

Singing in the... Snow

... by LVAG

On Valentine's Day eleven adventurers braved the I-70 winter terrors to rendezvous at our annual bed-and-breakfast stagecoach stop southwest of Leadville: the Mt. Elbert Lodge. Roads were dry, in spite of viciously swirling twilight snowflurries, and the inn was cozy and smelled of herb teas.

The following morning, in a balmy 20 F., all of us trooped to the nearest trailhead to attempt—once again—a “summit:” the Lake Pass which eludes the group so frequently because of bad weather or bad snow or both. This year, Mother Nature smiled. Snow was ample and virgin: we set the first traces, with Ingvar ranging far ahead. Skies varied from cloudy to sunny, with occasional blustery winds.

In late morning we fueled up on a south-facing slope, among the firs, and continued. By mid-afternoon, with more than six gently uphill miles behind us, some of us were fading. With the end in sight, but still distant, several reversed their points and began the glide back down the beautiful South Fork Valley, while the others trudged ahead for a look “over the edge.”

To our disgust, snowmobilers had arrived behind us and obliterated our tracks. We could hear their hornet noises echoing through the woods nearby. When they occasionally fell silent, a healthy “Halloo!” to the opposite hillside brought a clear and much cheerier echo.

(cont. on page 6)



March Nature Notes

...Randy Gietzen and Steve Jones

Before getting to March Nature Notes, there are a couple of notes left for February. One is the sighting of a Snowy Owl at Rabbit Mountain. It was observed just up and east of the picnic area. Southern Canada is normal southern range for this owl [see page 11 for a related story].

At Dodd's reservoir off of Niwot Rd. and east of 63rd, a Ross's Goose and an immature snow goose have been sighted. Red crossbills and Bohemian waxwings can be seen in downtown Boulder.

In March, signs of spring start to show in Boulder County. Yet it is also our snowiest month of the year. The record total snowfall for March is 56.7 inches. It's a good time to get out and do some animal tracking. The average high temp. is around 53 degrees. During the month, our days will get 1 hour and 19 minutes longer.

By mid-March the mourning cloak butterflies that managed to survive winter in cracks and crevices emerge to find the early spring blossoms. Some of the blooming plants include creeping mahonia, Nuttall's violets, Easter daisy, and pasque flower. Bell's twinpod bloom in the scattered shale outcroppings in the northern part of the county. This is the only place in the world where the Bell's twinpod grow.

Red fox, badger, and black-tailed prairie dogs are giving birth under ground. The babies will emerge from their dens next month. A good place to observe foxes may be at Sawhill ponds (east of Boulder on 75th street) in the early morning hours. Bears will emerge from hibernation and start eating like hungry teenagers. So will the first ticks of the year.

(cont. on page 10)



BCNA CALENDAR - SPRING TO SUMMER

- Sat.**
Mar. 15
9:00 am -
4:00 pm

 - **City of Boulder Mountain Parks and Open Space Symposium.** Presentation of 10 (of more than 50) ongoing research and monitoring projects sponsored by the City (see page). At NIST, 325 Broadway. Call 441-3440 for more information.

- Sun.**
Mar. 23
4:30 am -

 - **Post- equinox sunrise hike to Green Mountain top.** The nearly-full moon will set in the West as we approach the summit to see the sunrise. Meeting time guarantees large turnout, so get there... early. Meet at Chautauqua (cottage parking lot) to carpool to west trailhead, and bring breakfast. Fair weather only. **Contact: Randy, 530-4355.**

- Mon.**
Apr. 7
6:30 pm -
8:30 pm

 - **Sunset birds and comet Hale-Bopp.** (see page X for more information on comets). Join Scott and friends for a visit to Artist's Point during the peak visit of this celestial visitor. Incidental wildlife included free, so bring binoculars (and flashlight, warm drinks, and warm clothes). Meet to carpool at the Wild Bird Center, 1641 28th St. (behind the Video Station). Snow date April 14th. **Contact: Scott, 541-0784.**

- Sat.**
Apr. 19
11:30 am -

 - **Raptor Wrap-up Meeting.** Bring data sheets and maps. Warm up and stretch first (see page X for details). Location at Holly's house, 4800 Osage Dr. #11. **Contact: Holly, 543-8730.**

- Fri.**
May 23
7:30 pm -

 - **Moonlight and night critters hike.** We'll listen and look for wildlife, admire the stars, and peek at the old burn site. Meet at Rabbit Mountain trailhead, east of Lyons about 1 mile and north at the County Open Space sign. Bring a snack or warm drink, binoculars, and warm clothes. **Contact: Chaya, 772-3659.**

- Sun.**
May 25
7:00 am -
11:00 am

 - **Search for Little Brown Jobs (LBJs).** Short course on sparrow identification, with emphasis on song and habitat of these interesting birds. Each participant will receive a tape of songs of breeding sparrows of Boulder County. Limited to 8 people. Meet to carpool at Wild Bird Ctr, 1641 28th St. behind Video Station. **Contact: Scott, 541-0784.**

- Sat.**
July 12
7:00 am -
10:00 am

 - **Butterfly photography workshop.** Bring a 35 mm camera with a short telephoto or macro lens. We'll get really close to swallowtails, mourning cloaks, admirals, wood numpfs, and fritillaries, and practice techniques for photographing them in their best light. Limited to 8 people. **Contact: Steve for instructions, 494-2468.**

1996 BCNA Board

President: Kristine Crandall (444-1955)
 V.P.: Steve Jones (494-2468)
 Treasurer: Chaya Nanavati (772-3659)
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 Jim McKee (494-3393)
 Holly Devaul (786-0479)

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)



BCNA Website

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

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

The Green Network

Do you have Internet access? Join the BCNA Nature-Net for rapid communication (special announcements like "Wine-tasting at Linda's place," or "Prairie dog photo party!"), and for pressuring local politicians and staffers when their intervention can benefit butterflies, birds, beebalm, etc.

To join our network, send this e-mail message to majordomo@lists.csn.net: "subscribe bcna-nature-net@csn.net." Subsequently, you will receive instructions reminding you how to use the Naturenet. Whenever you need to contact the rest of us, you will post a single message to: bcna-nature-net@csn.net. *Voila!*

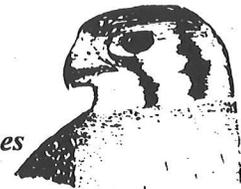
Note that e-mail wastes no paper, not even the post-consumer recycled kind.

Further Netty questions? Call our tech wizard, Randy Gietzen: randyg@csn.net



THE RAPTOR'S EYE

*Reminders, Action-options,
and Mini- and Maxi-reports about ongoing local issues*



BCNA Research Grants

BCNA has budgeted \$750 to fund research projects on a first-come, first-served basis during 1997. Research should involve natural resources in Boulder County. Previous grants, for example, have supported research on the impacts of development on solitary vireo reproduction, on corvid predation of songbirds, and on old-growth forest inventories.

Currently, many County and City agencies need careful research to help formulate management policies. City Open Space, for example, needs research relating to the impacts (or lack of impacts) of recreational activities on ecosystems and species. Other needed research concerns "pest management:" the effects of weed-control treatments on Bell's twinpod and on needle-and-thread grassland communities, or the effects of diffuse knapweed infestations on Bell's twinpod, etc. A typical BCNA award is for about \$250. Recipients agree to provide the Association with a written summary of their research results, and to participate in our symposia when appropriate. Contributions to the newsletter are also appreciated.

Those interested in applying for a grant should send a short (3-5 page) proposal describing their research project to: Kristine Crandall, 1182 Juniper, Boulder 80304. The Board will consider proposals at the next quarterly meeting, on April 24th.

Winter Raptor Monitoring Wrap-up Meeting

Saturday, April 19th at 11:30 am.

We ask everyone who can make it to attend, bringing with them the data sheets and maps from this year's surveys. We randomly select a sample of these to plot on topo maps as a means to view annual distribution and relative abundance of species observed. This activity is fondly referred to as "Raptor Twister," as we scramble to place our little colored dots in the proper location. If you cannot make the meeting, it is **IMPERATIVE** that you send your data sheets and maps to Holly *in advance of this date*, so we have a full pool of data from which to select. Location: Holly Devaul's house, 4800 Osage Drive, #11. Call 543-8730 if you need directions.

The Twelve Days of Springtime

Composed by LVAG while running and birdwatching on the South Boulder Creek trail, south of S. Boulder Rd:

On the first day of springtime, my true love sent to me:

- 12 Brewer's blackbirds
- 11 red-winged blackbirds
- 10 larks of meadow
- 9 squeaky starlings
- 8 ugly cowbirds
- 7 snipes and killdeers
- 6 robins redbreast
- 5 common yellowthroats!
- 4 yellow warblers
- 3 singing housewrens
- 2 turtle doves
- and a red-tailed hawk in a tall tree.



Allegra Collister Nature Area (a.k.a. Lykins Gulch): ACCESS PROTOCOL

It is clear that the Allegra Collister Nature Area holds an attraction for many birds, and other creatures too. Because of its value as a study site for a variety of disciplines, the BCNA has negotiated for, and administers, a conservation easement for this critical habitat. **It is private property.** It is important that the landowner's wishes be respected, and the intent of the agreement honored. Written permission must be obtained prior to entering the property. Access will be limited. Only those who are conducting pre-approved studies, or who are performing planned maintenance activities, will be allowed routine entry.

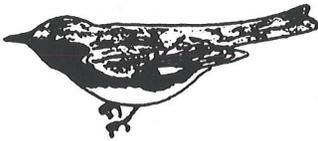
Little Old Warbler #119

In July 1996 we were delighted to report that the nearly-famous little Yellow Warbler who had always returned to the Allegra Collister Nature Area was again faithful to the rendezvous. At six years a veteran of the incredible journey made twice a year by our neo-tropical birds, #119 is a tiny hero. Will he survive his 13th international trip and meet us again? Watch this spot for news in July.

DIA and Wings

It seems that no matter what they do with those flying machines, the noise tortures somebody. Lately the flight modifications made to pacify humans have found a new population to bother, and the latter is not likely to protest. Flights routed north toward Wyoming are booming over the wildlife refuge at Barr Lake, a habitat so rich in birds that on the Christmas Count, in spite of a frozen lake, the species count was 68 and the number of individuals... over 17,000!

If you are still not happy with noise at Denver Internatl. Airport, join the crowds who continue to bombard the hotline with calls: 342-2380 or 1-800-417-2988. Ask the FAA to commit to protecting Wilderness Areas and special habitats from flight noise, as promised in the Environmental Impact Statement.



As for the airport structure itself, an interesting avian adaptation recently came to light, which may indicate that birds have given up living under or near the airport and have decided to... move in.

A CO-birder (member of a birding chat-group on the Net) mentioned in December that as he was accompanying someone to catch a flight, he noticed a bird in the "rafters" of Concourse C. Near Gate C39 precisely. This was not just your run-of-the-mill English sparrow or starling. Not a know-nothing pigeon or house finch. No sir, this was a fairly rare wood warbler: the Black-throated Blue Warbler, causing the viewer to ask, "Are interesting new migration strategies being developed by wood warblers?... Some excellent opportunities seem available to the bird, but I think that Northwest to Minneapolis would be a mistake!"

Another CO-birder reacted with this: "I believe that last winter... an Ovenbird spent the winter in a fern bar in a Chicago hotel lobby."

Let's hope the Wise Use people don't get hold of this information. They'll tell us it just proves that wildlife doesn't need "Nature" any more...

In this arena, we have been working primarily on legislative issues. Perhaps most contentious is SB97-52, the enabling legislation for Amendment 14. As you know, Amendment 14 prohibited the taking of wildlife using leg-hold traps, instant kill, body-gripping traps, snares, or poisons, except under certain conditions. And therein lies the problem. The sponsors, Senator Wattenberg and Representative Entz represent rural districts and, in their bill, are attempting to minimize the impact on farmers and ranchers. At the same time, the leaders of the anti-trapping initiative want enabling legislation to match their *intent* in writing Amendment 14, not just the *language* of the amendment. The amendment was loosely written and left many loopholes for different interpretations. My testimony at the Senate hearing was primarily intended to ensure that the statute fairly represents the language of the amendment and reduces the possibility of successful legal challenge.

Both sides might do well to look at future changes to the amendment to make it less onerous to agriculture in the state and, at the same time, meet the (sponsor's) intent regarding what regulations apply regarding hardware and method of take and whether the Division of Wildlife (DOW) or the Department of Agriculture (DO Ag) is responsible for enforcement.

HB97-1045 prohibits the Division of Wildlife from adopting rules that restrict the taking of coyotes and raccoons to a specific season. The bill would make it the intent of the General Assembly that the state is potentially liable for damage to livestock caused by a species that the livestock owner cannot control or if the species is one on which a closed season has been set. The bill makes an appropriation for game damages to come from the general fund. If this provision doesn't stand and the bill is amended to require payments from the Wildlife Cash Fund, there is a serious risk of the state losing approximately \$10 million from federal Pittman-Robinson and Dingall-Johnson funds. I have opposed the provisions in this bill that jeopardize federal funding and restrict the ability of the DOW to set seasons on the take of wildlife. (cont. on page 10)

Indian Peaks Birdcount:

Spring Update

Next counting period: Breeding Season (June)

....by Dave Hallock

The Indian Peaks Four Season Bird Counts are now in their 16th year. Conducted annually during each of the four seasons, the counts were started in order to learn more about the birds that live in, and pass through, our mountains. For the volunteer participants, the counts represent an enjoyable day of hiking, skiing or driving around with an extra purpose. Since 1982, 250 people have participated, giving over 15,000 hours of time.

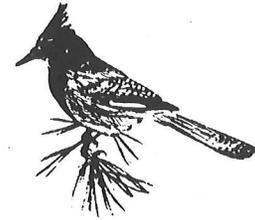
Almost 200 species of birds have been observed over the first 15 years. This is about half of all species seen in Colorado, and a quarter of the species seen throughout the country. A little over 100 species mate and raise a family. Fewer than 40 species are here during the winter as many of our breeding birds migrate south or move to lower elevations. Over the four seasons, our most common birds are mountain chickadee, dark-eyed junco, and pine siskin. American robin and yellow-rumped warbler are also abundant except during winter.



Some trends and cycles are becoming apparent. Members of the corvid family (jays, crows, magpies, and ravens) are increasing in number and are more widespread. These species appear better capable than some birds of living around humans. As more people settle in the mountains, corvids will probably continue to increase. The downside of this is that corvids can act as predators on the young of other bird species, contributing to their decline.

During the past five years (1992-1996), there were numeric declines for several of the long-distance migratory species including western wood pewee, willow flycatcher, dusky flycatcher, warbling vireo, virginian's warbler, Wilson's warbler, and Western tanager. For many of these neotropical migrants, declines are being seen throughout the U.S. Possible causes of the declines include the loss of winter habitat in Central and South America, the alteration and fragmentation of breeding habitat here, and even the loss of key locations for stops during migration. It should be noted that all of the declining species make open cups for nests, which are more susceptible to predation from not only corvids, but also other animals that tend to increase around people (like raccoons, house cats, and foxes).

(cont. on page 10)



County Parks & Open Space: North Foothills (Heil/Hall Ranches)

....by LVAG

After purchasing these large ranches in the northwestern part of the county, and conducting a partial inventory of the resources therein, the County has launched a stakeholder roundtable to develop recommendations on several of the most controversial questions. The conclusions of these discussions will be forwarded to the County Commissioners for action.

The roundtable will wrestle with the question of dog management on the properties (current County law requires on-leash control on all Open Space), and with the many-tentacled issues of access and trails.

For more information, call our representative Kristine Crandall (444-1955) or other BCNAers (Jim McKee, Jim Knopf, Suzanne Webel, Mike Figgs) who also are participating.

City Open Space: North Boulder Valley Management Plan Public hearing at Municipal Bldg. Mar. 26th

....by LVAG

City Open Space is slowly developing management plans for each of seven areas which compose the current and potential properties of its domain. Critical decisions are being made in these plans, especially the first ones, where precedent will be established for managing the others. For example, if a part of an area has already been identified as essential habitat, or ecologically sensitive, what, if any, recreational activities will be allowed there? These kinds of thorny questions make public hearings on the Management Plans very lively.

The first major draft plan now being discussed under the name "North Boulder Valley" includes Open Space north and west of Wonderland Lake, the Beech and Neva Road areas, the Boulder Valley Ranch and adjoining properties, and the land north of the Boulder Reservoir. As usual, trail issues are the most controversial. Please call any member of the Board to learn more about this topic, and *please come to the public hearing on Mar. 26th* to express your opinions.

Be the Louis-and-Clark of Noxious Weeds

...by JimMcKee

I have offered BCNA assistance in mapping noxious weeds on Table Mountain and at Sawhorse Ponds. I don't know whether the Table Mountain offer will be accepted or not, but it looks like Sawhill Ponds is on.

If you're interested in helping, please let me know. Also, we will be pulling some weed species at Sawhill, where the infestations are not severe, but have the potential to become so, and where pulling is a viable control technique. And training will be provided if you're unsure of your identification skills. (Phone Jim at 494-3393).

Great quote from: Ross Perot, the Conservative^{ist} Politician

From POSAC minutes, 12/12/96: In terms of urban sprawl, Ms. Rachel quoted Perot, "by aviarist [*sic*—*she knew the birdlovers were at fault somehow*] and selfishness, and a groveling habit of regarding the soil as property, the landscape is deformed." In terms of open space, Ms. Rachel states Perot might well have said, "a man is rich in proportion to the number of things he can afford to let alone." Right on, Ross!

Art Credits in this Issue

(non-copyrighted artwork uncredited)

page 3: owl from *One Man's Owl*, Bernd Heinrich (Princeton, 1987); kestrel from *Falcon flight*, Ada & Frank Graham (Delacorte 1978)

page 6: foxes from *La Hulotte*, French children's magazine, 08240 Boulton-aux-Bois, France

page 8: fawn from *La Hulotte*; also, back page owl

page 10: elk from works of Carl James Freeman, 2485 Herring Rd., Arcadia, MI 49613

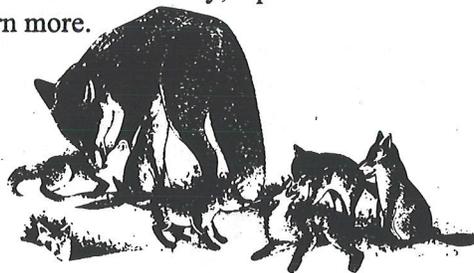
Reporter Needed

The newsletter editor is seeking someone interested in raptors and/or soap operas to serve as the liaison with several agencies and individuals in order to *keep our membership informed about Boulder County raptor gossip*. Who has moved in? Who is flirting with whom, or (saints preserve us) having sex? Who has had babies? How are the kids developing as they reach their adolescence? Which couples are successful in keeping their home together until the kids are out on their own? These are the subjects that interest our readers when the raptors are in town. It takes about two hours, twice a year, to make a few phone calls and write a summary of the news. Please help. Call Linda at 543-9404.

Be a Park Host this Summer

Boulder County Parks and Open Space needs park hosts to hang around beautiful scenery, chat in a friendly way with people from all over the world, and get a good tan (optional). Hosts will be staffing the five premier County parks (Hall, Walker, Betasso Preserve, Walden Ponds, and Rabbit Mountain) to describe the natural and cultural resources, recreational opportunities, and current management programs. Besides the enjoyable encounters with visitors and wildlife, perks include official tshirts and ballcaps.

Hosts must enjoy public contact, must be County residents, and must be willing to work six shifts during the summer. Training will take place on Sunday afternoons (April 20-May 28) from 1:00 to 4:30 p.m. Application deadline is Friday, April 4th. Call 441-4559 to learn more.



(Mt. Elbert ski weekend, cont. from page 1)

The potluck supper that night, after the last weary troopers had returned, was delicious (with generous homemade pizzas, roasted rice, broccoli salad, Jamaican pork masala, veggie chili, and a triple dessert for a triple-birthday celebration), and merry (including drinking songs in three languages, Norwegian and French jokes, and countless stubborn birthday candles).

Wildlife sightings during the weekend were few, as the mountains were still in the iron grip of winter, but thanks to the feeders at the Lodge, and hardy high-country critters, we took pleasure in sighting evening grosbeak, juncos, very lively chickadees, ravens, Steller's jays, tree sparrows, downy woodpeckers, and also mountain sheep and ermine (the latter was energetically raiding the inn's compost pile).

Sunday the group split apart for the day, since recovering muscles all seemed to need special treatment, and ambitions were varied. Most intended to squeeze at least one more ski, snowshoe or walk into the delightful weekend. All agreed that the Fifth Mt Elbert weekend had been perhaps the best so far. Join us next year for a new episode.

Rock Creek Farm Wetlands Project

.....by Michael Sanders,
County Open Space Staff

Today, wetlands are on everyone's mind, but approximately 15 years ago only a few biologists knew of them and fewer wetlands specialists partially understood these complex systems. Now, even the U.S. President proclaims his dedication to preserving these important resources. In fact, the term has only recently come into common usage to provide a generic, all encompassing word that includes virtually all types of shallow water environments.

In the past, only a few conservationists, scientists, and recreationists were interested in managing and protecting marshes, swamps and bogs, now known as wetlands. Wetland losses and disturbances have been extensive. The vast majority of society viewed these areas as obstacles to progress since most wetlands were thought to be reservoirs of disease and unfit for farming or development. In 1977, Executive Order 11990 was issued to protect wetlands. Since that time the change in society's attitudes has been dramatic. Nevertheless, *losses in the United States are estimated to have reached more than 50 percent of the presettlement wetland area, and losses continue at the staggering rate of 450,000 acres per year.*

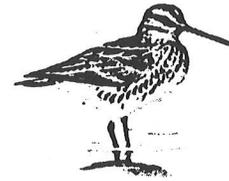
Wetlands represent a very small fraction of our total land area, but they harbor an unusually large percentage of our wildlife. For example, 900 species of wildlife in the United States require wetland habitats at some stage in their life cycle, with an even greater number using wetlands periodically. Representatives from almost all avian groups use wetlands to some extent, and one third of N.American bird species rely directly on wetlands for some resource.

Due to the diversity of habitats possible in these transition environments, the nation's wetlands are estimated to contain 190 species of amphibians, 270 species of birds, and over 5000 species of plants. Many wetlands are identified as critical habitats under provisions of the Endangered Species Act, with 26% of the plants and 45% of the animals listed as threatened or endangered either directly or indirectly dependent on wetlands for survival.

The decline of waterfowl populations and the loss of wetlands are high-ranking environmental concerns in N. America. The key to reversing this decline is through partnerships with federal, state, and local governments, as well as with private land owners, to protect and perpetuate these important areas.

In 1990, in cooperation with the Colorado Division of Wildlife and other waterfowl organizations, County staff began to investigate the possibility of enhancing part of the southwest section of Rock Creek Farm by increasing the amount of pond/marsh habitat in the area, specifically to encourage duck nesting and brood-rearing, and more broadly to benefit all wetland wildlife species.

The project was initiated due to the shrinking habitat for migrating and resident waterfowl species. However, the funding to implement this project was much harder to acquire than the brain-storming necessary to develop the idea. Nevertheless, during the budget cycle in 1995, Boulder County was awarded \$56,500 from the Col. Division of Wildlife habitat enhancement funds, with matching funds from Boulder County, to begin construction of four diked ponds with outlet structures to manipulate water levels.



One small pond will serve as a water quality filtering area, and the other three will be managed as pairing- and brood-rearing habitat for waterfowl. The pond design will maximize shallow water/emergent vegetation interface, and nesting cover will be improved by reseeding with native grasses. The existing duck nesting cover is currently poor in the vicinity, predominately from livestock overgrazing and inappropriate grass species.

Construction of this shallow water, ponded-marsh habitat will benefit Boulder County in numerous ways. It is estimated that 9 breeding pairs of waterfowl will use this site for pairing, nesting, and brood-rearing. Approximately 42 young should be fledged annually. Furthermore, benefits to other wildlife can be expected. Extensive use of these ponds by marsh/pond wildlife such as great blue herons, bitterns, coots, grebes, nesting blackbirds, rails, raptors, etc. is common. It is anticipated the project will create 8.6 acres of wetland habitat and the overall benefits should be dramatic.

Each wetland project varies in complexity. The variables include water availability and control, topography, soil type, composition of vegetation, problem plants and animals, and other constraints, however, the benefits at completion are far greater than the obstacles in the beginning. The project is scheduled for completion in 1997.

POT POURRI AND POT FRAIS

Environmental, ecological, and culinary odds and ends

Comet Commentary

....by Scott Severs

Late March and early April of 1997 provide a special treat for sky gazers. Comet Hale-Bopp will make its closest approach to the sun and its brightest appearance in the northwestern evening sky over Boulder.

Comets have fascinated me ever since I saw comet West in 1976 as a young boy of seven. My sister woke me early one morning and took me to look out the east window of my room. The spectacular comet shined brilliantly in the predawn sky, with a beautiful plume of a tail: a celestial event I will never forget.

Hale-Bopp promises to be just as spectacular. The mound of ice, gravel, and dust comes alive surrounded by a coma of burned off gases, trailed by a bluish ion stream as well as a yellowish tail of dust. It is visible in the predawn northeastern sky until mid-March. At this time, Hale-Bopp switches to a northwestern stage, being seen best as the last vestiges of sunlight fade away at dusk.

Best viewing will be away from the light of cities polluting our night sky. Those venturing to Nebraska to see the cranes should schedule time to see the comet. Binoculars and low power scopes will add to the appreciation of this comet.

The Internet is good for something, as an excellent web page on comet Hale-Bopp can be found at <http://www.skypub.com/> This site by Sky & Telescope Magazine has excellent sky charts, photos, news, and links to other sites on comets.

Take your kids out to see Hale-Bopp! Bright comets are rare, and although comet Hyakutake was fairly easy to see, Hale-Bopp's glow will equal many of our brightest stars. It will be an event they may never forget! [for *Comet Field Trip, see page 2*]



Visitor to Sombrero Marsh

Late spring, 1996

....by LVAG

Except for the birdsong chorus, stillness shrouds the misty little marsh and pond as we wait for the sun to rise a bit higher. Then brusquely the general serenity is rent by the roar of a schoolbus departing the nearby yard, and the roars continue sporadically for the next half hour.

Nevertheless, all the yellow birds are now in full song, dominated by the choked squawk of the yellow-headed blackbird. At various stations around the pond, eight great blue herons are frozen in watchful anticipation. Occasionally the water's surface erupts with the splash of their prey, just out of reach. Sometimes, with a quick dart, a heron grabs a mouthful.

The sun creeps higher. The mists begin to lift. A hollow hiss sounds out overhead as a hot-air balloon floats gently past, its occupants peering over the basket at us. Not one heron is distracted from its vigil.

From out of the reeds on the far side of the marsh sails a modest brownish duck, soon followed by a mate. Opposite, on our side, ten or fifteen scopes and binoculars focus intently: the star is now on stage. Boulder's rare Asian visitor, the garganey, is silently appreciated by all the watchers in the peaceful morning.

From the Dentist's Window

....by LVAG

Our "March Nature Notes" (page 1) suggest looking for red fox at Sawhill Ponds. There are other, more astonishing places where such clever creatures can manage to survive (not for nothing do fox and coyote have their wily reputations). One place I discovered recently—other than my own "backyard" between Centennial Trail and Baseline—is right outside my dentist's window.

While the hygienist entertained me with stories of the wildlife they have been seeing across busy Arapahoe Ave, next to the Foothills Parkway, I visualized the scene: at mid-day when most shy animals have gone into hiding, a pair of foxes appears. With hungry kits to feed at home, they trot seriously into the pasture to begin transecting for voles and mice (too early in the season for grasshoppers). They work the area in a grid, and when they have finished one pass, they begin again from the bottom. Meanwhile, the occasional hawk floats over to check on their success.

While I was sitting/lying in the dental chair, between "aaahing" and swallowing, I took a quick peek outside: a ferruginous hawk sailed over toward the cottonwoods along the creek. The hygienist and I both exclaimed, "We've got to get this office equipped with binoculars!"

Trails Redux

.....by Tim Hogan

In the last issue of this newsletter, a founding member of the Boulder Areas Trail Coalition (BATCO) criticized BCNA for being "unnecessarily divisive" with respect to trails, and urged us to "broaden our perspective [to] incorporate the new paradigm in natural resource management ... that people are part of all ecosystems." These two points-- an emphasis on consensus and compromise, and an appeal to the "new ecology"--are routinely used across the country to undermine the efforts of conservationists. I would like to look at each of these claims more closely.

No one questions that agreement between parties is preferable to disagreement. Nor do most people ignore the need to compromise and respect various opinions in a diverse community. An approach that emphasizes compromise and consensus is often the best method in conflict mediation and with regard to many political issues. However, for those concerned with the preservation of native species, the emphasis on such an approach must be suspect.

The interests represented at the consensual bargaining table are human interests. In a world experiencing a net growth of three people per second (that is not a misprint), and in a country where 3000 acres of rural land are converted to urban use each day (sic), the emphasis on compromise will necessarily result in an inexorable loss of native plants, animals, and natural habitat. Each land use decision that sacrifices a small part of our natural heritage in the spirit of consensus, leads, over time, to the sure diminution of ecological integrity. None of us are so naive to believe that these losses can be stopped easily, but to charge those who speak out against this erosion as being divisive and uncompromising is disingenuous. The "user groups" affected by trails and other developments on our public lands are not only hikers, runners, bikers, and birdwatchers, but also orchids, ferns, warblers, and bears. The encroachment of our presence onto every acre of the landscape must be weighed against our regard for these other interests.

Along with being uncompromising, those in the so-called Wise Use movement also accuse conservationists of being uninformed about recent developments in the "new ecology" - developments that recognize the effects of disturbance and human presence on natural landscapes. Critics like to assert that humans have been

in North America for millennia--starting fires, hunting animals, maintaining travelways--and that these activities are equivalent to contemporary human impacts. This argument ignores both the scale and the rate of these impacts.

The recognition, or at least a greater emphasis, on natural disturbance such as fire and flooding has been a significant change in ecological thinking over the last decade and offers many arguments for the preservation of large natural areas. Similarly, a greater appreciation for the role Native Americans had on shaping the landscapes of North America has been an exciting area of research and new insight. But it is important to remember that these impacts occurred on a continent with a population roughly equivalent to the numbers that currently reside in two or three of our largest cities; the technology of traditional people was primitive and locally based; and the belief systems of these people was embedded in a luminous, living landscape. The effect of native people on the landscape was more akin to lightning-caused fire and the predation of wolves, than it was to the effect of contemporary development with its channelization of rivers, conversion of native prairies to agricultural factories, and planetary imperilment of the atmosphere. The impact of Paleo-Indians who lived in the Boulder Valley for thousands of years is fundamentally different from the impacts of a modern city. To assert that "people are part of all ecosystems" offers little insight into how the non-human members of those ecosystems might be better served.

Over one hundred years ago, a cantankerous Yankee naturalist opened the last essay he would ever pen with these words: "I wish to speak a word for Nature; for absolute freedom and wildness, as contrasted with a freedom and culture merely civil, - to regard man as an inhabitant, or a part and parcel of Nature, rather than a member of society. I wish to make an extreme statement, if so I may make an emphatic one, for there are enough champions of civilization: the minister, the school-committee, and every one of you will take care of that."

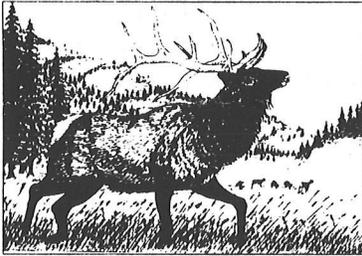
The backlash against the conservation of non-human interests occurring in our community and across the country makes these words of Thoreau particularly relevant today. Arguments that paint those who care about wildlife as extremist, naive, or ill-informed are everywhere. I for one am proud to be a member of an organization like BCNA that continues to speak out for a Nature that is wild and free. Ultimately, it is that Nature which nurtures our humanity and offers hope for the restoration of an intact and healthy community.

(CEC and legislation, cont. from page 4)

HB97-1068 would add mule deer to the alternative livestock act, passed in 1994. This act classified elk and fallow (red) deer as "alternative livestock" and moved jurisdiction over elk ranching from DOW to the DOAg. Mule deer ranches primarily serve the demand for "canned" hunts. I have opposed this bill because it further erodes the authority of DOW over a native Colorado wildlife species and because of ethical concerns relating to "fair chase" when hunting.

SB97-167 concerns authorization for a study of wolf-dog hybrids and wild canid hybrids with domestic cats. This bill has passed the Senate and moved to House Ag. I fully support this bill.

HB97-1073 concerns a surcharge on penalties for poaching trophy, big game animals and was sponsored by Representative Udall who represents part of Boulder County. Penalties would be split between DOW and the general fund. The House Finance Committee provided for a \$269,000 appropriation from the law enforcement, equipment and training fund to implement the bill. I



(Indian Peaks birdcount, cont. from page 5)

Resident species, including chickadees, nuthatches, and creepers, have been faring better and increasing in number. These species can take advantage of the resources provided in maturing forests, including cavities for nests. Cavity-nesting birds are also less susceptible to predation.

Birds that rely on the seeds produced in the cones of our trees for food hit peak numbers in the winters of 1984, 1991, and 1995. These high number events seemed to coincide with "bumper" cone crops on Engelmann spruce trees. Species such as red crossbill, red-breasted nuthatch, and pine grosbeak will search throughout North America for regions with good cone crops. When the trees in Canada are having a poor cone production year, then these birds fly south in search of better food supplies. If our trees have a good cone crop when the birds are irrupting from the north then we will have a "major event." So far, it has been occurring once every five years. [see *Seed-eaters field trip report, page 11*]

fully support this bill and would also support reinstatement of surcharges for poaching trophy bear and lion. These were amended out of the bill in House Ag.

Right to Hunt and Fish: Senator Gigi Dennis plans to introduce a constitutional amendment guaranteeing the right to hunt and fish, based on a similar initiative in Alabama. If successful, the bill would appear as a referendum next year to place language in the state constitution. At first glance this doesn't seem so bad -- until you look at the details. Early versions of this proposal set a very high threshold for the DOW to meet before regulations regarding specific species can be made or changed -- the viability of the species. Public values or ethical considerations would no longer be an issue. I oppose this bill. For your information, a similar resolution just failed in the Wyoming legislature.

I urge you to look carefully at these wildlife bills and let your state senator and representative know how you feel about them. If you need further information about a bill, feel free to call me (494-3393).

(March Nature notes, cont. from page 1)

Music returns to nature this month. The symphony of red winged black birds has already started in a wetland near you. Later in the month the chorus frogs will join them. The meadowlark song is a definite sign of pleasant weather. They, along with song sparrows, are tuning-up and practicing their songs.

The Bald Eagles and the Rough-legged hawks are heading north and will be replaced by the Swainson's hawks moving into the area from points south. Golden eagles and great horned owls are already incubating their eggs. Red-tailed hawks have started their courtship and will begin nesting this month. One pair of red-tailed hawks are already moving back home, adding to the nest they've shared for years on 61st street, north of Valmont, near Boulder Creek.

And, finally (outside of Boulder County), 500,000 sandhill cranes will be stopping along an 80 mile stretch of the Platt River near Kearny Nebraska. Best viewing is at dawn and dusk from the blinds at the Lillian Annette Rowe Bird Sanctuary (308-236-7574. The sound and sight of thousands of cranes flocking together is worth the eight hour drive.

Until next month....

Skiers Check on Seed-eaters

.... By Steve Jones

Field trip report (Mar. 1): This was definitely *not* the year of the great ponderosa pine cone crop. There were almost no cones on the pines of Enchanted Mesa, and most of the seed-eaters (including red crossbills) were in town munching on cottonwood and willow buds. We did enjoy a dazzling blue-sky morning of skiing, snowshoeing, and hiking, and we saw a smattering of forest birds, including: red-tailed hawk, downy woodpecker, hairy woodpecker, white-breasted nuthatch, pygmy nuthatch, and brown creeper. [Participants: Fern Ford, Steve Jones, Margy Lanham, Bob and Rue Wing].



Enviros have Gone Too Far

a careful analysis from a Daily Camera reader

Dear Editors: In this state there are [*sic*] a group of people that make up one of the biggest organizations called "environmentalists." Environmentalists are a group or organization that does many activities concerning the good nature of the environment. Here in Boulder the environmentalists are overcrowding the city and overacting [*sic*] in their cause.

I have lived in Boulder all my life, and in my opinion it has gotten out of control. The environment is an important issue to everyone, but these groups of people have gone too far. There are many causes that the environmentalists fight for, but they can never make up their minds which side of the controversy to be on. These groups of people are always supporting their side of the argument, but sometimes they go too far.

Picketing a fur-selling store or chaining themselves to a tree is fine until they cross the line. When the environmentalists go too far and end up hurting somebody or somebody's possession it is unjust and those people are not fighting for their cause, rather they are fighting just to fight. All in all, the environmentalists are way too active in the city, and are going too far with a cause that they can't even figure out for themselves.*Jerrod Stephan, Louisville, 11/8/96*

The Snowy Owl Frenzy

.....by LVAG

On Washington's birthday, Bob Cahn saw a Snowy Owl at Rabbit Mountain, and since then the place has seen no peace. I was one of the first to check: hiked all over the place in a snowstorm the following morning, but discovered that looking for an arctic bird in a blizzard is like the needle-in-a-haystack challenge. However, not seeing the owl was not too disappointing, since I did see lots of lovely brown deer peering at me from under snow-laden branches, and I had a springtime epiphany: ten brilliantly blue mountain bluebirds escorted me down the road as the sun struggled to appear.

But that was not the end of the Snowy Owl business. In the CO-bird "chatroom" on the Net, someone asked whether one should look for the owl in a tree or on the ground (where he would normally be, in the tundra). Here are some extracted replies:

"This past December and early January while I was vacationing in Poughkeepsie, NY, a Snowy Owl was seen spending its holiday in a strip-mall... It was spotted on the edges of these flat-roof buildings, on a TV antenna, on a deserted Burger King, on the letters of Walmarts... and, yes, perched in a tree. The reason the owl spent its time here was the abundance of pigeons in the mall's parking lot, and, it like Poughkeepsie." (Ken Fredericks, Boulder)

"While growing up on southern Ontario during the 1940s... I saw quite a few Snowy Owls. As far as I can remember, I never saw one in a tree. They seemed to prefer large concrete breakwaters in Lake Ontario, the roofs of buildings close to the shore, ice along the shore, and the shoreline itself... While working at Sioux Lookout (200 mi. north of Duluth) [in the 1950s], colleagues there reported that Cree Indians living along the shores of Hudson Bay would sometimes trap... owls: They would build tripods made from short black spruce trees... and set muskrat traps on top of these tripods. Some... would catch as many as 150. To them, it was an important source of food!" (Alex & June Cringan)

"I have seen one perched on top of a 12-15-story building in Manhattan... on a 4-story building at Michigan State... 8-story building in downtown Lansing, MI... Look everywhere, but realize... that Ferruginous and Red-tailed hawks can look very white from underneath." (Tony Leukering, Brighton)

"I've seen them on phone poles, roofs, ground, fence posts, etc., both high and low, but never in a tree. I once thought I saw one perched on top of a van, but it turned out to be a plastic Michelin man." (Greg Pasquariello)

"My only Snowy was... in western Michigan... It was on the ground, but the great thing about the bird, for me, was that as I was viewing it, I noticed Snow Buntings on the ground behind it. Two life birds in one view!" (Bill Kaempfer, Boulder)

"Today I yanked the car over and pulled out my binocs to view another plastic milk jug upside down on a fence post... (Scott Roederer, Estes Park)

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
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<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, 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
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