



# NATURE NEWS

Volume 19, Number 3  
Summer, 2002

## Introducing . . .

**Vicki Flower became the new Treasurer in January, 2002.** Vicki moved to Boulder County about four years ago from the Pacific Northwest. While her professional experience includes work in the healthcare industry with computing and laboratory medicine, it was while at her position at the Nature Conservatory that she first became acquainted with environmental non-profit work. Currently, Vicki serves as a volunteer naturalist and also loves to garden.

**Carol McLaren became the new Chair of the Education Committee this past spring.** Currently Carol is the founder and director of the Science Discovery Program at the University of Colorado. She has been involved in experimental education since 1973 when she taught at Boulder Valley Institute. Her underlying motivation for getting involved in experiential education was the desire to teach (and learn) about the environment with the hope that the more people experience the natural world and learn about it. Carol's other interests include hiking (preferably in the Alpine Tundra), cross country skiing, gardening, dancing, and helping her husband out on the goat farm where they live.

**BCNA's new Conservation Committee was created by the board last October to address a need to coordinate and facilitate our conservation activism activities.** With Boulder County's increasing population growth and a dwindling land and resource base upon which nature can survive, the conservation issues we face are steadily increasing in number, type and complexity.

Throughout its entire history, BCNA has played an active role in conservation issues. One of our first projects was persuading Boulder County to purchase Rabbit Mountain for open space purposes, which they did in 1983. That purchase, in turn, inspired the county to put a greater emphasis on open space acquisitions and eventually lead to the excellent program we have today. We have also been involved in other open space programs (especially Boulder's) and in Forest Service issues; promoting land protection and land management practices that are sensitive to our native ecosystems and the requirements of all our natural species.

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Extra copies of the newsletter are available from the BCNA or sometimes at the Wild Bird Center.

To submit BCNA-related material to the editor, email [susanwinter@qwest.net](mailto:susanwinter@qwest.net) or call 303-581-0783.



# summer calendar



## Sunday, July 7:

*Evening search for nesting osprey, American bitterns, northern harriers, Swainson's hawks, and owls at Boulder Reservoir.* Meet at Boulder Reservoir west entrance on North 53rd Street at 6:30 pm. Call Steve Jones for questions: 303-494-2468.

## Saturday, July 20:

*Butterflies and Bird Sounds.* Join Boulder Bird Club to look for butterflies when the sun shines and birds when its cloudy at the Cal-Wood Outdoor Center, near Jamestown - from 9:00 to 11:30 am. Bring hat, sunscreen, water, binoculars that focus closely, and sack lunch if desired. Meet at 8:00 am, at the "Four Mile Creek" Open Space Parking lot on Lee Hill Road (It is 0.4 miles west of North Broadway on Lee Hill Road). Carpool \$1.00. Call Janet Chu for questions: 303-494-1108.

## Sunday, July 21:

*BCNA Board of Directors meeting and potluck.* All members are welcome at these bi-monthly meetings. Business meeting begins at 4 pm, potluck at 6 pm. Call Mike Figgs for directions, 303-747-1008.

## Sunday, August 11:

*Late night Perseid viewing on Bald Mountain.* Bring a blanket and finger-food snacks to share. Meet at 9:30 pm at the parking lot on Sunshine Canyon Road - on the left, 200 yards west of the Mapleton Rehabilitation Center - to consolidate cars. Call Susan Winter for questions: 303-581-0783.

## Saturday, September 21:

*Full moon Equinox hike in Dowdy Draw area with Steve Jones and Joyce Gellhorn.* Meet at 6:30 pm at the Dowdy Draw trailhead, 2 miles west of South Foothills Highway on Eldorado Springs Drive. Bring portable food to eat or share. Return around 9 pm. Call Steve for questions: 303-494-2468.



## upcoming bcna classes



### Going Batty in Boulder

**Instructor:**  
Toni Piaggio

**Description:**  
This is an opportunity to learn about bats in the classroom and experience interacting with bats in the field. Topics will include bat lifestyles, shapes and research.

The field trip portion of the class will include using mist nets to capture bats and using a bat detector to hear bats. When and if a bat is captured the instructor will be the only person to handle the bats, however the instructor will show the participants the bat and describe the species, then demonstrate how a bat is handled and processed by a bat researcher.

**Dates:**  
Thursday, August 15, 7-8:30 p.m., indoor class  
Saturday, August 17, 7-10 p.m., field class (may continue depending on bat activity)

**Tuition:**  
\$40 (\$35 for BCNA members)  
Limited to 15 participants.

**Equipment:**  
Weather appropriate clothing (summer evenings can be chilly and rainy), hiking shoes (easy hike to the site), headlamp, and something that you can carry to sit on.

**To Register:**  
Call Toni at (303) 583-0018, or e-mail at: [batchaser1@netscape.net](mailto:batchaser1@netscape.net).

*For information on future classes, visit our website at [www.bcna.org](http://www.bcna.org).*



## Introducing: continued from first page

For its first project, several members of this new committee testified at the May meeting of the county's Parks and Open Space Advisory Committee (POSAC) in support of purchasing a half interest in a large 1,594 acre parcel comprising much of Dowe Flats and some of the hillsides to the west. The outcome of the hearing was everything we had hoped for: POSAC voted unanimously to recommend the purchase. Many thanks to those who testified and to our fellow citizen members of POSAC for recognizing the importance of this property. Closing is set for July 15th.

The other half interest in the property is owned by Cemex Corporation which operates the mine in the southern part of Dowe Flats. Discussions are in progress with Cemex on the possibility of buying out their share at some point in the future. BCNA will follow these discussions.

Conservation Committee members became involved in this issue because of the large size of the parcel, its natural values, its growth and development potential, and its close proximity to Rabbit Mountain. In spite of the desirability of this land; the price (\$7 million in cash), the half interest ownership situation, and the complex nature of prior legal agreements were potential reasons for POSAC to recommend against purchase. BCNA testified in support of the purchase so this rare opportunity would not be lost.

There are many other conservation issues the committee will be working on including land acquisition, inappropriate and/or poorly managed recreational uses in sensitive areas, inadequate monitoring of vulnerable plant and animal species, invasions of weeds and other non-native organisms, wildfire mitigation, development in floodplains and riparian areas, growth, chronic wasting disease, and prairie dog management.

But we need more members to help out. If just half of our members could write one letter and/or attend one hearing each year we would have a much stronger voice and could accomplish a lot more. The Conservation Committee would appreciate anything you can do to help in this regard. Please contact us if you can help or if you would like more information (contact information is in the back of this newsletter).

As with the Dowe Flats issue, BCNA's conservation activism efforts will continue to make sure that nature's voice is being heard in public policy, land management and land acquisition decisions.



## Boulder Audubon Bird-a-thon Results

By Bill Kaempfer

The Boulder Audubon Bird-a-thon for 2002 was held on May 17th and 18th. The great migration activity noted around the county this spring was reflected in the records broken by teams during this year's event. All told the six teams participating saw more than 163 different species including several rarities.

The Bird-a-thon, which is Audubon's major fund raiser for the year, has teams of three or four birders out scouring the entire county for all the bird species that they can find during single day. Teams can either use cars or restrict their birding to a foot and bike route. This year, one team was out on Friday the 17th while the other five counted their species on Saturday the 18th, with one team opting for the no-car method.

The "Only B Birders" team of Bill Kaempfer, Bev Baker, Maggie Boswell and Alex Brown racked up a grand total of 147 species during their birding day that started at 5:00 a.m. and lasted until 9:10 p.m. This topped the old Bird-a-thon record of 140 set in 2000. The winning strategy for the Only B Birders included a mid-day trip to the mountains including Ward, Allenspark and Wild Basin which no other team attempted. The "Rank Armatures" team of Richard Trinkner, Bill Schmoker, Hector Galbraith and Sharon Dooley also beat the previous record with their total of 142 species.

Other teams included Scott Severs, Steve Frey and Ellen Klaver at 132 species, Cliff and Marlene Brunning and Paula Hansley with 124 species DW King and Wes Sears with 101 species and Barb and Chris Beall, Andy Cowell and Jim Morris on bikes at 101 species. This marked the first year where all the teams topped 100 species for the day.

Among the most unusual birds spotted were the Golden-winged Warbler that had delighted dozens of birders along Boulder Creek for more than a week before the Bird-a-thon, Northern Waterthrush, Black-and-White Warbler, Baltimore Oriole, Broad-winged Hawk, Brown Thrasher and Great-tailed Grackle.

On June 23rd the Bird-a-thoners got together for a wrap up of the event including presenting all funds raised for Audubon during the event. It is anticipated that more than \$8,000 will be raised in total to be used for such activities as Audubon's Rowe Sandhill Crane Sanctuary in Nebraska, education projects for Boulder County kids and funding a grant for habitat preservation and birding promotion in Central America.



## Wildlife Update

By Jim McKee

### Wolves in Colorado??

CDOW staff have put together the outline of a wolf management plan for use in the event that wolves wander in or are otherwise found in Colorado. This has not had a hearing yet before the wildlife commission, but at least they are considering the possibility that there will again be wolves in Colorado. I'll provide more information as it becomes available.

### Lynx

Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) staff have proposed several more years of lynx releases to ensure that there are enough lynx on the ground for breeding to occur. This seemed to have plenty of support until a shepherd in southwestern Colorado shot a lynx and the ranch owner was charged with take of a listed species (after the herder left for Mexico). At this time Greg Walcher, the Director of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and others are saying that additional releases will only be permitted if Colorado lynx are given an experimental, non-essential status and they are nego-

tiating with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to achieve this status. This would limit the degree of protection for the animals, but may be the only way to get more lynx on the ground. If this is our only alternative, I suggest that we hold our (collective) noses and support the releases.

### Black-Tailed Prairie Dog

After some months, it was decided that Russell George, the director of the CDOW, would approve the work product of the group which develops the "Shortgrass Prairie Conservation Plan (a.k.a. "the Black-tailed Prairie Dog Management Plan) while keeping the director of DNR, the Colorado Commissioner of Agriculture and the Wildlife Commission abreast of what is happening. I hope to be a part of this group, whatever it's called, and help develop the management plan over the next twelve to eight-teen months. With luck, we'll know at our next meeting on June 17 who has been chosen. Besides putting together this work group, CDOW personnel are continuing to fly aerial transects which will provide more accurate acreage estimates for the remainder of eastern Colorado counties.



## Wherefore art thou Bobolink?

By Linda Andes-Georges

The first week of every May, I begin to throw open the windows of the house, regardless of the weather. My ears develop a permanent eastern orientation, like a satellite dish waiting for a signal. I run and hike always toward the irrigated meadows near home, and along the South Boulder Creek trailhead. All of this anticipation is for one reason only: the bobolinks are due to return soon. When will the first one arrive?

The equivalent to a singles-bar for the bobolink is not found just a skip down the street. These dauntless little blackbirds--same family as grackles and red-winged blackbirds--travel a terribly long distance to tryst with each other here in Colorado, where they raise their babies and begin their nearly non-stop journey back home again in about 8 weeks--a fantastic "turn-around time." But for all the rest of the year, huge rice fields and meadows of Argentina and Brazil provide feeding and socialization grounds for flocks of bobolink. In our state, only marginal populations find a place to breed in our irrigated hayfields. In Boulder County, bobolinks are truly a rarity: less than a dozen fields support them. The largest portion of the bobolink population does its flirting and baby-making in the upper Midwest and Canada.

My affection for them derives from their song. These unique little icterids have by far the most beautiful song of all their immense blackbird family. It begins with whistle-notes and ends with a series of rapid up-and-down squeaky joyful sounds. Often the male is flying from his tall-weed perch while singing urgently: "Ladies I've got the best nest-site in the field. Come take a look. See my fine creamy bonnet and check out my flashy white back: this is NOT a rented tuxedo! Best pedigree in the state this year!"

Mr. & Mrs. Bob are as wily as coyotes. After constructing their summer home of grasses on the ground, under good cover of tall waving grasses above, they "approach and exit their nest sites by walking along the ground rather than by flying directly to or from the nest," which of course confounds both predators and human nest-counters.

See and hear them during mosquito and firefly season, in the Burke meadows (just east of 55th and Baseline), along the Bobolink trail, on the SE corner of Cherryvale and S. Boulder Rd., and in north county irrigated natural grass hayfields. If you find them (especially in new places), report them to City and County Open Space.

*Sources:* Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas, Hugh Kingery ed.; and Boulder County Nature Almanac, by Cushman, Jones and Knopf.



## Light and Clarity on the Grassland Sea

### *Ecology and Economics of the Great Plains*

by Daniel Licht, 1997.

Review by Steve Jones

The clearing of rain forest in South America and fragmentation of wildlife habitat in East Africa have proceeded gradually compared to the transformation of the North American grasslands, the "American Serengeti," during the nineteenth century. Within a period of 50 years one of the most remarkable ecosystems in the world was literally obliterated. Gray wolves, elk, bighorn sheep, black-footed ferrets, and river otters were extirpated. The immense, roving herds of 30 to 70 million bison were reduced to a few hundred individuals. Seven hundred thousand square miles of native prairie was plowed under, while hundreds of thousands of Plains Indian people were killed and their rich cultural tradition nearly snuffed out.

For years many North Americans, including environmentalists, have ignored the plight of the grasslands, assuming that nothing of them remains or that the little that does remain isn't worth saving. Daniel Licht makes a compelling case for restoring and preserving the North American prairie through a network

of grassland reserves populated by native species. Such a wildlife reserve system, encompassing grasslands from Alberta to Texas and Colorado to Iowa, would cost little (the land could be acquired for less than the current cost of the federal Conservation Reserve Program and crop set-asides) and would offer a wildlife spectacle rivaling that found anywhere else in the world.

Licht begins with a detailed discussion of the status of native grasslands and their wildlife populations. Then he evaluates current efforts of government agencies and private conservation organizations to preserve native grasslands. He demonstrates that the current network of small and scattered prairie preserves will never support self-sustaining populations of large, charismatic species, including gray wolves, grizzly bears, and bison. As for smaller mammals and birds, small preserves, with their high "edge" to area ratios, consistently favor non-natives and generalists at the expense of native grassland species. Much larger preserves will

be necessary to re-establish a functioning grassland ecosystem.

Admitting that the effort might open him "to ridicule," Licht then maps out a system of federally managed prairie preserves encompassing 27,000 square miles. In Colorado, a Pawnee Grasslands preserve, created through the purchase of inholdings within the current national grassland, would protect more than 1,000 square miles "of classic High Plains prairie." Other, larger preserves would lie in western North Dakota and South Dakota, the Nebraska Sandhills, the Texas panhandle region, the southern Flint Hills, and the Iowa Loess Hills.

These preserves would be large enough to support wolves, bison, and other large mammals. They would stimulate local economies through tourism. They would provide opportunities for recreation and spiritual renewal. "In the final analysis," writes Licht, "the conservation of the grassland ecosystem is not for the critters, and plants, but for humans....Land is the strongest link between generations--stronger than books, stronger than legends. It is said that the Iroquois treated the land as a gift to the seventh generation to come. We would do well to carry that morality with us."



*An anonymous Southern slave captured the notes of liberty and happiness in the song of the bobolink, a bird which abounded on rice plantations. His onomatopoeic rendition was quoted in Simeon Pease Cheney's Wood Notes Wild, Notations of Bird Music (1892).*

-submitted by Linda Andes-Georges

Liberty, liberty

Berry nice to be free!

Bob-o-link where he please

Fly in de apple trees.

Oh 'tis de freedom note

Guggle sweet in him troat.

Jink-a-link, jink-a-link,

Winky wink, winky wink.

Only tink, only tink

How happy, bob-o-link!

Sweet! Sweet!



## **Wildlands Restoration Volunteers is pleased to offer a great collection of day-long and weekend projects this summer and fall!**

If you want to get outdoors into some beautiful places, work together with others doing important work to restore the land, and above all have FUN, please take a look at the schedule below. Instructions for registration are included at the end of this e-mail. Projects tend to fill quickly, so please register early to reserve a spot. No experience is required to attend. Some projects include overnight camping. Meals are provided in most cases. Thanks for your help!

### **July 12 (evening)-14: Lost Lake - Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest**

Volunteers will close social trails; close and revegetate numerous illegal lakeside campsites with locally collected transplant plugs; install signs showing location of official campsites and trails; re-route badly eroded portion of trail heading down to lake; close and rehab portion of old mine road. Meals will be provided and volunteers will have the opportunity to camp for two nights at this beautiful mountain location. Number of Volunteers: 35. Minimum age: 16.

### **August 17-18: Mitchell Lake - Indian Peaks Wilderness**

We will address impacts to the fragile sub-alpine environment near gorgeous Mitchell Lake and re-route and revegetate a steep wide eroded 200 yard section of trail above the lake and extend an existing plank boardwalk through a nearby wetland area. We will also close social trails near the lake. Meals will be provided and volunteers will have the opportunity to spend the night at the historic CMC Brainard Cabin. Number of Volunteers: 15-20. Minimum age: 16.

### **August 24-25: Jasper Lake - Indian Peaks Wilderness**

Our activities will include native seed collection for revegetation projects the following year, mapping and pulling of an expanding Canada Thistle population, planting of test plots using native seeds collected on site in 2001, closure and revegetation of heavily impacted lakeside campsites and improved signage. Volunteers will have the opportunity to camp overnight in this beautiful setting. Number of Volunteers: 15. Minimum age: 16.

### **September 14: Gillespie Gulch/Owens Flats - Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest near Jamestown**

In a cooperative effort between WRV, the James Creek Watershed Initiative and the Boulder Ranger District, we will close and revegetate a badly eroding road. After heavy equipment is used to close access and prepare the site, volunteers will apply organic fertilizer, plant native seed, complete waterbars and checkdams, and install erosion control matting and informational signs. Lunch will be provided. Number of Volunteers: 50 adults. Minimum age: 16.

**If you would like to attend any of these projects, please contact Ed Self of Wildlands Restoration Volunteers at [edself@eco-mail.org](mailto:edself@eco-mail.org) or 303-543-1411.** Please tell us your name, address, home/work phone, e-mail, how many people will be attending including yourself and any related special skills or interests you have.



## **Citizens for the Arapaho-Roosevelt**

Get involved in our summer fieldwork! We are working to map and inventory the nearly 350,000 acres of roadless areas in the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest. The information collected will help us protect these areas and advocate for more effective management. You can expect to meet others who share your passion for wild places, enjoy traveling in some of the most beautiful forests we have left, and learn about threats facing public lands in Colorado.

### **Volunteer Programs:**

*Volunteer Corps:* If you have some basic experience with maps, backcountry navigation and camping skills, this is the program for you! To participate in this program you need to be able to commit to conducting six days of field work over the course of the summer months (whenever it is convenient for you). This is an excellent way to gain valuable skills and experience and be actively involved in the effort. Attending one of the following training sessions is necessary for Corps participants: May 15-16 or June 22-23. Registration is required.

*Volunteer Weekends:* Attend one or more of three weekend trips into the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest where you will survey selected areas for "Wilderness Quality". Camp out with a group of other volunteers and spend a day hiking into the interior of some of the most wild forest we have left. Dates: June 14-15, July 19-20, August 23-24. Call or email for locations.

*Occasional Volunteer Help:* Help contribute by donating your time to some of our smaller projects: office work, planning needs, field work. Every little bit helps!!!

For more information or to register for a volunteer program, contact: Lisa Dale at (970) 227-9407 or e-mail to [ldale@frii.com](mailto:ldale@frii.com).



## 2001 BCNA Board of Directors

President . . . . .Bruce Bland . . . . .303-499-8612  
Vice President . . . .Mike Figgs . . . . .303-747-1008  
Treasurer . . . . .Vicki Flower . . . . .303-684-9030  
Secretary . . . . .Bev Gholson . . . . .303-440-5225

### Members-at-large:

Joyce Gelhorn . . . . .303-442-8123  
Steve Jones . . . . .303-494-2468  
Naseem Munshi . . . . .303-673-0933  
Joan Ray . . . . .303-444-5011  
Jacob Smith . . . . .303-247-0998

## BCNA Online

### VISIT OUR WEBSITE

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

### JOIN THE NATURE-NET LIST SERVICE

For the latest news and in-depth discussions on issues of interest to BCNA members

For more information, go to:  
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### CONTACT BCNA

Email BCNA at [mail@bcna.org](mailto:mail@bcna.org)



## Committees & Contacts

Allegra Collister Nature Preserve and Birdbanding Site . . . . .	Joe Harrison . . . . .	303-772-3481
Cliff Nesting Raptors . . . . .	Nan Lederer . . . . .	303-447-1899
Conservation Committee . . . . .	Bruce Bland . . . . .	303-499-8612
	Joan Ray . . . . .	303-444-5011
Education Committee . . . . .	Carol McLaren . . . . .	303-530-9108
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	Bill Kaempfer . . . . .	303-939-8005
National Forest Management . . . . .	Tim Hogan . . . . .	303-444-5577
Newsletter, Website, Marketing Literature . . . . .	Susan Winter . . . . .	303-581-0783
Parties, Special Events . . . . .	Naseem Munshi . . . . .	303-673-0933
Publications Committee . . . . .	Steve Jones . . . . .	303-494-2468
State and Regional Wildlife Issues . . . . .	Jim McKee . . . . .	303-494-3393
Winter Raptor Survey . . . . .	Steve Jones . . . . .	303-494-2468

## Artwork Credits, Acknowledgements, Etc.

Animal art (except bat): exzooberance.com, photoartofnature.com; Page 7: I dedicate this page to my cat, Michael, who, through his strong desire to live, survived 3 operations, occupying all of my thoughts and energy for the past months while showing me just how vast my capacity of love truly is. (Thank you for allowing the designer a selfish indulgence.)



## Support the Boulder County Nature Association

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone, Fax or Email (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Membership:

- Student/Senior (65 and over)      \$10
- General Member      \$15
- Family or Household      \$20
- Supporter      \$30
- Subscriber      \$50
- Founder      \$100
- Life Member      \$300

**The membership year is January 1 to December 31.**  
(Members who join after October 1 are considered paid through the following year.)

All members receive this quarterly newsletter.

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

Thanks for your support!



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

