

Another Great Season at Lykins Gulch

Fall bird banding was fun, interesting, and productive. From September 1 through October 25, we captured and banded 605 individuals of 48 species. Not many mornings were missed. There is a magnetism, a difficult-to-resist lure that pulls a dedicated bander back to the station. The rewards vary depending on your perspective; but the bird banding really gets under your skin.

Is it the idea that a small but measurable contribution is being made to our understanding and knowledge of birds? Or is it the sense of awe and appreciation you feel when holding that 10-gram feathered creature and you realize it has unerringly traveled thousands of miles with only the aid of its internal GPS? Sure, it's those thoughts plus a personal satisfaction that is private and deeply felt.

Here are some highlights from this past season:

- A first palm warbler. This particular bird was of the western subspecies and did not show extensive yellow in its plumage.
- Our second western scrub-jay, our third and fourth sage thrashers, fourth and fifth rock wrens, and fifth Townsend's warbler.
- Numerical highs for ruby-crowned kinglet (21) and yellow-rumped warbler (142), along with an impressive number of Wilson's warblers (107).
- A red fox eyeing a songbird struggling in a net; a few coyotes skulking around; our familiar and graceful white-tailed deer; the small herd of elk across the road; fresh bear scat steaming in the morning sun; and a yellow-bellied racer swallowing a vole.

One bander among us, Virginia Dionigi, has truly set the standard. She is first to arrive at the station, usually before sunrise, and is often the last to leave after documenting the day's banding effort. We have all enjoyed the baked treats that she prepares and brings each morning. And, as our "data recorder," she is a stickler for accuracy and keeps the rest of us on our toes. Even on non-banding days, she is busy laundering the bird-holding bags, painting the worktable, or attending to other details. Children are her favorite guests at the preserve. She motivates and inspires all of us.

BCNA members are always welcome to join us for a morning of banding and birding. Check with Virginia or me to find out what the schedule might be next spring or simply to learn more about the banding program and the Allegra Collister Nature Preserve.

- Joe Harrison (303-772-3481), for fellow volunteers Virginia Dionigi, Tony Esposito, Maggie Boswell, and Tom Delaney.

Books: Slivers of Light in a Somber World

Small Wonder, by Barbara Kingsolver. HarperCollins, New York, 2002. \$12.95
Reviewed by Ruth Carol Cushman

Biologist Barbara Kingsolver has written many enchanting novels, such as *Prodigal Summer* (my favorite) and *Animal Dreams*. In the aftermath of 9/11, she wrote *Small Wonder* (HarperCollins, 2002), a collection of essays portraying the wrongs humanity is imposing on the earth, on wildlife, on plant life, and on humanity itself and urging us to fight against these abuses. She also writes of the small wonders that help stave off despair and that give us hope, things like scarlet macaws launching like rockets against the blue sky and a line of "dipper gourds hung down from the trellis over our heads in a graduated array, like God's wife's measuring spoons". She ends with this sentence "Maybe life doesn't get any better than this, or any worse, and what we get is just what we're willing to find: small wonders, where they grow."

Dragonflies Made Easy

Dragonflies through Binoculars: a Field Guide to Dragonflies of North America, by Sidney W. Dunkle. Oxford University Press, 2000. \$29.95. Reviewed by Steve Jones.

This neat little field guide offers color photographs, range maps, and descriptions of all 307 dragonfly species found in North America. Since only about 50 species commonly occur in Boulder County, I found it fairly easy to identify my dragonfly photos using this book. The section on mating and reproduction is fascinating.