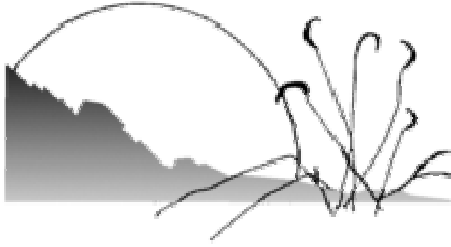


# BOULDER COUNTY NATURE ASSOCIATION



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## Tasmania – the best kept secret!

This incredible island is one of the most ecologically rich places on our planet. Elevations range from sea level to over 5,000 ft, which at this latitude is tundra. The southwestern corner has been designated a World Heritage Wilderness Area, the Tasmanian Wilderness. In this roadless area, over 60 percent of the alpine flora is endemic! It is one of only three temperate wilderness areas remaining in the southern hemisphere.

Hobart, the capitol, has been said to be one of the 10 most photogenic cities in the world. It is hilly and surrounds a beautiful bay with many inlets. Tasmania is famous for its port wine, brie cheese, and fields of lavender. Flower bulbs are exported all over the world—even to Holland. The wealth of produce is due to the mild climate: the mean daily maximum temperature in January is 21.5 °C and the mean daily minimum in July is 4.5 °C. Copper mining was a major industry until 1994, but now the “moonscaped” mining areas are luring tourists.

The scenery of the island is dramatic, ranging from 400 ft fluted basaltic cliffs to white, sandy beaches; from green, rolling hills to dense forests. At least 16 different types of eucalyptus forest are spread over the island! In wetter rainforests, ferns grow larger than a Volkswagen “bug.” One national park was designated to protect Huon pines, some of the oldest pines in the world.

Tasmania was part of the super continent Gondwana (South America, Antarctica, New Zealand, and mainland Australia) over 100 million years ago. Unlike these other places, Tasmania has not been affected by the importation of exotic species and extreme development; therefore, endemic flora and fauna have had a chance to survive. For instance, it is home to 12 endemic bird species, including the Forty Spotted Pardalote, Satin Flycatcher, and Black Currawong. Many of these can be found on Bruny Island near Hobart. Some of my favorites were the brilliant Flame and Scarlet Robins, Superb Blue Fairy Wren, and Golden Whistler.

The world’s largest marsupial carnivore, the Tasmanian devil, may rarely be seen at night. We had a very close encounter with a (wild) young “devil” at the Cradle Mountain Lodge. The creature actually stood on my hiking boot while I was taking video of it, and its mother was screaming! In the same area, wombats, Brushtail possums, wallabies, and echidna were common. Other unique creatures that are either endemic or threatened include the moss froglet, Tasmanian tree frog and cave spider, burrowing crayfish, and many species of rodents and bats.

I highly recommend visiting Tasmania the way we did: we rented a small (roads are narrow) car and, having drawn up a “loose” itinerary, had flexibility in our travels. By reading “volumes” of literature on Tasmania, we realized that there were two “must stay” places: Cradle Mountain Lodge and Freycinet Lodge, in the alpine region and on the sea-coast, respectively. We were easily able to find accommodations between our reserved stays, but I don’t expect that to be the case much longer.

I don’t recommend going any earlier than late November, because there was even a little bit of snow when we were on the tundra. We hired a wonderful guide, Ruth Blozek, for one day. She is one of the best-known naturalists in Tasmania. Her ear for bird song is unparalleled and she is familiar with all natural history subjects.

Fortunately, Tasmanians realize the unique ecology of their island and have taken steps to preserve many areas. Just within the past 10 years, a new conservation movement has saved several large rivers from being dammed and some forests from being logged. Right now, it is still a “laid back” island where you can drive (on the “wrong” side) along narrow, windy roads through rainforests and pleasant green, rolling hills covered with sheep, stopping for morning and afternoon tea. Its long distance from most other countries has saved Tasmania from discovery by more tourists...but not for long. - Paula Hansley

## BCNA Fall Calendar

Saturday, October 29, 9 a.m. to noon: Raptor identification training with Boulder County Parks and Open Space volunteers. To register, contact Larry Colbenson, 303-441-3899; kolbenson@co.boulder.co.us.

Saturday, November 19: Hawk and eagle watching with Boulder County Audubon. Meet at Niwot Park and Ride, Niwot Road at the Boulder-Longmont Diagonal Highway, at 9 a.m.. Bring lunch and plan to return around 3. Wayne and Diana Johnston, 303-683-5662; wjohnston@att.net.

December 1-February 28: count period for Indian Peaks winter bird count. Contact Bill Kaempfer (kaempfer@colorado.edu; 303-443-3175) for more information or to volunteer.

December 21, 7-10:30 a.m: Annual Winter Solstice sunrise hike on White Rocks Trail (which parallels, but does not enter, the White Rocks Natural Area). Expect to see bald eagles, white-tailed deer, waterfowl, and a beautiful misty sunrise. Feel free to bring a thought, poem, or song to share at a short sunrise ceremony at the Boulder Creek bridge. Breakfast afterward at the Garden Gate Cafe in Niwot. Call Steve Jones (303-494-2468) to secure a place at the breakfast table.

## Training for Wintering Raptor Surveyors

Saturday, October 29th, 9:00AM-12:00PM, location to be determined

The Wintering Raptor Survey begins October 15th and runs through March 15th. BCNA surveyors may attend the raptor identification classroom session being offered by Boulder County Parks and Open Space to its volunteers. Enrollment is limited. To register for this training, contact Larry Colbenson at 303.441-3899, or lcolbenson@co.boulder.co.us

--Sue Cass (303-494-5345), wintering raptor survey coordinator

## Sightings

Those barn owls at Valmont Reservoir raised a second brood of young, all of whom had fledged by mid-September. This is the second documented case of multiple brooding by barn owls in Boulder County. The first was last year in a barn south of Hygiene.

We all held our breath as a pair of osprey at Boulder reservoir eschewed the various artificial nesting platforms to build a flimsy stick nest on the narrow crossbar of a power pole just 40 meters from the road. Fortunately, the power lines were inactive, and the osprey fledged two young. A second pair a mile away also fledged two youngsters.

A dozen Boulder County Audubon volunteers "re-adopted" the bluebird trail at Walker Ranch, with the able assistance of County wildlife specialist Denny Morris. The results were astounding: 100 mountain bluebirds, 28 western bluebirds, 9 tree swallows, 5 mountain chickadees, and 38 house wrens fledged from 48 boxes. The volunteers also reported numerous dogs running off trail and unleashed. To help out, contact Marti Oetzel (nature@birdhike.com).

Deceptive weather! With a five-day stretch of 99° or higher temperatures and another two-week-long stretch of 90° or more, both in July, this summer may have seemed unusually hot. The totals are in, and the average daily temperature was actually a few tenths of a degree below average. A cool, wet June, along with consistently cool nighttime temperatures in July and August, made the difference. So far this decade, Boulder's mean daily summer temperatures have been about 0.6° above the 110-year average.

Boulder County, however, is drying out after two wet years, while the Great Basin and northern plains remain refreshingly wet. Here are 365-day percentage of average precipitation amounts for selected regional cities through September 15:

Alamosa 120, Boulder 95, Grand Junction 163, Pueblo 90; Scottsbluff 110, North Platte 135; Cheyenne 97, Lander 110; Goodland 110, Dodge City 120; Albuquerque 138, Farmington 150; Cedar City 178, Salt Lake City 111.

### Fall Natural Events Calendar

Early October: Sumac (*Rhus glabra*) turns fiery red in foothills canyons. Black bears eat the seed heads like corn on the cob. Plains Indians and European settlers made a lemonade-like drink from the red berries. Listen for the wheezy calls of pinon jays working their way south along the foothills.

October 17: Full moon rises at 6:23 p.m.

Falling Leaves (Cheyenne)  
Snow Geese (Cree)  
When the Elk Bellow (Ponca)

October 17: Partial lunar eclipse

October 21: Orionid meteor shower peaks after midnight. The best viewing should be around midnight, just before the moon rises.

October 31: Samhain (Hallowmass)

At the beginning of the Celtic year, the last fruits of summer wither away and winter begins. During this dying time, the gates opened between the spirit worlds, allowing the dead to walk among us. Spirits of the dead were invited to family feasts and encouraged to warm themselves by the fire while sharing honey, sweet cakes, and beer.

Early November: Look for tundra swans, trumpeter swans, common loons, and snow geese at reservoirs in eastern Boulder County. Bald eagles and rough-legged hawks arrive from the north. The latter have virtually disappeared from Boulder County in recent years as subdivision development has fragmented native prairies and wetlands.

November 16: Full moon rises at 4:58 p.m.

Rivers Start to Freeze (Arapaho)  
Storms (Cheyenne)  
Baby-Bear (Osage)

November 17: Leonid meteor shower peaks, but viewing this year is expected to be poor due to the full moon.

Early December: Bighorn sheep smash heads on Specimen Mountain and North Sheep Mountain. December and January are the most likely months to see short-eared owls quartering over the cattail marshes west of Boulder Reservoir. They are reported there about once every three years. There is only one historic nesting record for Boulder County, location unknown.

December 14: Geminid meteor shower occurs just as the moon is growing full. Wait till next year.

December 15: Full moon rises at 4:24 p.m.

Popping Trees (Arapaho, Lakota)  
Frost in the Lodge (Cheyenne)  
When the Deer Run Together (Cheyenne)

December 21: Winter solstice occurs at 11:35 a.m. Mountain Standard Time

At this darkest time of the year, tree-huggers celebrate the return of the sun by huddling in the cold mist emitted by a sewage treatment facility where Laramie and Fox Hills sandstone juts out above Boulder Creek.



BCNA Peaks Flower Walk  
Photo By Tim Henson

### Ecosystem Stewardship Update

A long-term study of various ecosystems in Boulder County has been initiated by the Boulder County Nature Association in conjunction with the Boulder City and County Open Space departments. To conduct these studies, volunteers have adopted areas and trails on Open Space land or on land that is not going to be altered in the near future. Adoption is "in perpetuity," meaning that the individuals will watch and census their areas for as many years as possible and then turn the areas over to others to continue the studies.

"Stewards" are becoming familiar with and censusing almost every natural history aspect of their areas, including birds, mammals, plants, and butterflies. No one, of course, need be an expert in all or any of these fields, but rather stewards take various "experts" along to help them study different aspects of their ecosystem. As part of the studies, we are also keeping track of use by people and dogs so that we can not only get an idea of the amount of traffic a particular area gets but if that usage changes in the long term.

A strict methodology has been adopted with input from the Boulder Open Space Department so that data from all sources can eventually be merged.

I have adopted the Towhee Trail, which takes off from the south end of the Mesa Trail. In early September, I went up to count people and dogs (it was warm and not particularly early, so I didn't expect to see much wildlife); I sat under trees to be in the shade in three different spots. In one area, I was thrilled to see a chat stuffing itself on chokecherries by a little pool of water; many other birds and butterflies came by to drink. In another, I heard a wren family hiding a few feet away from me in a bush and smelled a skunk.

Since the start of my study last spring, I have found that each time I go up the Towhee Trail I see something different. I now take my digital camera so that I can record what I see, especially if I cannot identify it. I look forward to the coming fall and winter!

--Paula Hansley

Note: to adopt an area or join a stewardship group, contact Steve Jones (303-494-2468; [stephen.jones@earthlink.net](mailto:stephen.jones@earthlink.net)). Or look for stewardship field trips in upcoming newsletters.

### *In Search of The Ivory-Billed Woodpecker*, by Jerome A. Jackson, Smithsonian Books, 2004, 264 pages.

As a biologist who's investigated every museum specimen and hundreds of purported sightings of the ivory-billed woodpecker, Jerome Jackson has been hopeful, yet reluctant to accept unproven claims for its existence. When the Nature Conservancy and Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology made the recent announcement that they had "rediscovered" the ivory-bill, Dr. Jackson was among those scientists who initially refuted the claim based on lack of strong evidence. It was only after the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology released sound recordings of the ivory-billed from Arkansas, that Dr. Jackson and others revoked their position.

I was fascinated to learn of Dr. Jackson's rebuttal after I read this book, because upon initially reading it I assumed that he must have been privy to the "rediscovery" efforts. Since understanding and then searching for the ivory-billed has been Dr. Jackson's personal quest for decades, he portrays cautious optimism for the existence of the bird but insists that strong proof is needed.

This book guides the reader on a journey beginning with the ecology, presumed extinction, and the present day search for the ivory-billed woodpecker. It ends with a question about the future of the ivory-bill which portrays the author's optimism. "Can we save the ivory-bill?...If there is habitat, there is hope. If there are ivory-bills out there, there is hope. The truth is out there."

—Rebecca Hill



Sky Pilot  
Photo By Tim Henson

### **Birds of Special Concern: Bald Eagles and Osprey Up, Burrowing Owls and Lark Buntings Still Down**

This year's avian species of special concern monitoring confirmed a disturbing long-term trend in Boulder County grassland ecosystems. While some birds that nest near water are increasing in number, several grassland specialists continue to decline.

Two burrowing owl (rare and declining) nesting attempts were observed, both on City of Boulder open space, but the nests fledged a total of only three young. No nesting activity was observed at historic sites at Boulder Reservoir and Lookout Road. Lark Buntings (rare and declining) and northern bobwhites (rare and declining) were seen during the nesting season, but no nests were confirmed. Northern harriers (rare and declining) courted around Boulder Reservoir, but no young were observed.

Positive trends include a steady increase in numbers of nesting osprey (undetermined status). Six locations fledged at least 10 young. Two bald eagle (federal threatened) nests each fledged one young. American bitterns (rare and declining) were heard or seen at four locations. Barn owls (rare) nested successfully at three locations. Volunteers monitoring bobolinks (isolated) on City of Boulder open space observed a record 175 individuals.

Here's a summary of nesting reports for species listed as rare and declining on the Boulder County Nature Association Avian Species of Special Concern List:

**Northern Bobwhite:** One adult was seen in the Gunbarrel Hill area, but no nesting activity was confirmed.

**American Bittern:** Calling individuals were heard at Boulder Reservoir, Coot Lake, Walden Ponds, and the University of Colorado south campus.

**Northern Harrier:** One territorial pair observed, Boulder Reservoir.

**Burrowing Owl:** Individuals observed at four locations. Two nesting attempts fledged three young.

**Long-eared Owl:** One adult seen in Spring Gulch area, 25 June.

**Lewis's Woodpecker:** No breeding season reports.

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** No breeding season reports.

**Loggerhead Shrike:** No breeding season reports.

**Brown Thrasher:** No breeding season reports.

**Lark Bunting:** One adult seen near 79th and Lookout, 28 May. A fairly large flock was observed in July in the Coal Creek area south of Boulder.

-- Steve Jones, with thanks to all the volunteers who submitted reports this year, including Linda Andes-Georges, Mark Brennan, André Carvalhaes, Linda Cooper, Ruth Carol Cushman, Lisa Dierauf, Paula Hansley, Buffy Hastings, Rick Hatfield, Diana and Wayne Johnston, Bill Kaempfer, Cherie Long, Carol McLaren, Dave Madonna, Joy Master, Denny Morris, Sue Rodriguez-Pastor, Scott Severs, Dave Sutherland, Heather Swanson, Joyce Takemine, Suzanne Webel, Carl Whitehurst.

#### ***Standing between Saturn and Phantom Canyon***

*The stars got quiet just before sunrise  
while the river was still black, bending past  
the high meadow; thousands crowded the clear  
shimmering and four times falling for me.  
Nighthawks worked the dark. An owl waited near  
until the pale sky dissolved the last star.  
Then the birds were still, the invading cheatgrass  
swayed in the stiff air as the sun took  
each ridge and slid down to the green water.  
Mule deer flapped ears, grazing the yellow rim  
of a granite phantom, home to a nest  
nine thousand years old, hung high by eagles;  
generations of the same family  
of birds watched the red canyon with the stars.  
-Beth Isacke*

## Lynx Update

Of 34 females from 1999-2004 releases that had active radio collars, tracking crews visited 16 dens during May-June 2005 and found a total of 46 kittens. All females appeared to be in excellent condition, as did the kittens. Additional reproduction is likely to have occurred in females that are no longer being tracked and from Colorado born females that have not been collared. Most of the dens were in Engelmann spruce/subalpine fir forests in areas of extensive downfall. Elevations ranged from 10,200-11,800 feet. One female has had litters 3 years in a row, all in the same area and with the same mate.

38 lynx were released in April and May of 2005 (18 females and 20 males). They were captured in Quebec, British Columbia, and Manitoba. All were released in the core area of southwestern Colorado with dual VHF/satellite radio collars so that they can be monitored for movement and mortality. The Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) plans to release 15 lynx annually from 2006-2008.

Most lynx released remain in the core area: New Mexico north to Gunnison, west as far as Taylor Mesa and east to Monarch Pass. There has been some movement of lynx in Colorado north of I-70 and into Utah, Wyoming, New Mexico, Nebraska, and Montana.

Of the 204 adult lynx released in 1999, 2000, 2003, 2004, and 2005, there have been 66 known mortalities. Of these 26 are from the 1999 releases, 24 are from 2000, 5 from 2003, 8 from 2004, and 3 from 2005. CDOW is currently tracking 110 of the 138 lynx still possibly alive. These numbers do not include survivors from the 101 kittens born in 2003, 2004, and 2005.

Congratulations to the Colorado Division of Wildlife. Thus far, this appears to be a successful reintroduction of a species once extirpated in Colorado.

## Front Range Mountain Lion Research

Things appear to be moving at CDOW. A job announcement was released on July 28 and closed on August 26 for a carnivore biologist. This position will serve as the division's scientific authority on interactions between humans and the biology of large carnivores and will initially conduct research on large carnivores (mountain lions and bears) along Colorado's Front Range. -Jim McKee

## BCNA Board of Directors

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Vice President....Sue Cass (303-494-5345)  
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Jim McKee (303-494-3393)

## Committees and Contacts

- *Allegra Collister Birdbanding Site:*  
Joe Harrison (303-772-3481).
- *Education:*  
Carol McLaren (303-530-9108) and  
Carol Kampert (303-499-3049).
- *Indian Peaks Bird Counts:*  
Dave Hallock (303-258-3672) and  
Bill Kaempfer (303-939-8005).
- *National Forest Management:*  
Tim Hogan (303-444-5577).
- *Newsletter:*  
Rebecca Hill (303-786-0553)  
rebecca.hill@gmail.com  
and Steve Jones (303-494-2468).
- *Website:*  
George Oetzel (303-543-3712).
- *Publications:*  
Steve Jones (303-494-2468).
- *State and Regional Wildlife Issues:*  
Jim McKee (303-494-3393).
- *Wintering Raptor Survey:*  
Sue Cass (303-494-5345) and Jim McKee

## Visit Our Website

For the calendar, class offerings, research results, publications, and other related information:  
[www.bcna.org](http://www.bcna.org)

## Join The Nature Net List Service

For the Latest news and in-depth discussions of Boulder County natural history issues, go to:  
[Http://groups.yahoo.com/group/nature-net](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/nature-net)  
E-mail BCNA at [mail@BCNA.org](mailto:mail@BCNA.org)

### Changes in the Association's By-Laws

The board of directors recommends several changes in the by-laws of our organization. Below is a ballot. You are requested to vote on the changes by returning this ballot not later than November 1, 2005 to Boulder County Nature Association, P.O. Box 493, Boulder, CO 80306

All of the suggested changes are available on the BCNA website ([www.bcna.org](http://www.bcna.org)) in the 'Newsletters' archive. You may inspect the recommended additions and deletions there. Changes are proposed in Articles IV, V, VII, and XIII. Most of the changes are of a housekeeping nature, bringing the by-laws into compliance with the Association's current practice. Changes of substance include:

1. changing the way the membership votes from ballots by mail to ballots at its annual meeting;
2. changing the number of consecutive two-year terms a board member may serve from two to three; and
3. deleting all mention of the Boulder County Land Trust and its advisory board.

Your board recommends these changes in order to save money, to govern more effectively, and to reduce our liability given new governmental scrutiny of non-profit organizations that purport to be land trusts. A small, all-volunteer organization like BCNA simply doesn't have the resources or expertise to meet current standards and reporting requirements for land trusts.

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**Boulder County Nature Association**

**Official Ballot on Amending the By-Laws**

I am a member in good standing of BCNA. I vote

† For all of the recommended changes                      † Against all of the recommended changes

† For these changes \_\_\_\_\_  
list Article and Section numbers

† Against these changes \_\_\_\_\_  
list Article and Section numbers

Please detach and mail by November 1, 2005 to **BCNA**, P.O. Box 493, Boulder, CO 80306

## Support the Boulder County Nature Association

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone and/or E-mail (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Membership:

|                                   |       |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| _____ Student/Senior (65 or over) | \$10  |
| _____ General Member              | \$15  |
| _____ Family or Household         | \$20  |
| _____ Supporter                   | \$30  |
| _____ Founder                     | \$100 |
| _____ Life Member                 | \$300 |
| _____ Corporate                   | \$500 |

The membership year is January 1 to December 31. Those who join after October 1 are considered members in good standing through the following year. All members receive this quarterly newsletter. Supporter-level members and higher also receive a complimentary copy of each BCNA publication.

Please make checks payable to "Boulder County Nature Association" or "BCNA" and mail to: P.O. Box 493, Boulder, CO 80306.

Boulder County Nature Association  
P.O. Box 493  
Boulder, CO 80306