look for waterfowl at the lakes at Walden and Sawhill Open Space areas if they're not frozen over. We will also look for the resident great-horned owls and hawks. At 75th St and Boulder Creek, we'll look for dippers.

Southeastern Colorado **Monday, February 17** **5:00 AM - 6:00 PM**

David Suddjian
Email: dsuddjian@gmail.com
Phone: 831-713-8659
Trail Difficulty: Strenuous
Maximum Participants: 8

This trip is planned to visit Cheyenne County, seeking to explore the wide-open prairie of this under-birded county. We will hope for interesting raptors, maybe in good numbers, and hopefully flocks of Lapland Longspurs. But every species is a prize in this challenging county, and we will visit some towns and tree groves as we find them. We may also bird Lincoln County. Good for County Birding. The day will involve long drives. Restroom portals limited.

Longmont Area Birding

Sunday, February 23

8:00 AM - 1:30 PM

Christie Owens

Email: christieowens2@icloud.com

Phone: 970-481-7271

Trail Difficulty: Easy

Maximum Participants: 12

Bring lunch and dress for the weather including shoes for sloshing through mud. Bring a scope if you have one. Also bring charged two-way radios if you have one or more. We will drive to various Longmont area lakes and ponds to search for any early arrivals as well as any residents. In addition, we will driving by fields and pastures searching for any raptors, sparrows, etc. We may walk a little more than 2 miles on level, mostly graveled trails.

Park County Explorations

Monday, February 24

5:00 AM - 4:00 PM

David Suddjian

Email: dsuddjian@gmail.com

Phone: 831-713-8659

Trail Difficulty: Moderate

Maximum Participants: 8

This trip will visit forests, creeks, lakes and open areas of beautiful southern Park County (and Teller, too), and hopefully early enough to give a try for Pygmy-Owl. We are sure to see interesting things. A run for Rosy Finches at Victor is possible. Good for County Birding. Bring lunch. Restrooms limited.

Dawson Butte Ranch Open Space (Douglas County)

Saturday, February 29

7:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Chris Gilbert

Email: chrisgee9@gmail.com

Phone: 804-214-1508

Trail Difficulty: Moderate

As we get close, we will know what kind of hike we will have. About a 5-mile hike with potential for all the front-range birds. Lunch is optional; there are picnic tables in the area.



Denver Field Ornithologists Membership Application

Join online at <https://dfobirds.org>, or by mail.

DFO memberships expire Dec. 31; valid for the next year if paid after Oct. 1.

DFO provides grants to individuals or organizations whose mission includes ornithological research, education, and conservation.

DFO is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and contributions are deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Annual family membership (electronic <i>The Lark Bunting</i>)	\$	25
Annual family membership (printed <i>The Lark Bunting</i>)	\$	60
Student membership (age ≤ 26)	\$	10
Research, Education, & Conservation Grant Fund donation	\$	_____

Total \$ _____

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (optional) _____

Email (legible) _____

(Must include for electronic *The Lark Bunting*)

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THE LARK BUNTING

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Englewood, CO 80111-5660

