



September/October 2013
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aikorns
AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

NEW BEGINNINGS

This time last year, as I took on the role of Aiken Audubon's President, Colorado Springs was coming out of the devastating Waldo Canyon fire. This year we faced an equally frightening fire in Black Forest. Many of us lived, or knew someone who lived, in Black Forest and who dealt with evacuation and/or total loss of property.

A large portion of this newsletter is devoted to the Kiowa Creek Sanctuary, the open-space property owned by National Audubon. Members of Aiken Audubon have a special place in their hearts for the property and have led efforts to catalog birds, plants and historical artifacts there.

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BURNED!

FIRE ENGULFS KIOWA CREEK SANCTUARY

Text and photos by Risë Foster-Bruder and Jeannie Mitchell

THE BLACK FOREST FIRE BEGAN IN THE EARLY afternoon of Tuesday, June 11, 2013. By full containment on Thursday, June 20, 2013 it had burned 14,280 acres (22.31 square miles), killed two people, destroyed over 500 homes and changed many lives forever.

The total evacuation area encompassed 94,000 acres and affected 38,000 people in 13,000 homes. Approximately \$9,324,000 was spent and more than 457 firefighters came to fight the fire. It was the worst fire in Colorado state history.

At nearly 1,500 acres, Kiowa Creek Sanctuary is 10% of the Black Forest Fire burn area. How many acres of trees are gone? Time

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Red-tails still soar, although much of the forest burned.

Coming programs

SEPTEMBER 18:

Black Swifts: Colorado's Coolest Birds?

Presented by Jason Beason

OCTOBER 16:

Inside the Colorado Bird Records Committee

Presented by Doug Faulkner

NOVEMBER 20

Birds of Australia & New Zealand

Presented by Diane Luck & David Elwonger

DECEMBER 14

Aiken's Christmas Bird Count

Newsletter articles

Articles, announcements, or other items of special interest to Aiken Audubon members are welcomed for consideration. We'd love to hear from you!

Deadline for the November/December 2013 issue of *Aikorns* is Wednesday, October 16.

➤ Contact the editor, Leslie Holzmann, at aikenaudubon@gmail.com, or call (719) 964-3197.

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SEPTEMBER 18 / JASON BEASON BLACK SWIFTS

OFTEN REGARDED AS COLORADO'S COOLEST BIRD, the Black Swift is one of the most mysterious bird species in the western U.S. Despite a very large breeding range from the West Indies and Costa Rica to the south and Alaska to the north, it is one of the least studied bird species in the Americas. Until 2012, there was no information about where the northern subspecies (*Cypseloides niger borealis*) spent the winter. There are still many information gaps about the natural history of the subspecies. We don't have a thorough understanding of its distribution in North America and we have no idea of the total population size throughout its range. Most research on the northern subspecies has taken place in Colorado thanks to a small group of dedicated citizen scientists.



PHOTO: DEBBIE BARNES

Jason received a bachelor's from Ohio State University (1990) where he majored in natural resources. After college, he moved out west and began birding, and has worked on a wide variety of avian research projects involving birds throughout the western U.S. Jason, his wife Kerry, and their son Otus and daughter Twyla, own and operate Rain Crow Farm near Paonia, Colorado. They are proud of the habitat they provide for birds and all wildlife on their farm. Their yard bird list is currently at 182 species.

OCTOBER 16 / DOUG FAULKNER INSIDE THE COLORADO BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE



DOUG FAULKNER WILL PROVIDE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CBRC history from its founding in the early 1970s to the Snowy Owl invasion of 2011-12. Along the way, he'll discuss why records matter and what happens to reports after they have been submitted to the CBRC.

Doug will delve into the CBRC's inner decision-making processes and some of the more interesting decisions it has made for such occurrences as the Red-backed Hawk and Baikal Teal.

Doug Faulkner is current Chair of the records committee. He's also the author of *Birds of Wyoming*, associate editor for "Western Birds," the journal of the Western Field Ornithologists and has served CFO as a past editor of *Colorado Birds*. He is a biologist with SWCA, a national environmental consulting firm, and he is currently a recognized authority on the effects of wind turbines on birds and bats.

Aiken Audubon programs are free and open to the public. They are held at the Colorado State Division of Wildlife building located at 4255 Sinton Road. Coffee and socializing is at 6:30 pm and programs begin at 7 pm. Please use the back entrance. NOTE: Sinton Road runs parallel to I-25 on the east side, between Garden of the Gods Road and Fillmore Street.

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Aiken Audubon Field Trips & Events

Everyone is welcome on Aiken field trips, regardless of experience level or membership in Audubon. Contact trip leader for details and to let them know you are coming. Don't forget to pack your binoculars, scope (if you have one), field guide, water, snack or lunch, hat, rain gear, sun screen, bug spray, camera(?), and some gas money for the drivers. No dogs are allowed on Aiken trips.

Note: In cases of extreme weather, trips may be cancelled. If this might be a possibility, please contact the trip leader an hour before the scheduled meeting time. To receive e-mailed reminders of upcoming field trips, send your name and e-mail address to aikenaudubon@gmail.com.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 7-10:30 AM FOUNTAIN CREEK FALL BIRD COUNT

Beginning-to-advanced birders are invited to observe and record the numbers of bird species and populations found in Fountain Creek Regional Park during the height of the spring migration.

Reservations are required, (719) 520-6745. Fee: \$5 donation for birdseed.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, ALL DAY (TIMES BELOW) CHICO BASIN RANCH

See what migrants are passing through Chico Basin. John Drummond will lead this trip looking for thrashers, quail, towhees, waterfowl, raptors, woodpeckers, shrikes and more. (Note that the RMBO banding station might be closed at the time of the trip.)

Meet at the Woodmen Park-n-Ride at 7 am, or at the Hanover Fire Station on Peyton Hwy. at 7:45 to carpool. Bring lunch and snacks and water, plus scopes and radios if you have them.

Reservations are required as the trip is limited. There is a \$10 fee to bird at the ranch. Contact Jeannie Mitchell at (719) 494-1977 or vancerus@earthlink.net with any questions and to sign up.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, ALL DAY (TIMES BELOW) BRETT GRAY RANCH

Aiken is heading back to the Nature Conservancy's Brett Gray Ranch! John Drummond will lead another trip to this oasis out on the plains. The ranch's many different habitats result in a long list of resident and migratory birds. Come see what you can find!



Meet at the Woodmen Park-n-Ride at 6:45 am, or the Fuel B Gas Station on Hwy. 94 in Ellicott at 7:30 to carpool. Vehicles should be 4-WD with high clearance. Bring something to eat and plenty of water (there are no public facilities at the ranch). Hiking boots are preferred (there are no trails); scopes and radios are also helpful.

Reservations are required as the trip is limited to 16 people. Contact Jeannie Mitchell at (719) 494-1977 or vancerus@earthlink.net with any questions and to sign up.

More trips online!

For the latest information on field trips and events:

www.AikenAudubon.com

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 9-10:30 AM FOUNTAIN CREEK NATURE ADVENTURES: BIRD BEAK BUFFET

Children ages 3-6, with an adult, will enjoy puppet shows, nature stories, crafts, hands-on activities, and discovery time on the trail.

Reservations required, (719) 520-6745. \$4.00 per person including adults and siblings.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

CAN YOU SPARE AN HOUR OR TWO?

Aiken Audubon will be hosting a table at the "Great Parks Festival" on Sunday, September 29, from noon to 3 pm at Bear Creek Regional Park. This festival is a free celebration of our outstanding parks and open spaces and the variety of recreational, community and volunteer opportunities available.



Last year, Aiken hosted a table and talked to people of all ages about birds and birding. We also played the "hummingbird beak" game.

We plan to have another interactive activity as well as information about birding, but we need help. Are you willing to help set up prior to the event, break down after the event or spend an hour to staff the table? If so, please contact Christine at (719) 596-2916 or baccab@aol.com.

OWLETS RELEASED

You may remember the big to-do about the Great Horned Owls who decided to nest at a busy intersection in Mountain Shadows. Here's an update summarized from a Gazette article by Andrea Sinclair:

The three Great Horned Owls that were removed from their nest in Mountain Shadows were released back into the wild after spending two months in the care of the Ellicott Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. They were released at 8 pm, roughly 5 miles from where they were hatched, using the birds' nocturnal tendencies in their favor as they got their first taste of freedom. The location of the release had been agreed upon with parks and wildlife officials, who advised the owls should remain within a certain distance of where they were born. The center cares for more than 800 birds and mammals every year with the goal of rehabilitation and release.

Read more: <http://gazette.com/>

mountain-shadows-owls-take-flight-released-from-wildlife-rehab/article/1504735

JOIN US FOR THE BIRDS!

I am looking for volunteers for the Conservation Committee. What a great way to get involved in local and national conservation issues!!! A good start is to know the state legislators in your area. Sections of local newspapers cover the legislature and the various issues they are discussing. I would like to address some of these issues by making announcements at meetings and by asking Aiken Audubon members to write letters to their legislators.

I will be placing information about conservation in the Aiken newsletter, and also mentioning successes. Committee members may add information that they think is important.

There is a site on the internet that tells how to write a congressional letter. It is http://L//www.ehow.com/how_5915001_write-congressional-letter.html.

There are ways to get started in conservation issues on your own, too—sign up for e-alerts from the National Audubon Society and email alerts from Audubon Colorado.

There is another way to become active in conservation. Those interested can become part of the Audubon Colorado Council's Public Policy Committee. Those participating would be part of the state wide Action Alert Network. When a bill before the Colorado legislature needs input, emailed alerts would be sent to either all senators and/or representatives or just to those of certain districts. More information is available to anyone interested in volunteering for this important position.

Jackie Heyda
jhmayl@yahoo.com

President's Message, cont'd. from front page.

Many birders around the state know of Kiowa Creek and expressed concern about the property through direct emails to board members and our Facebook page. Yes; a large portion of the property burned, especially the Ponderosa Pines. But there are already signs of renewal and rebirth. The pond closest to Hodgen Road is full of water as well as blackbirds. The open meadow areas were burned, but the grasses are returning. It is amazing how Nature regenerates. She can teach us many lessons of new beginnings.

Another new beginning is the program year for Aiken Audubon. Visit our website to see what we've lined up for this year. The first one is scheduled for September 18th. New field trips are posted as well. Join us for a fun-filled and interesting program year!

And for the record, if my third year as President brings another fire I might have to rethink this whole leadership position.

Happy Birding!

Christine A. Bucher,
 Aiken Audubon President



Look for the
Aiken Audubon Society
Facebook page!
facebook.com/pages/Aiken-Audubon-Society

NEWS & NOTES:

YARDMAP

Have you heard of a site called YardMap? It is a Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology project to encourage people to gather data about the habitats that they are familiar with—their yard, favorite birding spot, a school yard—to provide insights about how they can aid wildlife. The program is like Google Earth, allowing users to zoom in on their place and mark the types of plants that exist there. It's connected to eBird so they can also keep track of the birds they see.

A similar program called Hummingbirds at Home asks people to log observations of hummers on flowers and note blooming patterns.

/// You can learn more at <http://content.yardmap.org> and <http://www.hummingbirdsathome.org>.

AUDUBON EN ESPAÑOL

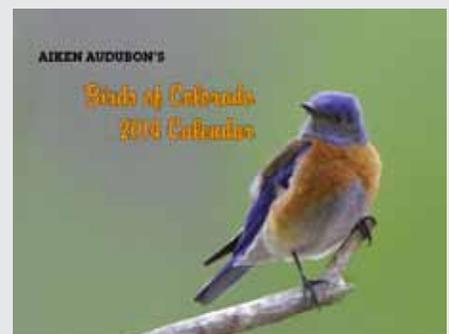
Did you know that National Audubon's website is also available in Spanish?

On sale September 18th...

AIKEN'S 2014 CALENDAR!

AGAIN FEATURING:

- /// Colorado Birds
- /// Aiken photographers
- /// Aiken-related reminders
- /// Professionally printed and ready to hang
- /// On sale this fall



Burned!, cont'd. from front page.



Above: Looking east from the dike. Green begins to reappear.

Below: Immediately after the fire, this pond was a dried up mud hole. Now, with all the rain and the ash from the fire, the pond is full of a black "goo" liquid.



A pair of western bluebirds (male pictured above) was carrying food into this nest box (top photo). Life goes on...



This Mountain Chickadee was hunting lunch among the ashes.

will tell. While many of the Ponderosas are dead, some merely have scorched needles and stand a good chance of surviving.

The property has definitely changed, but the plants and animals who live there are well adapted to fire. The meadows are already green. Birds and other animals are returning.

For now, we will not be having field trips at the sanctuary. While we anticipate future sanctuary visits, remember the majestic views of Pikes Peak, the ponds, the elk herd, and the nearly 150 bird species we've already seen there. ☘



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You do not have to be a member to participate in Aiken's activities.

Flores' Funnies



Artist Rick Flores, a Nature Center volunteer, enjoys sharing his views of happenings at Fountain Creek and Bear Creek Nature Centers.

WELCOME!

Aiken Audubon would like to welcome two new residents who are settling in at the Kiowa Creek Sanctuary. A Red Heeler named Mia and her human Justin Pepper, National Audubon's Director of Prairie Bird Conservation, moved into the house just after the Black Forest Fire erupted in June. Originally from Kansas, Justin has been with National Audubon for seven years and comes to Colorado from Illinois where he was the acting Director of Audubon Chicago Region. He has an Environmental Science degree from Kansas University, cheers on the Jayhawks and Kansas City Chiefs but says he "swore off baseball around 1986."

Though not a lister, the Elfin-woods Warbler, a Puerto Rican endemic, is among his favorite birds he has seen, and his "spark" bird is the Bobolink. He vividly remembers being "at the Bluestem Prairie in western Minnesota and wondering what was the black bird flying around making R2D2 noises."

Still in transition, he and Mia have been hiking the property getting to know the area. Justin is quickly learning about Colorado's short grass prairie and fire recovery while trying to develop bird-friendly grazing projects which produce excellent grassland birding habitat alongside cattle. Mia is learning about black bears on her doorstep and elk in her front yard.

Aiken Audubon looks forward to supporting Justin's efforts at the sanctuary and we hope he and Mia learn to love the property as much as we do. ☘