

Boulder County Nature Association



"Our mission: To educate, inform, and inspire for the purpose of conserving and promoting resilient natural ecosystems in our region."

Volume 34, Number 2
Spring 2016

2016 Ecosystem Symposium SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE: FOOD FOR THOUGHT Cindy Maynard

When the topic for this year's symposium was first announced, I must admit I was a little bewildered. How did agriculture relate to our higher purpose of supporting native ecosystems? By the end of the day I had no doubts whatsoever. Not only did I learn more than I ever bargained for, I was also entertained, enlightened and invigorated. The following is a "bird's eye view" of some of the interesting insights the symposium offered.



Aptly enough, the day started with David Bell's comprehensive overview of the history of agriculture in Boulder County. David is the Natural Resources Manager for the City of Longmont, and prior to that, spent nineteen years with Boulder County Parks and Open Space. Boulder County started with no locally-farmed food at all. Most of the first settlers were miners. Soon enough local farmers and ranchers learned how to turn our high prairie, once deemed "wholly unfit for cultivation" (Edwin James) into productive farms and fields. I learned that Boulder County leases 25,000 acres of publicly-owned land to local farmers, who are working to support our community's emphasis on locally-grown food. Agricultural lands do more than just maintain our scenic views; they also maintain an agrarian way of life in Boulder County.

The discussion of history dovetailed nicely into Heather Swanson's highly relevant description of how she, as Wildlife Ecologist for Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP), is striving to maintain and enhance biodiversity on the 14,000+ agricultural acres OSMP manages. City open space encompasses three types of prairie habitat, in addition to those in riparian and foothills areas. Her group carefully monitors, measures, then re-monitors these communities to preserve habitat for threatened species like the Preble's meadow jumping mouse, Bobolink, Ute's ladies tresses, and the Northern leopard frog. By managing for these threatened species, they are working for the "preservation of . . . wildlife habitats, or fragile ecosystems." (OSMP Charter)

Myron Gutmann, University of Colorado, Boulder, studied the entire Great Plains area in great detail, analyzing how farming released carbon stored in the soil into the atmosphere, and other ways human use affected the environment.

Virginia Scott, Collections Manager of the Entomology Section of the CU Museum of Natural History, presented a thoroughly delightful summary of the diversity of bees in Boulder County. Who knew, for example, that only 12 percent of Colorado bees live in colonies? Most of the rest are solitary, and some are nest parasites, like cowbirds! I learned that "no mulch zones" are very important for ground-nesting bees, and that the material used to plug the holes of cavity-nesting bees can help indicate which species are using the nests. I loved her description of bees as "fuzzy wasps." It almost made me like wasps. *(continued on page 3)*

A message from our outgoing President
Term Limited, Again!
Sue Cass

My, how fast the last six years flew by! I understand circumstances related to the aging process affect our perception of time which is really a mean trick when you think about it. Our so-called "Golden Years" pass in the blink of an eye! Not fair!

I remember my very first introduction to BCNA as a brand new "wet behind the ears" volunteer naturalist for BCPOS in 2001. During the very comprehensive training new volunteers go through, one of our instructors was Jim McKee. For some reason to this day I cannot explain, Jim literally and figuratively took me under his wing, mentoring, nurturing and introducing me to the broad and beautiful world of environmental conservation in Boulder County. BCNA was a huge and important part of this exposure, bringing me into a sphere that included many others like Steve Jones and Scott Severs who coddled and encouraged and instilled confidence to the point I would soon feel comfortable taking a position of leadership in the organization.

Jim's friendship and the time I spent with him, be it setting a record for the number of raptors observed on a BCPOS Raptor Driving Tour, 95, or crossing the Continental Divide in the subalpine of Costa Rica or educating my palate to the wines of the world under his tutelage, were gifts for which I will be eternally grateful! I will continue to serve in BCNA and in Mother Nature's army as recruited in 2001. I can think of no better way to honor my friend Jim McKee.

A Message from our Incoming President
HELP WANTED!
Michael Delaney

I find myself president of BCNA by default. Apparently, no one else would do it. I won't pretend to be as knowledgeable, as committed, or as competent as my predecessor. Everyone who cares about "preserving and promoting resilient native ecosystems" owes Sue Cass an enormous debt of gratitude, not only for her leadership of this organization, but for her long service on the Parks and Open Space advisory committee, her frustrating but committed work on the North Trails Study Area of the city of Boulder, her training of volunteer naturalists, etc.

What I have learned in the month since our annual meeting is that the members of our board of directors are wonderful! We are blessed with a group of very hard working individuals who have good ideas and the stamina to take those ideas and make them reality. Witness the very successful 20th annual Ecosystem Symposium in early March (see Cindy Maynard's article on page one). However, I think they work too hard. They are trying to do everything that the association needs nearly by themselves. Therefore, I'm asking you, two or three or five of you, to step forward with energy and commitment. We need you to write articles for the newsletter, to serve on committees, to advocate for our mission at public meetings, to help with mundane tasks, to prepare yourselves to serve on the board in the future. In our membership of 322, surely there are a couple of you who have the time and the interest. Contact me or any member of the board (michael.delaney@colorado.edu).

(continued on Page 3)

TRIBUTE TO JIM MCKEE

Scott Severs

Jim McKee--a longtime friend and board member of Boulder County Nature Association (BCNA), and a Boulder County Open Space volunteer naturalist--passed away December 26th, 2015.

Jim and I served on the BCNA board around the same time. He was a strong voice for ecologically-based positions for conservation for local and especially state wildlife issues. Jim brought this voice for over ten years to the Colorado Wildlife Commission, a Governor-appointed decision board often dominated by political or business interests. Jim's attendance was a valuable service to a group that often lacked a scientific or public perspective when making decisions for Colorado's wildlife. Jim did this difficult work with passion, and often without the recognition he truly deserved. His consistent civility was an endearing quality brought to challenging issues, often too rare in this day and age.

Jim was an incredible naturalist, whose knowledge of ecosystems, wildlife, and plants he shared endlessly with others, including training many a volunteer naturalist for Boulder County.

(Delaney, continued from Page 2)

As for my history with BCNA, my wife Jean and I went through the County's volunteer naturalist training program in 2003, and received a one-year complementary BCNA membership. A friend, Jan Carnes, got us involved that autumn in the wintering raptor survey, and then asked me to be on the board that spring. I took over the treasurer's position a few months later, which I held for three and one-half years, and then was president in 2009 and 2010, when I was term limited. I was asked why I took on the president's job again, and the simple answer is that Sue Cass asked me to do it. It is very, very difficult to say no to Sue--she is so committed to BCNA!



Mountain Plover
by Bill Schmoker

Special Thanks to our Ecosymposium Committee

We want to express our special thanks to the members of our Ecosymposium Committee who do such a stellar job of organizing BCNA's annual Ecosymposium. Kudos to the co-chairs Megan Bowes and Peter Kleinman, as well as to Kerrie Bryan, Sue Cass, Steve Jones, Mark Lewis, and Claudia Van Wie. The symposium is an enormous undertaking and an important contribution to the understanding of local conservation challenges and prospects, both within BCNA's membership and the larger Boulder County community. Many thanks for all the volunteer hours it takes to pull together this impressive event, year after year. We honor your commitment and your achievement!

Links to Other Local Nature Programs

- Audubon Society, Boulder Chapter, www.boulderaudubon.org
- Boulder County Parks and Open Space, www.bouldercounty.org/os/events/pages/default.aspx
- Colorado Native Plant Society, www.conps.org
- City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks, <https://www.bouldercolorado.gov/osmp/nature-hikes>
- Thorne Nature Experience, www.thornenature.org

(Symposium, continued from page 1)

Angela Dwyer is a Grassland Wildlife Coordinator for Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, a very long job title that reflects the far-reaching scope of her stewardship program for Mountain Plovers. As ground-nesting birds, they are especially vulnerable on agricultural lands where farming equipment can decimate them. I learned that direct, human contact with private farmers on the land can produce impressive results, improving nest survival to a whopping 87 percent.

Sean Cronin, Executive Director of St. Vrain and Left Hand Water Conservancy District, and Erick Carlson of Colorado State University both addressed the important role of our extensive ditch system. I learned there are far more miles of ditches than natural waterways in Boulder County. Ditches function as plumbing systems for agriculture. But they also mimic natural streams in providing habitat and species diversity. One of the biggest differences in the way ditches function is that ditch water runs intermittently, when farmers need to irrigate, whereas natural stream water fluctuates seasonally. Ditches play a much larger role in the ecosystem than I ever imagined.

The day flew by. When it was over, I had a much better understanding of the role of agriculture-related issues in Boulder County.

BCNA Memberships renew January 1, 2016!
The strength in BCNA
lies in active membership support!

Connect with nature:
nature-net-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Classes and Field Trips for 2016 are Underway

Mary Stuber

Response to our 2016 class offerings has been astounding! You've filled every available spot except for four. Thank you!

The first class kicks off in early May and they continue through September. I, for one, can't wait. I heard David Leatherman speak about bugs, birds, and bushes at the Denver Botanic Gardens in January. Rick Adams told us about our local bats at the Annual Meeting in February, and Virginia Scott regaled us with fun and intriguing bee insights at the recent BCNA Eco-Symposium. They are just three of our exciting presenters this season. The expertise and know-how each of our instructors share will leave you impassioned and inquisitive for more. And we're already at work lining up classes for next year as well.



White-tailed Ptarmigan, by Joyce Gellhorn

But we couldn't let the intervening time roll by without offering some field trips to whet your appetite. In late February fourteen intrepid snowshoers headed up to tree line to search for White-tailed Ptarmigan. Conversation was lively as we discussed the ptarmigan's habitat, wintering areas, and daily feeding routine. Our search turned up a few "forms" where birds had nestled under stunted trees, sheltered from both sun and wind, to digest their breakfast of willow buds, along with one indisputable track. But our hunt through a small willow carr failed to turn up any of the birds themselves. Everyone had a good laugh at me crashing through the crusty top one inch of snow into the airy sugar snow beneath. Watching me try to stand back up was an added bonus when the surrounding crust began to break off as well. But soon we were on our way "bushwhacking" through the woods in soft powdery snow, returning to the trail. Maybe we'll try again next year.

And on April 3rd and 4th we'll visit the Dinosaur Ridge Hawkwatch site near Golden. We'll climb the ridge to the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies' observation point to get a "bird's eye view" of raptors riding the updrafts. We'll hear about the history of this operation and how they use the data they collect between March and May each year. This is a Citizen Science project that depends on volunteers and is just one of the monitoring opportunities they offer. To learn more see www.birdconservancy.org.

Be sure to watch for more upcoming field trips we have in the works now. And if you have one that you'd like to lead, please contact Mary Stuber at canoemary@comcast.net. We can help make it happen.



Trekking for White-tailed Ptarmigan, by Cheryl Winch

We still have work to do!
North Trail Study Area
 Sue Cass

Despite relentless and passionate pleas from every environmental organization in the County and many members and supporters, on March 9th the City of Boulder Open Space Board of Trustees (OSBT) recommended to the Boulder City Council the North Trail Study (NTS) Scenario B which will place a ten foot wide multi-use trail through the middle of the West Beech Habitat Conservation Area (HCA). Our next call to action will occur in May when the OSBT recommendation will be reviewed by City Council at a study session tentatively scheduled for May 24th with final consideration and acceptance anticipated in June. We must make our case as strongly as possible to City Council during this time frame! If you would like to receive email alerts regarding this very important issue go to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FD7WMWL> and take two minutes to fill out the information requested. This will be our last chance to influence the outcome in favor of preservation of one of the last large unfragmented habitat blocks in the plains/foothills ecotone in Boulder County. When you hear "ALL HANDS ON DECK" be ready to move, each and every one of you, and many thanks to all who have so valiantly fought the good fight to this point!



North Trail Study Area, by Gary Stevens
<https://bouldercolorado.gov>

We invite you to report your sightings to
www.coloradofrontrangebutterflies.com

BCNA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President Michael Delaney 303-494-8583
 Vice-President Megan Bowes 303-561-4883
 Treasurer Howard Witkin 303-789-4950
 Secretary Peter Kleinman 303-554-5320
 Kerrie Bryan 303-834-8151
 Dot Fears 720-204-0010
 Shirley Jin 303-499-1574
 Cindy Maynard 720-203-8211
 Mary Stuber 303-664-9773
 Claudia Van Wie 303-494-2250

BCNA COMMITTEES

--**Conservation** (chair position open)

--**Education Committee**

Mary Stuber, Chair 303-664-9773, Kerrie Bryan (Instructor Liaison/Class Registrar) 303-834-8151; Megan Bowes, Carol Kampert, Cindy Maynard, Claudia Van Wie

--**Ecosymposium Committee**

Co-chairs Megan Bowes 303-561-4883 and Peter Kleinman 303-554-5320; Kerrie Bryan, Sue Cass, Steve Jones, Mark Lewis, Claudia Van Wie

--**Publications Committee**

Sue Cass, Chair 720-684-6922; Steve Jones, George Oetzel, Lysa Wegman-french, Howard Witkin

--**Research Grants Committee**

Peter Kleinman, Chair 303-554-5320; Megan Bowes, Kerry Bryan, Claudia Van Wie, Howard Witkin

--**Finance Committee,**

Howard Witkin, Treasurer 303-789-4950

--**State and Regional Wildlife Issues**

Gerry Kelly, 720-839-5210

BCNA RESEARCH PROJECTS

--**Allegra Collister Bird Banding Project**

Maggie Boswell, Coordinator picab@qwest.net

--**Avian Species of Special Concern**

Dave Hallock, Coordinator dheldora@rmi.net

Steve Jones, Coordinator curlwsj@comcast.net

--**Burrowing Owls Survey**

Sue Cass, Coordinator 720-684-6922

--**Butterfly Surveys**

Jan Chu, Coordinator 2chuhouse2@gmail.com

--**Ecosystem Stewardship Project**

Steve Jones, Coordinator 303-494-2468

--**Indian Peaks Bird Count**

Dave Hallock, Coordinator 303-258-3672

Bill Kaempfer, Coordinator 303-954-8998

--**Wintering Raptor Survey**

Sue Cass, Coordinator 720-684-6922

OUTREACH

--**Facebook Moderator and BCNA Buzz Editor**

Cindy Maynard, 720-203-8211 cmaynardre@gmail.com

--**Membership Committee**

Cindy Maynard, Chair, 720-203-8211

cmaynardre@gmail.com

--**Nature Net Moderator**

Scott Severs, scottesevers@gmail.com

--**Newsletter**

Dianne Andrews (content editor) dandrews@boulder.net

Carol McCasland (layout) 303-635-6433

--**Website and Support for Newsletter**

Claudia Van Wie 303-494-2250, webmaster@bcna.org

George Oetzel 303-543-3712

Interest in this program has been very high. The April 3rd trip is full. We were able to arrange a second trip on April 4th, and there are only two spots still available. If you are interested, contact Mary at canoemary@comcast.net

Join us for a visit to the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies spring Hawk-watch site, one of the best places in the U.S. to see migrating Ferruginous Hawks. Matt Smith, Citizen Science Coordinator, will tell us about the site and current work there, and how you can visit or volunteer. Then we'll spend time on our own looking for raptors. Binoculars are a must. Spotting scopes are helpful. There is a steep half-mile hike to the location. Bring a lunch, water, and be prepared for winds and changing weather.

Dinosaur Ridge Hawk-Watch Visit



Sunday, April 3rd, 2016

8:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.

Limited to 14 people, email Mary at canoemary@comcast.net to register

**Sponsored by
The Boulder County Nature Association**

**New Program Idea
and an Opportunity to Give Back**

We are often asked whether children or teens may attend our adult education classes. While these classes are not geared toward a younger age group, your Board of Directors would like to pursue the idea of creating a new program that is. Inspiring and educating younger people is essential since they will become the next stewards of our natural world. We imagine a family-oriented program in which a parent or guardian could accompany their child to a class, or on a field trip, project, or event. So we are reaching out to ask if any of our members have an interest in helping to create such a program as BCNA's new Family Outreach Coordinator. This endeavor could be shared between two or more people. It could start small with only one or two annual events and build in the future. If this opportunity to contribute to a better world interests you, please contact Mary Stuber at canoemary@comcast.net.

SPRING

Karl von Frisch, the zoologist, once described his study of the honeybee (which he adored) as a magic well that replenished itself endlessly. The same is true of any facet of nature. However much water you draw from it, you always find more waiting for you. Lose yourself in its miracle waters, and time will shimmy, the world recede, and a sense of harmony enter your bones. It is spring in North America. The well of nature is full today. Time to go outside and take a drink.

Diane Ackerman, *Deep Play*



Cinquefoil by Dianne Andrews

Playful Pipits

The most unusual instance of play I have yet witnessed among birds involved Water Pipits. It was a sunny winter day, and there were ice floes in the Carson River near Dayton, Nevada. We were near a stretch of the river where the water was moving the ice floes swiftly along through some rapids. Water Pipits were landing on ice floes and riding them downriver through the rapids. After traversing the swift water, each party of pipits would leave their floes and fly back upriver to catch other floes coming down.*

*American Pipit, *Anthus rubescens*.

Source: *Birds of the Great Basin: A Natural History* by Fred A. Ryser, Jr., University of Nevada



Anthus rubescens, American Pipit
by Bill Schmoker

**A Newcomer-to-Boulder's Introduction to BCNA
Carol McCasland**

When I moved to the Boulder area from Texas in 2009, I did not know anyone here except a few relatives! I had been here about 2 months, when I took the Raptor Tour advertised in the local paper. What a pleasant trip that afternoon was, driving around with Sue and Alan Cass, spying Bald Eagles, Ferruginous Hawks, and my very first ever Rough-legged Hawk, sitting on a fence post. Sue may not remember that occasion, but I do! She and Alan were so welcoming, explaining the natural history of the area, taking us to see the Grand-Champion Cottonwood Tree (now deceased!), and introducing me to BCNA. A year or so later, I found myself on another field trip, in the car with Michael and Jean Delaney. Michael did a great job of explaining the purpose of BCNA and the important work of the organization through the years. I was hooked! So I thank Sue and Michael for a great introduction to Boulder, to BCNA, and to a dedicated, caring community. And I wish them both well, Sue in her 'new role' (because I know she will be as busy as ever!), and a welcome to Michael in his revived role as President of BCNA.

Support the Boulder County Nature Association

Name _____

Address _____

Phone and/or E-mail (optional) _____

Type of Membership:

_____ Student/Senior (65 or over)	\$15
_____ General Member	\$20
_____ Family or Household	\$30
_____ Supporter	\$40
_____ Founder	\$100
_____ Life Member	\$300
_____ Corporate	\$500
_____ Donation to General Research Grants	
_____ Donation to Evenson Big Cat Research Grants	
_____ Donation to General Research Fund	

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