

Field Trips

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We'll carpool 50 minutes to the Bobcat Ridge Natural Area to search for American Woodcock. We will either walk the four-mile Valley Loop Trail or drive to other Larimer County hotspots. Leader will send details week of trip.

Pueblo and Cañon City Areas Sunday, January 21

6:00 AM - 6:00 PM

Gregg Goodrich (Email: GreggGoodrich@gmail.com
Phone: 303-655-9135)

Trail Difficulty: Moderate

Maximum Participants: 12

Directions: Meet at the Safe-way on Lincoln Ave and Yosemite (1 mile west of I-25 on the north side of Lincoln), Lone Tree CO.

This Trip will be similar to Joey Kellner's January 1st trip. Leader will contact participants the week prior to the trip.

Front Range Owling Monday, January 22

4:00 PM - 10:00 PM

David Suddjian (Email: dsuddjian@gmail.com
Phone: 831-713-8659)

Trail Difficulty: Moderate

Maximum Participants: 8

Directions: Meet at the Home Depot at 4277 S Eldridge St, Morrison.

Our owling locations will likely be located in Jefferson or Douglas counties. We will focus on Northern Pygmy-Owl and Northern Saw-whet Owl. Plan for standing in the cold and short walks in the dark.

Harriman Lake Saturday, January 27

8:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Edmund J Holub (Email: edmund.holub@gmail.com)

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Last Month's Program: *Flammulated Owl*

Tim Johnson

DFO "strigiphiles" and a very encouraging number of guests gathered at DMNS on November 27 to hear "Fall Ecology of the Flammulated Owl", presented by graduate students Max Ciaglo and Ross Calhoun of Colorado College.

This was the fourth time in 2017 that the monthly meeting focused on owls. Ciaglo and Calhoun are participating in Dr. Brian Linkhart's long-term study of Flammulated Owls (aka - Flams), which Dr. Linkhart described to DFO in December, 2013.

Complementing Dr. Linkhart's studies of Flam long-distance migration to Mexico and Central America, Ciaglo and Calhoun looked at owl activity at a Linkhart study area at the beginning of fall migration.

They began by summarizing Flam characteristics. Averaging 60 grams in weight, it is the second smallest North American owl after the Elf Owl. An obligate cavity nester heavily indebted to flickers, it is insectivorous, with moths as a major prey item.

It likes mid-elevation dry ponderosa forests and is, therefore, sensitive to fire. It is particularly threatened by high-intensity fires following long-term fire suppression activities. Owls arrive in Colorado in mid-May and owlets are gaining independence by August. Migration starts in September.

Knowledge of Flam migration destinations and routes is spotty. Before real data existed, it was believed that Flams survived winter in one of three ways: entering a state of torpor, being "facultative carnivores" that eat small rodents, or by engaging in elevational migration.

Vagrant owls, like those appearing on oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico, and the discovery of latitudinal changes in wing size suggested that migrant populations might exist. Some Flam winter migrants were located to southern Mexico through the use of geolocation technology. Unfortunately, since these devices must be recovered, only a few recaptured birds have supplied detailed migration data.

Ciaglo and Calhoun began their migration study thinking that migrant Flams might use low-elevation Pinyon-Juniper forests since, being warmer, more insect prey could be available.

Initial efforts at capturing migrant owls in such habitat in southern Colorado yielded no owls. However, when the study was relocated to a breeding habitat study area, many more owls were caught.

Over a 4-year period (2013-2016), 216 owls were caught, banded if necessary, and weighed. Samples of blood and feathers were taken. Age was estimated by looking at their feathers. Old and new feathers fluoresce differently under ultraviolet light.

Sixty-five birds were owls banded previously, a very high figure, which facilitated further analysis. These were classified 4 ways:

1. Owls caught twice during the fall banding period. This group consisted of 21 owls which migrated in from parts unknown.
2. Owls caught in previous fall banding periods. Four birds had been banded the year before, one bird two years before. This group demonstrates that the

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owls can show site fidelity; it remains a question if these owls used the site for breeding.

3. Owls caught in the fall but banded in the same or previous summers by others. This group contained twelve birds fledged the same year and eight adult birds fledged previously. Interestingly, the adult birds gained much more weight than the recent fledglings.

4. Eleven owls who were caught in the fall returned to breed the following summer. These birds were possibly “prospecting” in the fall, looking for territories they could potentially move into later - a very interesting hypothesis with implications for owl mentation.

Ciaglo and Calhoun emphasized how these results indicate the importance of band returns and collaboration for data interpretation. High priorities for future research include remote retrieval of data using telemetry, which would complement banding, geolocation technology, and PinPoint trackers.

They would very much like to find out from where the alien Flam in their study migrated and hope to analyze their feather samples for stable isotopes for this purpose.

Several stable (non-radioactive) isotopes, such as deuterium and carbon-13, show strong latitudinal variation in plants and animals, so analysis of these elements can indicate approximately where a bird was during the time the feather was grown.

Perhaps we can look forward to learning the results of these analyses, at a future DFO (Denver Focus on Owls) meeting.



Brown-capped Rosy-Finch. *James Esten*

Field Trips

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Phone: 303-979-2194)

Trail Difficulty: Easy

Directions: Meet at Harriman Lake Parking lot at W. Quincy & S. Kipling Pkwy.

Dress for the weather and bring a scope if you have one. We will hike about one mile on flat trail.

Greenwood Gulch and Marjorie Perry Nature Preserve Sunday, January 28

8:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Kevin Corwin (Email: KevyGudGuy@aol.com
Phone: 720-482-8454)

Trail Difficulty: Moderate

Directions: Meet at the parking lot at Castlewood Park, 5601 East Orchard DRIVE (not Orchard Road) at its intersection with South Holly St. There is a portable toilet at the parking lot.

Total walking distance is about 3 miles. The trails border cattail marshes, wet meadows, and the typical High Line riparian strip. There are a couple of small ponds in the Marjorie Perry Nature Preserve at the northwest part of the loop.

Mueller State Park and Victor Tuesday, January 30

5:30 AM - 3:30 PM

David Suddjian (Email: dsuddjian@gmail.com
Phone: 831-713-8659)

Trail Difficulty: Moderate

Maximum Participants: 12

Directions: Meet at Lowe's in Castle Rock near the outlet stores.

We will seek forest and mountain birds at Mueller, with possible Pygmy-Owl and Gray Jay; look for Rosy-Finches at Victor and Cripple Creek; and make our way back to Deckers and Sedalia, birding as we go.