



THE LARK BUNTING

QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE DENVER FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS

VOLUME 62 | ISSUE 4 | FALL 2026

DFOBIRDS.ORG

LAST WORD, LAST LOOK

In memoriam: Hugh Kingery,
dean of Colorado birders

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dfo
DENVER FIELD
ORNITHOLOGISTS



Great Blue Heron
Chatfield State Park, Jefferson Co.
Melody Serra



ON THE COVER

Great Blue Heron: Statuesque on a perch, whether along the shore or in the trees

Patrick O'Driscoll

In this season of frenetic warblers and other passerines tanking up for migration flights south, it's easy to look past the other birds that share our favorite haunts for all or most of the year. But when the tallest of Colorado's avian homies comes into view, it tends to refocus our attention.

Long of legs, neck and body, the Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) catches all eyes, whether on land or in the air. Stately and majestic, it stands about 5-feet-3, almost as tall as the average woman. With a hat tip to the poet **Lord Byron**, Great Blue Heron "walks in beauty, like the night."

Its flight profile is something else, too. Neck tucked into an S-double curve, legs and feet trailing, it beats its wings slowly and deeply, in absolutely no hurry whatsoever to reach its next destination. In this season of movement and urgency, the Great Blue Heron is not on the clock.



Melody Luck Serra is a longtime Colorado resident, a registered nurse at the VA, and a DFO member since 2022. She

discovered birding in 2021, which soon led to a passion for bird and wildlife photography

But if you see one wading in the shallows or hunting in a farm field, don't blink or you may miss the lightning stab of head and bill. Although their diet is mostly fish, Great Blue Herons have appetites for turf with their surf, from snakes and bullfrogs to voles, mice and gophers. They'll even eat other birds. Cornell Lab's *Birds of the World* includes a remarkable photo series of a Great Blue Heron in Florida swallowing an entire Lesser Bittern.

Fun fact: Cornell's *All About Birds* notes that Great Blue Herons have specialized chest feathers that fray into "powder down." When "combed" with a fringed toe, the substance becomes kind of a washrag to wipe fish slime and swamp oils off their feathers while preening.

Our cover bird this issue was photographed four years ago this month by DFO member **Melody Luck Serra** near her favorite birding spot: Kingfisher Bridge in Chatfield State Park. In October 2022, the cottonwoods there had not yet been killed by the rising waters of the reservoir's "reallocation" expansion. Seeing the bird disappear into trees on the JeffCo side of Kingfisher Cove, she followed to find it hiding in the autumn leaves of the cottonwoods, "which, sadly, are no longer there now," she says. Those vanished trees "were where I saw many of my first birds — Belted Kingfisher, Yellow Warblers, female Wood Duck, Snowy Egrets, Killdeer, Northern Shrike . . . My love for birds and wildlife photography is firmly rooted in those cottonwood groves."

That heron in a lost Chatfield cottonwood is a bittersweet reminder just now. On Sunday, Oct. 18, the family of the late Colorado birding giant **Hugh Kingery** will host a memorial celebration of his life at the nearby Denver Audubon nature center now named for him and his wife, **Urling**. More than half a century ago, Hugh spent 12 years studying a colony of Great Blue Herons where Chatfield Reservoir now lies. He even proposed marriage to Urling beneath the cottonwoods where the birds nested. Within a year of their wedding, the new reservoir's waters drowned the mature trees — and the herons moved on. (The Lark Bunting's *obituary tribute to Hugh, who died in July at age 94, begins on page 36 of this issue.*)

Patrick O'Driscoll, editor of *The Lark Bunting* since 2020, took up birding in his 50s. A retired newspaper journalist, he joined DFO in 2014 and became a field trip leader in 2016



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Hugh Kingery (1932–2026)
Conservationist, birding mentor,
dean of Colorado birders

The Lark Bunting, formerly the monthly newsletter of Denver Field Ornithologists, is the club's quarterly journal and is published in winter (January), spring (April), summer (July) and fall (October).

DFO On the Wing, the club's digital newsletter, is emailed monthly to all members.

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The Lark Bunting welcomes story ideas and original articles, essays and photos from DFO members. Submit yours to the editor at patodrisk@gmail.com. Send image-file photos of birds or bird outings to the photo editor at jcesten@gmail.com.

Submit time-sensitive, month-to-month news items, tips, announcements, photos and other materials to the monthly newsletter's editor at comm@dfobirds.org.

Editors reserve the right to accept and edit suitable articles and photos for publication.



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**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,
board directors,
committee chairs,
and other position holders
directly, please contact them
individually via the
[DFO Leadership Page](#).



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Investing in DFO's future: an update on new website, modernized systems

Jason B. Bidgood

Over the past several months, much of my work as DFO president has focused on one major project: preparing Denver Field Ornithologists for a new website and modernized systems to support our field trips, membership, and communications. This project touches nearly every part of DFO, and I want to share with you where we are and what's ahead.

In early August, DFO signed an agreement with [Skvare](#), a web developer that specializes in building websites and operations systems for nonprofit organizations like DFO. Key to Skvare's work for us is the configuring of an open-source management system called CiviCRM, short for Civic Constituent Relationship Management.

CiviCRM is software built specifically for nonprofits and non-governmental organizations (the "civic" part). In DFO's case, it will modernize how we manage club membership and communicate with our members, interact with the greater community (including non-members and DFO friends), support club volunteers, and manage our unparalleled program of free field trips. Skvare is our partner in creating a new website that will be much easier to navigate and maintain, and better aligned with how DFO operates today.

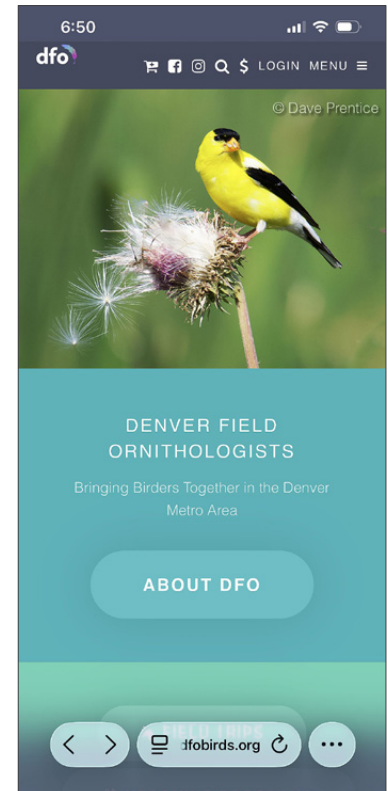
This is not merely a visual refresh. It's a full modernization of the online and digital tools we use to accomplish those tasks and interact with members, partners and the broader public. Our current system served us well for many years, but it has become increasingly difficult to update and adapt.

With our move later this year to a website built on the [WordPress](#) content management system and CiviCRM, we're aiming for long-term stability, flexibility, and sustainability. This is a foundation to support DFO for at least the next decade, not just the next season or year.

Skvare started work in August. By the time this issue of *The Lark Bunting* is published on our existing website, Skvare's team will be roughly halfway through the building of our new website and the modern system to manage almost everything we do on the way to leading field trips, putting on speaker programs, and managing club business.

DFO's own team for the project — a mix of officers, board members and other club volunteers — is deeply involved in reviewing procedures, mapping workflows, and ensuring that the new system preserves the atmosphere of humanity, enthusiasm and love of birding that makes DFO unique.

Our goal is ambitious but important: to get the new DFObirds.org website online during DFO's annual end-of-year push for membership renewals. A modern, reliable system for managing membership will make that process smoother for everyone and fuel a strong start to the new year.



Current DFO website homepage from a smartphone

Continued on page 6

Thank you to the volunteers who are vital to this effort — understanding our database, setting up new accounts, reviewing content, making suggestions, and helping define what DFO needs from its new website and management system. This project is a reminder of how much DFO depends on people who give their time and expertise selflessly, behind the scenes. Our website may be changing, but the spirit of volunteer commitment that propels DFO forward remains the same.

As we get closer to launch, look for more updates from us in our email newsletter, *DFO On the Wing*. In the meantime, I encourage you to stay connected, stay curious, and — IF you're interested in helping with website content, testing, or other tasks — click on the VOLUNTEER link on www.dfobirds.org and let us know.

This is a big step for DFO. Let's build it together.

— **Jason**

Jason B. Bidgood, a DFO member since 2016, became our newest president in April of this year. He has led DFO field trips since 2022 and has been a member of the field trip committee since 2024. When not birding, he can often be found at his local climbing gym or out for a run

DFO PICNIC

DFO's summer picnic returns with taco-bowl twist

Sixty-two DFO members turned out on Aug. 29 for the return of the DFO summer picnic. Instead of burgers & brats on a hot barbecue grill, DFO Programs chair **Carly Crow** and her crew served up taco and burrito bowl fixings buffet-style in Bluff Lake Nature Center's new multipurpose room and patio overlooking the lake. The spread was catered by Illegal Pete's "Mission-style" Mexican food chain. Before the Saturday lunch, field trip leaders led birding outings at several nearby Denver hotspots.

Welcome to new DFO members

Toni Buffa and Dianna Craig of Arvada; Jules Burke and Eliane Walters, Lakewood; Sumner Crosby III and Bonnie Crosby, Denver; Mark Eadie, Littleton; Ed and Nicholas Maa and Skye Barker Maa, Denver; Ellen McDonough, Denver; Kimberly Pugliese and Joe Huggins, Arvada; Harald Stark and Sandy Johnson, Westminster

Thank you for your contribution

Research, Education and Conservation Grants Fund

Jean and Charlie Curlee, Aiva Noringseth, Kimberly Pugliese and Joe Huggins, Joel Zigman

Friends of DFO

Mary Beverly, Beth Brockman, Jason Carroll and Michelle Loader, Jim Esten, Mike Lee, Caitlyn O'Neil, Kris Tita, and Martha Strickland
In memory of Hugh Kingery

DFO's Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch

Jane Haddock, Joel Zigman



Members line up for make-your-own tacos and bowls from Illegal Pete's at DFO picnic at Bluff Lake Nature Center
Jim Esten

HELP WANTED: Editor for THIS journal



Patrick O'Driscoll

In January, I begin Year 8 as editor of *The Lark Bunting*. It was the monthly newsletter of Denver Field Ornithologists when I started in late 2019. It's DFO's quarterly journal today. But with this column, I'm announcing that 2027 will be my last year — check

that, my *half*-last. When I finish Spring 2027 Issue No. 2 in April, I'll hit SEND, log off and shut down for the last time.

I'm not going away. I'll still be on the DFO Board and a committee or two. I'll still lead the occasional field trip. I might even write for *The Lark Bunting* on occasion — if it still exists.

That last phrase is what, in my former newspaper life, we called “burying the lede.” The real news here isn't that the editor is leaving. It's whether *The Lark Bunting* — in the somewhat antiquated format of a 20th century-style magazine (albeit online) in today's vastly different 21st-century multimedia world — will survive.

The hard truth is: *The Lark Bunting* as it exists today, this month, is too heavy a lift for another DFO volunteer editor. That's not bragging, it's just fact. As a retired newspaper reporter and editor, my decades of career time and tools enabled me to grind out 10 to 11 newsletters a year (and now, four quarterly journals) on deadline as volunteer editor and writer of most of the words.

This quandary is more than partly my fault. Over the years, I've souped up *The Lark Bunting's* content (please thank our art director-layout design maven **Jennie Dillon** for making it all look so slick and sleek). I've added people features, birding travelogues, columns and photo galleries that are fun to produce and, for some DFO members anyway, fun to read. But you have to have the time and interest to scroll through a stodgy PDF or, as some people do, print it out for yourself. We know from member surveys that some DFO'ers really enjoy *The Lark Bunting*. We also know that others prefer to learn news about DFO via our monthly email newsletter, *DFO On the Wing* — or maybe in other and different ways altogether.

Ostensibly, my departure is about volunteer burnout. My “CHECK ENGINE” light has been flashing red for a while now, and I need to step back. But who can or will pick up where I leave off? And if they can, should they?

These questions rise just as we are in the midst of an exciting rebuild and makeover of the DFO website (something **Jason Bidgood** tells you more about in his “From the President” column in this issue). As we wrestle with how and whether to keep *The Lark Bunting* going after next spring, the new website's more robust capabilities could make it an inviting platform for hosting (and reimagining and repackaging) some of the quarterly's content.

In the meantime, YOUR help is needed! Would you or someone you know with editing and writing skills be interested in taking on the editorship of *The Lark Bunting*? I'm more than happy to talk with you and/or that someone about what is involved. Contact me at patodrisk@gmail.com.

Your FEEDBACK is also welcome and needed. We've asked questions like these of DFO members and *Lark Bunting* readers before, but not with the urgency we now face.

- What features of *The Lark Bunting* do you enjoy the most? What could or should we dispense with?
- What social media platforms do you enjoy — YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Blue Sky, X, or something else? If we moved the content currently published in *The Lark Bunting* to another, different online format, would you follow it?
- What other ideas do you have about what you'd like to read and see in *The Lark Bunting*?

Send me your thoughts and ideas soon at patodrisk@gmail.com. We've got six months until I quit the editorship, but we'll need to chart the next course for *The Lark Bunting* (or its best contents on other platforms) before then. Thanks in advance for any and all opinions, advice, nits to pick, and other points of view or items I haven't touched on here. And happy autumn birding!

— Patrick O'

DFO News Notes

Patrick O'Driscoll

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



FALL OUT! AUTUMN BIRDS ARE OCT. 15 BIRD BOMBS TOPIC

The next episode in DFO's popular "BIRD BOMBS" webinar series will focus on autumn birding challenges and what to look forward to as fall migration deepens. "Fall Out," with DFO Field Trips chair **David Suddjian**, is scheduled for **Thursday, Oct. 15 at 7 p.m. MDT** via Zoom. Click below to register for this free program. To view any of the more than 40 other episodes in the series, now in its fifth year, go to the [Bird Bombs Past Programs page](#) on the DFO website.

REGISTER FOR BIRD BOMBS



SAVE THE DATE! DEC. 19 IS DENVER XMAS COUNT

It's never too early to plan for major birding events in Colorado, and one of the biggest is now on the calendar: **The Denver Christmas Bird Count, Saturday, Dec. 19, 2026.**

Mark your calendar NOW, then stay tuned to DFO's *On the Wing* monthly email newsletter and social media for details about how to join. As you know, the national CBC, sponsored by National Audubon, is the longest-running community science bird project in the US, with a trove of species data. The Denver count is among more than 50 count "circles" across Colorado that will do similar one-day counts between mid-December and the first week of January 2027.

The Denver CBC — which focuses inside a 15-mile diameter circle over the southwest quadrant of metro Denver — dates to 1954. For years, DFO field trip leader **Joey Kellner** has organized and overseen the count as official compiler. He's working now to line up and re-enlist leaders for the 24 count areas inside the Denver CBC circle. Kellner welcomes birders of all skills and capabilities to join in the annual one-day count. Look for details soon about how!



**KING SOOPERS
SHOPPER? FREE \$\$
TO SUPPORT DFO**

The largest grocery chain in the state has \$10 million to donate annually to Colorado nonprofit groups like Denver Field Ornithologists. If you're a King Soopers shopper, help us claim DFO's share of those dollars to help fund monthly programs, field trips, and this quarterly journal. It's incredibly easy and costs you and DFO nothing. Members (and friends of DFO) register for the King Soopers Community Rewards program and choose the club as their designated recipient, then continue to shop for groceries and refills at King Soopers stores and gas stations. Then each quarter, the grocer divides a pool of \$2.5 million among participating Colorado nonprofits based on each group's percentage of total spending. The more DFO members and supporters sign up and shop, the more DFO can receive.

Here's how to enroll: Go to the Community Awards program's secure website and either sign in to your existing shopper's card account or create a new digital account. Then link your shopper's card to "Denver Field Ornithologists," and you're in! Thanks in advance for taking the time to enroll!

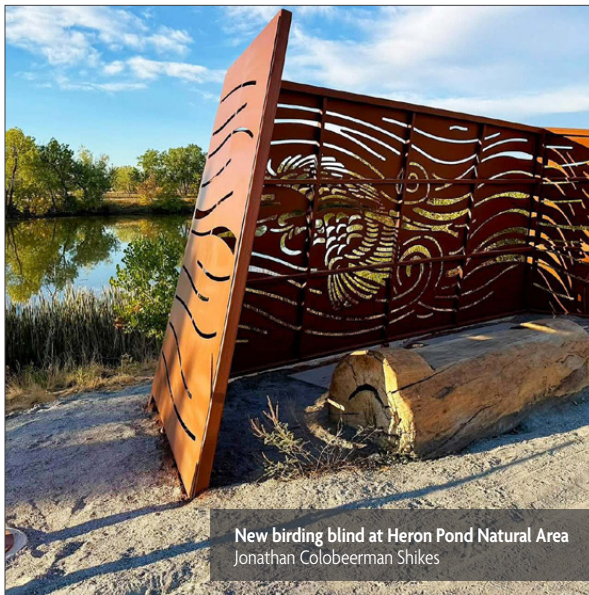
ENROLL NOW

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DFO'S FACEBOOK GROUP TOPS 9,000 MEMBERS

Early October saw a notable milestone for the [Denver Field Ornithologists Facebook Group](#) when its page on the social media giant reached 9,000 members, nearly double what it was a year ago. (Not to mention about 15 times as many people as DFO has dues-paying members, as FB group membership is free to all.) Group page administrator **David Suddjian** said a particularly popular post of field trip photos in early October 2025 by DFO member and photographer **Melody Serra** “went sort of viral (viral for DFO anyway) with nearly 800 likes and over 28,000 views.” Suddjian said a “large pulse of new members happened then and steadily since.”

The DFO Facebook Group was formed about 12 years or so ago and mostly features photos of birds that individuals take on bird outings around the state. Some DFO trip leaders also post brief summaries of their trips with nice bird shots and the occasional view of the trip participants focusing intently on a prize bird in the field. Suddjian estimates the page averages about 10 new postings a day. “There is a wide pool of regular posters,” he noted.



New birding blind at Heron Pond Natural Area
Jonathan Colobeberman Shikes

DENVER'S HERON POND REOPENS AFTER 2-YEAR RE-DO

Fans of what was once Denver's best-kept birding secret are rejoicing: [Heron Pond Natural Area](#) is officially open again after two years of major restoration and park development. The \$39 million project of Denver Parks & Recreation and other agencies seeks to “re-envision and reunify” 88 acres of “long neglected and abused” city-owned land in four connected tracts: the 47-acre natural area, 25-acre Heller Open Space beside it, 2 acres of “constructed wetlands” and 14-acre Carpio-Sanguinette Park (formerly Northside Park) along the South Platte River. The existing park and nearby urban park areas will provide the working-class Globeville neighborhood with a nature-themed playground, paved and accessible footpaths, picnic and amphitheater areas, and even a closed-loop “pump track” of bumps and banks for BMX bicycling.

Much of the site will retain an undeveloped character, but with major cleanup and restoration with native plants and grasses where weeds and junk once covered the landscape. It all sits in the middle of a gritty industrial area off north Washington Street. Bordered north and south by 54th and 51st Avenues, it is surrounded on three sides by recycling yards and is just across the river from the National Western Stock Show complex. The existing riverside park was once a sewage treatment plant. Its graffiti-covered concrete remnants are retained as a unique artistic feature.

Despite neglect and past Superfund-level contamination (arsenic, cadmium and lead), Heron Pond for years has attracted wildlife and birds — and birders. During the closure, enterprising birders viewed through the chain-link construction fencing to compile checklists of 25 or more species at a time. Heron Pond's eBird hotspot bird list now totals 193 species, including the large waders for whom the pond was named. Improvements include “protected natural areas” around the water, a new birding blind and an observation tower built 2 years ago but off-limits until now.

DFO's first field trip at the restored Heron Pond Natural Area is scheduled for Sunday, Oct. 25. Trip details are on the Field Trips pages of the DFO website.

[REGISTER FOR FIELD TRIP](#)



Member dues help in online management of DFO's many free field trips
Joe Chen

MEMBERSHIP

Renew. Donate. Volunteer.

Three words to live by as 2026 wraps up

Mary Geder

I wrote a version of this three months or so ago with another kind of appeal in mind. But postponement was fortuitous. With the end of 2026 just over an autumn horizon crowded with birds flying south, DFO has three other seasons to focus on now along with fall migration.

They are there in the headline: Time to renew our DFO memberships, which expire at the end of each calendar year. Time to consider tax-deductible, year-end donations to the three funding sources that make DFO go. (More on them below.) And time for the reason that knows no season: Volunteering to help DFO manage the business of our 91-year-old club, the oldest birding enterprise in Colorado. Why wait until Jan. 1, 2027 to live up to that New Year's resolution to devote time to a great cause?

For bird lovers new and old alike, our club and its activities remain a strong and helpful force for birding. It's easy for us regulars to take DFO's offerings for granted. But people fresh to the birding community find remarkable value in what DFO affords. Read on for the whys, the wherefores, and the how-to's.

Membership

Get a jump on that end-of-year renewal now. And if you've got friends whom you think would enjoy membership, joining now gets them free membership through the end of 2026 on top of a full year's membership in 2027. Considering all the non-monetary benefits of DFO membership, the annual cost you pay as a member is minimal: \$30 individual, \$45 family, \$15 student.

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These modest dues help us maintain DFO's many moving parts, from the club's website (and a new one coming by year's end!), field trip registration and organization, newsletter and quarterly journal to monthly speaker programs, social media, Hawk Watch, community outreach and more.

Ready to renew? Go now to [DFO's Membership Renewal](#) page. You can renew for one, two or three years. And when you've filled of the renewal portion, look below it for an easy way to do what I'll talk about next.

Donations

DFO does not live on dues alone. Besides sharing generous birding fellowship in our matchless field trips program (more than 260 outings so far this year and a record-smashing 325 likely by the end of December), we do good works in the field. Support of [Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch's](#) spring count of migrating birds of prey helps gather valuable data for raptor science and conservation and promotes public appreciation of hawks, eagles, falcons and vultures. We also help researchers, educators and conservationists with modest grants to do their vital work for birds and their habitat in Colorado and beyond. First funded in 1994 from an endowment by **Mary Hope Robinson**, [DFO's Research, Education & Conservation Grants](#) have come since 2012 from monetary gifts and donations by generous DFO members and friends. Finally, we appreciate any additional donations for the Friends of DFO fund, which augments general club operations wherever and whenever needed.

You can donate to these funds anytime at the DFO website's [Donations](#) page. And as noted, when [renewing your membership](#), there are boxes at the bottom of the renewal form to make donations to DFO's three in-house funds.

And don't forget DFO's [Colorado Gives Day](#) page for annual donations in December, perhaps the giving-est season of the year for all nonprofits like DFO.

Volunteering

This past spring, several DFO officer and board director positions came open and in need of filling. When word got around of this need, members stepped forward to contribute their time, talent and energy. But as you can imagine, more tasks and needs await. DFO needs YOU. If you're ready to offer some of your time and talent to help your favorite birding organization, Denver Field Ornithologists is ready for you.

Contact DFO Volunteers coordinator **Ryan Corda** via the [Volunteers](#) page on the DFO website, where current volunteer vacancies also are listed.

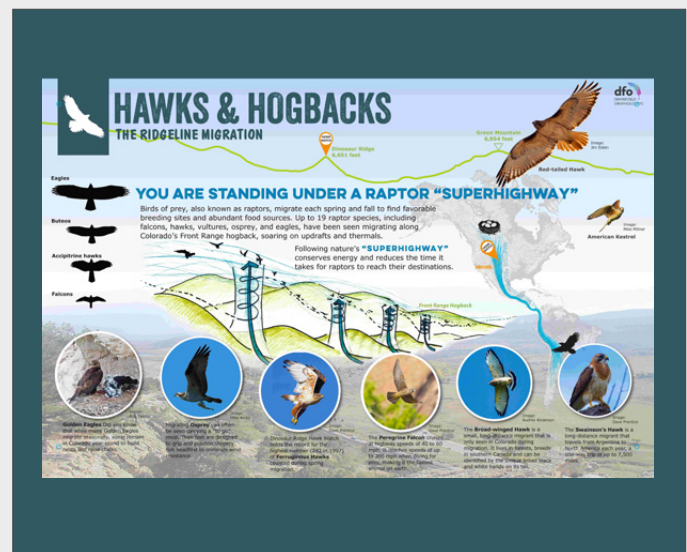
Ready? Let's get going. Happy fall migration . . . and happy giving, and giving back, to Denver Field Ornithologists. Thanks!

Mary Geder has held several volunteer posts since joining DFO in the early 2000s. She worked as a US Fish & Wildlife Service biologist before a 30-year career in the oil and gas field. Now retired, she lives in Lakewood

HAWK WATCH

Park-n-Ride lot info sign tells Hawk Watch story

This new Colorado Department of Transportation sign will be installed any day now at the Stegosaurus Park-n-Ride lot outside Golden near the trailhead to Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch, DFO's spring migration community science project. The sign, which features the club's feather logo in the upper right corner, tells the story of the birds of prey that professional counters and a cadre of DFO volunteers tally from atop Dinosaur Ridge just south of Interstate 70. DFO's Hawk Watch team collaborated on the sign with the transportation department and Jefferson County Open Space.



Volunteer recognition social Oct. 30, “Dead of Winter” speakers November through March

Sharon Tinianow

As DFO's 91st year as a birding club winds down, the “program” for our last in-person meeting of 2026 will be a casual social plus volunteer recognition event on the Friday night before Halloween. After that, DFO's usual array of fall and winter programs will take a new twist as we join with our friends at Colorado Field Ornithologists in co-presenting the popular *Dead of Winter Speaker Series*.

Originated by CFO, this winter-long schedule of monthly programs via Zoom webinar is so named because, as the dark nights get longer and the weather turns frigid, it's nice to curl up with bird-related presentations in the warm comfort of home. This year, DFO and CFO are pooling resources to collaborate on a great series of speakers.

From November 2026 to March 2027, you can meet a scientist working with owls in Colorado, two authors of recent books about birds and birding, and a wildlife biologist turned bird guide — all without having to don a parka and brave wintry nights.

Check out the coming season's lineup below and plan your winter knowledge quest. All you need to do is register in advance on the DFO website to get the link to these free webinars. You'll also find more information soon on the [Upcoming Programs](#) page of the DFO website.

A planning note: The realities of venue availability and speakers' schedules necessitate a departure this season from DFO's longtime practice of holding program meetings on the fourth Monday of the month. Thank you for understanding the challenge we face in continuing to bring you interesting and informative programs.



New Terrain Brewing in Golden
New Terrain Brewing website

DFO Volunteer Recognition Social

At [New Terrain Brewing Co.](#)

6401 Table Mountain Parkway, Golden
Friday, October 30, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. MST

This casual mixer for all DFO members the night before Halloween will feature volunteer recognition awards, bird-themed costumes (optional, but there will be prizes! — check out the costume categories on the [DFO website](#)), the always-popular DFO books table (bring your surplus and duplicate books and donate to the cause) and food and beverages available for purchase. Get started now on your costume!

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Continued on page 13



Where the Wild Birds Are

With Noah Strycker

Associate Editor, *Birding* magazine

Wednesday, November 18, 7 p.m. MST | [REGISTER HERE](#)

This season's first program is based on *Birder's Atlas of the World*, **Noah Strycker's** groundbreaking book published by National Geographic. Like the book, his presentation will broaden your horizons and give you a fresh perspective on where the wild birds are. Noah will take us on a whirlwind tour of the world from a birder's-eye view, roaming the habitats wild birds call home.



What an Owl Knows

With Jennifer Ackerman

New York Times bestselling author

Thursday, January 7, 2027, 7 p.m. MST | [REGISTER HERE](#)

Often seen as symbols of wisdom, knowledge, and foresight, owls have captivated and intrigued us for millennia. But what does an owl really know? And what do we really know about owls? **Jennifer Ackerman's** presentation, based on her book of the same name, will explore the rich biology and natural history of owls and examine remarkable new scientific discoveries about their brains and behavior — and with remarkable photos, videos, and audio recordings. (*NOTE: this presentation will NOT be recorded or archived for later viewing*)



Flammulated Owl Ecology in an Age of Rapid Change

With Kate McGinn, PhD

Visiting assistant professor, Organismal Biology and Ecology, Colorado College

Thursday, February 18, 2027, 7 p.m. MST | [REGISTER HERE](#)

Flammulated Owls are sentinels of the open, mature ponderosa pine forests of Colorado. However, these forests are rapidly changing as wildfires in western North America are increasing in size and severity. Long-term research on Flammulated Owls in Colorado provides a unique opportunity to examine how these changes influence owl populations over time. In this presentation, **Kate McGinn** will discuss what this long term-research has revealed about Flammulated Owl behavior, life history, and the species' response to environmental change.



Holiday in Craigmerica: The Grouse Utopia of Colorado

With Jeremiah Psiropoulos

Owner and operator, Colorado Grouse Tours

Wednesday, March 24, 2027, 7 p.m. MDT | [REGISTER HERE](#)

The low-key Western Slope town of Craig, CO is probably not on your bucket list of destinations. But many birders make the trek there each year through wind and snow to see one of the world's greatest spectacles: the courtship displays of grouse on communal grounds in the sagebrush steppe-brushlands of Moffat County. In this fun and informative presentation, former 15-year federal wildlife biologist **Jeremiah Psiropoulos** takes us to northwestern Colorado mating leks of Greater Sage-Grouse and Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse.



THE LIVES OF BIRDS

Think ghosts and goblins are spooky? Beware the Halloween nightjar . . .

Jared Del Rosso

What would Halloween be without the birds who haunt us — the murders of crows, the ravens who quoth, the unseen owls? But among the birds, a more obscure family's association with the holiday of hobgoblins is somehow even more important. To mark this year's spooky season, this issue's *The Lives of Birds* is about the twilight fliers known as [nightjars](#). And among them, one species of nightjar has had an outsized place in American horror: the Whip-poor-will.

So we begin with that bird and with one of the stories that made it notorious: **H.P. Lovecraft's** "[The Dunwich Horror](#)." Read on . . . if you dare.



R.W. Weir illustration of cloaked nightjar for 1843 poem "The Whip-poor-will" by George P. Morris

It is 1926, and Whip-poor-wills have refused to leave Lovecraft's fictional Massachusetts town of Dunwich until after Halloween. These "unnaturally belated" birds, as Lovecraft describes them, gather in flocks — another inauspicious, unnatural behavior for the species — outside the Whateley family farmhouse that begat the horror that had entered Dunwich. There, the Whip-poor-wills chant their call in unison:

Whip poor will, whip poor will, whip poor will

"After midnight," Lovecraft reports, "their shrill notes burst into a kind of pandæmoniac cachinnation which filled all the countryside, and not until dawn did they finally quiet down. Then they vanished, hurrying southward where they were fully a month overdue. What this meant, no one could quite be certain till later. None of the country folk seemed to have died . . ." But **Lavinia Whateley** — mother to the being that would become the Dunwich horror — was never seen again.

Among fans of macabre fiction and gothic literature, "The Dunwich Horror" is arguably the best-known story to invoke arguably the most famous nightjar species, Whip-poor-will (now Eastern Whip-poor-will). Lovecraft has the birds engage in all sorts of un-Whip-poor-will-like behavior — the flocks, the collective chants, the late autumn departures. The birds are keyed to the deaths of humans, especially "unnatural" humans like the Whateleys.

But Lovecraft wasn't the first to invoke Whip-poor-wills to elevate a horror story. A Whip-poor-will torments **Ichabod Crane** in **Washington Irving's** "[The Legend of Sleepy Hollow](#)." No doubt, the species was once common and well known around Tarrytown, NY, where the "headless horseman" ghost of a Hessian soldier pursued Crane. Poor Ichabod, who seems generally afraid of the dark, heard the Whip-poor-will's call as a moan, which blended with other noises: "the boding cry of the tree toad, that harbinger of storm, the dreary hooting of the screech owl, or the sudden rustling in the thicket of birds frightened from their roost."

Nor was Lovecraft the first to invoke the Whip-poor-will as unnaturally late to depart for the winter. A decade or so before his Dunwich Whip-poor-wills postponed their fall migration to collect Lavinia's soul, the writer **Clifford Raymond** kept Whip-poor-wills around through the October Hunter's Moon in "[The Mystery of Hartley House](#)." The birds inhabit this forgotten novel's climatic scene, foretelling a death at the haunted house.

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Nightbirds have long had a grip on the human imagination. They appear as shadows to us, as poor as our night vision is. They hoot and screech and churr and jar from hidden perches. We've associated them with impending doom — illness, suffering, death.

Shakespeare knew this, portending Caesar's death with a daytime owl:

*And yesterday the bird of night did sit
Even at noonday, upon the market-place,
Hooting and shrieking*

"Screeching owls are almost universally feared," the anthropologist **Edward Armstrong** writes in *The Folklore of Birds* (1970, p. 115). But "this bird was especially ominous because of its unnatural behaviour."

Thus, the literary allure of the unnaturally late Whip-poor-will, persisting into the darkness and cold of October — and the Hunter's Moon, the Halloween. And so, too, the allure of the unusual flocks that Lovecraft imagines, birds who chant *with* rather than against each other. (I have listened to flocks of Whip-poor-wills in the Ozarks of Missouri. They are haunting, yes, but they refuse to synchronize their calls, which slide in and out of synchronicity.)



Then there are the daytime Whip-poor-wills of *Chapelwaite*, an Epix network TV series based on Stephen King's short story *Jerusalem's Lot*: The birds and their unnatural diurnal behavior are a "double omen," as one horror blog puts it.

When birds no longer heed the laws of nature, something monstrous approaches.

And what about here in Colorado? Our near-equivalent to the Whip-poor-will is the Common Poorwill, famous for its ability to enter deep torpor to survive cold. Many birds can temporarily lower their body temperatures and energy needs on very cold nights, but poorwills can do it many nights in a row.

So for a Colorado birder, a Halloween encounter with a nightjar isn't out of the question. Poorwills linger in our state through late October, and there are even a few sightings in November and December. Often inactive, especially on cold mornings, they can be mistaken as sick or injured. More autumn poorwill encounters are in urban Denver-Aurora, perhaps because more birders live in town than in the scrub oak thickets outside the city. Autumn poorwills on pavement and in mulch piles are easier to spot, too. Perhaps the urban heat island effect also plays a part, keeping insects active for better hunting.

To sum up, what should you do if you hear a poorwill on Halloween? RUN! . . . but only after submitting your eBird checklist.



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PS: Your Denver-area birder's guide to Halloween

You'll start the day, of course, in Cheesman Park, one of Denver's best known haunted locations. With neighboring Denver Botanic Gardens, it's among the better places in urban Denver for uncommon fall and winter specialties: Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Mountain Chickadees, and Townsend's Solitaires. Orange-crowned Warblers have been reported as late as November. And who knows? At some point a Common Poorwill may linger as late as Halloween here.

From Cheesman, head for urban and suburban graveyards. Most notable are Fairmount Cemetery and Littleton Cemetery. Fairmount has easy access to the High Line Canal riparian corridor, and Littleton's conifers may hold the last montane species moving down into the greater Denver for winter.

If your Halloween appetite includes the dread of Edgar Allan Poe's most famous poem, pay his croaking bird homage by pursuing Common Ravens around the southern suburbs. They're often reported along the South Platte River in October, as well as in parking lots on the border of Littleton and Highlands Ranch. End the day with owling, perhaps on the High Line Canal Trail in Centennial, Greenwood Village, or Cherry Hills Village. An encounter with a Great Horned Owl is practically a given, while Eastern Screech-Owls — they of Irving's "dreary hooting" — are always possible in the canal's century-old, hollowed and hallowed cottonwoods.

All this . . . and nothing more!

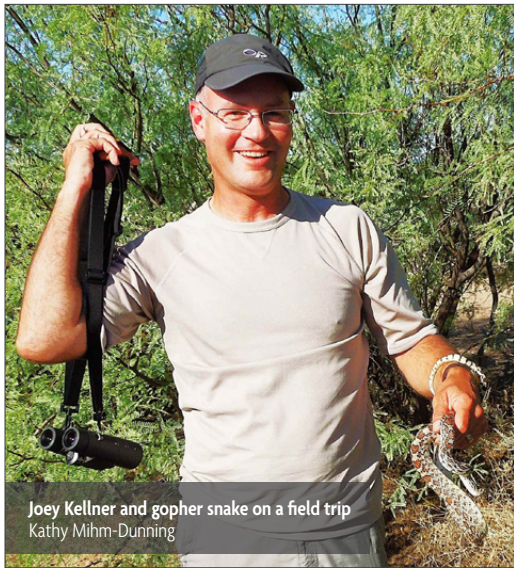
DFO member and birder **Jared Del Rosso** is also a wildflower gardener and sociologist with a special interest in urban and suburban nature. He's writing a book about Whip-poor-wills in American culture. Read more at his blog [The Lonesome Whip-poor-will](#)



"The Raven" illustration, 1875
Edouard Manet / Library of Congress



"Quoth the Raven, 'Nevermore!'"
John C. Breitsch



Joey Kellner and gopher snake on a field trip
Kathy Mihm-Dunning



The Piratic Flycatcher that was Kellner's
500th and Colorado's 523rd species
Rob Raker

Species Leaders		
1. Joey Kellner		500
2. Norman Erthal		496
2. Brandon K Percival		496
4. Cole Wild		490
5. Loch Kilpatrick		489
6. Rachel Kolokoff Hopper		488
7. Nathan Pieplow		480
8. John Drummond		479
9. Joe Roller		477
10. Joe Mammoser		474

MILESTONES

Mr. Everything reaches the once unreachable: 500 Colorado species for DFO's Joey Kellner

Patrick O'Driscoll

Longtime DFO member **Joey Kellner**, who has done just about everything a Denver Field Ornithologist can do, has done it again. In September, he became the first birder known to record 500 bird species in Colorado.

Kellner's 500th was also a first-ever-in-Colorado species: A [Piratic Flycatcher](#) found by Denver avian ecologist **Dan Maynard** Sept. 19 at a Yuma County lake less than 10 miles from Nebraska and Kansas. Maynard, a longtime member of the [Colorado Bird Records Committee](#) that will formally confirm this "first state record" sighting, submitted his mega-find with deadpan calm. "Um, wow," Maynard wrote to open his eBird description of the bird.

"No way in heck could I ever reach a number like 500 without other people reporting birds," said Kellner, thanking Maynard and remembering the many times he has seen new Colorado birds by chasing after someone else's find. "I needed the people — not just birders, even people who saw something weird, a different bird, outside their house."

Normally, Piratic Flycatchers stick to tropical parts of Mexico, Central and South America. But this one wandered far north to Stalker Lake State Wildlife Area, a patch of habitat by the railroad tracks outside Wray, CO, 170 miles east-northeast of Denver. There, it became the state's 523rd bird species. That's an astonishing figure — approaching half of the roughly 1,125 species ever recorded in the US — considering landlocked Colorado's great distance from the coasts, gulfs and oceans where the potential for unusual sightings is greater.

In a post on the CoBirds list-serv, bird-sound expert **Nathan Pieplow** of Boulder noted that Colorado is now one of just six states (CO, CA, AZ, NM, TX and FL) where someone has observed 500 species. "If you needed more evidence that we live in one of the finest US states for birding, there it is," he added. (Pieplow's post noted, parenthetically, that another prominent veteran Colorado birder, **Duane Nelson**, may already have reached or passed the 500 mark, "but Duane doesn't officially keep track of his number.")

Left: Kellner tops eBird's list of birders who've observed the most species in Colorado
eBird

Continued on page 18

CONSERVATION

Denver begins “restoration” of City Park meadow to bird-friendly prairie patch

Patrick O’Driscoll

The weekend before Labor Day, temporary chain-link fencing went up around almost 4 acres of turf-grass meadow on the far east side of Denver City Park. After the holiday, a team of “steam weeding” technicians, armed with long-handled tools resembling vacuum cleaner wands and hoses, began killing off most of the South Meadow’s bluegrass turf in clouds of hot vapor.

About a month later, much of the grass is dead as the site awaits the next step in Denver Parks & Recreation’s \$1.5 million [Living Land](#) project. By 2027, most of the site will be re-seeded with native shortgrass prairie grasses (blue gramma, buffalograss) and re-planted with native shrubs and wildflowers such as chokecherry, wild plum, blanket flower and prairie sage — more than 30 new native plantings in all. With this “naturalized native prairie meadow,” the city aims to re-create a representative trace of the western Great Plains landscape that covered eastern Colorado long before the park and Denver itself were established. Shortgrass prairie grasslands, where bison, prairie dogs, grassland birds and native tribes thrived until the mid-19th century, once blanketed 265 million acres of the western Plains.

City Park’s prairie patch is one of three Living Land elements to link Denver’s largest park with the indigenous peoples, plants and wildlife that were at home on the Colorado Plains before westward US expansion overran and resettled most of it. The project also includes conversion of two sites nearby — the park’s long-defunct former lily pond and its vacant eastside playground circle east of Ferril Lake — into a native and medicinal plants garden and a traditional meeting ground for gatherings of all kinds, from group picnics to native community ceremonies.

This triad of locations is meant to educate park visitors about the original landscape’s “environmental resiliency” and its pre-settlement stewardship by native tribes, and to celebrate the lives of the people and wildlife that once inhabited it.

The meadow under conversion lies south of the Denver Museum of Nature & Science and shares the east border of the park’s Nature Play area, where plentiful wildflowers and restoration of a seasonal “creek” also attract migrant and year-round bird species and other wildlife. Opened in 2024, Nature Play is a multigenerational playground dotted with wildlife sculpture, walking paths, restored vegetation and interpretive wayside markers with depictions of birds.

Once established, the prairie meadow next door is likely to attract birds as well, perhaps even species associated with shortgrass and sagebrush ecosystems, like Sage Thrasher and Brewer’s and Vesper Sparrow. Even before the meadow’s conversion, Loggerhead Shrike and Western Meadowlark have paid rare visits to this very location in a park less than 2 miles from downtown Denver.

Already built months ago is a short stretch of paved walkway into the south part of the meadow, ending in a circular spot destined to be a “meditation area.” Eventually, new gravel footpaths will wind through the re-created prairieland.

In consultation with members of native American tribes, the city agreed to use a less toxic method than commercial herbicides to remove the bluegrass turf and preserve the integrity of the underlying soil. It hired [Edaphic Solutions](#), a Longmont-based company that applies concentrated steam on the ground to kill weeds and other undesired vegetation, usually in small-scale home and business settings. The South Meadow turf removal is the company’s largest project ever.

Because large, mature trees like those on the north and east sides of the meadow were not native to the shortgrass prairie, the city will replace the bluegrass turf beneath them with a shade-tolerant mix of native grasses to complete the meadow renovation.



Left: Concept plan sign on temporary fencing for prairie restoration work at Denver City Park. Right: Edaphic Solutions worker steam-kills turf in project to convert a City Park meadow to shortgrass prairie (Patrick O’Driscoll)

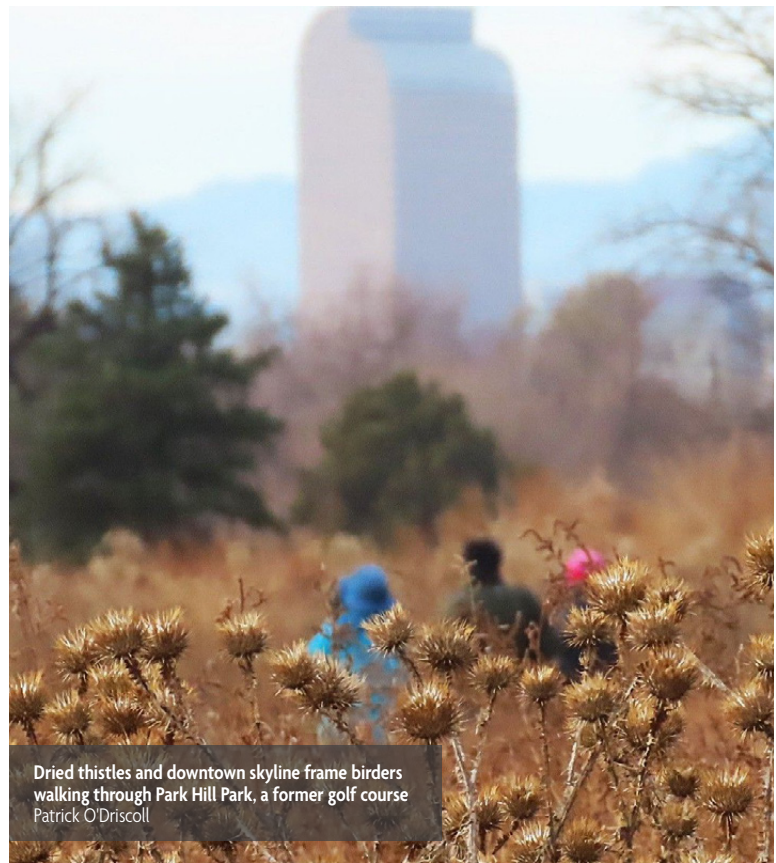
CONSERVATION

A diamond in the (weedy) rough: birding Denver's former Park Hill Golf Course

Michelle DiGiacomo

What is better than an unexpected gem? Think of that dive bar off of the main drag, with plastic chairs, generous pours, and creative appetizers seasoned to perfection. The equivalent of this, for Denver birders, might well be the former Park Hill Golf Course, at Colorado Boulevard and East 35th Avenue.

It's now called Park Hill Park, and a Denver Parks & Recreation planning process underway since spring 2025 is expected to redevelop the 155-acre site with traditional urban park features as well as some open space and wildlife habitat.



For the moment, though, this long-closed golf course (since December 2018) and its once-manicured grounds are overrun with taller, tougher, drier flora. For now, it's a place only for walking and wildlife watching. Here, grasshoppers fly like sparks with every step you take. Birds you'd expect to find in a cityscape make an appearance — Black-billed Magpies, House Finches, and European Starlings. But so do species that remind us city dwellers that, hey! We all actually live on the western edge of the Great Plains. This land used to be shortgrass prairie!

The last time I walked through on a DFO field trip, we found Western Meadowlarks, Western Kingbirds, and a Say's Phoebe. Then, surprise appearances by Bullock's Orioles, Lark Sparrows and a Blue Grosbeak (not seen but clearly heard) elevated our walk from enjoyable to fantastic. Those sightings merit my full recommendation of Park Hill Park as an off-the-main-drag spot for some surprisingly good birding. Its bird list on eBird is now up to 113 species, 40 of them added this year alone.

If you need more motivation to check it out, here's my pitch: What is happening at Park Hill Park is a unique ecological situation. Come see for yourself what happens when an ex-golf course, no longer groomed and watered, simply dries up.

If you visit, observe and record what you see on eBird. We can gather data together on how a former golf course lying fallow for nearly eight years is affecting populations of birds. Perhaps this information might help other communities where expensive-to-maintain golf courses may undergo similar change. In Broomfield, for instance, [Eagle Trace Golf Course](#) sold its water rights and is now closed permanently as of Oct. 3 because of the drought.

So check out Park Hill Park and enjoy it now, in its wild and undeveloped state. Within two or three years, redevelopment will begin to change its landscape again. Will that be better for the birds, or worse? Let's find out together.

Michelle DiGiacomo is a member of DFO's Conservation Committee. She lives near Park Hill Park and birds there often



FIELD TRIPS IN FOCUS

July, August and September DFO trips *In Focus*

Field trips in 2026's three summer-to-fall months included 77 total outings. Participants on 33 of them took pictures of "birders birding" as photographic history for our 91-year-old club. If you're on DFO trips in October, November and December, please take a few shots of your fellow trippers birding and send us the best for the next issue of *The Lark Bunting*, due out in January. Send .JPG or .PNG photo files of birders in the field, with date/location of trip and any individual IDs (if needed) to editor **Patrick O'Driscoll** at patodrisk@gmail.com. Deadline for the January 2026 autumn-quarter issue is **Thursday, Dec. 31**. Thanks!



JULY 7

Birds Plus Trees + Beavers (Park County)

Leaders

David Suddjian and Anne Craig

Participants

Kara Cooper, Coreen Spellman, Andrea Durán, Luke Jaramillo

Field trippers cross rocky stretch of Limber Grove Trail in Park County during DFO's Field Trips + Beavers outing July 7 to learn about eight conifer tree species and the beaver habitats of Four Mile Creek. The group tallied 49 bird species, and co-leader David Suddjian also notched his 100,000th eBird checklist on this trip

(David Suddjian)

TRIP REPORT

JULY 12

Ken Caryl Ranch (Jefferson)

Leader

David Suddjian

Participants

Bonnie Prado, Melody Serra, Virginia Gulakowski, Kelly Ducham, Bruce Raff, Caitlyn O'Neil, Caroline Armstrong

Birders among the rocks at Ken Caryl Ranch in Jefferson County on a DFO field trip on July 12. The field trippers checklisted 24 species, from several families of Wild Turkey to a single, female Broad-tailed Hummingbird at trip leader David Suddjian's front yard feeders

(Bonnie Prado)

TRIP REPORT



Continued on page 22



JULY 14

Lyons “Summer Hummers” (Boulder, Larimer)

Leader

Mary Geder

Participants

David Suddjian, Dana Hiatt, Sandy Johnson, Diane Hutton, Judy Lane, Kolya Souvorin, Andrea Durán, Rachel Laigast, Chrissy Fitzsimmons, Joe Chen, Mary Geder, Kavya Achanta

Participants on July 14 DFO/Denver Audubon field trip to Lyons watch for hummingbirds at feeders off the foothills deck of host Raymond Davis. They saw all four species of hummingbirds present in Colorado during summer and early fall migration

(Joe Chen)

TRIP REPORT

JULY 16

Golden Gate Canyon SP (Boulder)

Leader

Ryan Diabala

Participants

Jim McBride, Linda Purcell, Jason Bidgood, Anne Craig, Debbie Schultz, Annette Aguero, David Suddjian, Catherine McCloy

Field trippers on July 16 DFO visit to Golden Gate Canyon SP pick out a bird in the shaded mixed conifer forest on the lower part of Horseshoe Trail. Besides Mixed conifer forest shaded much of the lower part of the trail. Besides the birds, a major highlight was seeing a bull moose along the trail

(Jason B. Bidgood)

TRIP REPORT



JULY 15

Park County explorations (Park)

Leaders

Ryan Corda and David Suddjian

Participants

Kara Cooper, Olivia Salmon, Andrea Durán, Sean Warren

Birders walk along Geneva Creek on July 15 DFO field trip to locations in Park County, including South Park and Bailey. The group enjoyed walking through the woods and seeing sapsuckers, Band-tailed Pigeons and Rufous Hummingbirds

(David Suddjian)

TRIP REPORT



Continued on page 23



JULY 17

South Platte Park (Arapahoe)

Leaders

Cynthia Breidenbach and Julia Gwinn

Participants

Kara Cooper, Beth Moran, Evangeline Gallegos, Kris Saucke, Joe Chen, Jim McBride, Kelly O'Sullivan, Andrea Grasso

Birders cross dam on Eaglewatch Lake as they chase the shade during a hot monthly DFO/Denver Audubon field trip July 17 to South Platte Park. Their 31-species outing included a glimpse of a Northern Yellow Warbler feeding a Brown-headed Cowbird chick that had hatched in the warbler's nest

(Cindy Breidenbach)

TRIP REPORT



JULY 18

Ken Caryl Valley (Jefferson)

Leader

David Suddjian

Participants

Bonnie Prado, Kris Saucke, Sofie Davidson, Karen Bellina, Melody Serra

Field trippers on the trail in Ken Caryl Valley during a July 18 DFO outing that began with four hummingbird species in trip leader David Suddjian's front yard. A subsequent hike nearby followed Massey Draw from the foothills to the hogback. The group recorded 39 species on 10 checklists

(Melody Serra)

TRIP REPORT

JULY 19

Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR (Adams)

Leader

Jason B. Bidgood

Participants

Michelle Trotter, Nga Turner, Linda Purcell, Erika Pemberton, Pamela Kalinowski, Jack Robinson, Melody Serra, Debby Miller, Louise Morningstar, Becky Russell, Tyler Anderson

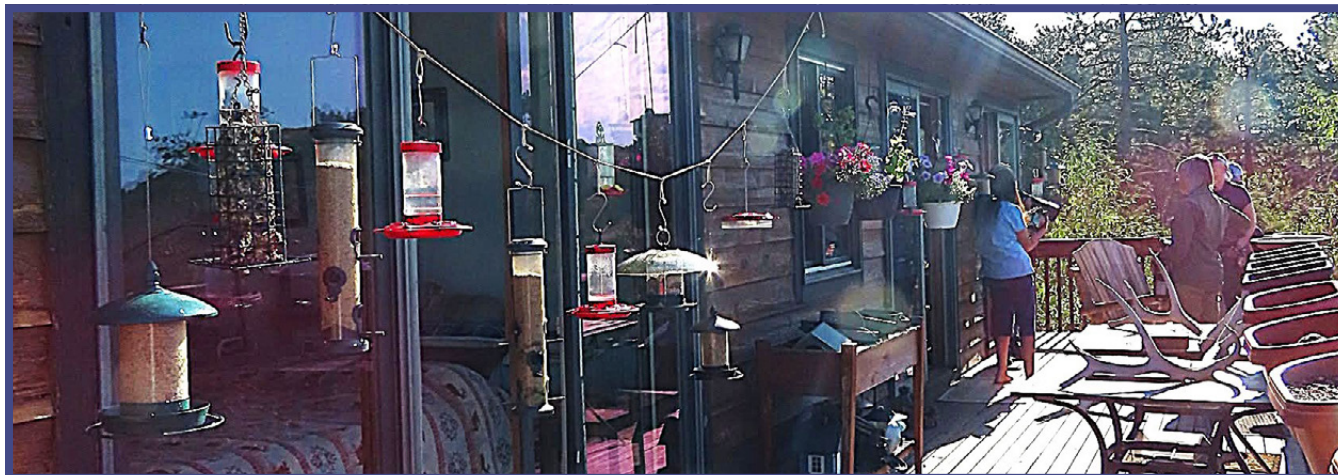
Field trippers shortly after sunrise on the Bluestem Loop trail during July 19 DFO outing to Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR. Birders found many young, recently fledged birds among 46 species checklisted. Family groups of Eastern and Western Kingbirds were especially vocal

(Melody Serra)

TRIP REPORT



Continued on page 24



JULY 22

Bailey Region “Summer Hummers” (Jefferson, Park)

Leaders

David Suddjiann and Anne Craig

Participants

Joe Chen, Meg Kenny, Paula Rosson, Chrissy Fitzsimmons,
Coreen Spellman

Bird-feeder nirvana at the home of host Laurel George for another summer hummingbirds-focused DFO field trip July 22 into the Front Range high country. This house near Pine has hummingbird feeders on all four sides and plentiful food for all species. The group saw lots of Broad-taileds as well as Rufouses and Calliopes among 30 bird species recorded for the trip

(Meg Kenny)

TRIP REPORT



JULY 24

Denver Botanic Gardens @ Chatfield (Jefferson)

Leaders

Judy McKeon and David Suddjian

Participants

Kara Cooper, Beth Moran, Sean Jones, Kris Saucke, Anne Craig,
Virginia Gulakowski

Field trippers view from a respectful distance a hummingbird nest with large chicks soon to fledge during a July 24 DFO “summer hummers” outing to Denver Botanic Gardens @ Chatfield

(David Suddjian)

TRIP REPORT

Continued on page 25



JULY 31

Lyons "Summer Hummers" (Larimer)

Leader

Susan Blansett

Participants

Edie Israel, Joe Chen, Anne Craig, Annette Higgins, Michelle Verostko, Kristi Moran, Bill Freeman, Meg Kenny, Kathy Kuncie Parker, Bruce Raff, Melissa Akers, Luca Finch

Birders gather on and around the back deck of host Raymond Davis's home near Lyons July 31 on another field trip focused on Colorado's summer hummingbirds. for good looks at three kinds of hummingbirds (Rufous, Black-chinned, Black-tailed) and more than 25 other species

(Meg Kenny)

TRIP REPORT

JULY 25

Lyons "Summer Hummers" (Larimer)

Leader

David Suddjian

Participants

Lauren Friesen, Michael Chen, Ann Christensen, Tyler Anderson, Jessica Oneale, Jessica Forbes, Jean Wei, Anna Puchalski, Ian Barrett, Ryan Corda, Jennifer Bailey, Matthew Fast

Birders swarm the back deck of host Raymond Davis's home near Lyons July 25 for good looks at three kinds of hummingbirds (Rufous, Black-chinned, Black-tailed) and more than 25 other species during another in DFO's series of "summer hummer" field trips. Other highlights included a Hairy Woodpecker feeding a begging juvenile, nesting Western Bluebirds, a bright Lazuli Bunting and a loud Plumbeous Vireo

(Ryan Corda)

TRIP REPORT



AUGUST 3

Lair o' the Bear Park (Jefferson)

Leader

Shay Lyons

Participants

Bonnie Prado, Jim McBride, John Batt, Isaac Ho, Cynthia Breidenbach, Sean Warren

Birders scan Lair o' the Bear Park for birds from bridge over Bear Creek during DFO field trip Aug. 3. The group checklisted 28 species, including more than two dozen Broad-tailed Hummingbirds

(Shay Lyons)

TRIP REPORT

Continued on page 26



AUGUST 8

Chatfield Farms, Denver Botanic Gardens (Jefferson)

Leaders

David Suddjian and Judy McKeon

Participants

Melody Serra, Amelia Brisk, Gabriela Durán, Keegan Finger, Joe Chen, Andrea Durán, Louise Morningstar, Mary Ramsey, Isaac Ho, Katherine Forcey

All eyes (and lenses) are on a patch where Calliope and Broad-tailed hummingbirds were feeding during Aug. 8 DFO field trip to Denver Botanic Gardens' Chatfield Farms. Another in DFO's series of "summer hummer"-themed outings, the trip produced all four species of Colorado hummingbirds. The group survived melting heat to checklist 29 total bird species

(Melody Serra)

TRIP REPORT



AUGUST 9

Louviers and DuPont Open Space (Douglas)

Leader

David Suddjian

Participants

Olivia Salmon, Coreen Spellman, Tyler Anderson, Virginia Gulakowski, Kris Saucke, Jacqueline Gorman, Melody Serra, Jud Feldman-Santos, Ryan Corda

150+ Field trippers look in all directions on the former DuPont dynamite factory site during an Aug. 9 DFO outing to the village of Louviers. There was plentiful viewing of birds in the village's trees, fields and bird feeders, with 34 species total

(Melody Serra)

TRIP REPORT

Continued on page 27



AUGUST 12

Drop-in Sunrise Sit, Chatfield SP (Jefferson)

Leader

Cynthia Breidenbach

Participants

David Suddjian, Coreen Spellman, Sue Plankis, Eliane Walters, Linda Purcell, Susan Blansett, Joey Kellner

Participants in DFO's "Drop-in Sunrise Sit" at Chatfield State Park on Aug. 12 admire the dramatic sunrise. Seeking out birds without leaving the "sit" site, the group compiled a list of 43 species for the morning, including 23 Snowy Egrets and a flock of Yellow-headed Blackbirds

(Cindy Breidenbach)

TRIP REPORT

AUGUST 14

Birds + Trees, Colorado 103 (Jefferson, Clear Creek)

Leader

David Suddjian

Participants

Jacqueline Gorman, Benjamin Shay, Jason Bidgood, Mary Fran O'Connor, Bridget Sanders, Laura Annunziata, Kim Hau

Field trippers examine parts of a conifer during a mobile Aug. 14 Birds + Trees field trip along Highway 103. The outing included stops at elevations ranging from 7,800 feet to 10,900 feet to examine the nine conifer species found in the Colorado's foothills, montane, and subalpine life zones. The group saw about 20 bird species along the way, too

(Jason B. Bidgood)



TRIP REPORT

Continued on page 28



AUGUST 19

Cherry Creek State Park (Arapahoe)

Leader

David Suddjian

Participants

Jim McBride, Sue Plankis, Virginia Gulakowski, Joe Chen, Bridget Sanders, Lynn Sauer, Ethan Cleveland, Anne Craig, Brian Wolfe

Participants on Aug. 19 field trip to Cherry Creek State Park scan Pelican Point for shorebirds. The group found a moderate variety of those, plus plenty of other birds for a 61-species outing

(David Suddjian)

TRIP REPORT

AUGUST 15

Ken Caryl Ranch private open space (Jefferson)

Leader

David Suddjian

Participants

Melody Serra, Coreen Spellman, Stephen Hendrix, Tyler Anderson

Birders on Aug. 15 field trip in private open space at Ken Caryl Ranch focus on a distant bird from hogback-like sandstone formations in the neighborhood's Brannon Gearhart Park. The group checklisted 42 species, including early migrants and birds in plumage molt along peaceful walking paths
(Melody Serra)

TRIP REPORT

Continued on page 29



AUGUST 28

Barr Lake State Park (Adams)

Leader

Charlie Chase

Participants

Cate Millard, Robin Trevillian, Emily Boswell, Joe Chen, Jim McBride, Anna Brooks, Jacqueline Gorman, Alayna

Participants in Aug. 28 field trip to the Barr Lake State Park banding station scan the lake for birds from a boardwalk viewpoint. DFO vice president Charlie Chase, a bander at the station, led the field trippers through the banding procedure. From the banding station and beyond, the group checklisted 49 species

(Joe Chen)

TRIP REPORT

AUGUST 23

Staunton SP (Jefferson)

Leader

Tim Condon

Participants

John Batt, Bonnie Prado, Isaac Ho, Kelly Ducham, Jason Bidgood, Jonathan Shikes, Jeff Dawson, Shilpa Klocke, Michelle Verostko, Caroline Armstrong, Randy Leonard

Birders pause on the Davis Pond Loop Trail in Staunton State Park during Aug. 23 DFO field trip. Among the birds seen on the 26-species checklist was a Brown Creeper foraging in the bark of a Ponderosa pine

(Jason B. Bidgood)

TRIP REPORT

Continued on page 30



AUGUST 29

Denver City Park (Denver)

Leaders

Patrick O'Driscoll

Participants

Linda Purcell, Stephen Hendrix, Sonia Kolts, Lauren Friesen

Field trippers scan Ferril Lake in Denver City Park during Aug. 29 outing. The group checklisted 32 species, including a Merlin, seldom seen in the park, and a juvenile Osprey diving for fish from atop streetlights along the lakeshore. Early fall migrants included Chipping, Brewer's and Lark Sparrows, and a pair of Wilson's Warblers (Patrick O'Driscoll)

TRIP REPORT



AUGUST 29

First Creek @ DEN Open Space (Denver)

Leader

Ryan Corda

Participants

Caitlyn O'Neil, Eliane Walters, Jules Burke, Emily Boswell, Meg Kenny, Joe Chen, Jacqueline Gorman, Jim McBride, Becky Russell

Birders on DFO field trip to First Creek @ DEN Open Space pause along the Buckley Road walking and cycling corridor to scan for some of the 30 bird species they checklisted on the outing. The southeast corner of neighboring Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR is in the background beyond the fence (Joe Chen)

TRIP REPORT

Continued on page 31



AUGUST 30

Inspiration Point Park (Denver)

Leader

Linda Purcell

Participants

Kara Cooper, Beth Moran, Virginia Gulakowski,
Jacqueline Gorman

DFO birders pose during early morning outing Aug. 30 to Denver's Inspiration Point Park. The group checklisted 22 species and enjoyed panoramic views of the city and surrounding northern suburbs from the semi-hidden, 25-acre site on a bluff in northwest Denver

(Linda Purcell)

TRIP REPORT



AUGUST 30

NE Colorado – Prewitt & Jackson Reservoirs (Washington, Morgan)

Leader

Joey Kellner

Participants

Olivia Salmon, Christie Owens, Norman Erthal, Matthew Fast, John Batt,
Judy McKeon, Jennifer Tonge, Robert Tonge, Joe Chen, Isaac Ho

Field trippers move in on marsh birds in a swampy area below the dam at Prewitt Reservoir during Aug. 30 outing led by veteran DFO leader Joey Kellner. The group's prodigious checklist of 106 species included 17 kinds of shorebirds, among them more than 1,000 Baird's Sandpipers

(Joe Chen)

TRIP REPORT

Continued on page 32



AUGUST 31

Prewitt Reservoir (Washington)

Leader

David Suddjian

Participants

Anne Craig, Sharon Kelly, Ian Barrett, Jacqueline Gorman, Debra Strike, Oliver Urdiales, Luke Jaramillo

Birders focus on a Virginia Rail below the dam at Prewitt Reservoir in Washington County during DFO field trip Aug. 31. The group saw 81 bird species total, including nearly 2,500 shorebirds near and far, about 1,200 of them identifiable in 17 species, and the rest not identifiable beyond “Scolopacidae,” the greater family of long-bodied, skinny-legged shorebirds from sandpipers and phalaropes to dowitchers and Whimbrels

(David Suddjian)

TRIP REPORT

SEPTEMBER 5

Louviers and DuPont Open Space (Douglas)

Leaders

David Suddjian and Anne Craig

Participants

Melissa Wetzig, Coreen Spellman, Timothy Condon, Linda Cunico, Debra and David Strike, Michelle Verostko, Kris Saucke, Michelle Trotter, Jim McBride, Melody Serra

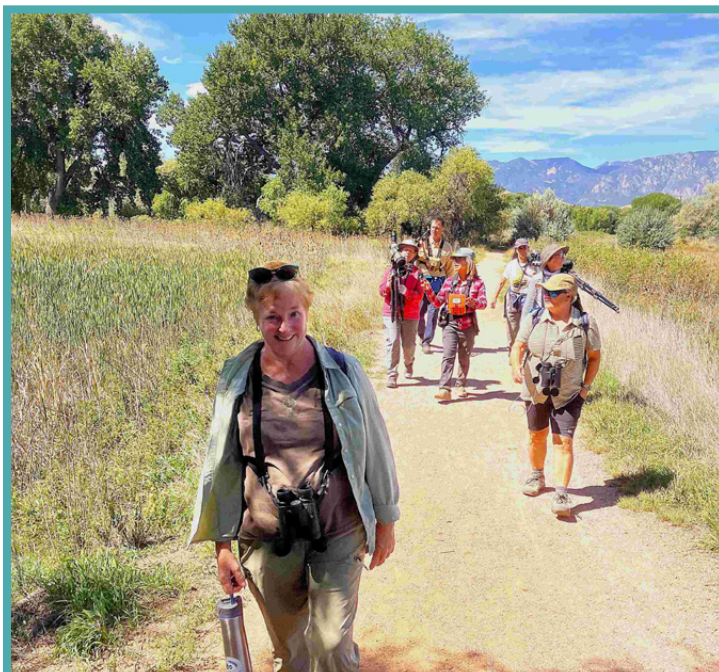
Field trippers zero in on a juvenile Western Bluebird from the streets of the village of Louviers during Sept. 5 DFO outing to the former company town of the defunct 20th century DuPont TNT factory. The trip marked David Suddjian’s 700th as a DFO trip leader

(Melody Serra)

TRIP REPORT



Continued on page 33



SEPTEMBER 11

Fountain Creek (El Paso)

Leaders

Linda Purcell and Judy McKeon

Participants

Isaac Ho, Linda Cunico, Cynthia Breidenbach, Jacqueline Gorman, Nga Turner, Luke Jaramillo

Birders on Sept. 11 field trip to Fountain Creek in the Colorado Springs area hike along trail enroute to checklisting 48 bird species, including a kettle of Turkey Vultures up high and a double-flock of Bushtits below
(Isaac Ho)

TRIP REPORT

SEPTEMBER 13

Belmar Historic Park (Jefferson)

Leader

Shay Lyons

Participants

Bridget Sanders, Tyler Anderson, Evangeline Gallegos, Joan Van Loozenoord, Laura Castellano, Jud Feldman-Santos

Participants in DFO field trip Sept. 13 to Belmar Historic Park in Lakewood focus in on a distant bird. The group checklisted 24 species on the 2-1/2-hour outing
(Shay Lyons)

TRIP REPORT



Continued on page 34



SEPTEMBER 16

Leyden Lake, Arvada (Jefferson)

Leaders

Judy McKeon and Diane Roberts

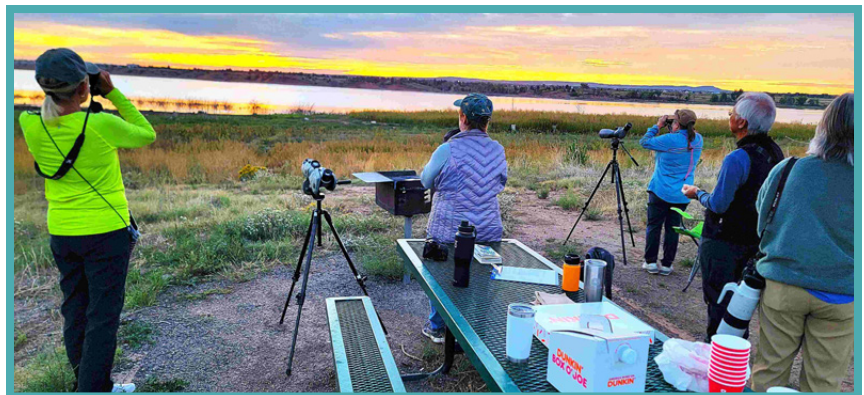
Participants

Shay Lyons, Debbie and Matthew Schultz, Dwight Stuessy, David Suddjian, Linda Purcell

Birders walk the edge of Leyden Lake on Sept. 16 during the first DFO field trip ever at that Arvada park location. The group checklisted 58 bird species, including eight kinds of waterfowl, four kinds of flycatchers and many, many songbirds

(Linda Purcell)

CHECKLIST



SEPTEMBER 16

Drop-in Sunrise “sit,” Chatfield SP (Jefferson)

Leaders

Joey Kellner and Cindy Breidenbach

Participants

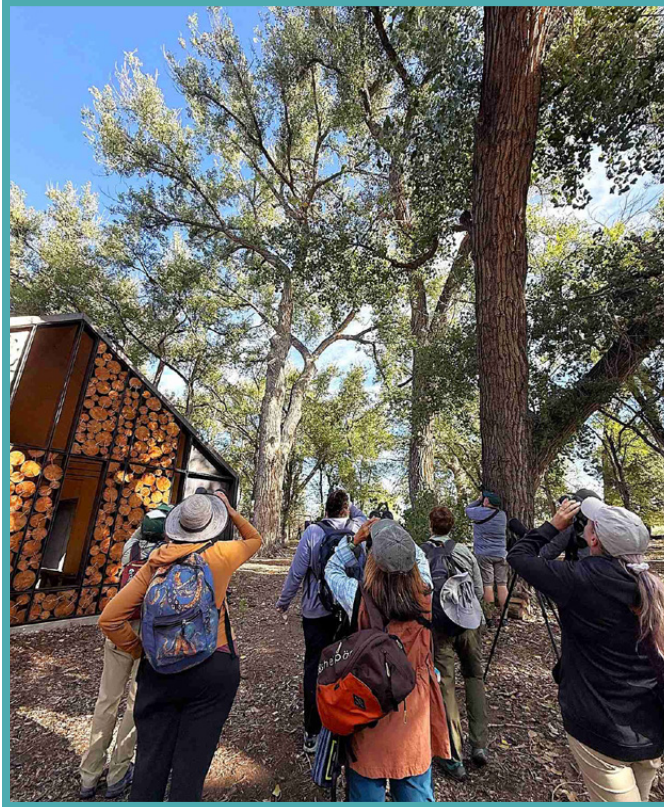
Coreen Spellman, Kelly O’Sullivan, Isaac Ho, Luke Jaramillo, Nathan Crow, Jacqueline Gorman

Birders on “Drop-in Sunrise ‘sit’” stationary field trip Sept. 16 at Chatfield State Park greet sunrise and scan for waterfowl and shorebirds while partaking in coffee and donuts. The group, which checklisted 42 species in the morning encounter, logged 11 species of waterfowl, including four kinds of grebe

(Joey Kellner)

TRIP REPORT

Continued on page 35



SEPTEMBER 26

Chico Basin Ranch (El Paso, Pueblo)

Leaders

Ryan Corda and Gary Witt

Participants

Ryan Dibala, Jacqueline Gorman, Jon and Angela Hebel, Benjamin Ewing, Lauren Friesen, Shay Lyons, Nga Turner, Caitlyn O'Neil, Kaz Werner

All eyes and lenses are in the trees as participants in DFO's Sept. 26 field trip to Chico Basin Ranch sort through Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Wilson's Warblers and Cassin's Vireos near the ranch's bird-banding station. The morning-long outing delivered productive checklists with 72 total bird species, from Curve-billed Thrashers and Loggerhead Shrikes to Soras, Virginia Rails and Broad-winged Hawks — and one shy porcupine up a tree

(Ryan Corda)

TRIP REPORT

SEPTEMBER 27

Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR (Adams)

Leader

Jason B. Bidgood

Participants

Laurie Tripp, Virginia Gulakowski, Debby Miller, Bonnie Prado, Lexie Cahill, Caleb Bolin

Birders on DFO's Sept. 27 field trip to Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR scan for birds from the north shore of Lake Ladora. Among the 42 species seen were a cooperative Ruby-crowned Kinglet, a singing Marsh Wren and a recently arrived Lesser Black-backed Gull. The butterflies were good, too: Monarch, Painted Lady, Queen and Common Buckeye, plus many Corn Earworm Moths

(Jason B. Bidgood)

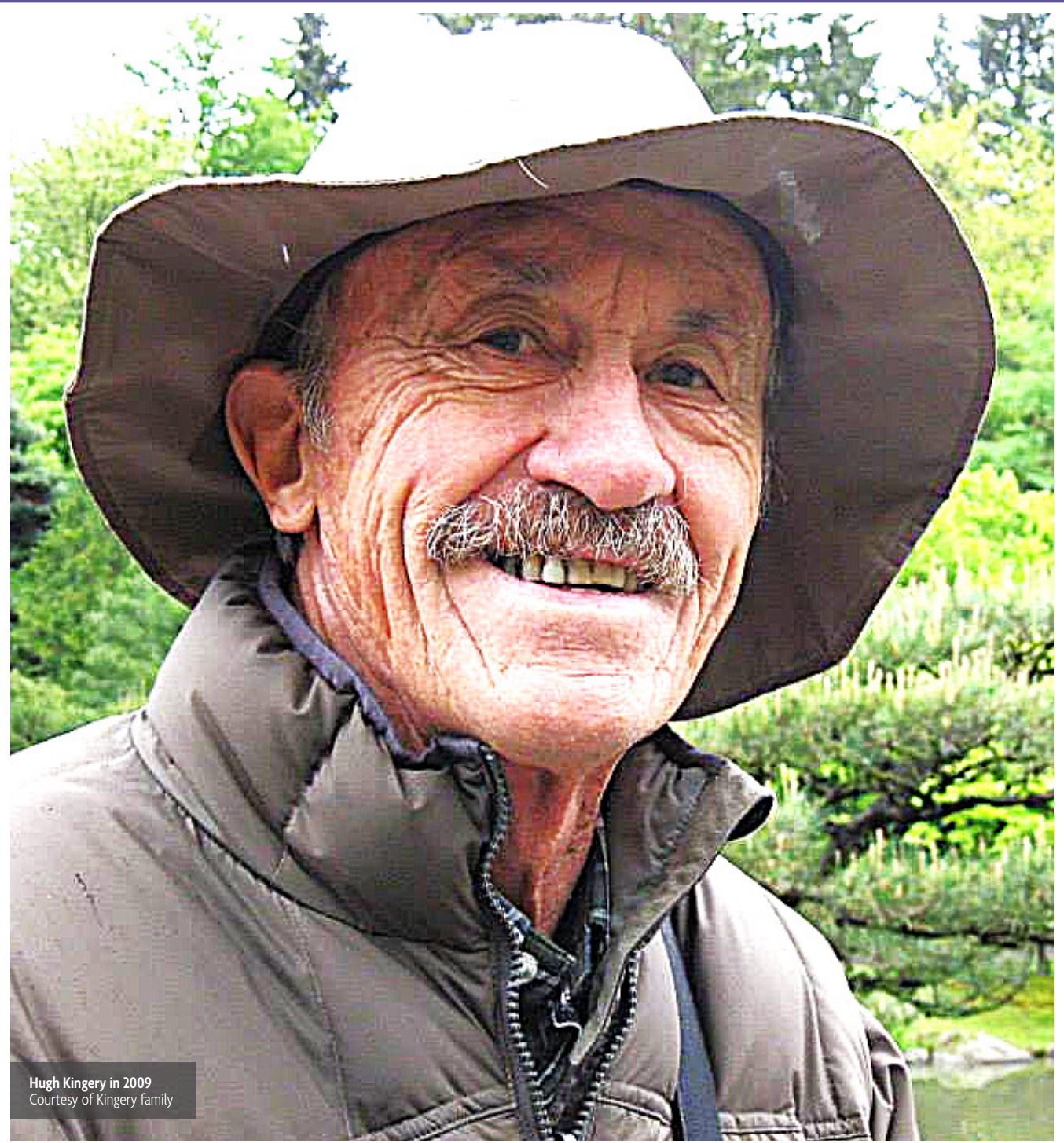


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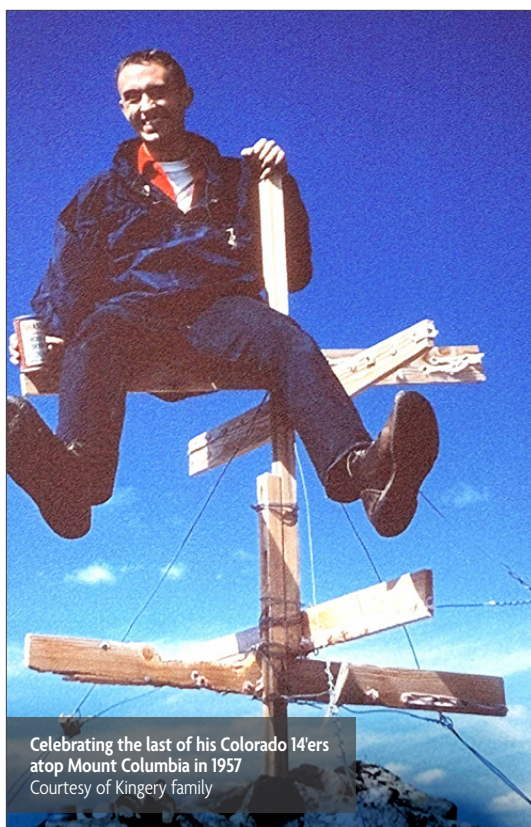
LAST WORD, LAST LOOK

Hugh Kingery (1932–2026)

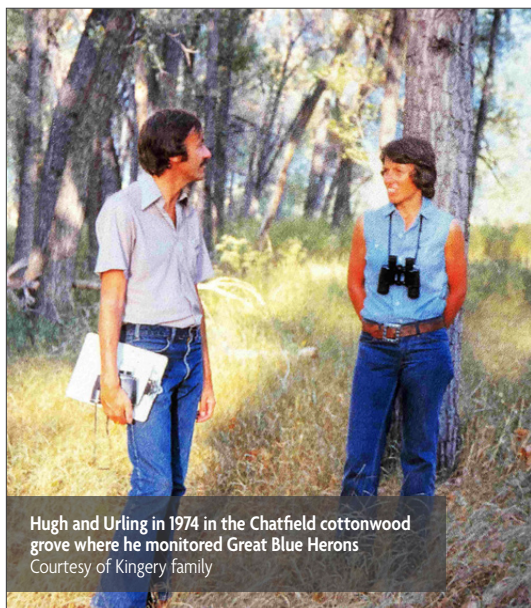
Conservationist, birding mentor,
dean of Colorado birders



Hugh Kingery in 2009
Courtesy of Kingery family



Celebrating the last of his Colorado 14'ers atop Mount Columbia in 1957
Courtesy of Kingery family



Hugh and Urling in 1974 in the Chatfield cottonwood grove where he monitored Great Blue Herons
Courtesy of Kingery family



Hugh and Urling, front left, with graduates and instructors from a Denver Audubon Master Birder class

Patrick O'Driscoll

Hugh Kingery, one of Colorado's most renowned birders and conservationists, died on July 11, 2026, 10 days after celebrating his 94th birthday by blowing out the candles on his cake. Surrounded by family, he passed peacefully in the home he shared with his wife and birding partner, **Urling**, amidst the scrub oak and canyon cliffs outside Franktown, CO.

Hugh belonged to Denver Field Ornithologists longer than any other member. He joined in 1953 when it was the Colorado Bird Club, and he continued as a member in the renamed DFO from 1963 on. When the club voted in 1968 against affiliating as a chapter of the National Audubon Society, Hugh joined a splinter group of 11 DFO members who met in another room to organize the Denver Audubon chapter. But he remained active in DFO, leading field trips and serving two terms as club president (1987-89).

Kingery's boyhood love of the Colorado outdoors — his earliest birding checklist dates to 1945, three weeks before his 13th birthday — spurred him on to decades of volunteer work for birds and the environment. A native of Denver's Park Hill neighborhood, he grew up with an unobstructed view across City Park's golf course to the Front Range peaks of the Rockies. Young Hugh went to the mountains often with his parents and younger brother, to a stone cabin on North St. Vrain Creek outside of Lyons.

Both parents were active hikers in the iconic Colorado Mountain Club, and as a 15-year-old Junior member, Hugh climbed his first 14,000-foot peak (Kit Carson) in 1947. He went on to summit all 53 Colorado "Fourteeners" within a decade, topping his last one, Mount Columbia, in 1957. He was just 25.

One cause after another

Hugh believed deeply in the importance of grassroots involvement in environmental conservation, and he pursued it intently. Besides co-founding Denver Audubon (1968-69), he was project director and editor of the first *Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas* (1986-1998), leader and compiler of numerous Christmas, spring and fall bird counts, and state coordinator of Colorado's annual Breeding Bird Survey for years. He also served through the decades in board and officer roles with conservation organizations including Denver Audubon, the Colorado chapter of The Nature Conservancy, Colorado Open Space Coordinating Council, Rocky Mountain Center on the Environment, Western Resource Advocates, and North American Ornithological Atlas Steering Committee, to name a few. With Urling, he trained hundreds and hundreds of Colorado birders, founding Denver Audubon's Beginning Birder program and developing its Master Birder course.

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Urling and Hugh Kingery with family dog Dipper at Castlewood Canyon SP in 2017
Courtesy of Kingery family



Hugh and Dipper on a birding walk near home in 2021
Patrick O'Driscoll

LAST WORD, LAST LOOK *cont from page 37*

“Hugh brought more people to birding than any single individual in Colorado,” said DFO member and veteran Colorado birder **Mary Fran O'Connor**. “He was an amazing teacher and mentor to those passionate about birding, nature, and conservation.”

A graduate of Denver's East High School, Cornell University in New York (zoology, 1954) and the University of Denver College of Law (1965), Kingery served a four-year tour of duty with the US Air Force's Air Defense Command Ground Observer Corps in Colorado (1954-58). After several years of administrative jobs with IBM Corp. and the Colorado Conservation Council, he began his legal career in 1966 as a staff lawyer for Husky Oil Co., where he worked until retirement in 1987.

From then on, Hugh's devotion to birds and the Colorado environment became virtually a full-time volunteer career that lasted longer than his professional one.

Single-minded mission

For his first activity in “retirement,” Kingery undertook the most ambitious mission of his bird-related career. He initiated and directed the *Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas* project, mobilizing 1,200 field volunteers to document the state's breeding birds across 1,745 “blocks” of habitat, 3 square miles each. Working full time without pay for more than a decade, Hugh supervised field personnel (and surveyed 200 of the blocks himself, many with Urling), managed the data they gathered, recruited authors to write inspiring bird descriptions for each species, and edited it all into an encyclopedic reference volume published in 1998. He worked in tandem with **Radeaux**, the single-named Colorado artist from Pueblo, who illustrated the species entries with striking artworks of the birds.

Hugh's effort inspired awe. “For a state to conduct, assemble and publish a breeding bird atlas normally takes huge amounts of government money,” said fellow DFO member and field ornithologist **Bob Righter**. “In the 1980s, Hugh approached the powers-that-be in Colorado to do this and was turned down. He was not deterred. Almost single-handedly, he organized a committee, raised the funds, and the first *Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas* was launched. Not only was it a scientific success, but all who participated had never had so much birding fun.”

Continued on page 39

For years, Hugh also coordinated the Colorado portion of the annual North American Breeding Bird Survey, a continent-wide effort led by the US Fish & Wildlife Service and US Geological Survey. Each year from late May into July, thousands of skilled birders venture out to document bird species in peak breeding season along thousands of 25-mile, 50-stop listening routes across their states. Under his direction, Hugh quintupled the number of survey routes in Colorado.

In an oral history interview in 2014 with the Denver Museum of Nature & Science, Kingery elaborated on what drove him so about birds. After politely brushing off his interviewer's suggestion that he "must love birds," Hugh said it wasn't affection but an unsentimental fascination with "identifying their behavior, their occurrence, how they function as a representative of what's going on in our environment."

"I think," he added, "that birds can inspire people to become more interested in the outdoors, to appreciate the habitat, to understand the conservation issues, and it may start with just a feeder in your backyard and can develop on from that. And I hope that more people are . . . understanding the relationship between the outdoors and us. It's not just birds. Birds are an easy thing to watch and an easy thing to keep track of, but they depend on other critters and other plants, and if they don't have habitat, they can't survive."

Teaching beginners and masters

Kingery may be best known for his work with his wife to originate beginner birdwatching classes through University of Colorado Adult Education (1979-1982) and then Denver Audubon (1983-2020), introducing countless Coloradans to birding. With the start of Audubon's Master Birder program in the mid-2000s, they developed the curriculum, recruited the best birdwatchers in the state as speakers and leaders, and served as mentors in a demanding, year-long course offered only every other year.

"Hugh and Urling were the best known birders in the state," said longtime Denver birder **Doris Cruze**, who was Denver Audubon president in the mid-2000s. For decades, Denver Audubon's birding helpline rang at the Kingerys' home phone. Hugh and Urling loved talking to people about birds, whether their questions concerned rare species or common ones. As Hugh once described his work with Urling, "We operate as an Audubon team."

Added Cruze: "Hugh was a hard-driving leader, unafraid of walking through tall grass, rocky slopes, slippery mud or deep snow to get closer to a bird. Urling was a calming influence, bringing delicious homemade brownies to every outing and taking a personal interest in every birder." In the era before the Merlin bird ID app, their birding students had to scour reference books for species identifications. Tough but fair taskmasters, the Kingerys would give them only clues.

Hugh's own path to birding began in the Boy Scouts. "I didn't want to go to camp one summer and the scoutmaster insisted that I get a Bird Study (merit) badge on my own," he recalled in that oral history interview with the museum. Young Hugh spent weeks at the family cabin that summer of 1945, "traipsing up and down" after mountain species, "and my mom helped me to identify these birds."

They used a copy of *A Field Guide to Western Birds*, a classic handbook by legendary birder-artist **Roger Tory Peterson**. Decades later, Kingery would serve as a consultant on species range maps for a later edition of the guide. At his death, Hugh's original boyhood copy was still on the birding bookshelf at home.

Prolific field trippers

Through the decades, Hugh led countless field trips with Urling for both Denver Audubon and Denver Field Ornithologists, serving terms as president of both. In 2022, Audubon paid tribute to the Kingerys' lifelong service in conservation and birding education by renaming its activities center at Chatfield State Park the [Kingery Nature Center](#). Years earlier, Hugh and Urling had originated Audubon's popular monthly "Walk the Wetlands" field trip there, a first-Sunday tradition that continues today, rain, snow or shine.

The nature center renaming was only the most recent accolade. In 1990, DFO made the Kingerys the fifth recipients of its highest honor, the Ptarmigan Award for exceptional volunteer contributions to the club and birding. Colorado Field Ornithologists also gave Hugh its highest award. Other honors came from Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (now Bird Conservancy of the Rockies), Colorado Division of Wildlife (now Colorado Parks & Wildlife), and Boulder Audubon, to name a few. The Museum of Nature & Science made Hugh an associate in 1990 and recognized him for 10,000 hours of volunteer service.

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The Kingerys at renaming of Denver Audubon nature center in their honor in July 2022
Patrick O'Driscoll



On a ski outing with Colorado Mountain Club in the early 1970s
Trail & Timberline

LAST WORD, LAST LOOK *cont from page 39*

Even the US Army Corps of Engineers paid tribute — for “birdwatching,” as Hugh would later joke. The Corps gave him its Civilian Service Medal to recognize his 12-year study and census of a Great Blue Heron colony in the South Platte River floodplain where the Corps’ was building Chatfield Dam and Reservoir in the 1960s and ‘70s. But in a rueful twist, the water project that created the reservoir and state park also inundated and killed off the grove of old-growth cottonwoods where the herons once nested — and where Hugh had proposed marriage to Urling. (She said yes.)

Urling Cannon, who grew up in upstate New York, moved to Colorado in the late 1960s and took a job teaching school in Denver. She met Hugh briefly at a party but got to know him better on a Colorado Mountain Club backpacking trip he led in the southwest part of the state. They married in 1974 and raised two daughters in Denver’s Congress Park neighborhood. In the 1990s, the Kingerys moved to their low-profile, split-level home on a hillside in semi-rural Douglas County near Castlewood Canyon State Park.

Birding master’s roots

Hugh Eppich Kingery was born in Denver on July 1, 1932 to **Elinor Eppich Kingery** and **Hugh M. Kingery**. His father taught anatomy at the University of Colorado medical school, and his mother was a Stanford-educated homemaker and writer. Growing up just two blocks from the Denver museum, young Hugh went on numerous bird outings with **Robert Niedrach**, the renowned chief ornithologist and co-author of the encyclopedic two-volume *Birds of Colorado* (1965). “He’s one of the people that really inspired me,” Kingery later recalled. On daily walks past the museum to and from class at East High, Hugh wrote down the birds he saw in Denver City Park. More than 50 years later, when newfangled eBird invited birders to compile all their species sightings online, Hugh transcribed his past lists into the database. His birding on that school commute produced the first 79 species on eBird’s “first observed” list for the park.

By age 15, Hugh was a summer counselor at Boy Scout Camp Alexander near Lake George, CO, and about that time he also earned Eagle Scout rank, scouting’s highest achievement. In his early 20s, he served three summers as a National Park Service seasonal ranger-naturalist. He led bird hikes at Rocky Mountain National Park and gave several visitor talks a day at Yellowstone National Park’s Old Faithful whenever the geyser was due to go off.

Continued on page 41

Kingery's boyhood interest in birds coincided with his immersion into mountaineering through the Colorado Mountain Club. These twin enthusiasms would eventually put him in exclusive company for a very rare feat. Having summited all of Colorado's 14,000-foot mountains in his youth, he went on to observe at least 400 bird species in the state (out of the 523 recorded thus far). That made him only the fourth member of Colorado's "Fourteeners/400 Club," which includes just 10 men and four women so far to achieve this double distinction. At his death, Kingery had checklisted 433 bird species in Colorado, tying him for 62nd on the state's list of 100 top eBirders.

Prodigious list-keeper, but not "lister"

Hugh was a prolific everyday birder. Most of his 16,544 eBird checklists, all uploaded since 2006, were from his previous 60 years of birding, painstakingly transcribed into eBird from lists he had kept by hand since boyhood — and still did until his last week of life.

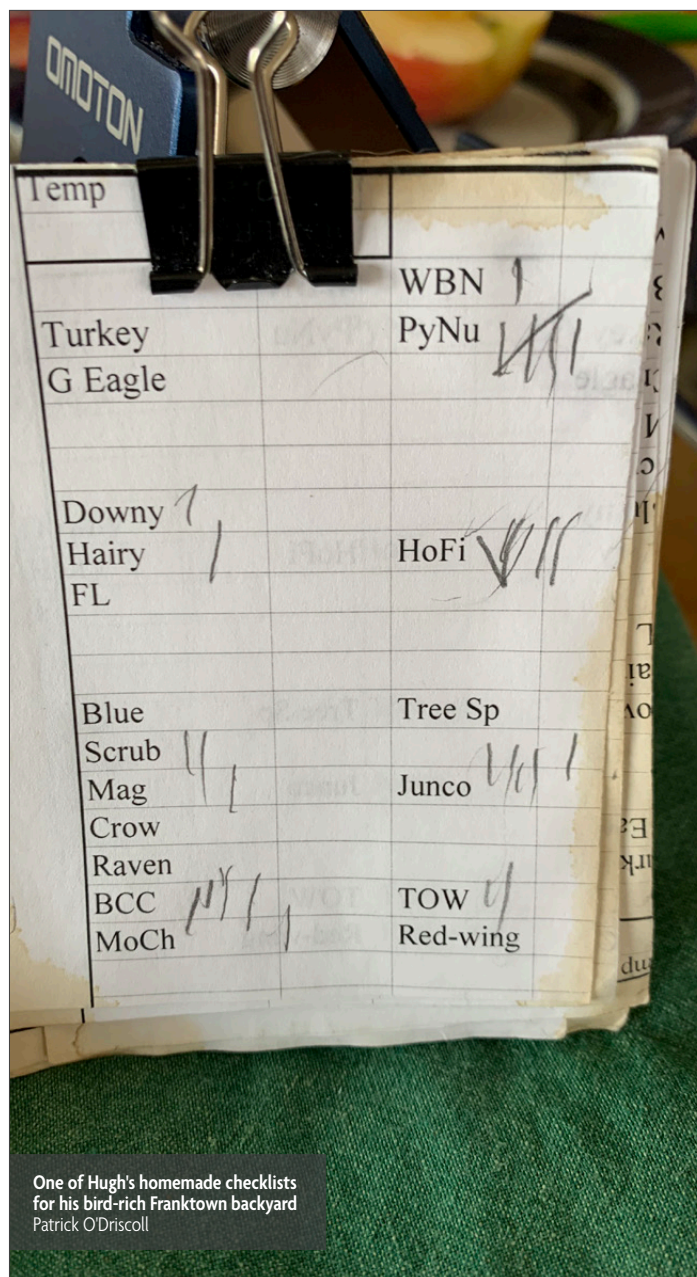
Yet Kingery's global life list of 856 species was modest compared to the thousands of birds compiled by globetrotting "listers" who pursue Earth's 11,000 bird species across continents, oceans and seas. In fact, all of his sightings were in the Americas. "We were busy doing other stuff," Urling explained. "Teaching beginning birdwatching classes or doing breeding bird surveys. It was all about surveying. Hugh really lived by knowing which birds were in which habitat."

Throughout his life, Kingery wrote extensively about birds. Assisted by Urling, he was author of *Birding Colorado* (2008, second edition 2023) in the FalconGuides series, a how-to handbook for 90 premier birding hotspots around the state. He also co-wrote two monographs for the *Birds of North America* series on two favorite species he'd seen as a boy near the family cabin: American Dipper and Pygmy Nuthatch. (Hugh's personal email address included the word "ouzel," short for Water Ouzel, the dipper's original name when he first saw it. Dipper was also the name of the Kingerys' beloved blue heeler cattle dog.) Both scholarly species accounts live on as authoritative chapters in the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's massive [Birds of the World](#) online encyclopedia of global birdlife.

Continued on page 42



Hugh and Urling at kitchen table, viewing birds at backyard feeders in 2025
Patrick O'Driscoll



One of Hugh's homemade checklists for his bird-rich Franktown backyard
Patrick O'Driscoll

Closer to home, for 12 years Hugh wrote the “Backyard Birds” column / blog in Denver Audubon’s newsletter, and for a time wrote a weekly “Colorado Birds” column in *The Denver Post*. For 23 years, he was Mountain West Region editor for *American Birds*, National Audubon’s quarterly chronicle of continental bird distribution. He also edited the Colorado Field Ornithologists journal (1975-1978), as well as all three editions of the Colorado Division of Wildlife and CFO’s “Colorado Bird Distribution Latilong Study.” And Hugh lent editorial expertise to the authors of the *Colorado Wildlife Viewing Guide*, and the *National Geographic Society Field Guide to Birds*.

As constantly busy as he was, Hugh still made room for serendipity. Just one year into his so-called retirement, he accepted a request to guide a pair of beginning birders on their first-ever US birdwatching field trip. During a summer visit in 1988 to Colorado’s Western Slope, former President **Jimmy Carter** and First Lady **Rosalynn Carter** met up with Kingery and followed him into the field outside Gunnison. The resulting checklist of birds they saw that day included a rare celebrity — [Red-backed Hawk](#) (renamed Variable Hawk in 2015), a South American species never seen north of Colombia until it showed up in Colorado the previous year. The retired President raved about the bird later in a thank-you letter to Kingery.

Hugh Kingery is survived by Urling, his wife of 52 years, and by their daughters **Anne Kingery-Schwartz** (Kevin Schwartz), **Kate Kingery** (Dave Hunzincker), and four grandchildren (Elinor, Jack, Bryson and Ember). He was preceded in death by his younger brother, **Karl**.

Celebrate Hugh’s life at Oct. 18 memorial

Hugh Kingery’s family invites friends and members of the Colorado birding community to join them in a celebration of his life on **Sunday, Oct. 18**. The memorial will begin at **10 a.m.** in the amphitheater at Denver Audubon’s Kingery Nature Center (11280 Waterton Road, Littleton, CO) at the south end of Chatfield State Park.

The morning will open with an optional, pre-memorial bird walk at 9 a.m. through the nature center wetlands, so come in birding wear with binoculars. An outdoor reception in the nature center garden courtyard will follow the memorial service.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that you consider donations to [Denver Audubon](#) or the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#) In Hugh’s memory.



Kingery with former President and First Lady Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter on Colorado field trip in 1988
Don Hall

Teacher, mentor, welcoming, inspiring: Admirers, fellow birders remember Hugh

EDITOR'S NOTE: *In the wake of Hugh Kingery's passing, The Lark Bunting collected personal stories and memories via email, online and social media posts by those who knew him, learned from him and admired him.*

Where to begin? My first awareness of Hugh was in 1975 when he was editor of the Xmas bird count and he questioned my sighting of a Red-headed Woodpecker. I learned to be sure of what I see. One cannot fathom how groundbreaking his work was on the first *Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas*. I consider it a work of art and science. He was an editor and mentor. I learned the joys of studying bird behavior. He also taught me the perils of using passive verbs in my writing. He was the king of birding in Colorado and was a very supportive patron of the arts. I will miss him greatly.

— **Radeaux**, Pueblo artist and illustrator of Kingery's Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas

I have so many fond “Walk the Wetlands” memories with Hugh. He and Urling both were so welcoming in my early years of birding.

— **Megan Miller**

Hugh greatly enriched our birding community. What a legacy he leaves. He emphasized the study of habitat in understanding and appreciating birds. And he had an infinite knowledge of and love for American Dippers — he never stopped studying their behavior. His book, *Colorado Birding*, and Audubon's Master Birder program were labors of love. He and Urling spent countless hours on the development of both. I assisted them with several *Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas* blocks and breeding bird surveys. I was amazed at how many miles Hugh could walk, especially when negotiating acres of felled, beetle-killed pines after a hip replacement.

— **Mary Fran O'Connor**, DFO member, Centennial

Hugh was always an inspiration and had an enthusiasm for birds that was contagious. When I first moved to the state in 1982, Hugh would call (back pre-technology) and we would visit about the birds reported in the San Luis Valley. We could talk for a long time. He was always inclusive, even to a new kid on the block. His legacy is great and I will always appreciate him for the kind and enthusiastic person he was.

— **John Rawinski**, Monte Vista

Hugh inspired so many of us to pick up the binoculars and head out to the field to enjoy birdwatching. I was one. And Hugh's skills were not just restricted to birds. He was also a brilliant matchmaker, introducing me to my wife, **Sandy**. We've been married for 43 years.

— **Bob Righter**, Denver, co-author of *Colorado Birds: A Reference to Their Distribution and Habitat*

Hugh had a column in *The Denver Post* in the early '90s called “Colorado Birds.” I clipped one titled “Acrobatic Hummingbirds” because it contained the recipe for making your own hummingbird nectar. I folded the article, revealing just the formula, and taped it inside my kitchen cabinet door. I still have it, and I think of Hugh when I double check it every time I refill my feeder.

Later, in 2015, I had a personal training client named **John B. Hayes (J.B.)**, an avid birder and a contemporary of Hugh. When talking once about bluebirds, J.B. directed me to a spot he knew: “If you want to see Mountain Bluebirds, go to this address near Castlewood Canyon.” I wrote it down and dutifully drove out to an area of homes scattered beneath cliffs and oak brush. Parking near the yard at that address, I could see activity at some bird feeders. As a beginner, I felt awkward pointing my binoculars into a stranger's yard. And then someone came out gesturing at me! Embarrassed, I quickly left, thinking I wasn't welcome. In retrospect, I'm sure he was actually beckoning me to come closer to the birds —

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and it was probably Hugh himself. J.B. knew him quite well, and Hugh and Urling were always fine with birders looking into their yard. Of course, I would later run into the Kingerys many times through the years on field trips and stakeouts, where I learned so much from them. They were quite a team!

— **Rosanne Juergens**, DFO member, Arapahoe County

One story about Hugh. It would not be a complete Denver Urban Christmas Bird Count without a potluck chili dinner and all the trimmings to compile the results. I remember one dinner at a beautiful home in the Cherry Creek area. My friend and I were seated near Hugh, and I remember him on his second or third bowl of chili, stirring in a big dollop of sour cream. Looking up, he noticed us and said, "Does it ever get any better than this?"

— **Doris Cruze**, Centennial, Denver Audubon president (ca. 2002-2007)

When I was a young curator of ornithology at the Denver Museum of Natural History (now of Nature & Science), Hugh locked into my consciousness the need to share and teach the knowledge I have learned, acquired, appropriated, flat out stolen and even just made up. When we first met there at a DFO meeting in 1980, there was a bird ID question floating around. When I took some people back to the collections to examine specimens that would help clarify the ID, Hugh immediately suggested we do this on a regular basis with particularly difficult bird groups — flycatchers, fall warblers, gulls, sparrows and such. He said we could follow each of these bird ID clinics with a field trip. And so it began. Almost 50 years later, I continue to teach and share about birds. For Hugh's prodding me into all of this, I am forever grateful.

— **Charlie Chase**, DFO vice president

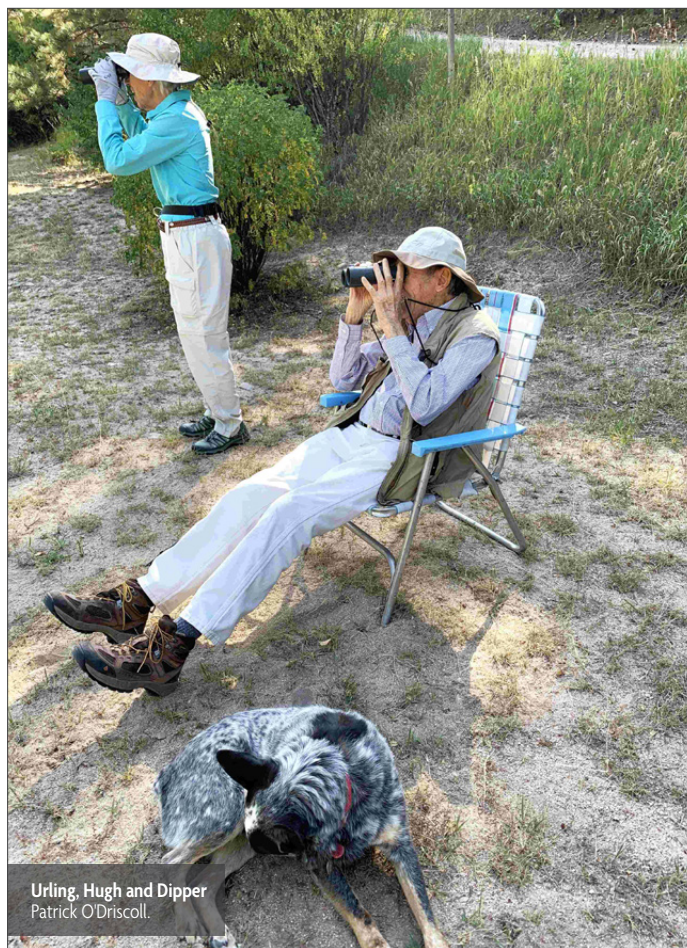
Hugh and Urling were a huge part of my birding path. I took their six-week Beginning Birder class twice! So much fun. I enjoyed every minute I got to spend birding with him and Urling. He will be missed, but the memories will live on.

— **Dean Shoup**

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Hugh and Dipper
Urling Kingery



Urling, Hugh and Dipper
Patrick O'Driscoll

Hugh and Urling led the very first trip we ever offered in collaboration with Denver Audubon back in March 2011. That trip sparked a partnership that has taken us from Cape May to Colombia over the past 15 years. We are so grateful it began with the two of them. During that trip, Hugh mentioned he kept a life list of birds he'd spotted from hay bales. That detail has never left us. Every time I've seen a bird on a hay bale since, I've thought of him and that trip.

— **Sheridan Samano**, *co-founder, Reefs to Rockies nature travel, Erie, CO*

I first met Hugh and Urling in the fall of 2009 as I attended one of their Beginning Birder classes at Audubon. It was a fantastic opportunity to get started in birdwatching. So many fond memories.

— **Mark Amershek**, *DFO member, Denver*

A true gentleman and such an amazing source of knowledge. He was a mentor and pillar of the birding community both locally and nationally. His wit and knowledge will be greatly missed.

— **A.J. Gest**

In summer 1990, I was taking a class with the Thorne Ecological Institute, and Hugh led a bird walk along the South Platte River. I saw my first Lazuli Bunting and first Great Horned Owl nest. It was magical, and he was kind and gracious.

— **Janet Buntrock**

As author of Denver Audubon's Beginning and Master Birder programs and one of the early supporters and founders of Denver Audubon itself, Hugh and his impact on our community with birding knowledge and conservation are profound. He was always with Urling. Who would we be without the Kingerys?

— **Harriet Stratton**

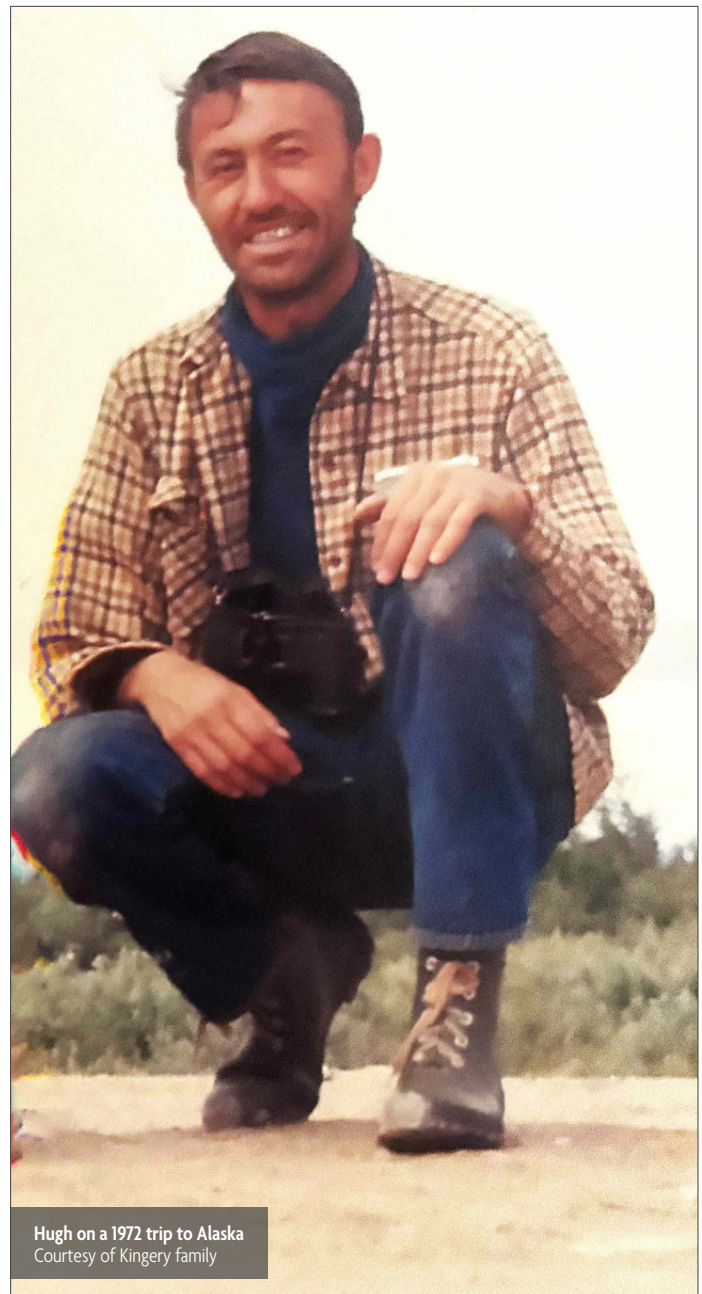
Truly the end of an era in Colorado birding; a great figure who will be missed.

— **Bob Andrews**, *Liberia, West Africa and Centennial, co-author of Colorado Birds: A Reference to Their Distribution and Habitat*

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Hugh in his birds and wildlife library at home
Patrick O'Driscoll



Hugh on a 1972 trip to Alaska
Courtesy of Kingery family

Hugh always talked me into doing bird studies, which I thoroughly enjoyed — like 13 Breeding Bird Atlas “blocks,” breeding bird surveys and studies of Bible Park and Hutchinson Park. He was such a wonderful teacher and mentor.

— **Jean Maguire**

I have a treasured copy, signed by Hugh, of the first *Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas*. We made the trip to Pueblo in 1998 for the book signing at **Radeaux's** art gallery. He did the artwork for the atlas and they both signed our copies. Whenever **Ann** and I would go birding at Castlewood Canyon State Park, we had to drop by the Kingerys' neighborhood below the canyon for more great birds. They were so nice to take us birding around a little lake in their development. What a special place.

— **Gregg Goodrich**, DFO member, and a member with Hugh of the “*Fourteeners / 400 Club*” of birders (just 14 so far) who have climbed all 53 of Colorado's 14,000-foot peaks and observed at least 400 bird species in the state



Still spry at 90 during re-naming of Kingery Nature Center
Patrick O'Driscoll

colorado birds

Acrobatic hummingbirds come in on anything red

by **Hugh Kingery**
special to the Denver Post

Hummingbird flight intrigues us. Fast wingbeats and the ability to fly up, down, forward and backward make these tiny and audacious birds unique among flying objects.

Colorado's common hummingbird, the broad-tailed, adds to the aura: Males fly with a loud tinkly trill. Only the male produces the sound, which he makes with one tapered wing feather that pulses into a trill from a wing speed of 38-50 beats per second. Over the length of a year, feather wear makes the trill almost inaudible; after spring molt in Mexico replaces the wing feathers, the trill returns.

Hummingbirds beat their wings more rapidly in hovering (50 times a second) than in forward flight (38 times a second). Because hovering consumes lots of energy they commandeer high perches for rest areas. Males perform spectacular aerial breeding displays — high climbs, dives and hovers, accentuated by the wing trill.

They eat both flower nectar and small insects. They particularly like tubular flowers, especially red ones. Anything red attracts hummingbirds — hats, blankets, car brake lights. Many flowers rely on hummingbirds for pollenization (among them the red columbine, scarlet gilia, penstemons and paintbrush).

The birds catch insects and spiders while darting and hovering in midair and by picking them from leaves and flowers. They eat sap (a nectar substitute) by hovering in front of sap wells excavated in willows by red-naped sapsuckers (a woodpecker). Meal size varies by gender and season:

Breeding females eat three times as much as breeding males.

The promiscuous males perform courtship dives for any passing female. After a brief fling, males desert their mate (or mates); females nest alone. By herself, she builds the nest, incubates the eggs and feeds the nestlings. Nest building takes several days; she constructs it of gossamer and spider webs and on the outside pastes lichens, bark fragments and moss as camouflage.

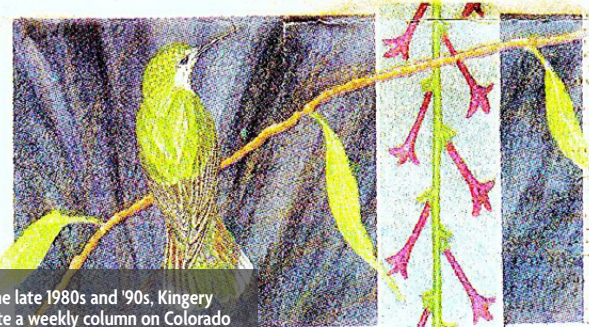
Because she spends 22 percent of daytime hours feeding herself, incubation takes quite a long time, 16-19 days. She feeds the nestlings by poking her very long bill right down their throats.

Despite their strenuous lifestyle, females can have long lives; one banded near Crested Butte survived for 12 years. Normal life expectancy, though, is only 1.6 to 1.9 years.

Broad-tails breed in the Colorado mountains and migrate only briefly through urban areas. Colorado has two breeding species of hummingbirds, broad-tailed (male with a red throat) and black-chinned, plus two regular migrants, rufous and calliope.

Feeders in the mountains and foothills attract hummingbirds all summer. Homemade sugar water probably is better than commercial mixes, which may have toxic amounts of iron. Make your own “nectar” by mixing 1 cup table sugar to 4 cups water. Boil it for a minute or two. Red food dye may harm the birds; don't use it.

Hugh Kingery, director and editor of the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas, writes a weekly column about birds from his home in Franktown. Artist Radeaux works from the John Deaux Gallery in Pueblo.



In the late 1980s and '90s, Kingery wrote a weekly column on Colorado birds in *The Denver Post*

Illustration by Radeaux



Until the next Lark Bunting . . .

**HAPPY FALL AND EARLY
WINTER BIRDING!**

Hugh Kingery then 87, with grandson
Jack, 2, in Cherry Valley, NY in July 2019
Kingery family photo