



THE LARK BUNTING

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE DENVER FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS

VOLUME 60 | ISSUE 06 | JUNE 2024

DFOBIRDS.ORG

BIRDING

DFO bike 'n' birders
take first field trip spin

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LAST WORD, LAST LOOK

Despite a bit of snow,
May means spring birds

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C'mon, people now,
let's get together

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Time to discuss this
newsletter's future

PAGE 6



Prothonotary Warbler
Rob Raker
Tucker Gulch, Golden



Robert Raker, a DFO member since 2014, is a former environmental scientist, adventurer and filmmaker on

many expeditions around the world. Now retired, he enjoys birding and photography and still goes rock-climbing and skiing.

ON THE COVER

Áccent on the -THON: Rarity from East twists our tongues, tickles our fancy

Patrick O'Driscoll

The first time I heard of the Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*), hearing had nothing to do with it. I *read* the bird's name, probably in somebody's CObirds post about a rare spring visitor from the East (US, not Asia). Being brand-new to birding at the time, I had no bird whisperer to instruct me in its correct pronunciation. As a word guy, I wrestled with it by myself out loud: "PRAW-thoh-NOTE-ury? Pro-THUNno-TARY? PROTT-o NOH-o?"

When I finally saw one in person in 2015 (my first and only so far, BTW), pronunciation was beside the point. Standing in the entangled, marshy Eden of the Lamar Community College woods in southeastern Colorado, I was looking at a color-sample definition of "golden." No lemon-yellow here. Yet this sleek, striking creature with gray wings was somehow altogether different from our common Yellow Warbler.

Anyway, we take spring note of this occasional Colorado visitor because you can't say "warbler" without eventually wrestling with "Prothonotary," even here in NOT-its-usual-habitat. As it happens, the one on this month's cover dropped by in that epic spring 2020 fallout season, when the COVID-19 pandemic was just a few weeks old and many more birders were out looking for spring rarities.

Rob Raker, a frequent photographer for our newsletter cover, captured the image on May 12, 2020, in Tucker Gulch, that previously unknown hotspot in Golden, CO that was memorably inundated that year with a profusion of various warblers. (Raker himself saw 17 different kinds there.)

As in most years, we've had a handful of lingering Prothonotary sightings in 2024. Its seldom-seen status probably owes to Colorado's relative lack of "wet forests," as Cornell's *Birds of the World* describes the species' preferred habitat. Something else *BOTW* also mentions is how the bird got its name: Its bright yellow plumage is said to mirror the robes of papal clerks, or prothonotaries, in the Vatican halls of the Roman Catholic Church.

Another fun fact: Cornell says it's "the only eastern wood-warbler that nests in tree cavities," especially those formerly occupied by Downy Woodpeckers. But finding those holes for breeding and wintering is much harder now as conversion of forests in the Southeast to timber and crops has destroyed significant habitat. Worse, the rapid loss of mangroves on South America's northern coasts is eliminating key winter quarters for many Prothonotaries.

Which begets a final, more hopeful fact: People have mounted nest box projects for Prothonotaries throughout their breeding range, like we do for bluebirds here, to rescue species numbers from steep and critical decline — and *that* is one golden opportunity.

Patrick O'Driscoll, editor of The Lark Bunting since 2020, took up birding in his 50s. A retired newspaper journalist, he leads occasional DFO field trips in his home patch, Denver City Park



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Welcome, spring . . . It IS spring now, isn't it?

The Lark Bunting newsletter of Denver Field Ornithologists is published online monthly at dfobirds.org except for joint issues in July–August and February–March.

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Submit original articles or story ideas to the editor at patodrisk@gmail.com. Send image-file photos of birds or bird outings to the photo editor at jcesten@gmail.com. Editors reserve the right to accept and edit suitable articles and photos for publication.

NEWSLETTER ADVERTISING

The Lark Bunting does not accept or contain paid advertising. DFO **AdBIRDtisements** are FREE to club members to seek or sell bird-related equipment, supplies, books and decorative items (artwork, photos, clothing, note cards, etc.).

- Ads must include name, email and/or telephone number, and may include weblink if items offered online
- Ads may be edited for inappropriate content or excessive length (125-word limit); ONE photo or image per ad
- Ads do not carry over each month. To renew, resubmit by next deadline
- Available *only* to DFO members
- Deadline: last day of month except January and June (*The Lark Bunting* does not publish in February and July)

Send AdBIRDtisement materials to editor **Patrick O'Driscoll** at patodrisk@gmail.com.

Next deadline: Friday, May 31, 2024



**A community of birders,
learning and acting together
for avian wildlife**

Denver Field Ornithologists is an all-volunteer organization that conducts hundreds of free birdwatching field trips throughout the year and welcomes participation and membership by all. DFO promotes enjoyment of nature, the study of birds, and protection of them and their habitats in greater Denver and beyond.

In addition to field trips, evening programs and birding workshops, DFO conducts community science in the field, including the spring Hawk Watch raptor migration count on Dinosaur Ridge.

DFO awards grants annually for bird-related research, education and conservation projects in Colorado. For more information, visit the [Research, Education & Conservation Grants](#) page on the DFO website.

DFO is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and financial contributions to DFO's three giving funds are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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To reach DFO officers,
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committee chairs,
and other position holders
directly, please contact them
individually via the
[DFO Leadership Page](#).



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Lemons to lemonade? If things go sour, DFO resolves to squeeze out the fun

Sharon Tinianow

By its nature, birding is fun, and birding's benefits to us individually are many. When we record what we see and hear via eBird, our forays into the field produce data that scientists use to monitor bird populations and identify species trends that lead to conservation action. What a great collaboration: Something we do for leisure-time fun can end up benefiting the very birds we enjoy finding and recording.

At the same time, the more we learn about birds, the more we encounter the really bad things that threaten them: habitat loss, climate change and window strikes, to name just three of many. In response, we can each resolve to change old behaviors or adopt new ones in our personal lives. We can get involved enough to help preserve birds and their habitats.

I find that same duality of “bad news, good news” and creative problem solving in many aspects of our own organization. When COVID-19 struck four years ago, Denver Field Ornithologists had to shut down field trips and in person program gatherings for a time. Learning how to produce Zoom webinars enabled us to continue learning about birds and birding, even while we couldn't gather in person. The DFO Board developed protocols that allowed us to restart the field trips program as soon as we did.

What seemed like a short-term solution to a pandemic roadblock ended up becoming the new normal for DFO. Now, club programs on the Zoom platform allow more local people to attend. And they enable us to connect with presenters (and with more remote friends and members, too) from well beyond our immediate area. Silver lining? For sure.

Another downside, of course, is that we still miss the social aspect that DFO monthly gatherings had pre-pandemic. A small group of members has been investigating what it would take to start meeting in person again and still get the high quality videos that result from a Zoom webinar. The technology hurdle is a high one, though, and we are still searching for an affordable meeting location that will allow us both to meet in person and to either connect via Zoom or videotape the program for others to view later.

I would also like to pursue another social alternative. What if we were to continue our monthly programs via Zoom, but also to host a few in-person events, mainly social, during the year? We could

empower a team to brainstorm ideas for such get-togethers — call it DFO's “FUN-raising Committee” — for birding-related fun! If you are interested, email me at the address below.

In addition, as your newly re-elected president, I am starting a one-on-one listening campaign to learn what matters most to you about DFO. I'm calling it “100 Cups of Coffee.” I invite you to meet with me over your beverage of choice, either in person or via Zoom, to share your ideas about DFO, both what works and what you think should change.

This needn't take more time than to drink a cup of coffee together — a meet-up, not a meeting. Let's talk DFO over a cuppa Joe! If you're interested, contact me at sharontinianow@gmail.com. I hope to hear from you soon.

— Sharon



DFO members at 2023 volunteer recognition gathering
Patrick O'Driscoll

DFO President **Sharon Tinianow**, who joined the club in 2016, was previously vice president (2021-23) and is a former editor of *The Lark Bunting*. She began birding in an ornithology class in college, and she retired as assistant director of CU Boulder's Museum of Natural History.



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

PLEASE READ: The future of your DFO newsletter may depend on it

Patrick O'Driscoll

For more than 70 years, *The Lark Bunting* newsletter and its predecessor, *Colorado Bird Notes* (the club was the Colorado Bird Club until 1964), have reported regularly to the Denver Field Ornithologists membership about the goings-on of our club. I have a question for you, its readers: Does this newsletter still serve a purpose or need? Does it matter to you as members?

Before you answer — and I hope you will; more about that below — a bit of history first. Back in the 1960s, DFO's newsletter was just a typewritten calendar of field trips, of the rosters and bird checklists from those trips, and of upcoming events. In the ensuing decades, more content would follow: reviews of evening programs, feature articles about birds, birders and birding, galleries of bird photos, a monthly message from the club president, announcements and other news of our organization.

But seven decades after first snail-mailing mimeographed bulletins to members, this newsletter has long since dropped the tasks for which it was created. Field trip checklists are now published instantly on eBird. Field trip registration and detailed trip descriptions went online some years after the DFO website was created two decades ago. And as for any pressing, urgent or more timely announcements? That's what blast emails, social media and pre-program reminders on Zoom webinars are for.

Lacking the month-to-month role it was created for, has DFO's newsletter outlived its need and purpose?

Even though *The Lark Bunting* went digital years ago, its dated 20th-century, print magazine-style format still remains. For all the colorful photos and topical articles, the PDF you are reading now is — in layout, design and function — an unchanged relic of the 20th century, almost 25 years into the 21st. It was designed to be read page by page, forward or backward. Today, you leaf through it on-screen just like the paper publication that readers once held in their hands.

As a practical matter, most of us now get our information differently. Whether it's vital news about home community, state, nation and the world, or family gossip, school and church bulletins, career field, sports team, hobby or club news — we tap multiple interactive platforms and sources: websites, text, email, online video, podcast, phone, satellite, cable, social media. Yes, “legacy” printed-paper publications and broadcast TV and radio networks/stations are still in the mix, but nowhere near as widely as when *The Lark Bunting* was invented.

Three months ago, I wrote in this space that we would soon begin “brainstorming a new format and role for *The Lark Bunting*,” to reimagine and redesign it for this century, not the last one.

Continued on page 7



Top to bottom:

1953, 1988, 2019, 2024 *The Lark Bunting*

I suggested it might become the kind of email-based newsletter that many other organizations, both public and private, send their members: Full of clickable links, short headlines, pithy blurbs and nice photos, but streamlined for here and now.

What do YOU think? Would a periodical email newsletter serve better? Would you prefer instead for DFO just to tell you whatever club news you need to know whenever you need to know it? Would you read *Lark Bunting* articles in an email if you don't read them now? DO you read them now? Do you skim the headlines, glance at the pictures, and move on? Or do you not bother?

By summer, DFO's Communications & Outreach Committee plans to send each of you a short survey about our newsletter and your relationship with it. Whether you read *The Lark Bunting* regularly, glance at it occasionally, or don't look at all, we value your opinion. Honest answers are vital to help direct our next steps. If the newsletter doesn't matter to you, tell us why. If you love it, tell us how. If you're somewhere in between, tell us what works and what doesn't, or what you'd change.

The Lark Bunting is yours, not ours. But unless you indicate that having a newsletter in whatever form matters to you, we might dispense with revamping this one, pull the plug, and instead change how DFO communicates with members to more immediate, on-demand outreach. That is, only when we need to tell you — or when you want or need to know.

Look for our survey soon. If you have comments or ideas you'd like to share now, drop me a note at patodrisk@gmail.com or call me at 303-885-6955. We need and hope to hear from you. Thanks!

SUPPORT DFO

King Soopers shopper? Help DFO with grocer's Community Reward\$

Patrick O'Driscoll

If you shop regularly — or at all — at King Soopers, you can help earn donations to Denver Field Ornithologists by enrolling in the grocery chain's Community Rewards program.

DFO has registered as a community organization with King Soopers, which means the company will contribute quarterly based on the spending of customers who use their King Soopers Shopper's Cards after linking them to DFO on the company's [Community Rewards](https://www.kingsoopers.com) website.

Once you register for DFO, all you have to do is scan your Sooper Card at checkout and a portion of your purchase amount will go to DFO. If you don't have a Sooper Card account, visit <https://www.kingsoopers.com>, select Sign In, then Create Account.

Like many merchants, King Soopers issues "loyalty cards" to enable customers to use them for digital coupons, in-store discounts and, in this case, as a channel for company charitable contributions to the organization of the customer's choice. The donations are based on customer participation in the program. But they are a contribution by King Soopers at no added cost to shoppers who participate.

King Soopers says the program "makes fundraising easy by donating to local organizations based on the shopping you do every day . . . The more your supporters shop with us, the more money your organization will earn." King Soopers donates based on percentage of spending by organization members and friends at its stores. As Colorado's largest grocery retailer, the Kroeger Family of Companies operates about 120 King Soopers stores in the state.

In the first quarter of 2024, DFO's Community Rewards account with King Soopers totaled more than \$120 in donation funds based on the participation of just 21 households. With the regular patronage of many more participating shoppers from the ranks of DFO and its friends, that figure could increase substantially every time King Soopers delivers its quarterly donations.



DFO News Notes

Patrick O'Driscoll

*Got blurbs on birds? Share with **DFO News Notes**: Colorado birding newsbits, eBird milestones, tales from the trail, birding life (and life birds!), etc. Email your items, photos, links and anything else to patodrisk@gmail.com.*

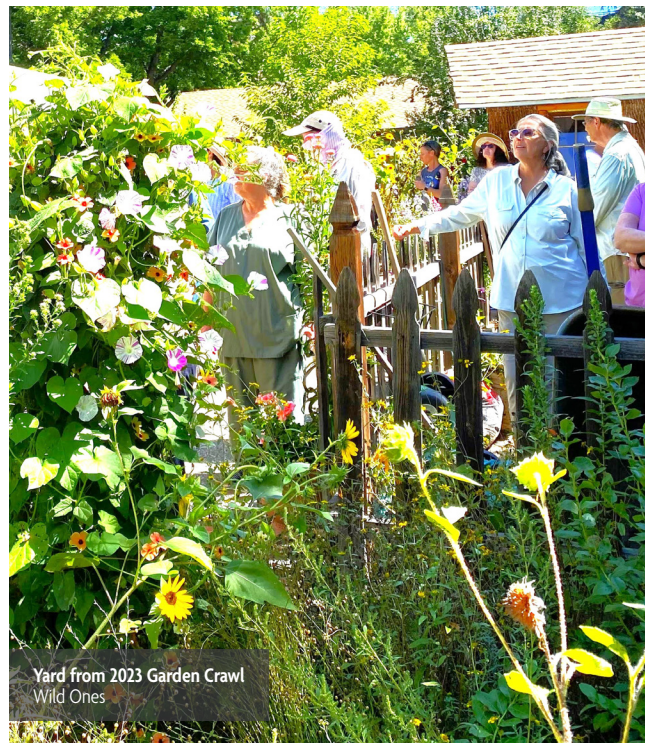
JOIN DFO ON NATIVE PLANT GARDEN "CRAWL" MAY 26



DFO and [Wild Ones Front Range](#), which promotes native plant landscaping, are collaborating for a Denver Garden Crawl the morning of May 26. Registered participants in this free event (8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.) will move

as a group through four residential gardens, all in transition from conventional landscaping to native plantscapes. If you've been thinking about incorporating native Colorado wildflowers, grasses and other plantings into your yard, this is a great chance to see what your garden can look like in early summer. You can also ask questions about how each homeowner is converting the yard. Spaces are limited, so visit the [Wild Ones website and register](#) today. Wild Ones has organized the tour, and DFO is a promotional partner. Our club president, **Sharon Tinianow**, will be at one of the gardens to talk about the importance of native plants to the bird species that visit our Front Range yards.

This partnership follows DFO's informative February program, "Gardening on the Wild Side," by **Jim Tolstrup** of [High Plains Environmental Center](#) in Loveland. The Zoom video from Tolstrup's presentation is a great introduction to native plants in the landscape and can be viewed on the [Past Programs](#) page of the DFO website. Plans are also underway for a program in the hummingbird-friendly home garden of DFO Board member **Tina Jones** later this summer.



DFO RE-ELECTS OFFICERS, ADDS TO BOARD

After two weeks of online voting for Denver Field Ornithologists' leadership positions, all candidates on the ballot were elected. They include three returning officers and one returning board member, in addition to three new board candidates. Re-elected president for a second one-year term was **Sharon Tinianow**, a former DFO vice president and past editor of DFO's newsletter. Also re-elected to one-year terms were club secretary **Nate Bond** and treasurer **Kathy Holland**. Board member **Patrick O'Driscoll** was re-elected for a third time.

Newly elected board members, who serve three-year terms, include DFO immediate past president **Susan Blansett**, DFO Communications & Outreach chair **Mike Fernandez**, and **Phil Waltz**, DFO's new Volunteer coordinator. Eight other members of the DFO Board were not up for re-election. (About one-third of board seats come open for election each year to ensure continuity.)

Still vacant is the position of vice president, which came open about a month before the election. If you are interested in volunteering for this position, please contact **Mary Geder**, chair of the DFO Nominations Committee, at mfg5000@live.com.

Continued on page 9

eBird Submit Ex

< My Trip Reports

DFO April 2024 Field Trips

1 – 30 Apr 2024 (30 days) [Link-only](#)

Colorado, United States
Adams | Arapahoe | Denver | Douglas | Elbert | Jefferson | Lincoln | Logan | Morgan | Washington | Weld

Denver Field Ornithologists

[Share](#) [Edit](#)

Narrative
Owners and editors of a Trip Report may write a narrative.

158 Species Observed
+12 other taxa

123 Checklists

APRIL FIELD TRIPS REPORT: 23 OUTINGS, 11 COUNTIES

The start of spring migration in April was reflected in an uptick in DFO trips for the month. Eighteen DFO trip leaders led 23 outings, on which 158 species were reported. All told, 123 eBird checklists were submitted from 11 Colorado counties, an average of more than 5 checklists per trip. Check out the complete April field trip rundown on this eBird trip report: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/220875>. And get in on the action in May! Here's DFO's calendar of upcoming spring trips, free and open to all: <https://dfobirds.org/FieldTrips/UpcomingTrips.aspx>

BIRD BOMBS FOR JUNE: TROPICAL COLOR

Mark your calendar for the next **BIRD BOMBS: Tropical Color**, set for **Thursday, June 20** at 7 p.m. MDT via Zoom with DFO Field Trips chair **David Suddjian** talking about ID of tanagers, grosbeaks and buntings. While waiting for this next (and 27th) chapter in the BIRD BOMBS series, check out videos of the other 26 in DFO's [BIRD BOMBS library](#) on the DFO website.

CLICK TO REGISTER

CO-BIRDERS CROWDSOURCE STATE “YARDBIRD” LIST

It began as an online question the morning of March 11 from Boulder birder and “pretty obsessive yard lister” **Thomas Heinrich** to fellow readers of Colorado Field Ornithologists' Colorado Birds [[cobirds](#)] list-serv: With all the great bird sightings posted there, how many of the state's 520 official-record species have ever or also been reported from that place we assume would be least likely to host a rarity — our own yard? Answering with his own yard list, Heinrich also noted a few recent examples from around the state: “Yellow Grosbeak, Pyrrhuloxia, Streak-backed Oriole, Long-billed Thrasher, Costa's Hummingbird, Laurence's Goldfinch, and even Anhinga come to mind as rarities that have shown up in or been observed from yards.”

His “*Yard list questions: How many of CO's 520 species*” post was instant catnip. The email thread quickly filled with entertaining crowdsource answers from dozens of other birders listing favorites, rarities, and personal stories of Colorado yard birding. Heinrich began an Excel spreadsheet with their lists, and by the next morning, the combined tally was 234 species. Another day later, it was 323. Then birder-meteorologist **Bryan Guarente**, who regularly posts migratory bird weather predictions on [[cobirds](#)], offered to merge Heinrich's list with a shared [Google Sheets checklist](#) that everyone could access online.

Barely a month later, Heinrich's update on April 19 showed the list had reached the 400-species milestone (77% of bird species ever seen in the state), thanks to more than 100 contributors from 30 of Colorado's counties. The spreadsheet's three lists include yardbirds in taxonomical order (where new species are added), alphabetical order, and a “needs” list of state-record species not yet reported from a yard. Heinrich stresses that the database does not substitute for or supersede the official Colorado state bird list. Rather, it's a fun, communal effort that “highlights the incredible diversity of yard habitats in Colorado, our remarkable breadth of coverage of Colorado's avian species, and the value of birding in the ultimate of local patches, our yards.”

MONTHLY PROGRAMS

If you missed it: DFO's April program

The DFO website contains a video archive of our monthly fall, winter and spring lecture programs on the Zoom platform. If you could not “attend” our most recent program live, click the WATCH ONLINE link below to view the recording.



zoom

Thanks to DFO historian **Kris Haglund** for editing and posting videos of other past programs, which can be viewed on the DFO website's [Past Programs](#) page.

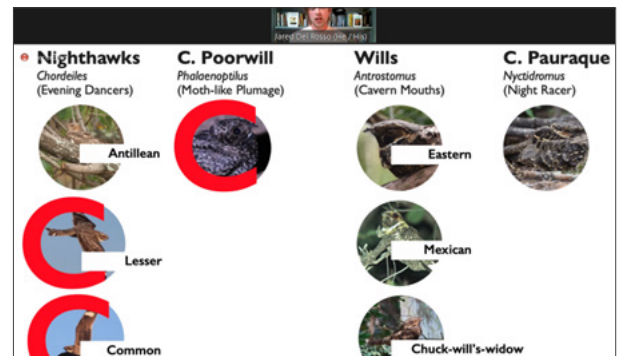
APRIL 29

The Lonesome Whip-poor-will: The Untold Story of America's Most Iconic Bird

Jared Del Rosso

WATCH ONLINE

In DFO's final evening program before our summer break, DFO member **Jared Del Rosso**, a University of Denver sociology professor, delves into his favorite bird family, the nightjars. He focuses first on the Eastern Whip-poor-will, a bird with an amazing natural, cultural and mythological history in the life and beliefs of America from colonial times. A self-taught scholar of the species, Del Rosso structures his engaging, hour-long talk to tell three rich stories: the many words we use for whip-poor-wills' camouflaged appearance and mystical behavior (including “goatsucker” for an ancient and false myth), their place in our natural and social lore from **Aristotle** to *Sleepy Hollow* to **Stephen King**, and climate and development threats that have led to their decline. Although the Eastern Whip-poor-will is just one of eight nightjar species in the US, Del Rosso notes that five have been documented in Colorado, including the familiar Common Poorwill and Common Nighthawk. His presentation includes fascinating video of largely ground-dwelling poorwills fending off threats, and astonishing audio of a whip-poor-will's loud, mechanical and jarring nighttime call. It's an other-worldly sound that gives the family its “nightjar” name. Click the link and prepare to be amazed.



Three of eight poorwill family species are in Colorado



Jared Del Rosso

Pedal pushers unite! DFO's first "Bike + Bird" field trip won't be last

Nate Bond

In mid-April, Denver Field Ornithologists staged its first-ever "Birding by Bike" field trip along the South Platte River. Early on April 13, five of us (myself, **Linda Purcell**, **Ryan Corda**, **Steven Smith** and **Eileen Warner**) met at Overland Park in south-central Denver to bird one of the river's best stretches of in-town habitat. Then we set off upstream on a 12-mile ride out and back on the South Platte River Trail.

We bookended our route with hour-long visits to two eBird hotspots — the Overland Park area on the north end and Arapahoe County's Centennial Park on the south — plus another hour at a hotspot in between, Denver's Grant Frontier Park. Along the way, we made several non-hotspot stops to view and checklist some of our 47 total species for the day. This birding *while* biking led us to fantastic and unexpected views of a Wilson's Snipe along the Englewood part of the trail and a very early Solitary Sandpiper at the Centennial Park end.

To me, that's one of the best features about birding by bike: When you see or hear something en route, whether a specific bird or promising habitat, you can pull over (safely, of course) to check it out. Birding on two wheels works well in Denver, a city with a growing number of bike lanes and various bike paths to explore.

Seeing under-birded places you may miss going past by car is what excites me. Which also reminds me: Having a kickstand on your bike is especially helpful. Stopping frequently for birds is so much easier when not having to balance your bike while looking.

Why bird by bike to begin with? It's a great way to have an immersive birding experience — feeling you're surrounded by bird habitat as you go, and leaving the car behind. You're birding in a "greener" way, not adding to the carbon footprint by burning fossil fuel to get from place to place. In our case, three out of the five rode their bikes to the starting point and home again afterwards, an even better carbon savings.



It's likely we'll have more DFO "Birding by Bike" trips in the future. If you want to participate, have questions, or want to share ideas for future bird + bike trips, contact me at nnbond22@gmail.com.

*Field trip leader **Nate Bond** is secretary of DFO. He joined the club in 2021, a year after taking up birding during the Covid-19 epidemic. A high school chemistry teacher, Nate lives in Denver.*

Nate Bond, foreground, and participants of DFO's first bicycling + birding field trip
Nate Bond

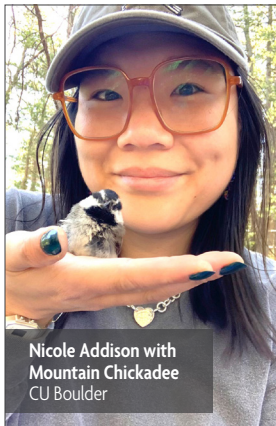
DFO grant fund awardees for 2024: Shrikes, chickadees, bird rehab and more

Jill Boice

Thanks to the generosity of Denver Field Ornithologists members and other donors, six grant applicants are receiving a combined \$9,888 in financial aid this year from DFO's [Research, Conservation & Education Fund](#). The winning endeavors were chosen from 11 very interesting applications reviewed by the DFO Grants Committee and approved in February by the DFO Board of Directors.

This marks the sixth consecutive year that our club has granted a record dollar amount to research, education, interpretation and support projects in Colorado and about its avian inhabitants. The committee evaluated the grant winners based on how well their projects match DFO's goal to "encourage the study, appreciation and preservation both of birds and their habitats."

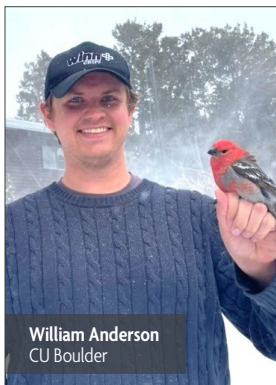
Here are summaries of the grantees' projects by title, applicant, and dollar amount. Each is expected to report back to DFO and its membership next year about the status of the work.



"Investigating Anti-predator Defenses in Chickadees Along the Rocky Mountain Front Range"

Nicole Addison, University of Colorado Boulder / \$2,000

Addison's research seeks to document real-time predations on Black-capped Chickadees (*Poecile atricapillus*) and Mountain Chickadees (*Poecile gambeli*) at different elevations on Colorado's Front Range. In particular, she will study when individual birds are trapped inside a nesting cavity by an intruder. Chickadee defense responses include hissing, wing-slapping and protruding their heads. She plans to install about 13 movable video cameras in existing nest boxes of the university's continuing Boulder Chickadee Study. The research aims to evaluate predator-prey interactions and better understand how predators influence bird behavior. Some of the nest-camera videos will even be streamed online for community viewing. Yes, DFO members can follow directly in the field a project that their grant dollars support.



"Comprehensive Transect Sampling of the North American House Wren Hybrid Zone"

William Anderson, University of Colorado Boulder / \$1,850

Previous work by Anderson and colleagues examined the genetic differentiation of two subspecies of House Wren common in the US: *Troglodytes aedon aedon* in the East and *Troglodytes aedon parkmanii* in the West. They found both subspecies present in Colorado, indicating that the hybrid zone between the two is significantly farther west than previously thought. This project is sampling wrens along Colorado's Front Range to develop a more complete understanding of the contact zone and hybridization between these subspecies. "The potential results have much to teach us about avian hybrid zones, species boundaries and genetic divergence," Colorado bird sound expert **Nathan Pieplow** wrote in a letter of recommendation for this project.

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“Genoscape and Migratory Connectivity of the Loggerhead Shrike”

Holden Fox, *Colorado State University* / \$2,000

Fox is conducting a comprehensive genetic analysis of migratory patterns in the Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*), a grassland species experiencing significant range-wide population declines. His project goal is to create a map of genetic variation to be used in targeted and region-specific management and conservation. Shrikes have intricate and varied migration patterns. Some are fully migratory, others are partially migratory, and still others remain year-round residents. Fox plans to sample birds in Colorado, Nevada, Oregon and Washington and use some samples from the museum collection at CSU.



“Purchase of Species-specific Foods and Medical Supplies”

Matthew Celesta, *Greenwood Wildlife Rehabilitation Center*, Boulder / \$2,000

This 41-year-old organization near Longmont, CO takes in injured and ill birds from along the Front Range. In that time, it has cared for more than 200 different avian species. This grant is paying for highly specialized medical supplies and special foods that help center caretakers feed and nurse their bird patients. “Having additional funding allows us to offer each patient the most comprehensive care we can provide,” Celesta wrote.



“Updated Signage”

Erin La Count, *Friends of Dinosaur Ridge*, Morrison, CO / \$1,052

This nonprofit manages the fossils and natural resources in and around Dinosaur Ridge, the famed hogback geological formation on the edge of the Front Range foothills in Jefferson County. In their long-standing relationship with Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch (now a DFO community science project with spring raptor counting from a ridgetop observation post), Friends plans to replace and update older interpretive signs about Hawk Watch for visitors to the ridge’s east side main visitor center and west side Discovery Center.



“Presentations About Wildlife in Jefferson County Schools”

Devin Jaffe, *Nature's Educators*, Florence, CO / \$986

Nature's Educators keeps and cares for non-releasable and captive-bred birds and other wildlife for use in educational programs and public forums throughout Colorado. Grant funding will support raptor programs in Jefferson County schools and coordinate activities with DFO's Hawk Watch on Dinosaur Ridge. Nature's Educators has presented at DFO functions and has a longstanding relationship with DFO.

Jill Boice, who joined DFO in 2001, chairs the club's Grants Committee and leads occasional slow field trips. She is also a volunteer raptor monitor at Cherry Creek State Park



FIELD TRIPS IN FOCUS

April DFO trips *In Focus*

With spring migration underway in April 2024, DFO led 23 field trips. Of those, participants took and shared pictures of “birders birding” on 11 of them. If you’re on a DFO trip in May, please take a few shots of your fellow birders and send us the best: hiking the trail, taking a lunch break, all eyes on a distant bird, or just a candid moment. We’ll run one from each trip in the next issue of *The Lark Bunting*, due out by the end of the first week in June or thereabouts.

Send your .JPG or .PNG photo files, with date/location of your DFO trip and any individual IDs (if needed), to editor **Patrick O’Driscoll** at patodrisk@gmail.com. Deadline is the last day of the month — **Friday, May 31**. And don’t forget: photos of field trip *people*, please, not birds. Thanks!

APRIL 3

Southwestern Metro Area

(Jefferson County)

Leader

David Suddjian

Participants

Gigi Zarzuela, Diane Sanelli, Tim Redmond, Mike Ley, Scott Hammel, Katherine Peterson, Courtney Rella

Field trippers pause at Mann Reservoir in South Valley Park on April 3 trip in SW metro area
(David Suddjian)



APRIL 5

Colorado Eastern Prairie

(Elbert, Lincoln)

Leader

David Suddjian

Participants

Ryan Corda, Melissa Wetzig, Kenneth Stuckey, Courtney Rella, Luke and Sara Jaramillo, Linda Cunico, Gary Witt, Roger Spaulding, Judy McKeon, Lorna Thomas

Eastern prairie field trip April 5 birded country around the tiny town of Karval
(David Suddjian)

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APRIL 8

Northeastern Colorado (Weld, Morgan, Washington, Logan)

Leader

David Suddjian and Diane Roberts

Participants

Bonnie Prado, Debra and David Strike,
Melissa Wetzig, Luke and Sara Jaramillo, Robert
and Jennifer Tonge, Andrea Duran, Scott Hammel

Scoping for prairie chickens April 8 in
Washington County on NE Colorado field trip
(David Suddjian)

APRIL 13

Dinosaur Ridge (Jefferson)

Leader

Ajit Antony

Participants

Jeff Dawson, Laura Koepnick,
Amy Manning, Derek Freed, Liza Antony,
Eileen Holcomb, Deb Piranian

Looking for raptors on April 13 field trip atop
Dinosaur Ridge in Jefferson County
(Eileen Holcomb)



APRIL 13

South Platte Birding + Biking (Denver, Arapahoe)

Leader

Nate Bond

Participants

Ryan Corda, Linda Purcell, Stephen Smith, Eileen Warner

Participants in DFO's first bicycling + birding field trip
April 13 along South Platte River in Denver
(Nate Bond)



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APRIL 14
Roxborough Area
(Douglas, Jefferson)

Leader
David Suddjian

Participants
Alice Tariot, Virginia Gulakowski,
Shay Lyons, John Batt, Michelle Verostko,
Gigi Zarzuela, Linda Klumpers

Field trippers scoping South Platte Canyon Reservoir
April 14 on Roxborough area field trip
(Gigi Zarzuela)



APRIL 21
Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR
(Adams)

Leader
Jason Bidgood

Participants
Kathy Cisar, Phil Waltz, Virginia Gulakowski,
Lynn Slaga, Joe Chen, Ryan Corda,
Linda Klumpers, Colleen Nunn

Bundled up and scanning Lake Ladora at Rocky Mountain
Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge on April 21 field trip
(Jason B. Bidgood)



APRIL 22
Cherry Creek SP
(Arapahoe)

Leader
Mary Keithler

Participants
Rachael Falgout, Patricia Diluzio, Cynthia Breidenbach,
Amy Manning, Kris Saucke, Patricia Cullen, Julia Gwinn,
Lorna Thomas, Joe Chen

Mary Keithler, front right, leads April 22 field trip
at Cherry Creek State Park
(Joe Chen)



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APRIL 25

Red Rocks Park (Jefferson)

Leader

Nate Bond

Participants

Bridget Sanders, Joe Chen, Yvonne Berg,
Sharon Tinianow, Michelle Verostko, Becky Russell

Climbing trail amid sandstone giants on April 25
DFO field trip in Red Rocks Park
(Joe Chen)

APRIL 28

Tamarack Ranch SWA (Logan)

Leaders

Carly Crow and Ben Jacques

Participants

Courtney Rella, Julie Hendricksen, Archer Silverman,
Timothy Condon, Kristin Tallis, Ryan Corda, Michelle Trotter,
Lynn Dierker, Adriana Jacobi, Brad Tallis

Carly Crow demonstrates bird radio-tracking during
DFO trip April 27 to Tamarack Ranch State Wildlife Area
(Courtney Rella)



APRIL 29

Ponderosa Preserve (Aurora)

Leader

David Suddjian

Participants

Cynthia Cestkowski, Ryan Corda, Rachael Falgout,
Michelle Trotter, Oliver Urdiales, Joe Chen, Luke Jaramillo,
Lori Morton, Deborah Hebblewhite

Birding amidst the ponderosas of Ponderosa Preserve
in Aurora on April 29 field trip
(David Suddjian)



LAST WORD, LAST LOOK

Welcome, spring . . . It IS spring now, isn't it?

Photos by James Esten



White-crowned Sparrows in spring snow



Mountain Bluebird on a frosted perch

Patrick O'Driscoll

As I write this, scores of our birding friends and acquaintances are ranging all over southeastern Colorado in pursuit of spring migrants and other avian delights during this year's Colorado Field Ornithologists convention in Lamar.

But as our state hits its traditional peak weeks of spring migration, I wonder: Is it just me, or has this been an uncommonly unsettled spring of chilly, blustery weather?

I asked newsletter photo editor **Jim Esten** if he'd go out and gather up a gallery of birds in springtime movement for this month's "Last Word, Last Look" feature — some seasonal scenes to go with that rare but regular spring visitor on our cover, the Prothonotary Warbler.

When the nice shots that Jim brought back included a several with snow in them, I did a doubletake, then nodded in recognition. Spring may be here, but sometimes it wears a mantle of white, even if it's gone within a day, two tops.

Snow or no snow, here's to a great last few weeks of spring migration. Welcome, warblers, tanagers, shorebirds, sparrows, our namesake Lark Buntings and all the rest!

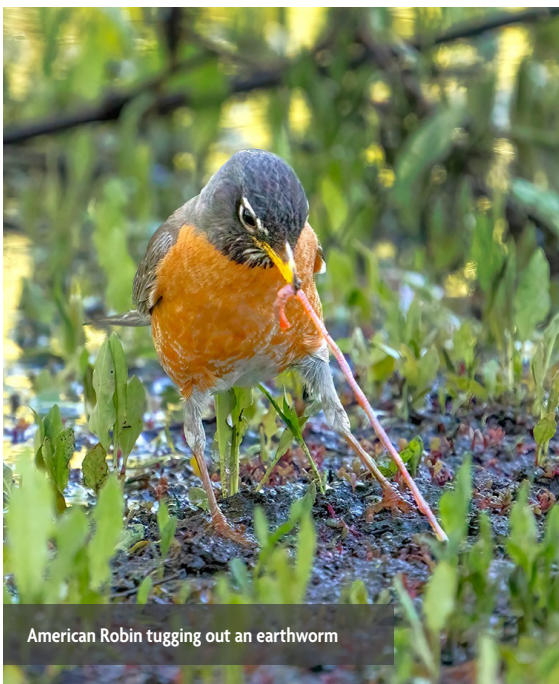


Great Blue Heron trio at Chatfield SP

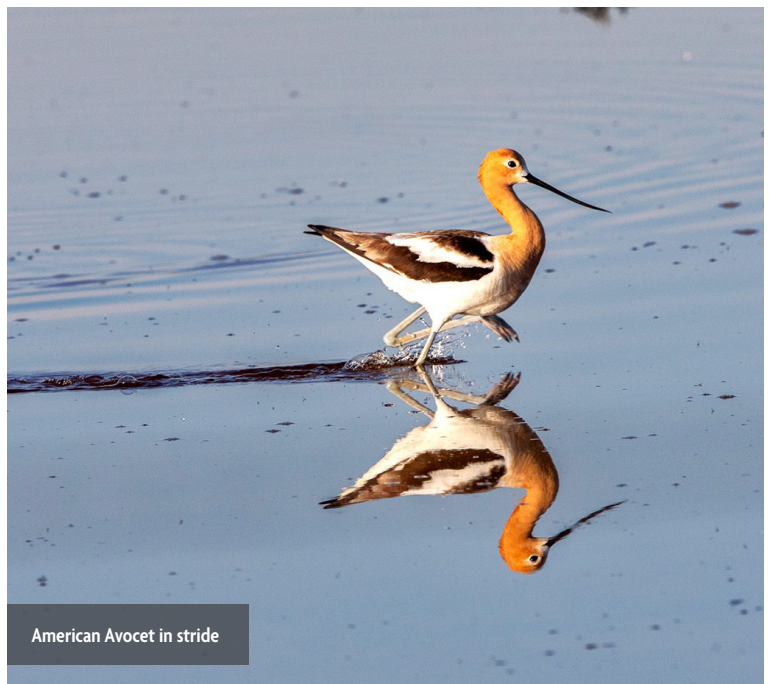
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Yellow variant House Finch



American Robin tugging out an earthworm



American Avocet in stride



A solitary American White Pelican

Until the next Lark Bunting . . .
**HAPPY END-OF-SPRING
BIRDING!**



Top: Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle)
Bottom: Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's)