

Happy (green and white) Holiday



...by LVAG

Her dark feathers were sprinkled with tiny white specks, like a starry sky, and at the tip of each feather was a rainbow iridescence. Her beak was pale yellow, but ink-tipped, and her eye sparkled mischievously at the one she loved most. Dumbo the starling was being coaxed by her owners, once again, to show off for visitors.

I had never seen a starling so close before, nor had I ever wanted to. I thought of starlings as "trash birds," like brown-headed cowbirds and to some extent, like their flashy cousins the bluejays and magpies. Noisy, dirty, pesky, prolific and invasive... What kind words can one find for such creatures?

Dumbo had been rescued as a displaced spring fledgling by soft-hearted zoologist Eileen Billings, eleven years ago. At the time, the tiny bird was "all beak and no feathers." She bonded to Eileen, and spent her happy baby hours sitting in a flowerpot while her caretaker gardened. As she learned to fly, she was so tentative and clumsy that Eileen and spouse Dave named her Dumbo, after the Disney elephant. (cont. on page 11)

Annual Mt. Elbert Weekend

Pick your own mode: ski, 'shoe, or sled

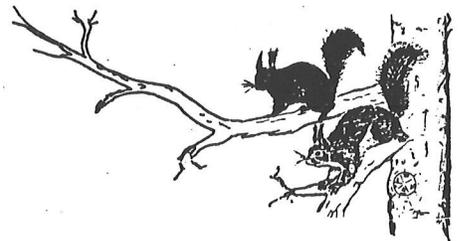
The scenery is spectacular, the snow superb (we hope), and the company congenial. The annual BCNA ski trip to the Mt. Elbert Lodge in Twin Lakes is guaranteed to be a memorable event. Join us on President's Day Weekend, Feb. 14-16.

Accommodations at the historic stage-stop bed-and-breakfast are luxurious (for BNCA!), and we've reserved all 6 rooms. The group can expand to 14. Breakfasts are bodacious, and our Saturday potluck dinner always provides some delicious surprises.

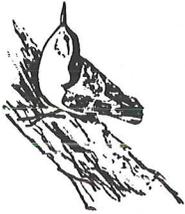
Ask anyone who has attended for their impressions of previous trips. They'll tell you about... gorgeous skiing eight miles up a wilderness valley... incredible snow... cruddy snow... too much snow... thrashing around in willow bogs up to our waist in snow... being stuck for hours in a blizzard on I-70... having a bonus day skiing in two feet of new powder... All these impressions are accurate, depending on which year you attended.

What will it be like this year? The snowpack is already approaching record levels. But who knows? Be adventurous and sign up. Since it's President's weekend, and some folks won't be working on Monday, they might want to consider staying over Sunday night. Let Marty know if you're interested.

Send a check for \$45 per person (which covers the nights of Feb. 14 and 15) to Marty Dick, 3992 Sunshine Canyon, Boulder 80302. Checks received before Jan. 20th will be "confirmed reservations" in the order received. Additional people will be put on a waiting list. (**Lodging costs can only be refunded if replacement people can be found**). Call Marty at 444-0473 for more information.



BCNA CALENDAR - WINTER TO SPRING



Sat.
Dec. 21st
7 a.m. -
?

- **Winter Solstice Celebration.** Meet at Teller Farms parking lot (on south side of Valmont) and hike to Boulder Creek Bridge on White Rocks Trail. Bring poem or thought to share during brief sunrise ceremony, if you like. Optional breakfast at Rev. Taylors's in Niwot after. **Contact: Steve, 494-2468, or anybody who might like to come along.**

Sat.
Feb. 8th
7 a.m. -
?

- **Ski-hike (and incidental bird-count).** Seeing birds on Niwot Ridge in winter is like a small miracle, but it happens, and we count them and have a great time getting rosy cheeks and eating homemade fudge. Meet back of the Greenbriar Restaurant, north of Boulder (3 mi.?) on Hwy 36. Bring XC skis (the slope is very gradual). All members welcome. **Contact Linda, 543-9404.**

Sat.
Jan. 25
6:00 pm-

- **BCNA annual New Year's potluck and membership meeting.** Bring a dish and a drink to share, and if you wish, some slides of a past adventure with wild things. This is a good place for new members to jump in and find a warm feeling of community right away. "Elections" which be held (see col. 2). **Location:** home of Roger Jakoubek, 3065 24th St., Boulder. Tel. 449-3503.

Weekend
Feb. 14-
16

- **Mt. Elbert ski party.** Sign up soon for our most unique group weekend activity of the year. See details page 1. **Contact Marty, 444-0743.** Participants must commit with \$ (it's a bargain).

Sat.
Mar. 1
8 am-
11 am?

- **Late winter/early spring exploring.** A two to three-mile stroll on Enchanted Mesa to look for seed-eating birds and early wildflowers. Meet at Chautauqua Auditorium (take 12th St. south from Baseline). **Contact Steve, 494-2468.**

This space for rent

- **Put your idea here!** BCNA events are not limited to stiffly official meetings, research projects, and scientific transects (but these can be arranged if you like). Want company on a hike to a wild and natural place? You be the contact for a "field trip" or picnic. Phone the editor: **Linda, 543-9404.**

5BCNA Goes High-Tech

View the Association home page on the Internet—and find the information you lost when you misplaced your newsletter. Address:

<http://www.csn.net/~randyg/bcna.html>

Red Alert! Elections are NOT over!

The BCNA Nominating Committee is currently taking nominations—and volunteer candidates—for the 1997 BCNA Board. Positions come with the standard perks: good fellowship and exotic food, unimaginable political power including your own standing Green army, and of course, vacation time in Veracruz or Cape May. There are four positions open (see term summary on page 4). Please call Randy, Scott, or Marty (tel. nos. below) to suggest a name, or to beg to run yourself. P.S. Just kidding about the political power. But the Green army is real.

1996 BCNA Board

President: Scott Severs (442-1322)
V.P.: Steve Jones (494-2468)
Treasurer: Chaya Nanavati (772-3659)
Secretary: Marty Dick (444-0743)

Members-at-large:

Tom Delaney (581-0478)
Bev Johnson (444-1220)
Cherie Long (447-0922)
Jim McKee (494-3393)
Kristine Crandall (444-1955)
Holly Devaul (543-8730)

Committee Representatives

Prairie dogs - Randy Gietzen (530-4355)
Ind. Peaks Bird Count - Dave Hallock (258-3672)
Bldr. Cnty Land Trust - Joe Mantione (417-0948)
Field Trips - Steve Jones (494-2468)
Col. Envir. Coalition - Jim McKee (494-3393)
Trails; Partners in flight - Scott Severs (442-1322)
Newsletter - Linda Andes-Georges (543-9404)

1996: Local Conservation in Review

a BCNA retrospective summary

Many members of the BCNA contributed countless hours to conservation in local, statewide, and national actions. However, in order to thank them (and to maintain our spotless non-profit reputation) we have attempted the impossible: counting the people-hours. Below is a rough (and far under-estimated) tally, with *HVALA* to all.

1996 Ecosystem Symposium Volunteers

MILLE GRAZIE to the organizers of the excellent 1996 symposium, *Finding Common Ground: recreational use of natural lands in Boulder County*. The principals (Scott Severs, Kristine Crandall, Holly Devaul, Bev Johnson) averaged 50 hours each, and the contributing volunteers from 2 to 10 hours each. Total: **250 hours**

Education and Outreach

This category includes hours as volunteer guides, field trip leaders, and writing in a volunteer capacity. We do not include the hours of all the Volunteer Naturalists who are honorary members of BCNA. Few of you have returned figures in this category, so a very low estimate would be **300 hours**. *MERCI DE VOTRE FIDELITE*.

Conservation and Administration

Those who worked in the various conservation arenas (letter-writing, speech-making, meeting-attending, committee-serving, etc.) put in more time than we can credibly estimate. For examples of this type of activity, see PAGE for reports on the North St. Vrain and on the Wildfire Mitigation Group. A conservative [*sic*] estimate of time, based on counts from the 15 who returned personal tallies, yields an average of well over 150 hours each for the year; assuming lower numbers for other active members, our total exceeds **2850 hours**.

Among those whose time in both quantity and quality surpasses the norm were Jim McKee, Mike Figgs, Kristine Crandall, Tim Hogan, Scott Severs, Steve Jones, Marty Dick, Elaine Hill, and Linda Andes-Georges. *ASANTE !*

Indian Peaks Birdcount

BCNA has finished the 15th year of this birdcount, useful in land-planning and as a general contribution to avian research. Spring's count had a record number of species, but below average count. Breeding season also was above average in no. of species. Sadly, some species seem to be maintaining a decline, willow flycatchers, for example. Waterfowl, which arrived early last spring, were gone early this fall (for details, call one of the counters for a full copy of the reports).

The data-cruncher is Dave Hallock, whose time both in the field and at the computer are impressive. While Dave is interested mainly in birds and birds-per-hour, it is harder to obtain individual timecounts on the human

participants. However, 45 people counted during the year; the total time exceeded **1200 hours**.

DANKE SCHON: Linda Andes-Georges, Bev Baker, Joanie Bloom, Barbara & Earl Bolton, Alex Brown, Diane Brown, George Coffee, Robert Cohen, Jack & Tressa Coss, Andy Cowell, David Craig, Kristine Crandall, Tom Delaney, Marty Dick, Lee & Virginia Evans, Mike Figgs, Kathy Gibson, Terri Gillatt, Vi Haertling, Paula Hansley, Susan Harris, Elaine Hill, Jim Holitza, Jody Horvorka, Steve Jones, Bill Kaempfer, Sue Keaveny, D.W. King, Dawn Kummli, Margy Lanham, Nan Lederer, Cherie Long, Merle & Sally Miller, Paul Mintier, Naseem Munshi, Carol Newman-Holitza, Pam Piombino, Pete Plage, Michael Tupper, Bruce Young, Tom VanZandt

Eastern Screech-owl Study

Data from last year's eastern screech-owl study add to information gathered during previous BCNA studies of flammulated, burrowing, northern saw-whet, northern pygmy, and boreal owls. Joe Harrison, Virginia Dionigi, and D.W. King did about half the looking, and found more than half the owls, 14 (6-8 territories) along St. Vrain Creek between Lyons and Longmont. Maggie Boswell, Fern Ford, Tom Deloaney, Holly Devaul, Pam and Dana Piombino, Ruth Carol Cushman, Scott Severs, and Randy Gietzen found 6 (4-5 territories) along Boulder Creek between Eben Fine Park and White Rocks. Steve Jones, Paula Hansley, Cushman, Trevor Munoz, Kristine Crandall, Linda Georges, Mike Tupper, and Angela Gilbert found 5 (4 territories) along South Boulder Creek between Eldorado Springs and Arapahoe Avenue. We found no screech-owls along Coal Creek Between Hwy. 93 and Marshall. Our tentative conclusion is that these owls are slightly less numerous or less vocal than we had thought. A more definitive conclusion is that Boulder County is a very noisy place at night. We plan to write up our results for C.F.O. Journal. *MUCHAS GRACIAS* to all the volunteers who staggered around in the dark with their boom boxes. Total: **150 hours**.

Winter Raptor Survey

Even before these last snows and coldsnaps, the calendar ushered in the beginning of another BCNA winter raptor survey. The survey runs from October 15th through Mar. 15th, when Boulder County's populations of Bald Eagles, Ferruginous Hawks, Rough-legged Hawks, and numerous other raptors swell for the winter. We have a fairly large number of participants who are

(continued on next page)

cruising the Rabbit Mountain, Boulder Reservoir, East County, and South County routes this season, identifying and counting raptors. *SHUKRIA* to the 1996 volunteers, who accumulated more than **250 hours**:

Gary Baxley, Sharon Norfleet, Ivan Getting, Bob Washo, Valery, Randy Gietzen, Tom Van Zandt, George, Francesca Howell, Tom Delaney, Joe Harrison, Holly Devaul, Jeff Hicke, Theresa and Jack Coss, Jim McKee, Kristine Crandall, Bernie Gay, Angela, Robin Forrey, Bob Haskins, Fern, Maggie Boswell, Bev Johnson, Carl and Rhonda Knapp, Chaya Nanavati, Darren McKague, Brian Maes, Paquita Zuidema, Ann Oyer, Todd Steury

For more information on the wintering raptor program, please contact Holly Devaul, tel. 543-8730, or Kristine Crandall, 444-1955. Boulder City Open Space is also undertaking a raptor survey project on some of its prairie dog management areas, and is seeking interested volunteers. Contact Cary Richardson at 441-4495 ext. 235 for more information.

Birdbanding at Allegra Collister

TUSEND TAK to the keen eyes and gentle hands of the birdbanders, who spent days and days in two seasons and all weathers gathering frightened feathered creatures, measuring, weighing, and identifying them, and setting them free with best wishes. A fascinating record of the birds who have been banded or sighted at the Nature Area can be obtained from Big Boss Joe Harrison, but please send a little contribution with your request—they don't really have the staff for lots of paper pushing. For a heart-warming story of one individual (a little yellow warbler) who has returned six times, and for a believe-it-or-not retrospective, see our Summer 1996 issue.

Again, *MANGE TAK* to Joe, assistants Virginia Dionigi and Tony Esposito, and to volunteers Tom Delaney, Rudy Dionigi, Elywin Frazier, Emily Workman, and Mike Wunder. Time: **1038 hours**.

The Puma Connection

A goshawk-small owl study and a bat study were initiated this summer as part of the Magnolia Area Wildlife Inventory Project, conducted by PUMA (Preserve Unique Magnolia Association) with assistance and guidance from members of BCNA. The wildlife inventory is an ongoing compilation of sightings, modeled on the Boulder County Wildlife Inventory of the Boulder Audubon Society. Its purpose is to document the fauna of the Magnolia Area to be able to minimize the impact of the increasing human use of the area upon the wildlife. Warmest *SPASIBA* to the many volunteers who have contributed approximately 1000 hours to this project during 1996.

Cliff-nesting Raptor Monitoring

BCNA, which initiated this concept as a group project in 1983, has slowly been able to turn it over to various public agencies as, through the years, the latter came to realize the vital importance of monitoring wildlife levels and the impacts on them from different sources. Now that City and County Open Space, City Mountain Parks, and the State are finally all monitoring their respective territories for raptors, the 1996 participation from BCNA could be reduced to watching the eagle nests of the S. St. Vrain and of Eagle Rock. Chief raptor-watchers—*DOMO ARIGATO*--were Nan Lederer, Randy Pair and Tom Delaney; time, **62 hours**.



The BCNA Republic-Rats

Elections for Board of Directors members, in small associations like this one, tend to be a bit casual, especially if candidates are scarce. But we are always excited to have new people, new energy, and new perspectives joining us. We invite YOU to do so.

Our by-laws require seven to nine members on the Board. Four positions need to be filled for 1997.

If you enjoy good company, great food, and thoughtful CONVERSATION with your CONSERVATION, please consider coming "on board" with us, helping to steer the best environmental organization in Boulder Or if you know someone else who fits this description, please contact one of the Nominating Committee: Randy Gietzen (530-4355), Scott Severs (541-0784), or Marty Dick (444-0743).

For the Record

We are limited to two terms of two years, then we have to retire and take a break before being invited to serve again. Most of us hang around anyway, giving unsolicited advice and checking up on stuff.

Board members ending their first term in Dec. 1996:

Bev Johnson, Cherie Long, Jim McKee.

Bored, pardon us, board members ending their second term in Dec. 1996: Marty Dick, Scott Severs

Board members ending first term in Dec. 1997:

Tom Delaney, Kristine Crandall, Holly Devaul, Chaya Nanavati, Steve Jones

A few members are retiring from formal service after the holidays; others are considering another year. It would be wonderful to have a really competitive, spirited election. Please call to make it so.

North St. Vrain Receives Protection

Good News, for once

.....by Mike Figgs

Legislation that protects the North St. Vrain canyon upstream of Ralph Price Reservoir was approved by the Senate and signed by Pres. Clinton in November. This legislation is the product of a persistent 11-year effort by the N. St. Vrain Advisory Committee which is comprised of local environmental organizations, government agencies, water rights users, and mountain residents. The legislation prohibits federal permitting or assistance for dams on this portion of the river, and directs federal agencies to process land exchanges in order to consolidate land ownership patterns that hinder effective management of the area.

In a parallel development, the Arapaho/Roosevelt Natl. Forest has recommended in its draft Revised Land and Resource Management Plan a Research Natural Area designation for 4800 acres in the heart of the North St. Vrain Canyon, and 5600 acres of adjoining Forest land is proposed as Core Area Habitat. The Research Natural Area (RNA) was originally recommended by the Colorado Natural Areas Program in 1986 and later recommended by the N. St. Vrain Advis. Comm. The Core Area Habitat designation was promoted by BCNA and several other environmental organizations.

The North St. Vrain geographic area direction in the draft Forest Plan calls for *emphasis on winter range wildlife habitat and rehabilitation of ecosystems through natural and management induced processes. The creek corridor is to be maintained with an undeveloped character, the riparian vegetation to be protected, and additional recreational use will be discouraged.*

The North St. Vrain Canyon and adjacent areas represent the largest and least impacted foothill ecosystem in Boulder County. Few areas of comparable quality exist in the Front Range. The creek is a designated wild trout stream and the canyon provides habitat for bighorn sheep, elk, and black bear. Good to excellent stands of montane grasslands and shrublands have been identified. And most of the remaining old growth ponderosa pine in our county can be found here.

In yet another related and stunning development earlier this year, Boulder County *purchased a conservation easement on the 2100-acre Trevarton property, the largest private parcel in the mountains of the northern part of the county; this is immediately adjacent to the North St. Vrain Canyon.* This acquisition had been recommended by BCNA in 1994. (cont. at right)

Table Mountain Gravel Mining

More good news

....by Jim McKee

As many of you know, BCNA opposed the county's proposed extension of gravel mining on NIST's Table Mountain property because of high quality, relatively rare plant associations on the property. As a result, the County Commissioners requested that the Road Maintenance Department have a survey done by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program to verify the truth of our assertions. This was done and, in fact, supported our arguments. After some delay, we sent a letter to the Commissioners to reiterate our opposition to further mining. To our delight, we found that the Commissioners had already decided to stop further mining (but no one had told us).

The Commissioners further decided not to mine a proposed alternate site near Kenosha and East County Line Roads. In fact, *they are now planning to restore Boulder Creek from Highway 287 to the east county line, stabilizing banks, planting willows and cottonwoods, and even restoring some of the historic oxbows in the creek. They will also be doing restoration work on some of the ponds in the area that resulted from earlier gravel mining.*

In the near future, we will be talking to NIST management regarding the long-term future of Table Mountain. Noxious weed control is of most immediate concern. In the long run, however, we would like to see something like a conservation easement which would allow continued use by NIST as an antenna farm, but no further development. With a lot of good will and cooperation, something like that may be possible.

Attention Boulder Birdbanders: Can we beat this?



.....collected by LVAG from CO-birds,
a Colorado chat group on the Internet

Whitefish Point Bird Observatory (in northern Michigan) is catching lots of Boreal Owls this fall. They caught and banded 24 on the night of Oct. 12-13!

In Duluth, the raptor-banders are catching quite a few Northern Saw-whets, with 125 banded in one night recently. [Tony Leukering, 10/16/96]

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Congratulations to all who helped support the protection of the North St. Vrain area. Persistence pays off. Now we can schedule a field trip for next summer and enjoy the area rather than attend more meetings and write more letters.

## Boulder Country Wildfire Mitigation Group

.... By Mike Figgs

The Wildfire Mitigation Group is a consortium of local agencies that see the Northern Front Range as an area of high concern for wildland fire hazards in the wildland/urban interface. The goal of this group is to develop an ecosystem-based, landscape-level, forest health and fuels management program in Boulder County. Members and supporters of the group include: U.S. Forest Service; Colorado State Forest Service; Colorado Division of Wildlife; Boulder County: Land Use, Sheriff, Parks and Open Space, Health Depts.; City of Boulder: Mountain Parks, Open Space; Denver Water Board; Cherryvale, High Country, Coal Creek, and Nederland Fire Protection Districts.

The primary objective of this group is to reduce excessively high fuel accumulations in ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, and to a lesser extent, lodgepole pine stands in the County. Because of natural fire suppression over the past 100 years, most stands have become dense, closed-canopied, contiguous forests. In the last 10 years, several insect outbreaks have resulted in thousands of acres of tree mortality which has opened up the canopy in some areas, but also contributed to high ground fuel loading. This situation, coupled with extensive mountain residential development and with the status of the Arapaho, Roosevelt Natl. Forest as one of the top ten forests in the nation for recreational visitor use, has created an unusually high potential for catastrophic wildfire.

BCNA is currently a member of the Ecosystem Roundtable which serves an advisory function to the larger group. BCNA representatives include Dave Hallock, Tim Hogan, Mike Figgs, and Cherie Long. The BCNA Board of Directors will be considering the appropriate role of the organization in this County-wide forestry program. Our preliminary assessment is that the program has considerable positive potential for ecosystem restoration, but will require careful design and long-term post-treatment monitoring in order to determine if the conceptual restoration benefits actually take place.

If you are interested in this issue, please contact one of BCNA's representatives. We will explore this program in more detail in future newsletters and keep you posted of specific proposals as they develop.

## Volunteer Naturalists Wanted

The County is looking for individuals who are enthusiastic, knowledgeable nature-lovers--a description that fits most BNCA members! Volunteer naturalists present outdoor and indoor interpretive programs about the County's wildlife, vegetation, geology, and ecosystems. Audiences include school groups and the general public, often during in-the-field hikes.

Two training courses will take place this winter:

Feb. 11 - April 15: Tuesdays 8:30 to 3:30

Feb. 14 - April 18: Fridays 8:30 to 3:30

The application deadline is Jan. 24, 1997. Applicants will be interviewed. Call Shelley O'Connor at 441-3899.

## Update on GO-CO Funding

....by LVAG and Jim Knopf

The Colorado legislature eventually will be considering reauthorization of the Lottery, as well as an amendment to divert Lottery proceeds from current distribution (State parks, 10%; Conservation Trust Fund, 40%; capital construction, variable; GO-CO Trust Fund, all remaining) to this system: State parks, 10%; Conservation Trust Fund, 40%; GO-CO Trust Fund, 50% up to 35 million (adjusted to inflation); *with remaining proceeds reverting to the General Fund.*

However, an in-depth audit must be completed before reauthorization can take place, so the above questions probably will be brought up in 1998. This means GO-CO can make no funding commitments beyond July 1999.

## Front Range Mountain Backdrop

*Post-election Ripples*

....by LVAG and Jim Knopf

The change of certain county commissioners, due to the elections, will have some repercussions on planning in this multi-county effort to coordinate use and preservation of our common local mountain heritage. However even those who are not enthusiastic about this concept will have some difficulty "turning down" the enormous funds available to it from GO-CO. Generally the public seems to be supportive of using funds for "green" purposes, but the power structure is "frustrated and looking for money."

Most likely to impact us in Boulder are current plans for the Jefferson County Center; conflicts on our southern border may be inevitable. In any case, there will be a five-year major audit first.

## Quick Outrageous Quote

Overheard at a BCNA Board meeting, about a City department which shall remain unnamed:

“Sure it’s a stupid way to landscape, but he saves money and it makes life easier for his department, which is typical for engineers.... “



## Crossbill and Croissant (Boulder’s only Nature Gossip Column)

.....by *Pinchas Flingamo*

Bruins in repose: Roger Jakoubek, Linda Georges, and several other observers saw three bear cubs snoozing in a cottonwood tree in Skunk Canyon in October. The Boulder Mountain Park rangers spotted at least ten black bears in the park this fall: two sows, five cubs, two yearlings, and a large boar. This year’s plethora of chokecherries, wild plums, and apples made life relatively easy for the bears; only one made it into downtown Boulder to see the sights.

Exotic visitor from east: Marty Dick found a dead opossum near Crossroads in early October. Opossums are relatively new to Boulder County. To our knowledge (and we’re right 50 percent of the time--on true/false questions, at least) this is the first local sighting in years.

Rare bird alert: This is an alert to all rare birds. Leave the county immediately, before the hordes descend. This goes out especially to the tundra swan, black-throated green warbler, Pacific loon, and marbled murrelet seen somewhere in the county during November. Rosy finches and pine grosbeaks appeared at feeders in town (and a snow bunting at Cherry Creek in Denver). Does this indicate seed crop failures up north?

*(continued on page 10)*

## Moonlight Meeting Madness

*Unofficial version of the Minutes, by MD and LVAG*

While we don’t always have full moons, we do usually have madness of one kind or another, usually the delightful and wacky kind. Here are some moments from the Minutes of past Board meetings:

*July 21, 1996:* “This evening meeting,” writes secretary Marty Dick, “held in the back yard of Steve Jones, was made magical as we watched yellow evening primroses popping out as dusk advanced. Even the hummingbirds buzzing in the purple figwort appeared to be watching in awe.”

More mundane matters on hand included the planning of a letter to the City staff asking for a more complete inventory of breeding birds and invertebrates (the City is developing a management plan for the North Boulder Valley area). We shared information about the Table Mountain mining issue, the Silver Lake/Lakewood pipeline issue, the dogs-on-Open Space issue, and the winter raptor survey. Planners of the BCNA Ecosystem Symposium were patted on the back: it was well done. We discussed requirements of BCNA grant recipients. We tried to think of an effective way to stop the creation and paving of a large trail on Open Space (old Burke properties near the Bobolink trail). We ate interesting stuff.

*Sept. 29<sup>th</sup>:* in spite of a fat yellow moon, almost everybody got lost trying to locate Linda’s house, thanks to the 55<sup>th</sup> St. closing. It was too chilly to eat outdoors and watch the deer and coyotes, so we made room for both edibles and notes on the table and tackled discussion of the Land Trust, which has languished in obscurity and inactivity for the past few years. In 1988, it provided a needed method for land conservation for people who preferred not to deal with public agencies. Now the Cnty. Open Space tax has reduced the need for it. The Board voted to explore legal ways to disband it and incorporate its activities into the regular business of the BCNA board.

Other matters discussed: possibility of creation of conservation easement on nearly 700 acres of grazing land near Hygiene (field trip to look at site planned); anti-trapping amendment (Board members were divided on its impact on wildlife management, though supportive of its humane intentions, and decided not to take a political position); beautiful wintering raptor maps; PUMA application for GO-CO grant for its comp plan; continuing protest against mining at Table Mountain; and slight change in newsletter schedule.

## Invasion of the Irruptive Seed-snatchers?

...by Steve Jones

When I saw the two Clark's nutcrackers flapping past the Third Flatiron on Oct. 15, I began to wonder. When Ruth Carol Cushman reported pine grosbeaks on Enchanted Mesa in early November and D. W. King spied more Clark's nutcrackers near Lyons, my pulse quickened slightly. Could this be the year?

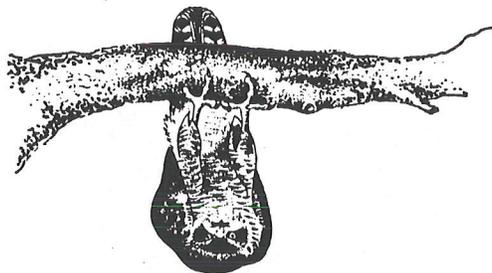
I remembered the winter of 1988, when there were so many seed-eaters in the ponderosa pine forest west of Doudy Draw that Jim Knopf kept count by writing sideways eights on the Christmas Count form. We couldn't tell where one flock ended and another began. In addition to several hundred chickadees and nuthatches, we counted a hundred or so red crossbills and a couple of dozen pine grosbeaks and Clark's nutcrackers, birds that usually confine themselves to the subalpine life zone. I also remembered last year, when I led a winter field trip to the same area, and we saw one mountain chickadee and six juncos.

Which will it be this year? Ponderosa pines produce bumper seed crops at irregular intervals, about once every four to seven years. These seed crops attract irruptive seed-eaters, birds that migrate from higher elevations or latitudes in search of seeds. Bumper seed crops appear more regularly in spruce-fir forests.

The BCNA Indian Peaks Bird Count has tracked these boreal forest eruptions in higher elevations of Boulder County over 15 years. Bumper seed crops in the winters of 1984, 1991, and 1995 attracted large flocks of crossbills, pine siskins, red-breasted nuthatches, and other seed eaters. Some flocks contained hundreds of birds.

CU ecologist Carl Bock and co-author L. Lepthien, who studied conifer seed crops and songbird eruptions in North America and Asia, concluded that seed crop fluctuations are synchronized over large geographic areas. Amazingly, conifers in northern Siberia and northern Canada tend to produce poor seed during the same years. Bock and Lepthien concluded that trees growing at high latitudes may have evolved "a common sensitivity for a group of regularly fluctuating climatic variables." Periodic low seed production may serve as a defense against predators, limiting their populations and ensuring that some seeds survive during most years (The American Naturalist, 1976, vol. 110: 559-570).

Will this be the year of the great ponderosa pine cone crop? To find out, join us for a walk on Enchanted Mesa on Saturday, March 1. And if you'd like a copy of Dave Hallock's ten year summary of the Indian Peaks counts, give me a call at 494-2468.



### Creature feature: the Air Force falcons

.....collected by LVAG from CO-birds,  
a Colorado chat group on the Internet

Friday morning here at the Air Force Academy, amid the snow, two of the biology teachers and many students watched a peregrine chase a rock dove into the courtyard of the high school, where they both banged into one of the large windows and were stunned. The teachers ran out to check on the falcon (we have many rock doves!), and saw that it was still moving, although slowly. While one prof watched and kept the kids back, the other called DOW to see if they could come help.

[Shortly however], the falcon got up and flew to a nearby Russian olive where it was seen hanging upside down on a branch while several magpies mobbed it. Eventually it seemed to get its bearings, pulled itself upright, and flew out of the courtyard....

Which reminds me... I was camping at Wilkerson Pass in April with my son's scout troop, and we launched Estes rockets as part of one of their projects. After 10-15 successful launches, the kids all suddenly oohed and ahhed as they saw us take out a peregrine with a surface-to-air missile! It had come cruising over the hill behind us, and no one had seen it until the rocket passed close to it and the bird tumbled to get out of the way! That would have been REAL hard to explain to the DOW and the Audubon Society... [Steve Brown, 11/2/96]

## Creature feature: Humbled by the Harrier

....by LVAG:

One fine fall day, as I was running along my habitual short route—the now infamous Bobolink trail—I happened to notice a hulking shape sitting on a fencepost in the field to the east. Curious to see which particular raptor it might be, I crawled under the barbed wire to get a little closer. The bird didn't move.

I thought it looked a bit harrier-like, but wanting to confirm, tried to approach as closely as possible. I crouched and tried to move like a lion: stalking is such fun. I was within 75 yards... 50... 30! How was this possible? The harrier eyed me warily but held his position. I began to wonder if he was wounded and unwilling to fly.

Suddenly he rose up and headed for me with a purposeful look. I felt a mouse-fear in my chest, wondering if he would grab my scalp and take off with my 96 pounds!

He flew over my head and directly behind me I saw what he had really been concerned about during my approach: a red-tailed hawk was poaching harrier hunting-grounds behind me. The harrier set upon the hawk with determination, and they flew east with mutual determination, leaving me with the feeling that I had just been put in my place.

### *(Crossbill and Croissant, cont. from page 7)*

Scott Severs saw a flock of six swans (easy, we trust him) flying over the Boulder Elks Lodge on November 19. Internet birding groups have shared the following: a Pacific loon (seen on Baseline Reservoir), a Ross's goose (at the East Bldr. Comm. Center—presumably getting fit for more travel), and a snow goose on Dodd.

December wildflowers: Look for gumweed and Mahonia blooming on sunny slopes in Gregory Canyon, Easter daisies in lower Bear Canyon, and rabbitbrush on, appropriately, Rabbit Mt.

When the town of Richmond Homes said it wanted to build more houses on designated County open space so residents could keep their tax bills down, a BCNA member remarked, "That reminds me of the store owner who complains, 'I'm losing money on everything I sell. I better increase my volume, or I'll go broke.'" This seems to be the current human approach to world problems in general, *n'est-ce pas?*

Enjoy Winter Solstice. And send your nature tidbits to this newsletter, Box 473, Boulder 80306. *Buenas aventuras!*

## Nature Notables

....by LVAG, from several media sources

Maine's loss is our gain. We recently learned that the renowned "Loon Lady" of Hancock County, ME, **Ruth Surgeson**, is moving from her home of many years to be closer to family members in Boulder. We hope she discovers BCNA too!

Mrs. Surgeson coordinated her county's loon count beginning in 1983, and she and her husband were honored as Acadia Natl. Park's Volunteers of the Year. She published a newsletter and served as a clearinghouse for all kinds of loon-related information through the years, as well as acting energetically in various protection and education projects.

Another Boulder resident, **Harold E. Malde**, was recently honored in "The Face of Conservation" profile in the national Nature Conservancy newsletter. Mr. Malde, a retired geologist and volunteer photographer, has photographed 372 Conservancy preserves, and is praised not only for his nature-related activism, but for his kindness and thoughtfulness to human relations along the way.

He notes that the most physically challenging assignment was in Two Hearted River watershed in Michigan (because of the swarms of deer flies); the most challenging in terms of photographic conditions was Gypsum Dunes, TX, where the fine white sand created lighting problems.

The City of Boulder is fortunate to have many residents like these fine and caring folks. Tell us about others you know.



As a fellow BCNA member with no small involvement in the trails/greenways/Open Space debate, I'd like to make a few comments on Scott Severs' editorial in the Autumn 1996 newsletter.

As most of you know, for environmental, esthetic, and user-conflict reasons I fought the Greenways plan for a concrete bike path east of South Boulder Creek and parallel to the Bobolink Trail for more than six years. Starting way back in 1990 I was told repeatedly by Open Space staff that they didn't like it either but it was a "done deal." In spite of our extensive research into issues and solutions, garnering of consistent public opposition and willingness to negotiate in good faith, misunderstandings, hard feelings and general bloodshed ensued. I'll spare you the gory details and get to the point -- it was a done deal, mysteriously, and we lost the battle.

I agree with many of Scott's observations about this specific bike path, and about concrete in general on Open Space: they are both a travesty and an abomination. However, even in my moments of bleakest despair I don't believe this individual decision will result in uncontrollable concretization of Open Space, or even uncontrolled proliferation of trails on Open Space. I also don't believe that the "elected officials and city departments" are listening only to "rabid recreationists."

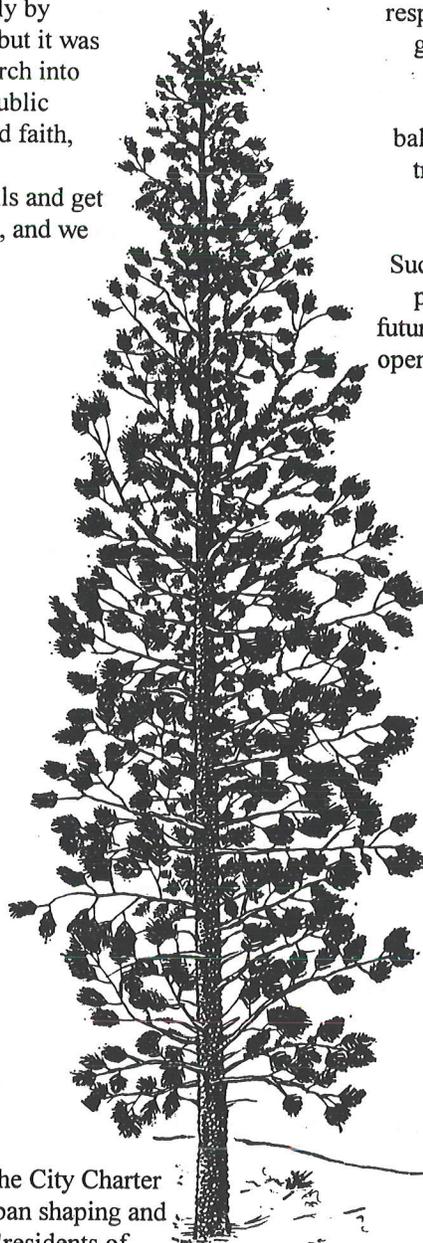
In my ongoing personal journey of environmental awareness, I have come to see that there are many ways to define a successful Open Space program, and there are many valid perspectives. Therefore, I found Scott's repeated rallying cry to "the real environmental community of Boulder" unnecessarily divisive, as if no viewpoint other than one focused exclusively on native species would be tolerable. I believe I am a "real environmentalist," and I agree that biodiversity, habitat fragmentation, and wetlands are important issues; but I also believe there are many other legitimate purposes set out for Open Space in the City Charter which can be met simultaneously, including urban shaping and passive recreation. Indeed, I am among those "residents of Boulder Valley" who do have a vision of a system of multi-purpose trails connecting various types of public lands, as well as the growing urban areas, to each other. This vision doesn't have to include "a convenient maze of asphalt" or "trails on each and every portion of Open Space." Good sound bites, perhaps, but those simplistic accusations have simply never been true.

Part of my vision about Open Space and trails includes the elimination of inflammatory rhetoric and an "us-versus-them" mentality. I believe we must stop arguing with each other about preservation or recreation, acquisition or management, good or bad, open or closed, black or white, all or nothing. The reality, of course, is a splendid palette of shades and colors, of checks and balances, of compromises and solutions.

Therefore, I look forward to a time when we can all start actively communicating with each other and respecting diverse opinions. We must ensure that we gather and share all available information, identify problems objectively, and work together toward judicious solutions that best represent an overall balance among competing priorities. With regard to trails, I believe if we work together to design trails well, we will be able to minimize environmental impact and maximize our enjoyment of nature. Successful trails can actually enhance environmental preservation and will generate more support in the future among taxpayers for even more preservation of open lands. Trails encourage a healthy lifestyle and a sense of community, and can be a valuable educational tool in developing an ethic of active environmental stewardship among trail users.

Aren't these among BCNA's goals also?

Therefore I urge BCNA to broaden your perspective to include, in addition to the native species, the rest of us as well: the people who cherish and appreciate Open Space as a matter of personal growth and renewal, or "re-creation." Let's incorporate the new paradigm in natural resource management which is being widely accepted in other parts of the country: that people are part of all ecosystems. Let's encourage management of Open Space to include human use, rather than merely management by keeping people out. I submit that in the process we just might rediscover the joy and wonder that brought us all outdoors in the first place.



**Editorial corner: Comments on Amendment 14**

...by Jim McKee

Hurrah! Amendment 14 passed and fewer animals will be tortured in traps and snares. We should all, as good environmentalists be happy. Right?

Then why do I feel as if urban environmentalists have declared war on farmers and ranchers in Colorado. Well for one thing, we've taken away their rights to protect their property. Amendment 14 bans all use of leghold traps, killing traps, snares, and poisons in the state, with just one exception. Landowners can trap for one 30 day period on their own land if they can convince their District Wildlife Manager that non-lethal and other approved lethal methods of control haven't been sufficient to prevent depredation. Unfortunately coyotes don't just eat sheep and raccoons don't just eat sweet corn or melons for one thirty-day period during the year. Neither do beavers and muskrats abstain from damaging reservoirs and canals for eleven months of the year.

In case you weren't aware of it, farming and ranching are not lucrative professions for most family farmers today. This amendment puts just a little more stress on these people who provide our food, and may result, after a few years, in a few more farms and ranches being sold and more mountain condominiums and prairie palaces being built (a poor trade-off for wildlife).

You should be aware that neither DOW nor Department of Agriculture regulations regarding depredating species endanger these species populations in any way. While some of us may regard trapping as inhumane, the end result, for coyotes at least, will be more calling and shooting, more aerial gunning, and hence more coyotes killed in Colorado.

Aside from the fact that wildlife management should not be done by constitutional amendment, this initiative was poorly written and unduly punitive to private landowners. All of us who care for wildlife in this state should consider supporting sensible efforts to reform this amendment within two to four years. First, the constitutional amendment should be rescinded and a statutory change substituted. This statute should, I believe, eliminate all commercial and recreational trapping in Colorado. Second, It should mandate current DOW regulations regarding hardware and method of take for trapping on private property. Finally, trapping on leased, public land should be allowed only with the concurrence of the District Wildlife Manager that other non-lethal or approved lethal methods are not

working. And, finally, there should be no calendar restrictions regarding control of depredating animals. These changes would, I believe, meet the ethical requirements of most environmentalists and, at the same time, provide farmers and ranchers with the tools that they need to protect their property and stay in business.

*(Note that Jim was on the steering committee for the Division of Wildlife furbearer stakeholder process and was a governor's appointee to the Department of Agriculture Predator Roundtable.)*

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*(Happy holiday, continued from page 1)*

Dumbo began riding a friendly shoulder to visit neighbors, and learned to enjoy outdoor exploring, but she never wandered far. Early on when uncertain of her sex, her hosts provided her with nesting materials, and learned she was female for sure when in her fourth year she built a fine nest (including candy wrappers gathered outdoors) and laid four (unfertilized) eggs.

Dumbo's current palatial residence is in a large cage in a magnificent tropical atrium, where she is allowed to fly often. She not only knows all the standard starling songs—the whistly, squeaky ones we are grateful to hear in winter when all else is silent—but she also has learned “Pop goes the weasel” and “Yankee Doodle.” In addition, she speaks English quite well, and uses some phrases appropriately. The Billingses did not intentionally teach her—she picked up phrases by herself, perhaps choosing those she felt were most useful to a half-human bird. Speaking on the phone, for example, she mutters, “Yes.. yes... OK, OK...” “If you disturb one of her protected sites, she cries, “Get outta here! Get out!” She may comment, as you brush your coat, “Well, it's the cat hairs...” or she may complain, “I'm getting thirsty.” When in an insulting mode, she hollers, “Buzzard!”

As Dave Barry likes to repeat, I am not making this up.

While BCNA is not in the business of protecting starlings and cowbirds, or of admiring tame pets, this enchanting encounter put my own arrogant condescension into perspective. In the future, I'll be more curious and less scornful when I see a crow, a magpie, or... a starling.



# MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION BOULDER COUNTY NATURE ASSOCIATION

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

|                                                                               |      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student or senior citizen (65 and over)              | \$10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General member                                       | 15   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family or household                                  | 20   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporter                                            | 30   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Land Trust/subscriber (\$20 to Bldr Cnty Land Trust) | 50   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Founder (\$70 to Boulder County Land Trust)          | 100  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life member                                          | 300  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate member                                     | 500  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholder (\$700 to Boulder County Land Trust)     | 1000 |

**Membership year is Jan. 1 to Dec. 31.** Members who have joined since October 1 are considered paid through the following year. Members receive a quarterly newsletter. Supporting members also receive a complimentary copy of each BCNA publication that is published during the membership year. New Boulder County Parks and Open Space Dept. Volunteer Naturalists receive a one-year general membership. Please make check payable to "Boulder County Nature Association" or "BCNA," address below.

Extra copies of the newsletter are sometimes available at the *Wild Bird Center*, or from the editor. To submit BCNA-related material to the editor, e-mail to [andes@rmi.net](mailto:andes@rmi.net), or send a 3.5-in. disk in Word, DOS-text or ASCII text to Linda Andes-Georges, 5684 Aurora Pl., Boulder CO 80303. Typed copy is also accepted.

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

**DON'T SLEEP THROUGH IT!**  
Memberships are due in January

