

DFO grant enables tripling of study's Flammulated Owl netting efforts

by Ross Calhoun and Max Ciaglo

In recent years, the Flammulated Owl has received increasing attention from a large contingent of organizations, including Partners in Flight and the U.S. and Canadian governments.

This is a product of the disjunction between their ecological importance and prominent

gaps in our understanding of the species.

Where they have been intensively studied, these owls are strongly associated with old-growth pine forests that have been subjected to an anthropocentric fire regime and changing climate.

By studying the population dynamics of these owls we can develop informed forest management practices, but this requires a holistic understanding of their ecology.

Thus far, little research has been focused on habitat use and movement patterns outside the breeding season.

Flammulated Owls are long-distance migrants. Therefore, the pre-migration period has significant implications for the long-term success of these birds.

During this time, owls must exploit local food resources, storing fat for migration.

Females and fledglings will also begin to move locally, gathering information about nearby habitats



Flammulated Owl being processed. Ross Calhoun

they might utilize the following summer.

These habitats are also likely to be used by more northern populations as they migrate south.

Among long-distance migrants, determining patterns in movements and habitat use during migration is challenging, especially for small, nocturnal species such as Flammulated Owls.

In fact, the absence of Flammulated Owls from breeding areas during the winter was initially attributed to torporic behavior.

Improved monitoring efforts during migration are necessary if we hope to identify and conserve critical migratory routes and to have a broader context in which to understand larger scale population trends.

Since 1981, Dr. Brian Linkhart has been researching the demography and ecology of breeding owls on the Pike National Forest.

In 2013, we received funding from Colorado College to work under Dr.

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Field Trips

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267, take Kipling south about 0.75 mile and turn right (west) on 44th Ave. Go one mile west.

Look for the entrance to Prospect Park on your left (south).

Meet just inside the park in the lot right next to Prospect Lake.

Bring water and snacks and we will see what we can scare up. Ducks, gulls, finches, sparrows, raptors to be expected with waxwings and nuthatches possible.

You never know what will be sheltering in this tree rich area.

Cherry Creek SP Wetlands Loop (Arapahoe County) Sunday, February 8

9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Karen von Saltza (Email: kvonsaltza@yahoo.com Phone: 303-941-4881)

Trail Difficulty: Easy

Directions: Meet at the Prairie Loop lot in Cherry Creek SP.

From either park entrance, follow Lake View Rd to the Prairie Loop that is located at the south rim of the reservoir.

State Parks pass or day pass required.

This is a half-day trip passing through many important habitats in 3 miles.

Trails could be slippery, so dress accordingly. Bring water and snacks; lunch optional.

Beginning birders welcome.

South Platte River Trail at E 88th Ave and I-76

Saturday, February 14

9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Mike Foster (Email: mike1.foster@comcast.net Phone: 303-456-2647)

Trail Difficulty: Easy

Directions: Meet at the parking area at 88th Ave and South

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Field Trips

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Platte River Trail. From I-76 take E 88th Ave exit, go west on 88th for 1.6 miles, then turn south at Colorado Blvd.

Turn left again into the parking lot for the South Platte River Greenway Trailhead.

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

Sign up and sign waiver on-line.

To carpool (yes, do!), call Mike, then meet at 8:20 a.m. at SE corner of RTD lot (2nd and Routt) a few blocks east of Union Blvd.

From 6th Avenue and Union, drive south to 2nd, then turn left and enter lot near Routt.

Denver City Park (Denver County)

**Sunday, February 15
8:00 AM - 11:00 AM**

Chuck Hundertmark (Email: chundertmark8@gmail.com
Phone: 303-604-0531)

Trail Difficulty: Easy

Maximum Participants: 11

Directions: Meet at the parking strip southeast of 22nd Ave just north of Ferril Lake.

From Colorado Blvd, turn west onto 22nd Ave and go past the Museum of Nature and Science. Turn left just before the zoo at the sign to the Pavilion Bandstand.

Park on the left at the end of the parking area closest to Ferril Lake.

We'll look for wintering waterfowl and early nesting Double-crested Cormorants.

Scopes helpful. Bring water and snacks.

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FLAMMULATED OWL STUDY, *continued from page 3*

Linkhart's guidance and begin trapping Flammulated Owls after the breeding season.

This past fall, Denver Field Ornithologists graciously awarded us a grant, allowing us to continue our research.

In 2013, we trapped for 15 nights and a total of 80 hours and made 19 captures of 18 individual owls.

Thanks to the DFO we more than tripled our netting efforts in 2014, logging a total of 254 hours on 28 nights over a 6-week period; this resulted in 73 captures of 66 unique individuals.

This increased effort, combined with our opportunity to work with the most extensively studied breeding population of these owls, has allowed us to begin to uncover some interesting ecological relationships.

Across *both* trapping years, 15 birds—10 breeding adults and 5 fledglings—were captured at least once in *each* of the breeding and migration seasons.

While eight of these adults were initially captured during the breeding season, the other two were originally caught in the fall of 2013.

The following summer these birds were found to be nesting 1.7 km and 2.1 km away from where they were initially captured.

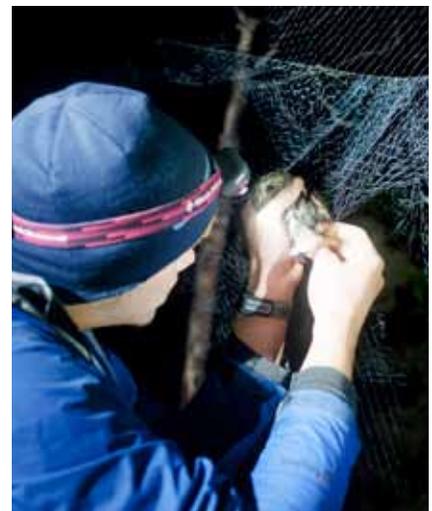
Our fledgling recaptures represent movements ranging from less than 1 km and up to 15 km from respective nest sites in the first 65 days after fledging.

Band returns such as these allow us to begin to compare forest usage across the breeding and migration seasons and to investigate dispersal dynamics.

The extent to which the remaining



Max Ciaglo attaches a band to a Flammulated Owl. *Ross Calhoun*



Ross Calhoun removes an owl from a mist net. *Courtesy of Michael Ciaglo and The Colorado Springs Gazette*

88 percent of our captures were migrants or local owls is a question we plan to address in subsequent years.

We aim to continue our research next fall and build a more compre-

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hensive picture of how Flammulated Owls use and move across the landscape during their fall migration.

Every year we learn more about the timing and magnitude of these movements, and with each new band attached or returned we add a new piece to the unique story that these birds have to tell.

In 2015 we hope to carry on with our current trapping efforts, but also to apply new techniques in order to

learn where these birds are coming from.

We thank the Colorado College Venture Fund for helping us to initiate this project and Dr. Brian Linkhart for his ongoing guidance and support.

We are truly grateful to the DFO for giving us this incredible opportunity, and we look forward to building on the strong foundation that they have helped us to create.



Measurements are taken on an owl. Ross Calhoun

Welcome, new members:

Jean Anderson, Lakewood; Debbie and Tom Behnfield, Lakewood; Mark Carson, Cambridge; Paul and Jane Derrick, Denver; Glenda and Terry Dwyer, Lakewood; Karen and Michael Fernandez, Denver; Carol Fitzgerald, Denver; Janet and A.J. Gest, Aurora; Karen Goetz, Lakewood; Steve Hebert, Denver; Debra Lentz, Denver; Patrick O'Driscoll, Denver; Richard and Cheri Phillips, Centennial; Peggy Salzer, Lakewood; Jeanette Strom, Denver; Marianne and Fred Wamboldt, Denver; Bea Weaver, Littleton; Wendy Wibbens, Englewood

Field Trips

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Boulder Reservoirs (Baseline, Valmont, and Boulder)

**Saturday, February 21
8:00 AM - 3:00 PM**

Wendy Wibbens & Sue Summers (Email: wibbwj@aol.com Phone: 303-330-1175)

Trail Difficulty: Easy

Maximum Participants: 15

Directions: Meet at the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Office, 6060 N Broadway.

Exit I-25 at 58th Ave, go west 2 blocks to Broadway, then north 2 blocks to parking lot on right.

Join us for an exploration of Baseline, Valmont, and Boulder reservoirs and surrounding areas to search for winter waterfowl and raptors.

We will be in and out of cars with short walks up to 1/2 mile. Please bring scopes for distance viewing if you have them; we will have at least 2 to share.

Dress for winter weather and bring water, snacks, and lunch.

Morrison Nature Center at Star K Ranch

**Sunday, February 22
8:00 AM - 11:00 AM**

A.J. Gest (Email: offsetaj@comcast.net Phone: 303-994-2420)

Trail Difficulty: Easy

Maximum Participants: 14

Directions: Located south of I-70 on Smith Road between Chambers and Airport Blvd. Address 16002 E. Smith Road.

This will be mid-winter birding in a riparian system.

We should see many of our winter residents: Black-capped Chickadees, nuthatches, woodpeckers, and raptors are a very good possibility.

No parks pass required. Dress accordingly. Bring snacks, water,

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