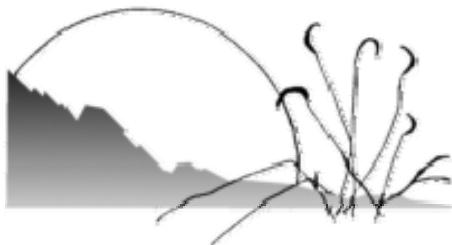


BOULDER COUNTY NATURE ASSOCIATION



Volume 25, Number 2
Spring 2007

Ominous Maneuvers in Southeastern Colorado

BCNA has joined several other Colorado environmental organizations in opposing the U.S. Army's proposal to triple the size of the Piñon Canyon Maneuver Site in southeastern Colorado. The Army would assume control of a large section of the Comanche National Grassland and use eminent domain to confiscate 400,000 acres of private ranchlands, expanding the maneuver site to an area the size of Connecticut.

The remote canyons and unique mixed-grass prairies in the Pinon Canyon area, south of La Junta, are a national treasure. Many BCNA members had the opportunity to spend weeks exploring this region while working on the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas project during the 1980s and 1990s. We found dozens of spring-fed grottos whose walls were adorned with Native American art and whose ledges and riparian thickets sheltered prairie falcons, Mississippi kites, roadrunners, wild turkeys, eastern phoebe, canyon wrens and Lewis's woodpeckers. We hiked across lush tablelands where lesser prairie-chickens boomed and pronghorn mothers defended their fawns from skulking coyotes. We spied golden eagles perched on black basalt cliffs and Chihuahuan ravens nesting in abandoned stone homesteads.

Just as important, we met countless ranching families who have been living on and caring for these lands for more than 100 years. Through their good stewardship, several hundred thousand acres of native prairie and spectacular canyons have been preserved for all North Americans to visit and enjoy. Most of the canyons contain springs that are sacred to Native American peoples. These are not appropriate places for military maneuvers, nor should this long tradition of private ownership and stewardship be undermined by government edict.

Ominous Maneuvers continued on page 5...

"Change Is Coming:" 14th Boulder County Ecosystem Symposium

NCAR's Robert Henson, author of the *Rough Guide to Climate Change*, will deliver the keynote talk at this year's Boulder County Ecosystem Symposium, Monday, April 16, at the Boulder Public Library auditorium. Rick Adams will address impacts of global warming and drought on bats. Chris Ray will explore the plight of pikas on ever-shrinking "alpine islands." Alex Cruz will give an overview of impacts of habitat fragmentation and other human influences on Front Range bird populations. An afternoon panel will discuss the future of area plants and wildlife in a warming environment.

As always, the symposium is free and open to all. Registration begins at 10 a.m. at the Boulder Public Library Canyon Street entrance. Visit the Boulder County Nature Association web site for a complete schedule of speakers: www.bcna.org. The library doors will open at 9 for those who would like to help out with registration and hospitality.

The annual symposium is organized by BCNA and co-sponsored by Boulder County Audubon, Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks, Boulder County Parks and Open Space, and the Colorado Native Plant Society.

- Symposium organizing committee: Bruce Bland, Sue Cass, Joyce Gellhorn, Steve Jones, Jeff Mitten, Dave Sutherland

April 1 special edition- See page 7 for
"Will Global Warming Save the Day?"

BCNA Spring Calendar

Saturday, April 14: Volunteer Training for Boulder Reservoir Species of Special Concern Monitoring. See related article in this newsletter. We will meet at 9 a.m. at Tom Watson Park, off North 63rd St. opposite Coot Lake. To sign up for the training, contact Mary Malley (malleym@bouldercolorado.gov).

Sunday, April 15: Early Blooms and Migrants, with Scott Severs. Come out and look for signs of spring along the South Boulder Creek Trail. We'll search for early emerging wildflowers, butterflies, dragonflies, and any birds we might find. Be prepared for possible muddy trails. Meet at 8 a.m. at the northwest parking area of the East Boulder Rec. Center, off 55th St., south of Baseline. Return around noon. For details call Scott at 303-684-6430. Jointly sponsored by Boulder County Audubon.

Monday, April 16, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m: Boulder County Ecosystem Symposium, Boulder Public Library auditorium. See article and list of speakers on page 1.

Wednesday, April 18, 6:45 p.m. Join Cyndra Dietz for a slide show and talk on the reintroduction of big-game onto former ranches that have been converted into private game reserves in South Africa. Cyndra spent the summer of 2006 doing radio-color tracking of large mammals on one of these reserves and traveling to other parts of northeast South Africa, including Kruger National Park, Swaziland, and the Drakensberg Mountains. George Reynolds branch library, 3595 Table Mesa Drive, Boulder (across Table Mesa from King Soopers).

Wednesday, April 25, 6:30-8:30 p.m: "Antarctica, East and West." Slide show by Glenn Cushman at George Reynolds Branch Library, on Table Mesa Drive across from King Soopers.

Thursday, May 10, 6-10 a.m: Breeding Bird Survey on Shanahan Ridge. Everyone is invited to join Betty Naughton and Steve Jones on this early morning hike which will also serve as a workshop for eco-stewards and Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas volunteers. Meet at 6 a.m. at Steve Jones's house, 3543 Smuggler Way (turn right off Greenbrier, 5 blocks past Fairview High School, and drive all the way to the end of Smuggler Way). Return around 10 a.m. stephen.jones@earthlink.net (303-494-2468). Jointly sponsored by Boulder County Audubon.

Saturday, May 12: International Migratory Bird Day, Walden Ponds. Visit the Boulder County Audubon web site for a schedule of events: www.boulderaudubon.org

Help Monitor Nesting Harriers, Owls, Bitterns, and Osprey at Boulder Reservoir

For the past three years, 15-20 volunteers have been keeping an eye on nesting birds of special concern on Boulder Parks and Recreation property near Boulder Reservoir. While providing us with data on nesting success of osprey, burrowing owls, American bitterns, and northern harriers, this monitoring project has strengthened nesting habitat protection for these rare and declining species.

We're asking for a commitment of at least one morning or evening per month, May-July. A volunteer training will be offered on Saturday, April 14, from 9 a.m. to noon. For more information or to volunteer, contact Mary Malley (malleym@bouldercolorado.gov) or Steve Jones (stephen.jones@earthlink.net).



Nesting Great Horned Owl, Boulder County.
Photo by John T.

Natural Events Calendar

A month-by-month nature almanac, with color photos of wildlife and wildflowers, is now available on the Boulder County Nature Association web site: www.bcna.org

April 2: Full moon rises at 6:46 p.m.

Ice Breaking in the River (Arapaho)
Buffalo-Pawing-Earth (Osage)
Green Grass (Pawnee)

Mid-April: Look for the bright yellow flowers of Bell's twinpod (*Physaria bellii*) on foothills shales along US 36 north of Boulder. This wheel-shaped mustard is named for its inflated, two-chambered seed pods. "Physa" means bellows. Because it grows only on bare shales in a small geographic area (the northern Front Range foothills), this mustard is particularly vulnerable to environmental change. In his bi-weekly column in the Boulder *Daily Camera*, University of Colorado ecologist Jeffrey Mitton pointed out that the nearly competitor-free niche that Bell's twinpod has carved out is a precarious one. Shales erode rapidly, and this habitat specialist may survive only so long as the unique shale formations it has colonized persist. So tread lightly.

April 22: The Lyrid Meteor Shower peaks shortly after sunset. Up to 20 meteors per hour may be visible once a quarter moon sets around midnight.

May 2: Full moon rises at 8:44 p.m.

Buffalo-breeding (Osage)
When the Horses Get Fat (Cheyenne)
When the Ponies Shed Their Shaggy Hair (Arapaho)

May 5: The Eta Aquarid meteor shower peaks tonight and tomorrow night. Look toward Aquarius in the southern sky.

Mid-May: Abert's squirrels chase one another through the ponderosa pine canopy in a madcap meeting frenzy. Young are born in early summer.

May 19: the crescent moon is just 1° from Venus in the evening sky, a gorgeous sight.

May 31: The second full moon of the month (known as a "blue moon") rises at 8:41. Some say this definition of a blue moon was inadvertently created in 1946 by *Sky and Telescope* magazine, which misinterpreted an older definition: the third full moon in a season with four moons. That definition, popularized by *The Farmer's Almanac*, was reputedly used by the Catholic Church to sort out confusion over the timing of Easter. An early reference to a blue moon appeared in an English folks saying published in 1528: "If they say the moon is blue, you must believe that it is true."

Mid-June: Look for calypso orchids (*Calypso bulbosa*) in moist, shady locations under aspens and pines. Spotted coralroot orchids bloom under conifers in slightly drier locations.

June 21: Summer solstice occurs at 11:06 a.m. On this longest day of the year, bonfires are built and leaped over to promote fertility, health, and love. Midsummer herbs are collected and used as incense. Try pasture sage, fringed sage, wild rose, and prostrate verbena (but never collect on public lands).

Late-June: Prairie and peregrine falcon young fledge from rock ledges in the Flatirons. Look for them flying with their parents over the mesas.

June 30: Full moon rises at 9:14 p.m.

Rose (Pawnee)
Strawberry (Ojibwa)
Idle (Assiniboine)



A Reflective Moment with a Solitaire

An enchanting experience happened to me on the way home from campus in the late fall. To explain, I am a long-time fan of the Townsend's Solitaire. There's something intriguing about their tendency *not* to "flock together," and their beauty is subtle but dramatic. To me, if a robin were a Vogue model it would look like a Solitaire, with their slimmer shape, gorgeous shades of gray, and highlighted eyes.

Above all, though, there's that wondrous voice, as cheerful as a finch in spring, yet edged with the haunting depth of the thrush family. I had been grieving for over a year at the demise of a Solitaire in my own backyard, and the fact that I'd seen very few of them since that time and never nearby. Suddenly in the midst of a gray afternoon as I bicycled past Macky my attention was caught by such a mesmerizing song that I thought it had to be a thrush, yet it seemed more complex and resonant than a robin. I was beginning to wonder if some bird had landed near the tower where they send out magnified carillon sounds and was getting in on the act!

I was beginning to suspect it was a Solitaire, but I couldn't figure out why his song sounded so especially vibrant. Then I realized with a start that he was very close to me: he was sitting on the edge of a car door, looking in its side-view mirror. He would occasionally bounce around on top of the mirror, and sometimes fly to a nearby tree for a break, but always come zooming back to sit there and sing loudly at the mirror. He seemed to be very excited about the fact that no matter how hard this voluble, beautiful little bird sang, his insistent rival would not leave!

No doubt a perplexing mini-drama for him, but a great gift to me to be so close to my favorite bird in the midst of this eccentric and passionate moment.

- Cathy Comstock



Townsend's Solitaire
Photo By Bill Schmoker

Announcing: BCNA Research Grants for 2007

The Boulder County Nature Association continues to offer research grant funding on projects that benefit the natural history, conservation and education of Boulder County ecosystems. The BCNA Board has increased the funding budgeted for grants this year. Also new this year, grantees will be expected to sign a contract agreeing to share the results of their research with BCNA.

To apply, send a short description of your project, including a detailed budget listing other funding sources, to:

Sue Cass, President BCNA
4560 Hanover Avenue
Boulder, CO 80305-6035
(303) 494-5345
suecass@comcast.net

This year's submission deadline is Wednesday, May 2nd.

Morel Mushrooms

*Softly they come
thumbing up from
firm ground*

*protruding unharmed.
Easily crumbled
and yet*

*how they shouldered
the leaf and mold
aside, rising*

*unperturbed,
breathing obscurely,
still as stone.*

*By the slumping log,
by the dappled aspen,
they grow alone.*

*A dumb eloquence
seems their trade.
Like hooded monks*

*in a sacred wood
they say:
Tomorrow we are gone.*

--Jane Whitledge.

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English at the University of Nebraska-
Lincoln.

...Ominous Maneuvers continued from page 1

The Army has issued a recent environmental impact statement concerning proposed intensification of maneuvers on the existing Pinon Canyon site (Base closures around the country are resulting in more soldiers being sent to Fort Carson. Intensification of maneuvers on the existing site is a precursor to formal presentation of a site expansion proposal). While the pending EIS acknowledges many of the sensitive resources in the region, it contains virtually no commitment from the Army to set aside necessary habitat and pursue adequate monitoring to protect these resources. In contrast, the U. S. Forest Service has committed to preserving and enhancing habitat for mountain plovers, lesser prairie-chickens, burrowing owls, and other sensitive species on their managed lands. The Forest Service and the Colorado Division of Wildlife have worked with local landowners to institute public-private partnerships to preserve habitat on private lands.

In February State Senator Wes McKinley introduced a bill into the Colorado State Legislature to oppose use of eminent domain by the federal government to confiscate Colorado lands. Though there is some question whether such legislation could be enforced, it would certainly send a strong message. Right now, probably the most effective thing individuals can do is write Senators Ken Salazar and Wayne Allard and representatives John Salazar (southeastern Colorado) and Mark Udall expressing outrage at this latest subversion of democracy and family enterprise by the military-industrial complex.

- Steve Jones

The Bedside Book of Birds

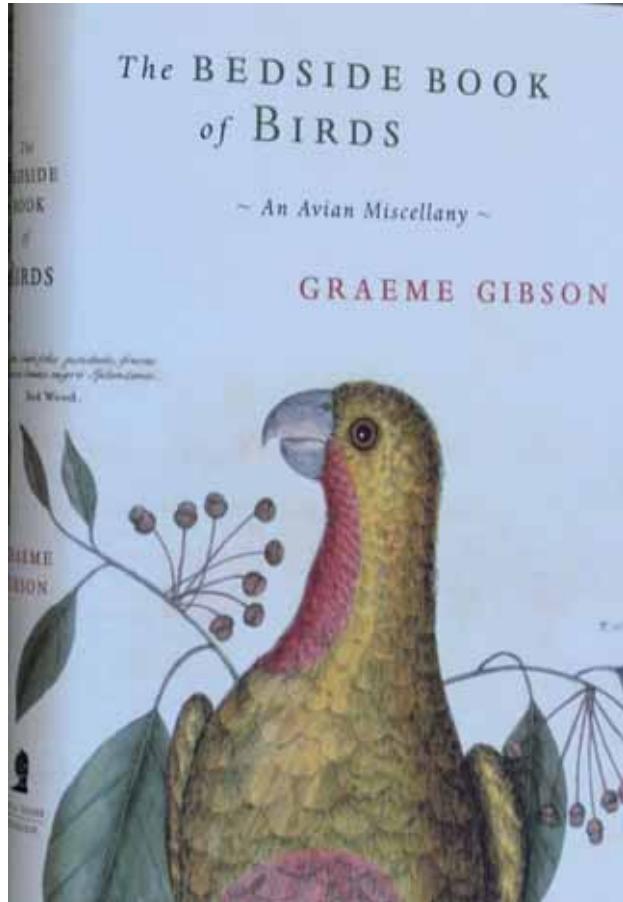
Graeme Gibson
Doubleday/Random House 2005

This book is a sumptuous, lusciously illustrated homage to birds of all sorts, common and exotic. It is printed on rich stock that frames the splendid artwork that accompanies each contribution. It is comprised of poems, meditations, folklore, sagas, and journal notes involving birds, from people who've been inspired or irritated by them. The artwork includes depictions of all sorts: famous Audubon watercolors, oils, aboriginal renditions in sculpture or stone paintings, statuary, mobiles. Selections range from less than a page to about 5 pages, perfect for those times when you have just a few minutes for reading.

Gibson is a lifelong birdwatcher and collector of arcane literary and artistic tomes on birds. Birds have always been providential for man, omens of good or evil tidings. Creation stories are replete with birds; they are clarions of peace, of messianic proclamation or of disaster. They include the dove clasping the olive branch, raven the trickster, and the albatross of naval lore. They can be objects of veneration, of beauty and song, or they can be pests that could ruin a crop or spread disease in overcrowded cities.

Bird lovers and those whose main preoccupation is the racket outside their window or the droppings in their public places will all find solace in this book.

- George Oetzel

**Antarctica--East and West (Kipling was wrong)**

Photographer Glenn Cushman will present images from two trips to Antarctica and the Subantarctic Islands south of New Zealand. The program features megabergs, icebergs, feathered and flippered creatures of the far south, and penguins, penguins, and more penguins.

Where: George Reynolds Branch Library on Table Mesa Drive across from King Soopers
When: Wednesday, April 25 at 6:30 p.m.

April 1st Special Edition

Will Global Warming Save the Day?

After a hundred year winter in Boulder County, residents are happy to be out from beneath the grasp of a small polar ice sheet. As expected with such a dramatic winter, the wildlife responded accordingly. Species typically seen only in the far northern reaches of Canada and Alaska began migrating southward, as temperatures in Colorado dipped far below Arctic norms. Pleistocene era species formerly thought to be extinct for thousands of years may have begun to make a comeback. Steve Jones reported finding wooly mammoth tracks in the North St. Vrain drainage, and said "The return of the Pleistocene megafauna could be the most significant ecological phenomenon of our generation".

Linda Andes-George also witnessed a change in local flora and fauna. "I was opening my kitchen window to look out at the bird feeder when I saw a migratory herd of musk ox pawing through the yard." Linda, an avid gardener, was shocked at the damage the musk ox did to her flowerbeds despite the deep covering of snow and ice. "The musk ox were rooting through the snow looking for lichens, but all they dug up were my pansies".

Rebecca Hill, a BCNA member in good standing, reported a snowy owl perched on a neighbor's fence. "The neighbors said that the owl looked just like the white one from Harry Potter. I thought, 'This must be it, it's chaos theory just like I learned in college, and even the wildlife are confused'".

Only an early spring thanks to human-induced climate change helped to lift the mini-ice age from consuming Boulder County, and sent several Arctic visitors on their pilgrimage back to the far North. Though most locals (non-birders) were thrilled to see the ice caps retreat, many BCNA members mourn the loss of our winter vagrants and were overjoyed to have added dozens of lifers to their lists.

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Committees and Contacts

-Avian Species of Special Concern:

Dave Hallock (dheldora@rmi.net) and
Steve Jones (stephen.jones@earthlink.net)

-Ecosystem Stewardship:

Steve Jones (303-494-2468)

- Education:

Carol Schott (303-530-9108) and
Carol Kampert (303-499-3049)

- Indian Peaks Bird Counts:

Dave Hallock (303-258-3672) and
Bill Kaempfer (303-939-8005)

- Newsletter:

Rebecca Hill (303-786-0553)
rebecca.hill@gmail.com
and Steve Jones (303-494-2468)

- Publications:

Steve Jones (303-494-2468)

- State and Regional Wildlife Issues:

Jim McKee (303-494-3393)

- Website:

George Oetzel (303-543-3712)

- 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

Support the Boulder County Nature Association

Name _____

Address _____

Phone and/or E-mail (optional) _____

Type of Membership:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Student/Senior (65 or over)	\$15
<input type="checkbox"/>	General Member	\$20
<input type="checkbox"/>	Family or Household	\$30
<input type="checkbox"/>	Supporter	\$40
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<input type="checkbox"/>	Life Member	\$300
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
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