



# THE LARK BUNTING

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE DENVER FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS

VOLUME 60 | ISSUE 07-08 | JULY-AUGUST 2024

DFOBIRDS.ORG

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**dfo**  
DENVER FIELD  
ORNITHOLOGISTS



American Kestrels  
Dave Prentice  
Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR  
Adams County



A DFO member since 2018, **Dave Prentice** has been a birder/photographer for the past 10 years.

A Colorado native, he lives in Denver and is retired from the product design field.

## ON THE COVER

# American Kestrel: Our smallest, and closest, falcon

**Patrick O'Driscoll**

We all love the American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), don't we? What's not to like about a colorful, even gregarious species that is, as Cornell's *Birds of the World* notes, "the smallest, most numerous, and most widespread North American falcon"? Who hasn't been mesmerized at the sight of one hovering in midair over open ground, face to the breeze and laser-focused on insect, reptile or small rodent prey below?

And how about those snappy, distinctive outfits they're wearing on the cover of this month's newsletter? Same palette but different strokes — his blue-gray wings and rufous tail, her streaked breast and black-bars-over-rufous wings. DFO member **Dave Prentice** of Denver saw this mated pair in March near the visitor center in Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge while on a Tuesday Birders outing. (*When you're done here, flip to the newsletter's back page for another, au naturel view of this same pair.*)

Of the world's 13 kestrel species, it's the only one in our hemisphere (though there are 17 subspecies variations of American Kestrel from the tip of South America to Alaska). A creature of mostly open plains and grasslands, the American Kestrel seems attracted to the landscapes that humans have bent to our own needs, like farmland, parks, even our own yards. (It may have been little birds at my backyard feeder that brought a pair briefly into my yard and alley last year in the thick of urban east-central Denver.)

If you don't see them as often as you used to (that's been my experience), there are alarming studies of late that say North American has lost an estimated 2 million American Kestrels since 1970 — and that their numbers are dropping by 1.4% a year. A recent New Mexico study suggested the "steady and widespread downward trend" may portend a need to list the species under Endangered Species Act protection unless we act.

And yet, no one can quite place a finger on how and why kestrels may be declining, beyond the "usual suspects": habitat loss, less available prey, and the suspicion that climate change is at play. The species still merits a "Least Concern" rating from BirdLife International, principally for its widespread range — essentially the entire Western Hemisphere. Yet the wildlife action plans of more than 20 states flag American Kestrel as a species of concern.

Purely anecdotally, it's interesting to note that American Kestrels outnumbered every other raptor and bird of prey species this spring at DFO's own Hawk Watch observation post atop Dinosaur Ridge. Between March 1 and May 10, our team of counters and volunteers tallied 501 of the little falcons, well ahead of Red-tailed Hawk (463), Turkey Vulture (394) and Cooper's Hawk (231) among the half-dozen species whose tallies reached at least triple digits (100 or more).

Once known as Sparrow Hawk (hence its Latin scientific name *sparverius*, "sparrow-like"), it nests in cavities (often former homes of woodpeckers) but has adapted well to artificial nestboxes placed by humans eager to have the species close by. Who can blame us?

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**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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*The Lark Bunting* newsletter of Denver Field Ornithologists is published online monthly at [dfobirds.org](http://dfobirds.org) except for joint issues in July–August and February–March.

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## CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEWSLETTER

Submit original articles or story ideas to the editor at [patodrisk@gmail.com](mailto:patodrisk@gmail.com).

Send image-file photos of birds or bird outings to the photo editor at [jcesten@gmail.com](mailto: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.).

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Send AdBIRDtisement materials to editor **Patrick O'Driscoll** at [patodrisk@gmail.com](mailto:patodrisk@gmail.com).

**Next deadline: Sunday, July 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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committee chairs,  
and other position holders  
directly, please contact them  
individually via the  
[DFO Leadership Page](#).



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

# Books on birds: A DFO veteran's trove will soon be available to you

### Sharon Tinianow

In this age of so many online and portable, pocketable, smartphone birding guides and apps — eBird, Merlin, Sibley Birds, iBird, BirdsEye, iNaturalist, the list goes on — bird-related books printed on actual paper seem rather passé. That first set of field guides that started you on your birding adventure . . . those gifts of desk references, birder memoirs and coffee table photo volumes . . . all those birding pamphlets picked up on the road. Are they gathering dust on your avian bookshelf?

That was certainly so for **Barry Knapp**, a member of DFO for 40 years. After collecting and reading dozens of bird-related books over the years, Barry recently offered his collection to DFO. Sell them for the club cause, he suggested, so that his beloved volumes, some of them quite rare, might live on in the hands and hearts of other birders who will appreciate them.

"I was never a '5-star' birder, chasing every new North American record, or even every new Colorado record," Knapp wrote in a recent email. He never tried to master all the gull plumages, either. (Nor have I! Have you?) But he liked to read, and his collection of bird books includes some real gems.

And let's face it: While a digital field guide is certainly handier, paging through a bound book with beautiful bird images and interesting text is still a delightful way to spend some time.

Barry began acquiring his bird library before his move to Colorado in 1971. He became a compiler for the Christmas Bird Count in the late '70s and early '80s, and he came to know Boulder's birding community through those efforts. One of his Christmas count feeder watchers was **Pat Wheat**, and after her passing, Wheat's husband gave Barry her collection of bird books, and his library grew.

Since receiving Barry's gift, DFO has been working with a local author and publisher to assess the value of his collection of books, vinyl records of bird song, Audubon bird prints, and prints of scientific papers. It's a necessary first step in deciding how best to make them available to birders. Setting aside

the non-books for now, we sorted Barry's volumes into two stacks: Those readily obtainable from sellers of used books, and those rare or hard-to-find.

Those in our easy-to-obtain box will be made available, each for a nominal donation, at in-person DFO events in the coming months. We plan to make the rare/hard-to-find books available for sale on eBay **beginning June 15**. Readers of *The Lark Bunting* can see the list of books in advance at [this link on the DFO website](https://www.dfo.org/links/2024/06/15/eBay-sale/). The sale will continue until they're all sold. We will not promote the sale to those beyond the readers of this newsletter until July 15.

To participate, go to this page on the seller's eBay sales site ("thegreatbe65"): [https://www.ebay.com/sch/267/i.html?item=166829002759&\\_ssn=thegreatbe65](https://www.ebay.com/sch/267/i.html?item=166829002759&_ssn=thegreatbe65). If you have an eBay account or a Google account you can sign in with that. If you don't have either, you might want to create an eBay account so you will be ready to purchase when you reach the sale site.

Our eBay booklist includes 30 volumes, all but six of which are bird-related. Of special interest to Colorado birders is the seminal two-volume publication *Birds of Colorado* by 20th-century naturalists and friends of DFO **Alfred M. Bailey** and **Robert J. Neidrach** when they worked for the Denver Museum of Natural History (now Denver Museum of Nature & Science). Neidrach and his ornithology students were among our club's founders in the 1930s. Paging through these volumes with their full-color plates and black-and-white photos is a delight.

Other oversized titles include *Birds of America*, featuring the paintings of **Louis Agassiz Fuertes**, *Collins British Birds* illustrated with the paintings of **Terence Lambert**, and *The World of Birds*, magnificently illustrated by **Roger Tory Peterson**.

The collection also includes delightful smaller books, including *The Tanagers: Natural History, Distribution, and Identification*

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by **Morton L. Isler**, *A Guide to the Behavior of Common Birds* by **David W. Stokes**, and *Birds of the Mayas* by **Anne Labastille Bowes** and **Ramon Castillo Perez**, to name just three of many.

Among the few non-bird books are two excellent field guides to mushrooms and a copy of *The Chimpanzees of Gombe* by **Jane Goodall**, signed by the author herself.

If you appreciate books on birds, you should look at the full list for what calls out to you — either for your own collection or as a gift to another birder in your life. Feel free to [contact me directly](#) if you have a special interest in the bird song recordings, prints or scientific papers.

— **Sharon**

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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.

## 100 CUPS OF DFO

# Let's talk DFO: Meet me for a cuppa joe!

In last month's "From the President" column, I mentioned I'm starting a one-on-one listening campaign to learn what matters most to you about DFO. I call it "100 Cups of Coffee." It's an optimistic goal: If I could have as many as a hundred sit-downs with individual members, I'll have a pretty good idea of what our members care about, and their ideas about the direction of Denver Field Ornithologists.

Here's how it'll work. Contact me directly — now! Drop me an email at [sharontinianow@gmail.com](mailto:sharontinianow@gmail.com), and we'll set a time and place that work for you to share your thoughts, face-to-face, over a cup of coffee (or other beverage of your choice). We can do this either in person or via Zoom.

But we can't meet if you don't get in touch. Do so today! I can't wait to hear your ideas for our organization. Thanks for reaching out soon!

— **Sharon**





## FROM THE EDITOR

# We'll be right back: It's summer break . . . and coming in 2025, DFO's 90th birthday!

**Patrick O'Driscoll**

It's that time again. With the publication of this issue, our newsletter is on mid-year hiatus, *aka* summer break. With spring migration done, DFO takes our foot off the gas a little until the fall, when monthly programs return, as do all those southbound birds we'll be out looking for.

But here at *The Lark Bunting*, we'll keep the pedal to the floor. As I've noted in previous "From the Editor" messages, we're wading into an important task: Converting the dated, previous-century format of this newsletter to something that fits our 21st-century times. Watch your email inbox for a brief survey soon about DFO's newsletter: If and how you read it, what you like or hate about it, what YOU think this newsletter should be . . . or even IF it should be. PLEASE be frank and honest — but more, please TAKE the short survey when it arrives.

While I'm at it, there's something else we hope you'll weigh in on: DFO's celebration of our club's 90th birthday next year!

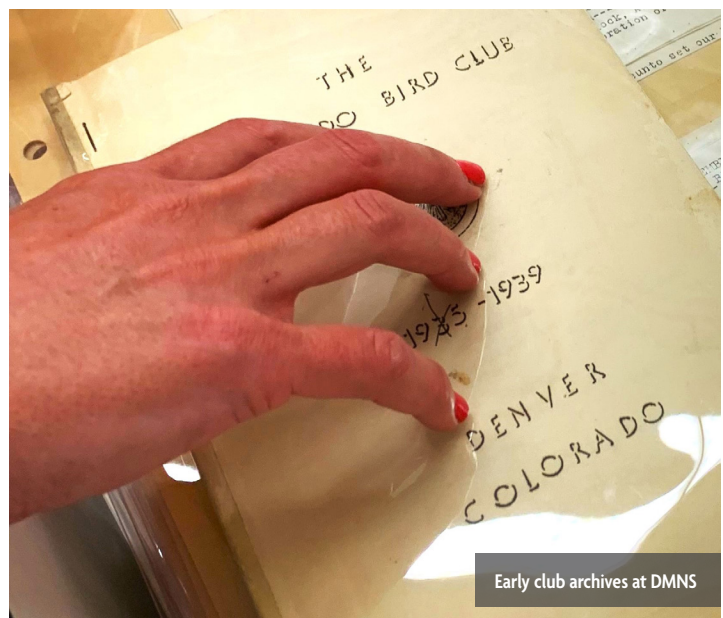
In the midst the Great Depression, DFO was founded as the Colorado Bird Club in 1935. Three decades later, club members and other Colorado birders decided to spin off a new birding organization with a statewide reach and role, and Colorado Field Ornithologists was born. At the same time, our field trip-oriented club changed its name to Denver Field Ornithologists.

We want to celebrate this milestone with as much looking back at DFO's colorful history as looking forward to our centennial in 2035 and beyond. To do that, we've already begun combing through DFO's archives, which includes boxes of documents, photos, scrapbooks and pamphlets under the professional care of the Denver Museum of Nature & Science's Archives department.

As we encounter old and sometimes forgotten names, dates and events, we want to ask now for members to share with us YOUR memories. What's more, if you have relatives who were in DFO earlier in our history, or know of people whose families or friends included long-ago DFO members, help us tell THEIR stories, too.

We'd love to interview those who are still with us about your memories of the club. For those who've passed on, perhaps you or the descendants of a past member might have photographs or even physical memorabilia — a vintage pair of binoculars, a well-worn birding hat — that we might photograph to include in our tribute to the club's past.

What'll that tribute look like? Perhaps a keepsake book? A special webpage tribute? We've just begun to explore the possibilities. What are your thoughts? Share your ideas as well as your DFO memories. Drop me an email at [patodrisk@gmail.com](mailto:patodrisk@gmail.com) or write to DFO president **Sharon Tinianow** at [sharontinianow@gmail.com](mailto:sharontinianow@gmail.com). In the meantime, happy summer birding, and thank you for continuing to read *The Lark Bunting*.



# 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](mailto:patodrisk@gmail.com).

## BIRD BOMBS EXPLODE WITH TROPICAL COLOR JUNE 20

Register [here](#) for **BIRD BOMBS: Tropical Color**, the next in DFO's popular series of bird ID miniwebinars. It's set for **June 20 at 7 p.m.** DFO Field Trips chair **David Suddjian** will explore identifying orioles, tanagers, buntings and grosbeaks of the Front Range / Denver metro region. Bright adult males of these species aren't so challenging to ID, but what about the females and the immature males?

You can view videos of more than two dozen past episodes in the DFO website's [BIRD BOMBS library](#). Check out the recent [Spring Into Warblers 2](#) with its focus on Colorado's nesting warblers. Other good episodes for June birding include [It's a Flycatcher](#) and [Prairie Sparrows](#).



## CHARLIE WALL'S "SPIRIT SOARED WHEN WATCHING HAWKS"

DFO member **Charlie Wall**, a Hawk Watch volunteer who died March 27 after falling ill at the Dinosaur Ridge observation post, is celebrated as a loving father, consummate soul mate, gardener, rockhound, foodie

(expert sourdough bread baker) and enthusiastic birder in a remembrance just published online by his family. As if those attributes weren't enough, Charlie also loved fishing, was a self-taught home brewmaster, restored a classic Pontiac GTO, and delighted in birding and Hawk Watch after joining DFO in 2021. As his obituary notes: "Charlie's spirit soared when watching hawks."

Wall, 69, who lived in Littleton with his wife, **Shelley**, is survived by two children and their families, four of his five siblings, and in-laws, nieces, nephews and cousins. In lieu of flowers, Charlie's family asks that donations may be made in his memory to DFO's Hawk Watch fund (<https://dfobirds.org/DFO/donate.aspx>) "or another organization of your choice. That would make Charlie smile." To read his full obituary on the DignityMemorial.com website, [click here](#).



## DFO FLIES FLAG AT MIGRATORY BIRD DAY EVENT

DFO was among various bird conservation organizations with public outreach tables at a [World Migratory Bird Day](#) event on Saturday, May 11 in Bear Creek Lake Park in Lakewood. Representing DFO was **Michael** and **Karen Fernandez**, our Communications & Outreach chair, who reported about three dozen park visitors stopped at our table to learn more about DFO at the 10 a.m.-2 p.m. event. DFO distributed "rack

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card” fliers about the club in addition to engaging kids and their parents in coloring activities and binoculars training. The park’s birds also played a big role. “We had a great show of local and migrating birds nearby and overhead during the event,” Fernandez said, “which helped generate enthusiasm for our mission.”



## GOT AN EAR FOR BIRDS? BIRD SURVEY NEEDS YOU NOW

The continent’s premier long-term bird monitoring program, the [North American Breeding Bird Survey](#)

(BBS), is now underway. But nearly three dozen vacant routes around Colorado need volunteer observers now. Many routes are in interesting parts of the state and some are near the Denver area. The national BBS’s [Vacant Routes](#) page displays routes by state, viewable on the online map, along with species recorded on the routes in previous years.

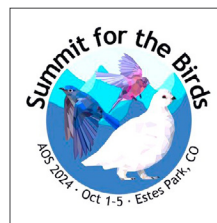
But the observation window is already open (May 27-July 7) and experienced birders with “significant field ID skills (especially by ear) and familiarity with the birds that live in the region” are encouraged to apply ASAP, says BBS state coordinator **David Suddjian** (who is also DFO’s Field Trips chair). He notes that BBS seeks a minimum 3-year commitment for surveyors. Participants “should be able to identify the species known to be along the route by sound,” Suddjian adds. “That is, you and not Merlin,” the bird sound ID smartphone app.

A BBS surveyor since 1992, Suddjian calls it “the best part of my birding year.” Suddjian, who says he is “happy to talk about what is needed and how to prepare with anyone who is interested,” can be reached at [dsuddjian@gmail.com](mailto:dsuddjian@gmail.com).

## WHIP-POOR-WILL PRESENTER’S FOLLOW-UP ON AUDUBON

On the heels of his April 29 DFO monthly program presentation on whip-poor-wills, DFO member **Jared Del Rosso** made the *Audubon Magazine* webpages in May with a related, “As the Whip-poor-will’s Chant Wanes, Our

Cultural Loss Grows.” It opens with **Henry David Thoreau** encountering multiple Eastern Whip-poor-wills on a moonlit evening outside Concord, MA in 1851. Del Rosso goes on to document and lament latter-day “extinctions of experience” for our broader culture as the once-common calls of whip-poor-wills recede with the advance of development and species decline. It closes with Del Rosso himself on a trip home to the woods of New York’s Hudson River Valley, searching to hear again the call-and-answer of the whip-poor-will song. [Click here](#) to read Jared’s essay.



## BIRD RENAMING UPDATE: TRYING TO GET PAST “HARMFUL”

The American Ornithological Society, which is launching a [six-species pilot project](#) in its effort to

replace the names of North American bird species named after people, will likely get an earful from vocal opponents this fall in Colorado. Not only did a popular petition drive against wholesale name changing originate here in our state, but a public forum on the controversial project also is scheduled at AOS’s annual meeting. Guess where? In Estes Park Oct. 1-5 at the AOS [Summit for the Birds](#).

The society’s November 2023 decision to replace “harmful” eponymous names rubbed a number of Colorado birders the wrong way. Led by Fort Collins birder **Rachel Kolokoff Hopper**, a Change.org petition drive has enlisted about 6,350 signatures opposing the society’s “one-sided decision” to purge eponymous (people) names from scores of bird species and replace them with names that highlight aspects of their appearance, behavior, habitat or location. The petition count is approaching three times as many signatures as another 2020 petition that set in motion the society leadership’s eventual decision to seek name changes for up to 150 species.

Meanwhile, the six pilot species up first for name changes include several familiar names: Inca Dove, Townsend’s Solitaire, Maui Parrotbill, Bachman’s Sparrow, Scott’s Oriole and Townsend’s Warbler.



Nic Korte  
Lee Gelatt Photography

## FALL PROGRAM PREVIEW

# No Boundaries for Wildlife: Saving Tropical Birds in Colorado

Nic Korte  
Monday, Aug. 26, 2024  
7 p.m. MDT

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)



## Patrick O'Driscoll

There's no missing the call to well-informed activism — especially where Mother Earth is concerned — in that familiar turn of phrase, “Think globally, act locally.”

Just now, longtime western Colorado wildlife conservationist **Nic Korte** suggests that North American birders try putting a Western Hemispheric twist to it: Think *tropically*, act locally.

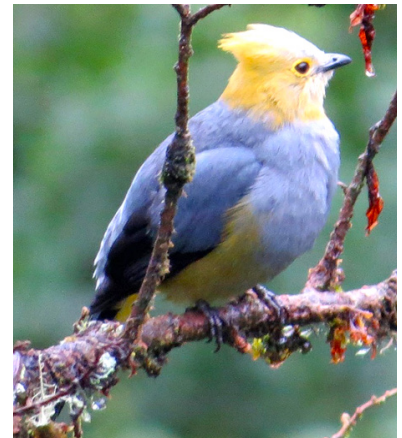
Korte says he'll call us to that in “*No Boundaries for Wildlife: Saving Tropical Birds in Colorado*,” his upcoming DFO evening program later this summer — **Monday, Aug. 26, at 7 p.m. MDT** via Zoom webinar.

“Local actions here affect birds in the tropics,” he explains. “Some of those birds spend part of their lives in Colorado. Avoiding palm oil in products you buy helps not just the birds whose year-round tropical habitat might be saved, but also birds that live part of the year here in North America.”

Indeed, this is the time when birds so familiar to us as spring migrants and summer nesters have returned north from their neotropical fall and winter haunts in southern Mexico, Central and South America: Tanagers. Orioles. Grosbeaks. Buntings. Flycatchers. Warblers. Not to mention every Swainson's Hawk on the planet.

Korte, a 40-year resident of Grand Junction, has been the conservation chair of Grand Valley Audubon Society for more than two decades and a board member for nearly three. And he leads the society's Western Screech-Owl observation project, with several hundred Grand Valley residents engaged in a community science effort with national status.

But Korte has also made 30-plus trips to the tropics. “I find the diversity of everything fascinating. There's so much to see, so many types of plants, butterflies, etc.” He has even written a book, *Ten Jungle Days* (Outskirts Press), that combines human and natural history, personal memoir and nature discovery travel in the Costa Rican rainforest. His encounters there have included exotic amphibians and anteaters, climbing rats, spider monkeys and “the delightful siren call of extraordinary birds.”



Top:  
Red-headed Barbet in Costa Rica  
Nic Korte

Bottom:  
Long-tailed Silky-Flycatcher in Costa Rica  
Nic Korte

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The motivation behind his DFO talk “is not to have people ‘know’ about the issues, but to inspire them to do something,” Korte says. He thinks the fact that many of “our” birds spend more of their lives in the neotropics gives us a greater stake in their welfare there.

Growing up in the farmlands of rural southern Illinois, “I was always interested in birds,” Korte says, “but if you weren’t harvesting something, whatever you were doing was considered wasteful. The only way to express outdoor interest then was hunting and fishing.”

Indoors, the family’s 1956 edition of the *World Book Encyclopedia* revealed Nic’s true interest. “The ‘B’ volume,” he says, “has several very worn pages — the pages on birds. I wore them out looking at them.”

He grew up to become a geochemist. But after graduate school, he worked at the University of Arizona in Tucson, “where I actually encountered birders” for the first time — and found a life’s hobby.

In 2015, Korte received Bird Conservancy of the Rockies’ Richard G. Levad Award for “distinguished service to the ornithological community.” In 2019, National Audubon awarded him its William Dutcher Award for “leadership in the birding community of Western Colorado.” Follow his blog at [Birds and More – Birding and conservation in Western Colorado](#).

## V IS FOR VOLUNTEER

# Volunteer opportunities: Come help DFO serve our members

Have you ever wondered who and what make DFO run?

The answer is simple, and you probably already know it: People like YOU do. Denver Field Ornithologists functions thanks to volunteers who step forward to ask: How can I help? We’ve got a few answers below, and we plan to provide more suggestions in every newsletter from now on.

As an all-volunteer organization, DFO exists only because people like you step up to offer your knowledge, experience and enthusiasm. Whether it’s a few hours a month or lending a hand now and then, your time and energy are priceless assets.

At the moment, here are some priority needs and the ways you can most help. Look them over and contact DFO Volunteer Coordinator **Phil Waltz** at [philipwaltzDFO@gmail.com](mailto:philipwaltzDFO@gmail.com) for more details. Come join us, won’t you?

### **Social Media Poster (Communications & Outreach Committee)**

As lead volunteer for just-in-time postings to DFO’s Facebook, Instagram and other social media platforms, your role could be intermittent, on an as-needed basis. We also seek expertise in helping DFO develop a strategic plan for our social media communications

### **Assistant Programs Manager**

Working with DFO Programs Manager **Bill Turner**, this volunteer helps develop and arrange DFO’s monthly evening programs, and helps write and post notices, articles and links promoting these Zoom-based presentations on social media and in DFO’s newsletter, *The Lark Bunting*

### **Technical Communications Adviser**

DFO needs a member with “techie” background, and knowledge and interest in online streaming and event recording (audio-video) to help present programs and conduct meetings and webinars

### **Newsletter Assistant**

You’ll help compile and write short items and “blurbs” about DFO events, programs, club news and people for *The Lark Bunting*, our monthly (10 times a year) newsletter. Basic writing ability is a plus, but your interest and ideas about what to write and show are a double-plus



Ted Floyd  
© Abby Santurbane Photography

## FALL PROGRAM PREVIEW

# The State of Birding, Volume 2024.9

Ted Floyd  
Monday, Sept. 23, 2024  
7 p.m. MDT

Look for registration information for this Zoom presentation in the next issue of *The Lark Bunting*

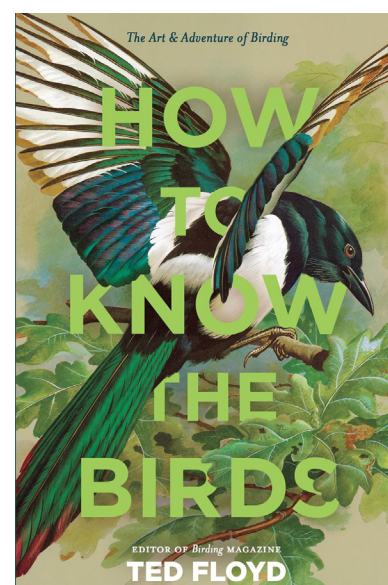
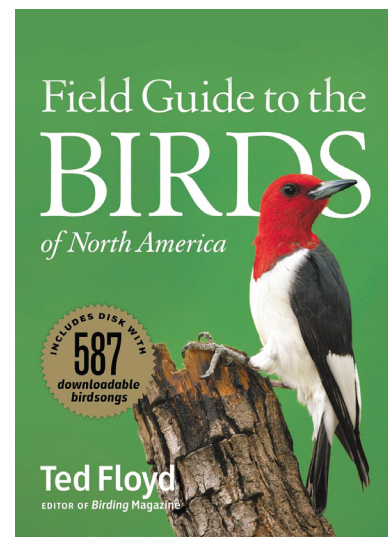
The world of birding is changing — and changing fast. eBird and the Merlin Bird ID app continue to massively alter the way we bird. Digital resources like the Cornell Lab's [Macaulay Library](#) deliver terabytes of amazing bird media to the whole world. Top-line optics maker Swarovski has launched a “[smart](#)” [binocular](#) that actually works. (“AI-supported . . . digital intelligence . . . identification function” and more, for only \$4,799!)

Meanwhile, the [American Ornithological Society](#) has begun the process of renaming some of the most familiar birds in Colorado and beyond, with no small amount of controversy swirling, if not raging, around it. (Guess where the AOS’s “Summit for the Birds” annual meeting is this fall? Mm-hmm: [Estes Park, CO, Oct 1-5!](#))

Amidst all this and more, our “man on the inside” — distinguished Colorado birdsoothsayer, guidebook author and aviajournalist **Ted Floyd** — will provide us with all the latest on new knowledge, new technologies, new names, and, ultimately, new ways of engaging and appreciating the world around us . . . at least as of September 2024.

Hence, the title of his latest DFO monthly evening program, “*The State of Birding, Volume 2024.9*,” on **Monday, Sept. 23 at 7 p.m. MDT** via Zoom. And yes: Ted says you can expect it to all change again pretty soon thereafter.

Floyd, who last spoke to DFO almost exactly two years to the day before this presentation (his Sept. 26, 2022 topic was “[Letting Go: Birding and Nature Study in the Age of Zoomers and Alphas](#)”), is an engaging and energetic speaker. Ted is also the longtime editor of *Birding* magazine, the award-winning flagship publication of the American Birding Association. He has written five bird books — including the *Smithsonian Field Guide to the Birds of North America* (HarperCollins, 2008) and *How to Know the Birds* (National Geographic, 2019) — and he has three more on the way. He has also written more than 200 popular articles, technical papers, and book chapters on birds and nature. He is a frequent speaker at bird festivals, bird club meetings, and ornithological conferences.



Continued on page 13

Floyd is especially interested in analyzing bird vocalizations, applying new media and emerging technologies toward the appreciation of nature, and interpreting birds and nature for children and beginners (he regularly leads popular field trips in and around Boulder County, where he and his family live in Lafayette). Ted has served on the boards of Western Field Ornithologists and Colorado Field Ornithologists, and he remains heavily involved in both organizations. He holds a Ph.D. in ecology from Penn State University and has taught biology, math, and statistics to everyone from second graders to advanced graduate students.

Ted is a recent recipient (2022) of the ABA's Claudia Wilds Award for Distinguished Service, recognizing his 20-plus years of contributions to the association. He is a frequent guest on the American Birding podcast and a prolific content generator for ABA's online platforms. He is especially proud of his involvement in the association's Young Birder programs.

## BIRDS AND WILDLIFE

# Injured bird? Free CO-based app locates help fast

**Patrick O'Driscoll**

This may sound new to you, but Boulder-based nonprofit [Mission: Animal Help Now](#) (AHNow) has been linking animal emergencies with wildlife aid experts locally since 2011 and nationally since 2012. It bills itself as America's first coast-to-coast wildlife emergency smartphone app, available free for iPhone and Android devices.

The need is huge. AHNow estimates that between 2 and 5 billion birds and 7 and 24 billion animals die annually in "wildlife incidents" in the US. With the app in hand or [this link to the online reporting page](#), DFO birders in the field needn't worry where to turn if they encounter injured, orphaned or distressed birds or other animal emergencies.

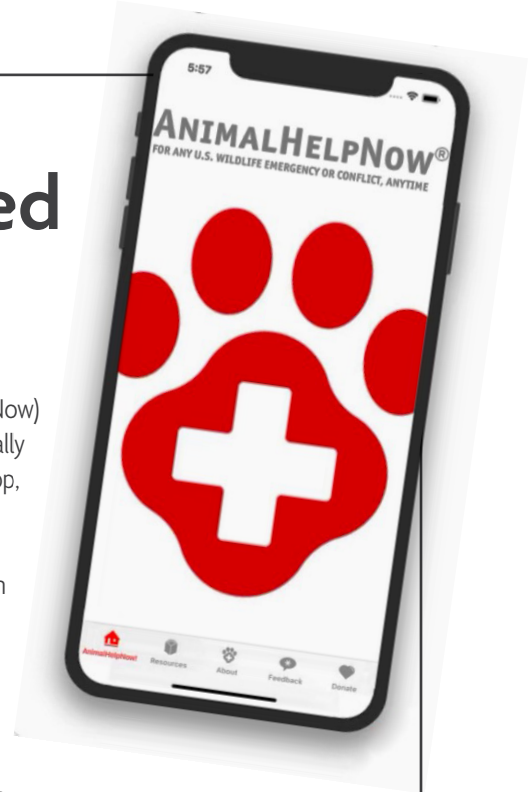
The app can immediately connect users "with the most appropriate time- and location-specific resources and services," Animal Help Now says. Its database contains 3,700 helpers — wildlife rehabilitators, rescues and hotlines, plus veterinarians who treat wildlife.

The free service even links to businesses that use humane methods to resolve people-wildlife conflicts — like removal of raccoons from attics or skunks from under porches. It's also a potential lifesaver for domestic critters. If a user is out of town, a related help-and-rescue app can alert and coordinate quickly with neighbors to evacuate the absent user's pets in an emergency.

AHNow can help users with other domestic animal emergencies, too: lost-and-found for companion animals, response to animal abuse and neglect, natural disasters. Finally, the nonprofit advocates for wildlife and educates the public in reducing everyday threats to wild animals, from window and vehicle strikes to dog and cat attacks.

The app is easy to use. Open and confirm where you are (if not your default location) and click on the type of need: wildlife emergency, wildlife conflict or "other animal issue." The app lists the nearest appropriate resources for each. With another click, each listing displays phone, internet and social media links.

To get the app or to volunteer, donate or learn more about AHNow, [click here](#).



# Final frontier: 6-day trip adds last 4 Colorado counties to DFO's list

**David Suddjian**

In late May, Denver Field Ornithologists' longest-ever driving field trip in Colorado completed our club's goal of leading field trips in all 64 of the state's counties. Not only did we color in our entire eBird map of Colorado counties birded, we also birded 13 others on our six-day, 1,200-mile loop.

Our three-vehicle caravan of a dozen birders journeyed to southwestern Colorado May 19-24 (with a first-ever side trip into Utah). Four of the 17 Colorado counties were first-ever destinations for DFO: Mineral, Archuleta, Dolores and San Juan. Seven more were DFO destinations for just the second time: Rio Grande, Hinsdale, La Plata, Montezuma, Ouray, Montrose and Delta.

The grand result for our team of DFO birders was a collective total of 154 species on 110 eBird checklists. (Trip report: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/242223>) The count included many great birds, including Grace's and Lucy's warblers, Acorn Woodpecker, Black-throated Sparrow, Gray Vireo, Lewis's Woodpecker, American Bittern, Hammond's and Willow flycatchers, Dusky Grouse and Flammulated Owl. While in the neighborhood, we added 11 species for Utah when we dipped into the Beehive State's side of Hovenweep National Monument, which has ancestral Puebloan sites in Colorado, too.

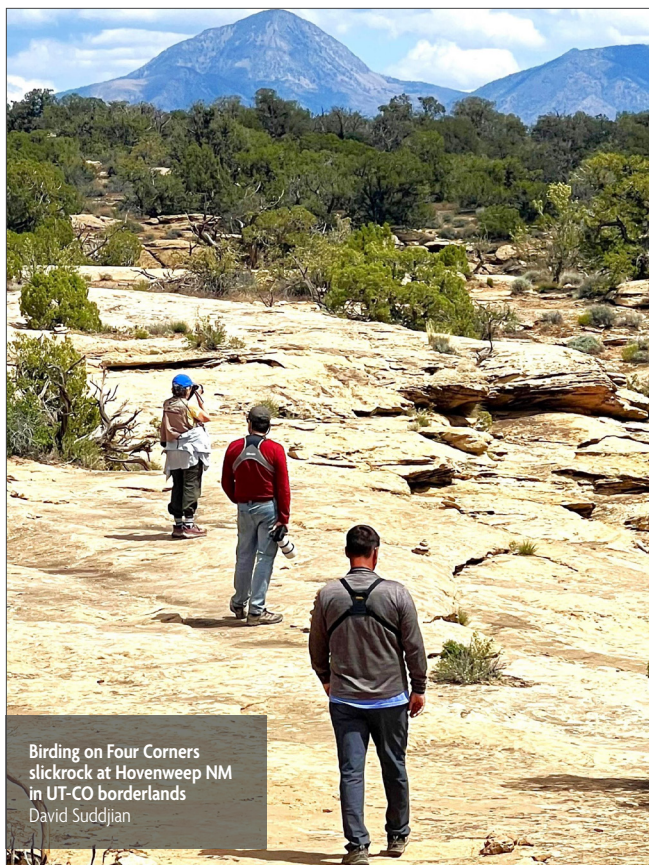
This epic trip touched iconic birding spots and wonderful habitats in what for us is a far corner of our state. DFO leads hundreds of field trips each year, but only rarely have we ventured far west of the Continental Divide. We are grateful to drivers **Linda Purcell, Luke Jaramillo** and **Chip Dawes** for steering us safely across the state.

My only regret was not spending more time in Archuleta County on a day too loaded with other stops. But that, and having seen only a small part of big Dolores County, means DFO should plan for more great trips back to Colorado's corner of the Four Corners.



DFO's expedition team at Boggy Draw in Montezuma County

*Continued on page 15*



Birding on Four Corners  
slickrock at Hovenweep NM  
in UT-CO borderlands  
David Suddjian



Scoping Pastorius Reservoir SWA in La Plata County  
David Suddjian



On the move in McElmo Creek area,  
Montezuma County  
Linda Purcell

## FIELD TRIPS *cont from page 14*

Memorable birding moments abounded daily, but here are a few that especially stood out, by species and location:

**Red-necked Phalaropes** — hundreds in great light at Park County's Buffalo Creek Reservoir

**American Bitterns** — hoped-for and found at Russell Lakes SWA in Saguache County

**Dusky Grouse** — a female gave us long looks along Road 430 in Mineral County

**Hammond's Flycatcher** — amid the pines of Archuleta County's East Fork Campground

**Lewis's Woodpecker** — We found our first on an unplanned drive through pasture and Ponderosas on Road 635 in Hinsdale County

**Acorn Woodpecker, Virginia's Warbler** — two treasures found in the Rafter J subdivision in La Plata County, where Pastorius Reservoir SWA also yielded magnificent spring views and Junction Creek Campground gave us our first Grace's Warbler

**Gray Vireo, Lucy's Warbler, Flammulated Owl, wild horses. Hovenweep, moon over the La Platas** — a few of the many charms of Montezuma County

**Red Crossbills, Pine Siskins, Glade Lake** — an amazing stop for forest birds in Road 504's Ponderosa Pines in Dolores County

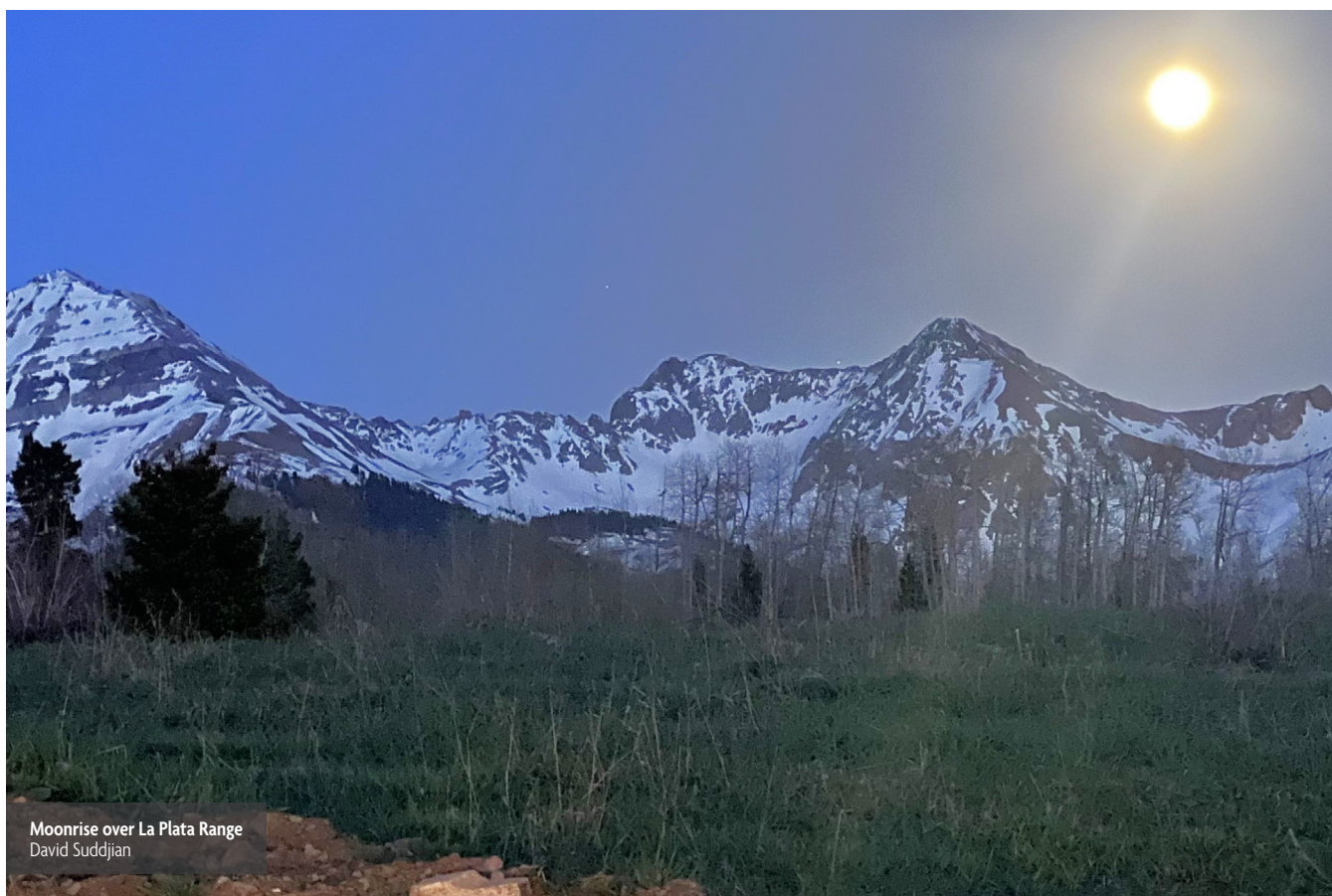
**Mountain beauty** — the San Juans in San Juan County, of course

**Gambel's Quail, Common Loon, Marsh Wren** — early and later delights at Sweitzer Lake SP in Delta County

**Chukar, singing Black-throated Sparrow** — on our way home, a welcome in Cameo, the coal-mine ghost town in Mesa County

County-by-county species totals for the trip, roughly chronological order: Park County, 26 species; Chaffee, 6; Saguache, 47; Rio Grande, 14; Mineral, 29; Archuleta, 41; Hinsdale, 20; La Plata, 78; Montezuma, 103; Dolores, 72; San Juan, 37; Ouray, 10; Montrose, 17; Delta, 50; Mesa, 29; Garfield, 5, and Eagle, 3.

*Continued on page 16*





FIELD TRIPS IN FOCUS

## May DFO trips *In Focus*

Peak spring migration month in Colorado resulted in 26 DFO field trips in May 2024. Of those, participants took and shared pictures of “birders birding” on 12 trips. If you’re on DFO outings in June and/or July, please take a few shots of your fellow birders and send us the best for the next issue of *The Lark Bunting*, due out in August. We’ll choose one picture for each field trip. Birders-in-action shots are preferred, but posed group pictures are acceptable, too.

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](mailto:patodrisk@gmail.com). Deadline is the last day of the month — in this case, **Wednesday, July 31** for June and July trips. Thanks!

APRIL 30  
**Dinosaur Ridge**  
(Jefferson County)

**Leader**  
Ajit and Liza Antony

**Participants**  
Susan Young, Michele Radice, Nancy Donovan,  
Rajkumar Manikandan, JP Young

Spotting raptors during April 30 field trip  
atop Dinosaur Ridge  
(Nancy Donovan)



MAY 5  
**First Creek @ Green Valley Ranch**  
(Denver)

**Leader**  
Jason Bidgood

**Participants**  
Becky Russell, Colleen Nunn, Karen Bellina, Joe Chen,  
Christine Macdonald, Debby Miller, Linda Klumpers

Field trippers look high up during May 5 outing  
to First Creek @ Green Valley Ranch in Denver  
(Jason B. Bidgood)



*Continued on page 18*



MAY 9  
**Roxborough SP**  
(Douglas)

**Leader**  
Bea Weaver

**Participants**  
Marjorie Middleton, Jeanne Dillon,  
Michelle Verostko, Alison Bishop,  
Chip Dawes, Christopher Curwen

*A trailside pose by field trippers on  
DFO's May 9 outing to Roxborough SP*  
(Alison Bishop)

MAY 10  
**Denver Area Parks**  
(Denver)

**Leader**  
Nate Bond

**Participants**  
Becky Russell, Julia Auckland,  
Christopher Curwen, Sharon Tinianow

*Participants in May 10 Denver parks  
bike-and-bird trip after spotting Summer Tanager  
at Phil Milstein Park*  
(Nate Bond)



*Continued on page 19*

MAY 11  
**Denver City Park**  
(Douglas)

**Leader**  
Patrick O'Driscoll

**Participants**  
Ajit and Liza Antony, Henrika McCoy, Glenn Jacoby,  
Jordan Nicholls, Joe Chen, Linda Lujan, Pete Brush,  
Sharon Guenther, Kyle and Kathleen Sandersen,  
Morgan Kahle, Janet Johnston

A full house of 14 birders pursuing flycatchers  
during May 11 field trip in Denver City Park  
(Patrick O'Driscoll)



MAY 14  
**Deer Creek Canyon**  
(Jefferson)

**Leader**  
David Suddjian

**Participants**  
Michelle Verostko, Janet Johnston,  
Melody Serra, Christian Caryl, Alison Kondler

Looking for Lazuli Bunting on  
Deer Creek Canyon field trip May 14  
(David Suddjian)



MAY 15  
**Fowler + Northern  
Spring Brook Trails**  
(Boulder)

**Leader**  
Peter Ruprecht

**Participants**  
Karen Clark, Patricia Kuzma Sell,  
Joe Chen, Ben Wilcox

Birders on May 15 field trip to Fowler +  
Northern Spring Brook trails in Boulder County  
(Joe Chen)



*Continued on page 20*



MAY 15-26

## Southeastern Arizona (multiple counties)

### Leader

Joey Kellner

### Participants

Liza and Ajit Antony, Amy and Shmuel Korengut, Betsy Goodwin, Alison Bishop, Mary Fran O'Connor, Linda Cunico, Christopher Curwen, Thomas Loucks, Bill Turner, Peggy Gonder

Joey Kellner, Chris Curwen and Ajit Antony fix huge holes in Carr Canyon Road so caravan of Southeast AZ May 15-26 field trippers can reach hotspot to see Buff-breasted Flycatcher, Greater Pewee and Yellow-eyed Junco  
(Liza Antony)

MAY 19-24

## Southwest Colorado Tour (17 counties)

### Leader

David Suddjian

### Participants

Linda Purcell, Gary Witt, Tresa Moulton, Betsy Rumely, Charlie and Mary Saunders, Chip Dawes, Edie Israel, Luke Jaramillo, Betty Glass, Courtney Rella

All eyes are up as May 19-24 SW Colorado field trippers make DFO's first visit to Mineral County en route to Wolf Creek Pass  
(Chip Dawes)



MAY 20

## Chico Basin Ranch (El Paso, Pueblo)

### Leader

Jessica Miller

### Participants

Deborah Hebblewhite, Joel Jones, Joe Chen, Margo Constable, Sara Jaramillo, Ian de la Rosa, Oliver Urdiales, Lisa Forte, Debby Miller, Andrea Bank

Field trippers May 20 on DFO's only outing to Chico Basin Ranch in short spring season  
(Joe Chen)



*Continued on page 21*



MAY 26  
**Prospect Park /  
Wheat Ridge Greenbelt**  
(Jefferson)

**Leader**  
Gigi Zarzuelar

**Participants**  
Patricia Kuzma Sell, Denise Reznicek,  
Victoria Miles, Sophie Benmore, Virginia Gulakowski,  
Becky Russell, Cassandra Stroud, Lorna Thomas,  
Melody Serra, Lynn Slaga

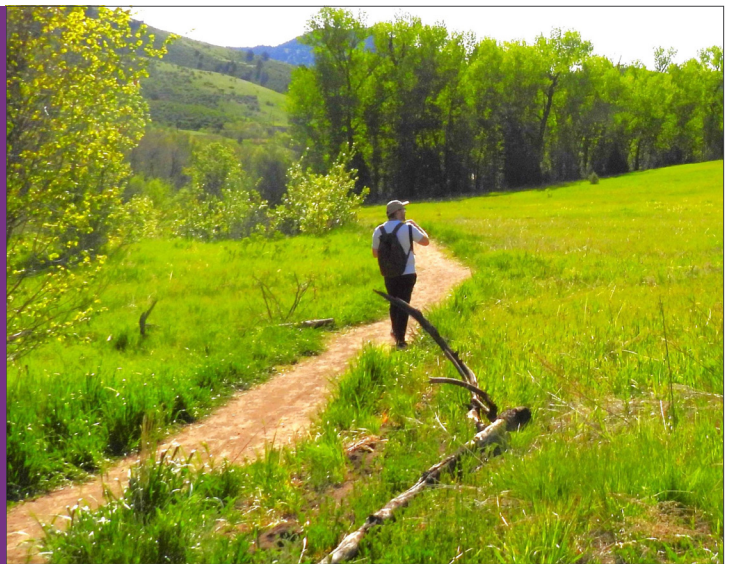
**Birders on May 26 trip to Wheat Ridge Greenbelt  
pause streamside for a closer look**  
(Melody Serra)

MAY 27  
**Lair o' the Bear Park**  
(Jefferson)

**Leader**  
Gigi Zarzuela

**Participants**  
Patricia Kuzma Sell, Lisa Forte, Emily Yates,  
Scott Levine, Nadiyah Watts, Cynthia Breidenbach,  
Lynn Slaga, John Featherstone

**John Featherstone heads up trail on field trip  
through Lair o' the Bear Park in JeffCo**  
(Gigi Zarzuela)



MAY 27  
**Quincy Reservoir, Aurora**  
(Arapahoe)

**Leader**  
David Suddjian

**Participants**  
Mary Ramsey, Leianna Schroeder, Joe Chen,  
Cynthia Cestkowski, Lynn Bakken

**DFO'ers hiking the path at Quincy Reservoir  
on a 45-species field trip May 27**  
(Joe Chen)





## COLORADO BIRDING

# How it went: 6 quiet weeks of half-day spring migration birding at Chico Basin

**Patrick O'Driscoll**

The first short spring season of birding under new access limits at Chico Basin Ranch in El Paso and Pueblo counties is now in the eBird books. After shutting down year-round, anytime entry for birders, the state-owned cattle ranch and birding-rich “migrant trap” southeast of Colorado Springs reopened on April 29. Those who booked daily reservations online (mandatory; no more same-day signups in person) were allowed onto the property, mornings only, for six weeks of spring-migration birding that ended June 2.

DFO led just one Chico Basin field trip this spring under the new regulations, but it was a doozie. Trip leader **Jessica Miller** and 10 other birders logged a whopping 77 species on May 20 in just six hours onsite. That’s because the Colorado State Land Board’s new rules inexplicably limited birder access to the

property from only 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. daily in a season already severely shorter than in the past.

Anecdotally, however, an underwhelming inflow of migrant birds this spring may have dampened birder interest, according to Aiken Audubon, the Pikes Peak region chapter that managed spring birding at the ranch under a lease with the land board. “The numbers are down so far for spring migration, compared to last year,” said Aiken conservation chair **Linda Hodges**, who coordinated the new access process. “You may have seen the bird bander’s post (on the COBirds list-serv) saying it’s the slowest she’s seen in her few years banding at Chico.” The Bird Conservancy of the Rockies has operated a banding station at the ranch in spring and fall for many years.

“We haven’t had much interesting weather to drop birds down into our area,” Hodges added, “other than one crazy fallout day at Clear Spring Ranch,” another popular birding spot about 12 miles northwest of Chico Basin as the crow flies.

Before the season began, there were worries that the land board’s strict new limit of only 20 birders a day on the ranch would “sell out” frequently, especially on weekends, denying more birders the opportunity to visit a premier Colorado birding location. But the lighter traffic of avian migrants may have rendered that a non-issue.

“I think the only day that was sold out was the day our Monday Birders visited the ranch,” Hodges said, referring to a weekly birding group in the Pikes Peak region similar to metro Denver’s Tuesday Birders. “As I’ve watched registrations come in, there hasn’t been a date that’s had overwhelming interest.”

The numbers of birds and people at the banding station are one measure of the first season under the land board’s new rules. Another is the number of checklists that Chico Basin birders filed to eBird during the April 29-June 2 period — a useful if imperfect marker because some birders may not use eBird.

For the season’s 35 days in late April, May and early June, birders filed 467 checklists, or an average of 13 total a day. Since some birders probably filed as many as two to five checklists (the number of available birding hotspots, including two general ones for El Paso and Pueblo counties, which bisect the ranch), those results suggest even fewer daily visitors on average, well under the 20-per-day limit.

*Continued on page 23*

Birders apparently did not abuse the honor system under which they were left to self-police their movements and time spent on the ranch. “As far as I know, only one birder, part of a group of two I think, stayed for an hour or two past the 1 p.m. deadline,” Hodges said. “The birder apologized to me after I reached out.” The land board also restricted birder travel to only three of Chico Basin’s six eBird hotspots within a few minutes’ drive from the ranch entrance.

After the slow spring, Aiken’s challenge now is to recoup expenses. Although its 5-year birding lease with the land board is “no-fee,” the club incurs various outlays — portable toilet rental, liability insurance, the birding reservation system, signs and other overhead. It collected \$15 daily admission from each birder but is required to split that revenue with the Bird Conservancy banding station.

In about three months, the ranch will reopen (Sept. 2 through Oct. 6) for autumn migration under the same rules and limits. “Since fall birding is a good deal slower than spring birding, I’m guessing that Aiken won’t cover our Chico costs this year,” Hodges said.



Ladder-backed Woodpecker at Chico Basin Ranch  
Joe Chen



Curve-billed Thrasher  
Joe Chen



Chestnut-sided Warbler at Chico Basin Ranch  
Joe Chen

## Welcome to new DFO members

Audrey Anderson of Boulder; Jason Carroll and Michelle Loader, Denver; Claire Frazier, Arvada; Zachary Haag, Springfield; Jess Kugler, Littleton; Alan Schmitz and Grace Bear, Centennial; Terry Tedford, Castle Rock; Mike Tupper and Naseem Munshi, Lafayette

## Thank you for your contribution

### Research, Education and Conservation Grants Fund

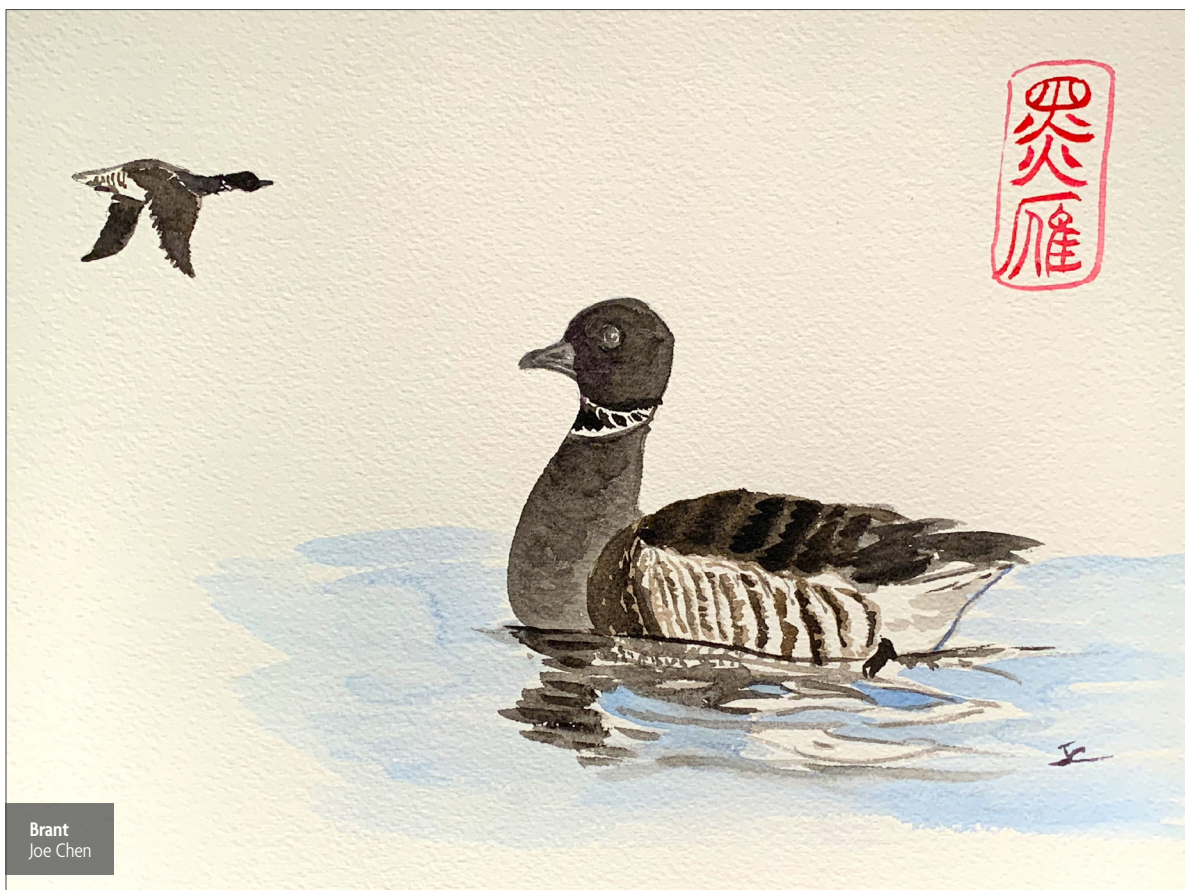
Claire Frazier, Terry and Becca Hammons, Roger Koester, Deb Pirrello, M. Beatriz Silveira, MD

### Friends of DFO

Gail Ferber, Tina Peters, Becky Russell

### DFO's Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch

Lee and Linda Farrell, Gail Ferber, Janet Peters and Michael Lupini in memory of Ann Bonnell, and David Hill in memory of Charlie Wall



Brant  
Joe Chen



LAST WORD, LAST LOOK

## It's what's for dinner: food prep with the “butcherbird” of the Colorado prairie

Patrick O'Driscoll

For birders, photographers and, yes, birders who are photographers, chance encounters and unscripted moments in the field are often the most meaningful.

DFO member **Dave Prentice** had one this spring during a private citizen-science project at a ranch on Colorado's eastern Plains. As a member of the Denver area Birding and Beers Meetup group led by **Sheridan Samano**, Prentice was exploring the dried-out riverbed of Big Sandy Creek on Flying Diamond Ranch, an Audubon-certified “bird-friendly” spread north of Kit Carson.

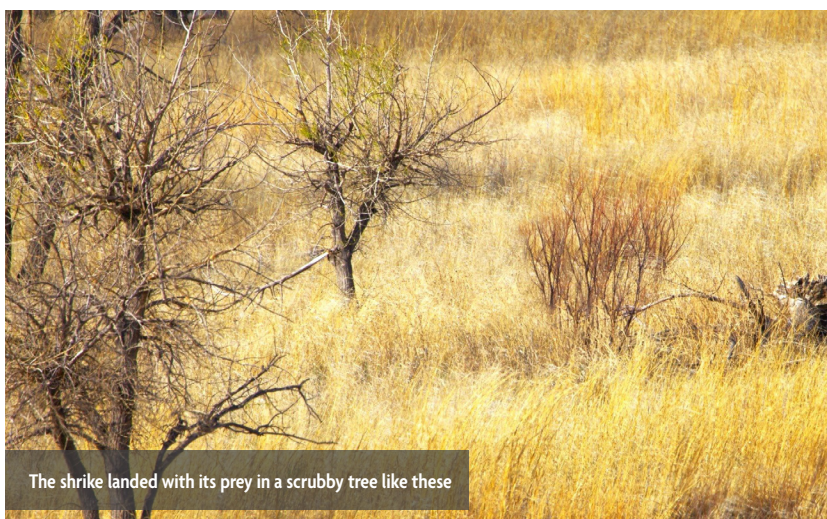
Photos by David Prentice

*Continued on page 26*

Loggerhead Shrike arriving  
with still-intact Sphinx Moth



Preparing to impale its catch



The shrike landed with its prey in a scrubby tree like these



Now the bird hooks the moth onto a thin, pointed branch

#### LAST WORD *cont from page 25*

The occasion was a private-access “BioBlitz” on May 4 to document biodiversity on the ranch. At mid-morning, Prentice and about 10 other birders were moving through the dry drainage “when I noticed a Loggerhead Shrike fly into a nearby bush” — a short, scrubby and leafless prairie tree. The bird “was carrying a [White-lined Sphinx moth](#),” Prentice said. “I was standing quite close, but the shrike didn’t seem bothered by me. It proceeded to re-position and impale the moth on a short branch, tear the wings off and then literally pose with it. It just chilled for a long time.”

That “long time” was barely three minutes, but Prentice was mesmerized, and his camera was busy. “I excitedly shared the news with the other members of the group. Unfortunately, no one else got to witness it, but it was so nice to have some photos to share.”

Later, Prentice was intrigued by how this masked hunter seemed to posture with its prey once it had de-winged the body. “Possibly attempting to attract a mate?” he wondered. “This was the first time I’ve observed a shrike impaling prey. It seems like everyone thinks the shrike impales its prey to cache for later, but I read something interesting in my National Geographic birding guide: ‘They mostly impale their prey on thorns. Recent research indicates that this is to mark territory and attract mates.’ ”

Whatever its intent, the bird certainly caught Prentice’s eye. “I took about 200 shots over a 3-minute encounter! I was psyched to have my camera and document the behavior. I’d never seen a shrike encounter, so that was really cool.”

Cool for us, too.

*Continued on page 27*



And goes to work field dressing its catch



With hooked bill, the shrike begins the dismemberment



Here a wing . . .



There a wing . . .



The crunchy parts come off



With the last bits now removed



It's time to admire and show off its prize



*Until the next Lark Bunting . . .*  
**HAPPY SUMMER BIRDING!**

American Kestrels mating in  
Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR  
Dave Prentice