

# Boulder County Nature Association



*"The Boulder County Nature Association is a private, non-profit membership organization committed to preserving the natural history of our region through research, documentation, and public education."*

Volume 30, Number 1  
Winter 2012

## 2012 Ecosystem Symposium will address WATER: PURE AND NOT SO SIMPLE

Mark your calendar for Saturday, April 21st, 2012, 8:00 a.m. to 4 p.m. The event is free and open to all, and will be held at the University of Colorado Ramaley Auditorium in the Ecology Department building, just east of Norlin Library.

The 2012 symposium will highlight local water issues and projects including:

- Climate change research relating to water
- Water contamination studies of Boulder Creek
- History and overview of local water sources
- Lower Boulder Creek Project
- Panel discussion of issues surrounding the proposed Gross Reservoir Expansion project
- And much more

The annual symposium is sponsored by the Boulder County Nature Association, Boulder County Audubon Society, Boulder County Parks and Open Space, Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks, and the Colorado Native Plant Society.

We are seeking volunteers to help set up and clean up and to help with food preparation at the event. Ideas for places to publicize the symposium will be greatly appreciated too. Visit [www.bcna.org](http://www.bcna.org) in the new year for updated information and a chance to view speaker abstracts. Or feel free to call or e-mail Natalie Shrewsbury at 720-352-4915 or [econats@gmail.com](mailto:econats@gmail.com).



Coot Lake

photo by Scott Severs

## Come one! Come all to BCNA's Annual Meeting!

BCNA's Annual Meeting will be held at 6:00 PM on Sunday, February 12th at the Arapahoe Ridge HOA Clubhouse, 1750 Powell Street in Erie, the same location as last year's gathering. Our program for the evening will be shared by Steve Jones and Jan Chu who will present an inventory of five years of butterfly research which has been supported, in part, by grants from BCNA and will touch briefly on late winter and early spring emerging butterfly species found in Boulder County... and Joyce Gellhorn who will enlighten us with "Mothers of the Forest", the story of the role aspen play as a pioneer species and their function in forest development.

As is usually the case, a potluck supper will be followed by announcements and elections to the Board of Directors. Please bring your own drinks and a main dish, side dish, salad or dessert to share and, in the interest of our environment, bring your own table service and serving utensils.

*(continued on page 4)*

## Board Nominations Sought

The BCNA Board of Directors is seeking nominations for three openings: Treasurer, Secretary, and one at -large position. Elections will take place at the Annual Meeting on February 12th. Nominations may be submitted to the Nominating Committee by contacting Sue Cass, 720-684-6922, [suecass@comcast.net](mailto:suecass@comcast.net) or Peter Kleinman, 303-554-5320, [peter218@gmail.com](mailto:peter218@gmail.com). The Board of Directors is the dynamic engine that keeps this organization moving toward its goal of "preserving the natural history of our region through research, documentation and public education." Your active participation provides meaningful support and direction. Join us!

### **Inside:**

**30 years of Indian Peaks Bird Counts, page 2**  
**BCNA Winter/Spring Calendar, page 3**

**Indian Peaks Bird Count Celebrates 30 Years**  
**— by Dave Hallock**

In the fall of 1981 Mike Figgs, who lives in Allenspark, Dave Alles, current whereabouts unknown, and I met to plan the first Indian Peaks Christmas Bird Count. Little did we know what was about to begin. Mike and Dave were well connected with Boulder Audubon and rounded up volunteers to bird in the count circle. Probably the most exciting aspect of the first Christmas Count was dealing with the weather. Observing only two mountain chickadees on a windy day was less than exciting, but the skiing was great!

Some of the participants were just as curious about counting birds during the other seasons. So the count evolved into the Indian Peaks Four Season Bird Counts sponsored by the Boulder County Nature Association and Boulder County Audubon Society. Now in its 30<sup>th</sup> year, this might be the only four-season count in the nation. We recently celebrated the anniversary with a get-together at the Kathmandu Restaurant in Nederland. (picture below!)

The most amazing aspect of the count is the involvement of the volunteers. Each count, somewhere between 25 and 35 volunteers will take part. People have adopted areas within the count circle and continue to go back to them, count after count, year after year. During the 30 years, over 250 people have participated. Nearly 40 people have regularly participated for over ten years; of these, 17 have done so for twenty or more years and nine have stayed with it since the beginning. This long-term involvement has greatly added to the quality of the information collected. You get to know the birds and the area better by conducting the counts over many years.

A psychologist could probably do an interesting study about the personality types of the long-term participants. We like to focus on a project and stick with it.

*(continued on page 7)*



Celebrating 30 years of Indian Peaks Bird Counts

**Greetings from your BCNA Board of Directors:**

Dear friends..., fellow lovers of nature..., wonderers of the Universe..., a New Year has begun and with it comes the almost exigent need many of us feel to become more resolute in our daily habits or to live more purposeful lives. To those of you who are seeking such a challenge I extend an invitation. Pour a little of that passion we all share for this amazing place into this amazing organization! Invest your time, energy and expertise by serving on our Board of Directors or on one of several very productive panels like the Education, Publication or Ecosystem Symposium Committees. Join your fellow conservationists in the tasks of conducting important wildlife surveys or ecosystem stewardship. We join organizations like BCNA because we share the same interests..., the same values and those of us who invest ourselves fully are richly rewarded. This comes from one who knows. To the many of you who are deeply rooted in BCNA's mission of environmental education and preservation we thank you! If you have not had the opportunity to be more involved, we ask you to join us. Warm friendships and a sense of accomplishment will be yours for the taking. Guaranteed!

Your BCNA Board of Directors wishes each and every one of you a healthful and fulfilling New Year and looks forward to seeing you at our Annual Meeting on February 12th.

Sue Cass, President

**NEWSLETTER CHANGES**

We want to extend our thanks to Steve Jones and Scott Severs for sharing the task of producing our quarterly newsletter for many years, in addition to all the other contributions they make to BCNA. With this issue Carol McCasland is taking over as the new layout editor, and Dianne Andrews is the new content editor. Please send articles, poems, photographs and announcements for the newsletter to Dianne at [dandrews@boulder.net](mailto:dandrews@boulder.net). The deadline for the Spring issue is February 27th.

We also thank George Oetzel, who has also been helping with the newsletter and managing our website. George would like a volunteer to assist him. If you are interested, please contact him at 303-543-3712. In addition, we thank the Education Committee for the Class Schedules that are inserted in the newsletter twice a year, with special thanks to Janet McLachlan, who puts it all together.

## BCNA Winter/Spring Calendar

Thursday, January 12, Colorado Native Plant Society, Boulder REI, 6:30 p.m. **White Pine Blister Rust in High Mountain Ecosystems**, presented by Anna W. Schoettle, PhD, Research Plant Ecophysiological, Rocky Mountain Research Station, who will provide an overview of the ecology of limber pine and the Rocky Mountain bristlecone pine, and the factors that threaten them. Both species are currently threatened by a non-native pathogen (that causes the lethal disease white pine blister rust), mountain pine beetle, and climate change.

Tuesday, January 24, 7:15 p.m. Rebecca Safran, Assistant Professor, University of Colorado, will discuss her **Barn Swallows Studies** - Ecological and Evolutionary Connections between Animal Behavior and Population Biology. Unitarian Universalist Church of Boulder, 5001 Pennsylvania Ave., off 55th St. between Arapahoe and Baseline.

Thursday, February 9, Colorado Native Plant Society, Boulder REI, 6:30 p.m. **Born to Burn**, presented by Paula Fornwalt, PhD. Colorado's ponderosa pine forests have experienced a marked increase in the frequency, size, and severity of wildfires in the last decade. How might understory plant communities be expected to respond to these fires in the years that follow? This program will explore this question, using the results of studies conducted following the 2002 Hayman Fire as a foundation.

Sunday, February 12, 5:30 to 8:00 pm. **BCNA Annual Meeting**. See article on page 1.

Tuesday, February 21, 7:00 pm. Jan Chu and traveling companions will present a travelogue of their recent 17-day **China trip**, which included tracking the wild Giant Panda and Giant Flying Squirrel in the QinLing Mountains and hiking in the Pudacao National Forest, Tebetan Prefecture. Their tour emphasized natural places and sights, flowers, butterflies, and birds. The extremes between the ancient and modern were evident in every small town. Meadows Branch Library, 4800 Baseline Rd.

Thursday, February 23, 7-8:30 p.m., George Reynolds Branch Library, South Boulder. **Driving to Alaska: Wildlife and Wildflower Viewing off the Beaten Track**, presented by Leslie Larson. See page 6 for details.

Tuesday, February 28, 7:15. Arvind Panjabi, International Program Director, Rocky Mountain

Bird Observatory (RMBO), will present a program on **Birds of Two Worlds, the Mexico-Colorado Connection**. Twenty-nine of 34 grassland-obligate species that breed in the western Great Plains overwinter in the limited grasslands of the Chihuahuan Desert. Many of these grasslands have been radically altered through grazing and cropland agriculture. RMBO is cooperating with Mexican and U.S. NGOs and others to develop and implement plans for protecting these beleaguered grasslands and their unique community of birds, offering hope for conserving this critical habitat. (see picture below) Unitarian Universalist Church of Boulder, 5001 Pennsylvania Ave., off 55th St. between Arapahoe and Baseline.

Saturday, March 10, 7:30 to 11:00 am. **Spring welcoming breakfast hike at Sawhill Ponds**. Meet at 7:30 at the Sawhill Ponds parking area (west of 75<sup>th</sup> St. between Valmont and Jay roads). Bring something warm, nutritious, exotic, or passionate (and definitely portable!) to share at a potluck picnic beside Boulder Creek. Expect to see ducks, raptors, and early-singing passerines. Steve Jones (curlewsj@comcast.net).

Saturday, April 21<sup>st</sup>. **Boulder County Ecosystem Symposium: Water Pure and Not So Simple**. See article on page 1.

Saturday, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. **Exploring Colorado's Lichens**. Join Ann Henson in a leisurely walk to learn about lichens of trees, soil, moss and rocks. Bring your hand lens and be prepared to crawl around and get close to small things! For further information and to register contact Ann: [2henson@kwabena.us](mailto:2henson@kwabena.us) or call 303-772-8962. Classes will also be held on June 10, September 22, and November 4, 2012.



The Malpaís Grassland Priority Conservation Area in Durango and Zacatecas, Mexico

Photo by [Jose Hugo Martinez](#)



Photo by Stephen Jones

CRANES

I went in search of them in the dark hour before dawn  
 through unfamiliar Nebraskan woods  
 a woolen sound as soft as memory riffled the leaves

sky and river eased to gold and in that brilliance  
 the sandhill cranes thousands and thousands  
 waking on the sand bars of the Platte

each breaking ray stoked the mitted sound  
 until it was no longer sound  
 but a vibrant force gripping like gravity

it was the solid footing on which I stood  
 holding my every thought which was no longer thought  
 each crane life poured through me

erasing past, present, future  
 the river trembled, time cracked open  
 sixty million years swirled in the current

I could no longer differentiate the roar of the cranes  
 from that of the water or the wind or the beat of my heart  
 the rivers of each were flowing as one

Now it is autumn in Colorado,  
 I am walking the dog in the valley  
 when I hear an ancient murmur on the crests of the wind  
 my body slows as if that fluid sound has

been simmering for centuries within me, its wild vines  
 twined around my bones like an unsung eulogy,  
 minutes go by like a lifetime until my eyes discern them

off to the north a flock of fifty sandhill cranes  
 weavers of earth and sky, testing the edges  
 tiny dancers of moon and cloud  
 pirouetters of time  
 curtsiers of stars

dressed in fine grey silks and fancy red caps  
 carrying millions of years of invisible baggage  
 seemingly weightless they go, wave after wave  
 dissolving like spindrift on the far horizon

oh lambent birds, not a single thread  
 from your silks nor a stitch of fire from your births  
 can hold you to this earth  
 and the wild vines unfold  
 in a eulogy unleashed

—Bev Melius

**Annual Meeting** (continued from page 1)

To reach the Arapahoe Ridge HOA Clubhouse drive east on Arapahoe Avenue to North 111th Street (the first light east of US HWY 287), turn left (north) on North 111th Street to your first right at Morris Court, then immediately left on Hughs Drive to Powell Street (second stop sign). Turn left on Powell (you will see a large park, pool and the clubhouse on the left), a short distance to a circular drive and the entrance to the clubhouse on the left. A large parking lot is immediately south of the circular drive. Drop-offs may be made at the entrance to the clubhouse from the circular drive, but no parking is allowed in the driveway. All are welcome!

**Burrowing Owl Survey Seeks Volunteers**

Boulder County Nature Association is recruiting new volunteers for this year's Boulder County Parks and Open Space burrowing owl survey. No previous experience monitoring burrowing owls is necessary, but volunteers need to commit at least 3 hours per month, April-July, and attend a volunteer training on Sunday, January 22, 3-4:30 p.m., at the Boulder Reynolds branch library, Table Mesa Drive opposite King Soopers. Volunteers will have the opportunity to go on a field trip in June to see nesting burrowing owls in Weld County.

These little owls are in serious jeopardy in Boulder County, probably due to nesting habitat fragmentation and predation by urban-adapted carnivores. Last year we found only three nests on Boulder County open space properties. Volunteers will adopt a single prairie dog colony and visit it at least four times between 15 April and 31 July.

For more information or to volunteer, contact Sue Cass: [suecass@comcast.net](mailto:suecass@comcast.net)



Photo by Scott Severs

## Wildlife Recording by Ann Cooper

I have the perfect set-up at my home for the lackadaisical birder, a feeder mounted a few yards west of my office window. Each morning I take a good look at what's pecking before checking email and the day's news. For the last three mornings I've had a very handsome white-throated sparrow scrabbling for spilled patio mix in the leaf mold below the feeder, or perching in the bare forsythia bush. I remember having this species only a few times in my backyard habitat. But when?



White-throated Sparrow, photo by Ann Cooper

Fortunately I can easily check. For many years I kept records on an *AviSys* database. Two years ago I switched to a different wildlife tracking program called *Wildlife Recorder*. My reason for switching had nothing to do with birds. This software program also includes species lists for dragonflies, a group I have been surveying on Boulder County Parks and Open Space. I wanted to track the dragonfly and damselfly species and their flight seasons in an easily-searchable way.

In making the move to *Wildlife Recorder*, I transferred all my historic records and life lists to have everything in one database. All names, places, dates, and trips are available at the click of a mouse—no searching through my scrappy field journals. It's an excellent program, although I admit that I probably have not used, or mastered, many of its more sophisticated possibilities.

As far as the dragonflies go . . . well, I'm what's often known as a "birder-gone-bad." I have become one-track minded in spring and summer, forgetting birds in favor of "odes" (shorthand for Odonata, the insect order that includes dragonflies and damselflies). I am on my second year of data and I am starting to see trends in the species seen and their known flight dates. Unlike many states, Colorado doesn't have a

dedicated field guide for dragonflies. Neither do we have easily available records of what species occur where and when in the state. With the help of *Wildlife Recorder* and many hours in the field (what a hardship!), I hope to be able to make a small contribution to our local information.

It's only in winter that I really pay attention to my garden bird life list again—and have the joy of a white-throated sparrow's visit to get me fired up on birds again.

[http://www.wildlife.co.uk/birding\\_software/prod01.htm](http://www.wildlife.co.uk/birding_software/prod01.htm)

### BCNA Research Grants – Call for Proposals

For many years the Boulder County Nature Association has funded research grants that deal with the natural history of Boulder County. From its outset, this has been an important mission of the Nature Association. Grants are available in two categories again this year.

First, the Evenson Memorial Grant offers up to \$400 and supports research on our native cats. Second, general BCNA grants support projects that add to our understanding of the natural history of Boulder County or document the County's ecosystems. These grants offer up to \$1000 (or more if funds allow). Recent projects included an analysis of 50 years of bird banding data from the Allegra Collister Nature Preserve and a grant to the Center for Native Ecosystems for the pilot season of the Front Range Pika Project, a collaborative citizen science initiative.

Proposals should include a detailed methodology and a complete budget and be limited to five pages. No institutional overhead will be allowed. Successful applicants sign a contract specifying they will complete the project in 2012 and share results with the Nature Association. We ask for electronic submission of a final report.

Applications should be submitted by Saturday, March 10, 2012, either to BCNA, P.O. Box 493, Boulder, Colorado 80306, c/o Peter Kleinman, Chairman, or by e-mail to [peterk218@gmail.com](mailto:peterk218@gmail.com).

Connect with nature:  
[nature-net-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:nature-net-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

### BCNA Winter Program

**Driving to Alaska: Wildlife and Wildflower Viewing off the Beaten Track**, presented by Leslie Larson, Thursday, February 23, 7-8:30 p.m., George Reynolds Branch Library, South Boulder

Nature photographer and videographer Leslie Larson will present information for those planning to drive to Alaska, or those wishing they could! Find out what plants and animals you might see along the way. Get some travel tips about road and weather conditions, seasonal attractions, and border crossings. Learn how to stretch your travel dollars.

Leslie is a naturalist and serious photographer who takes delight in every aspect of the world around us. Since retiring, she has traveled the globe in search of birds, animals, plants, and remote hideaways. She makes DVDs about each experience to share with others to help them plan their own trips.



Photo by Leslie Larson

**Winter sways gifts.  
Earth whirls a chorus.  
Beautiful eyes hoot.**

#### BCNA Board of Directors

President.....Sue Cass 720-684-6922  
Vice President.....Peter Kleinman 303-554-5320  
Treasurer.....Mort Wegman-French 303-543-0150  
Secretary.....Natalie Shrewsbury 720-352-4915

Steve Jones 303-494-2468  
Jim McKee 303-651-2414  
Janet McLachlan 303-746-3619  
Scott Severs 303-684-6430  
Terry Stuart 303-449-2232

#### Committees and Contacts

*-Avian Species of Special Concern:*  
Dave Hallock (dheldora@rmi.net) and Steve Jones (curlewsj@comcast.net)

*-Ecosystem Stewardship:*  
Steve Jones (303-494-2468)

*- Education:*  
Carol Kampert (303-499-3049)

*- Indian Peaks Bird Counts:*  
Dave Hallock (303-258-3672) and Bill Kaempfer (303-954-8998)

*- Membership*  
Janet McLachlan (303-746-3619) and Terry Stuart (303-449-2232)

*- Newsletter*  
Dianne Andrews, content editor ( 303-823-6779)  
Carol McCasland, layout (303-635-6433) and George Oetzel, support (303-543-3712)

*- Publications:*  
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*-Website:*  
George Oetzel (303-543-3712)

*-Wintering Raptor Survey:*  
Sue Cass (720-684-6922) and Jim McKee (303-651-2414)

We invite you to report your sightings to [www.coloradofrontrangebutterflies.com](http://www.coloradofrontrangebutterflies.com)

**BCNA Treasurer's Report – December 2011**

By Mort Wegman-French, Treasurer

As we approach the end of the year (it is the first weekend in December as I write this) I like to provide our membership with a brief review of our financial condition. Of course, since the year is not yet complete these results are preliminary and things will change a bit in the last few weeks of 2011. As the year winds down we typically see additional membership renewals come in and this year we will likely see more revenue from the sales of our new publication *Butterflies of the Colorado Front Range* by Janet Chu and Stephen Jones.

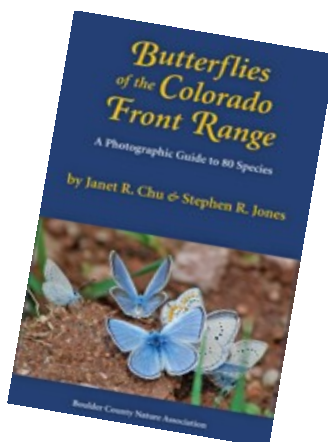
From a revenue perspective, we had a much stronger year in 2011 than in 2010 (\$19,725 versus \$12,808). We had higher income in all of our income categories including contributions, member dues, education income, and publication sales.

We also spent more this year than last (\$23,184 versus \$15,541), but most of that increase was related to the publishing of the butterfly book mentioned above. We have taken in almost \$5,000 from sales of the book so far (in 5 weeks) and we still have another 1,500 copies (60% of the initial printing) to sell. However, since we have seen all of the expenses from the book and only part of the revenue we are showing a loss for the year. Currently our loss is about \$3,500 as compared to a loss last year of about \$2,600.

Despite the loss we still have a comfortable \$42,000 balance in the bank accounts with potential demands on those funds of about \$26,000.

Financially we are well positioned to have a strong 2012.

**Now Available in Bookstores:  
Butterflies of the Colorado Front Range**



“Jan Chu and Stephen Jones have done a remarkable job in selecting the species most likely to be encountered in this seductive in-between land, picturing them with stunning fidelity, and introducing us to them through their own deep experience and concise, precise, and elegant prose.” –Robert Michael Pyle in the Foreword.

**Indian Peaks** (continued from page 2)

We never get bored going back to the same place; in fact, we thrive on it. Each day, season and year is different in terms of what birds will be encountered.

So what has been seen over the 30 years? A total of 208 species have been observed on the counts. Thirty-three species have only been observed once, including sandhill crane, Nashville warbler, short-eared owl, and eastern bluebird, as well as species with strange names, such as long-billed dowitcher, semi-palmated plover, willit, whimbrel, and marbled godwit.

Longer-term trends are also beginning to appear. The high counts for the breeding season have coincided with periods of drought, such as around 1992 and 2002. Maybe drought is not a limiting factor for birds in high elevation forests; in fact, these might be the good times. Birds on the upper edge of their range, such as yellow warblers, are much more common now than 30 years ago. A sign of climate change? And winter bird numbers appear driven by food supplies here (such as lots of pine cones), and/or the lack of food in the forests of Canada, hence we get (or don't get) large flocks of red-crossbills, red-breasted nuthatches and Bohemian waxwings.

Now the counts are entering a new phase based on the presence of the mountain pine beetle. We are already seeing increases in birds that feed on the beetles, such as American three-toed and hairy woodpeckers.

Thanks to the following for helping with the bird counts over the past few years: Linda Andes-Georges, Dianne Andrews, Bev Baker, Maureen Blackford, Barbara Bolton, Earl Bolton, Maggie Boswell, Alex Brown, Diane Brown, Diane Carter, Carol Cogswell, George Coffee, Andy Cowell, Margaret Davidson, Todd Deininger, TonyClaire Delany, Marty Dick, Libby Ellis, Kayla Evans, Virginia Evans, Mike Figgs, Ted Floyd, Maryanne Flynn, Jean-Pierre Georges, Kathy Gibson, Randy Gietzen, Audrey Godell, Paula Hansley, Jim Holitza, Steve Jones, Bill Kaempfer, Elana Klaver, Steve Koral, Nan Lederer, Petrea Mah, Mary Jane Makepeace, Gary Matthews, Lisa McCoy, Merle Miller, Sally Miller, Carol Newman-Holitza, Naseem Munshi, Christian Nunes, Mark Pscheid, Jeannie Reynolds, Joe Roller, Tim Smart, Susan Spaulding, Connie Steinkamp, Cara Stiles, Lucy Strook, Joel Such, Marcel Such, Karen Swigart, Walter Szeliga, Connie Takamine, Joyce Takamine, Laurel Temmen, Richard Trinkner, Mike Tupper, John Vanderpoel, Tineke VanZandt, Tom VanZandt, Dave Waltman, Tom Wilberding, George Young, and Patty Zishka.

A special thanks to Bill Kaempfer who has helped with compilation.

## 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