



The Lark Bunting

DENVER FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS/MARCH 2018/VOL 54 NO 3 [HTTP://DFOBIRDS.ORG](http://dfobirds.org)

Field Trips

Register for DFO field trips on the [website](#) or contact the leader directly. Bring your own binoculars, water, snacks or lunch, and sunscreen. Dress for the weather.

More detailed directions and descriptions of each trip can be found on the website.

Please be considerate and delete your reservation if you are unable to attend a trip for which you have registered.

NOTE: [DFO Big Year 2018 Rules and Regulations](#) can be found on the website.

Cherry Creek State Park (Arapahoe County) Saturday, March 3 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Mary Keithler (Email: mkeithler@yahoo.com
Phone: 303-771-1421)

Trail Difficulty: Easy
Maximum Participants: 12

Directions: Meet at the west marina parking lot. State Parks pass or day pass required.

Look for gulls, waterfowl, and a variety of birds. Habitats include deep water, marshlands, mixed grasses, and cottonwoods. We will carpool to the various stops and walk 1-2 miles. Scopes are useful.

Denver City Park (Denver County) Sunday, March 4 6:45 AM - 11:00 AM

Patrick O'Driscoll (Email: patodrisk@gmail.com
Phone: 303-885-6955 (cell))

Trail Difficulty: Easy
Maximum Participants: 12

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Monthly meetings: February, March

DFO monthly programs take place at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, Ricketson Auditorium, beginning at 7 PM. Enter through the north side security/employee entrance and tell the guard you are here for the DFO meeting.

Monday, February 19 7:00 pm eBird and the Elephant's Child

*Chris Wood, Assistant Director of Information Science,
Cornell Lab of Ornithology*

Chris Wood got his start birding along Colorado's Front Range, mentored by Joey Kellner whom he first met at a DFO meeting in 1989. His first public presentation was at a DFO meeting in 1994 shortly before he went to college.

Much of Wood's time is now focused on eBird, which has grown from a small traditional citizen science project into a collaborative global enterprise.

He and his team have developed a novel approach to citizen science by engaging diverse communities interested in watching birds while developing partnerships with scientists in a wide variety of fields.

Collaborating with conservation biologists, quantitative ecologists, statisticians, computer scientists, GIS and informatics specialists, application developers, data administrators, and expert birdwatchers has enabled eBird to reach a global audience. Advances at the intersection of ecology, statistics, and computer science allow this team to create new species distribution models that provide accurate estimates across broad spatial and temporal scales with extremely detailed resolution.

eBird data are openly available and used by a spectrum of students, teachers, scientists, NGOs, government agencies, land managers, and policy makers.

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Chris Wood is the February program speaker.

Field Trips

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Directions: Meet at parking strip on north side of Ferril Lake in City Park.

We'll check on returning large wading and waterbirds, plus early-arriving migrants and the usual mix of birds in this urban oasis. Scopes may be helpful.

Southwestern Metro Area Tuesday, March 6

7:00 AM - 2:00 PM

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

Trail Difficulty: Moderate

Maximum Participants: 10

Directions: Meet at West Deer Creek Canyon Road near Wadsworth.

Specific birding spots will be selected the day of the trip based on what is around and the weather. We will seek a variety of birds at a handful of sites and chase rare birds that may be in the local region.

Front Range Owling Tuesday, March 6

4:30 PM - 9:00 PM

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

Trail Difficulty: Moderate

Maximum Participants: 8

Directions: Meeting location will be announced by the leader at least two days before the trip date.

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

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Does eBird change the birder's mind?

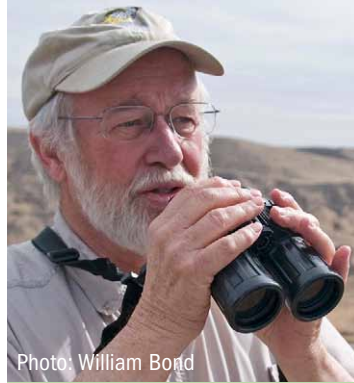


Photo: William Bond

From the President

Chuck Hundertmark

This morning I find myself on an unintended journey through the wonders of eBird. The journey began when I opened eBird to see how many species I've logged in my eBird checklists.

In two days, I leave for a birding tour in Ecuador. Since one purpose of the trip will be to add species to my life list, I was looking for my baseline count.

Fortuitously, my total was a nice round number—800 species observed. That will make the arithmetic pretty easy when I return. It's simple to find your eBird species total; you go to "My eBird" and check the

"My Stats" table. You'll also see your year and month species totals.

My year total stood at a miserly 55 species, making it clear I've been spending too much time at the computer and not enough time birding.

I have no idea what my total life list actually is. When I began birding seriously in the 1960s, I kept a simple life list at the back of my Peterson field guide. When that field guide disappeared, I recreated the list from memory in a new Peterson and continued building the list.

The next iteration of the list was in a Golden Press field guide which I still have. But I stopped adding to the list somewhere along the way. My focus shifted away from listing to my banding project and other citizen science projects.

It was eBird that brought my attention back to listing. By going to "Your Profile" on eBird, I was able to discover that I first used eBird June 26, 2006. I was pretty certain that I didn't use eBird regularly at first. By scrolling through my reports in "Manage My Checklists," I figured out that I began using eBird for all of my reports in fall of 2011.

More recently, I have been adding historical reports dating back to September 5, 1985. That effort has been sporadic rather than systematic. eBird has made me aware of the importance of archiving that data in a location where it can be aggregated by researchers.

Dealing with the numerous gaps in my old records has made me aware of the importance of keeping detailed records.

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Correction and apology

by Chuck Hundertmark

In "From the President" in the January 2018 issue of *The Lark Bunting*, Kris Haglund was inadvertently omitted from the list of individuals who provided complete and accurate records of DFO meetings in recent years. Haglund served as DFO secretary between the terms of Kay Niyo and Debbie James. My apologies to Kris, who not only served ably as secretary in 2016 and 2017, but who continues to serve as DFO's historian.

Ptarmigan Award recognizes Niyo impact

by Chuck Hundertmark

At the January 29, 2018 meeting of Denver Field Ornithologists, President Chuck Hundertmark presented the Ptarmigan Award to board member Kay Niyo in recognition of her contributions to the organization.

Niyo has played a major role in the growth of DFO since 2011. She first joined the board as secretary.

In that position, she implemented changes in the recording of board meeting minutes that greatly improved the ability of future board members to understand the decisions made by the board and the reasons for those decisions.

Niyo's experience with Evergreen Audubon and the Iowa Ornithological Society allowed her to introduce DFO to professionals who could provide needed services at prices consistent with DFO's budget.

When the board began looking for ways to improve the appearance and content of *The Lark Bunting*, Niyo introduced the board to newsletter designer Debbie Marshall, who provided a new format for the newsletter and monthly layout services at a competitive rate.

Niyo then assumed the duty of editor of *The Lark Bunting* in addition to continuing to serve as secretary. Under her editorship, the newsletter took on a more vibrant look with color photos by members and more varied content.

The board then turned to improving delivery of content through the web site. Niyo introduced us to Ann Johnson, who had designed several other web sites for birding and ornithological organizations. Johnson proved to be far more affordable than other bidders for the web design project and understood our needs completely.

Niyo was actively involved in development of the web site and worked closely with the Field Trip Committee members who were looking for ways to improve the process of signing up for DFO field trip offerings. The result was an online field trip listing, registration, and reporting system that may be the best among bird clubs in the country.

When the new web site was launched, Niyo assumed the role of lead administrator for the site. Working with other board members, she served as our interface with Johnson to deliver a steady stream of improvements to the web site.



Chuck Hundertmark presents the Ptarmigan award to Kay Niyo.

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Field Trips

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Prospect Park (Wheat Ridge Greenbelt) Saturday, March 10

9:00 AM - 11:30 AM

Jackie King (Email: jackie.king@ccd.edu Phone: 720-381-3314)

Trail Difficulty: Easy

Directions: Meet just inside Prospect Park entrance in the lot right next to Prospect Lake.

This is a trip with easy walking and accessible for mobility impaired individuals. Good trip for novice birders and new members.

Cherry Creek SP Wetlands Loop (Arapahoe County) Sunday, March 11

8:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Karen von Saltza & Bill Wuerthele (Email: kvonsaltza@yahoo.com Phone: 303-941-4881)

Trail Difficulty: Easy

Directions: Meet at the Prairie Loop lot in Cherry Creek SP. State Parks pass or day pass required.

NOTE: Daylight Savings Time starts today. This is a half day of walking that passes through most of the important habitats found in the park over a distance of about 3 miles. Trails could be slippery or muddy, so dress accordingly. Beginning birders are welcome.

Elbert County Monday, March 12

6:00 AM - 2:00 PM

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

Trail Difficulty: Moderate

Maximum Participants: 8

Directions: Meet at Lowe's in Castle Rock, 1360 New Beale St, Castle Rock, CO 80108.

We'll explore some parts of

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Field Trips

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Elbert County, driving roads and seeing what we can find. We will likely focus on the southeastern part of the county, seeking longspurs and raptors and other prairie birds.

Littleton Area Eastern Screech-Owl Tuesday, March 13 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM

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

Trail Difficulty: Easy
Maximum Participants: 8

Directions: Meeting location in Littleton area will be announced by leader at least two days before the trip.

We will visit some local parks in the evening to find Eastern Screech-Owls.

First Creek at Denver Open Space Saturday, March 17 7:15 AM - 11:30 AM

Patrick O'Driscoll (Email: patodrisk@gmail.com
Phone: 303-885-6955 (cell))

Trail Difficulty: Moderate
Maximum Participants: 12

Directions: From East Denver take 56th Ave east toward Pena Blvd. First Creek parking lot is just before Pena on your left (north).

We'll look for new arrivals in Denver's newest open space. Time and conditions permitting, we may bird BOTH sides of First Creek. Expect to walk 3-4 miles on paved and level trails.

NOTE: No restrooms at this location. "Go before you go" at King Soopers off Tower Road in Green Valley Ranch.

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MONTHLY MEETINGS, continued from page 1

eBird has become a major source of biodiversity data, increasing our knowledge of the dynamics of species distributions and having a direct impact on the conservation of birds and their habitats.

Participants have collectively spent more than 30 million hours collecting effort-based checklists, amassing more than 400 million records, representing every country in the world.

Birds capture the human spirit, our imagination, and our passion in a way that few other organisms do. They also serve as the most accessible and sensitive indicator of ecosystem health and environmental change. When combined, these two seemingly simple statements hint at the tremendous power that birds have to teach us. Never before have we had as great an opportunity to bring together different kinds of people from around the world to monitor and understand our natural world – simply by watching (and collecting information on birds).

Already, over 500,000 people around the world have taken part in reporting observations to eBird – from community members in the Yucatán Peninsula, to tour guides in Costa Rica, to researchers in India. This diversity in participation has given us an unprecedented look into bird migration, habitat use and distribution. Birds also have the power to inspire us to change behavior. Birds teach us that bird conservation isn't a simple matter of just protecting birds, or even protecting ecosystems.

Ultimately, conserving biodiversity, including birds and their ecosystems, is about protecting livelihoods and ensuring a sustainable future for us all.

Monday, March 19 7:00 pm

End of the World: Capturing Siberia's Wildlife on Video

Nathan Pieplow, Professor of Rhetoric

University of Colorado Boulder

In 2017, Nathan Pieplow and three other birders traveled to the ends of the earth — through Siberia from the Mongolian border to the Arctic Ocean — to make video and audio recordings of some of Earth's most remarkable creatures. In this tale of their adventure, Pieplow will take us along on their adventure by sharing video footage that illuminates the family lives of Great Gray and Snowy Owls, the survival tricks of the Arctic Fox, the courtship antics of the Ruff, and much more.

PTARMIGAN AWARD, continued from page 3

DFO also created a series of manuals on board and field trip functions. Niyo provided formatting direction to remove the stylistic inconsistencies that result from multiple authors of those documents. She gave the documents a polished, professional appearance and prepared them for posting on the web site.

More recently, as she began moving out of her multiple roles, she has worked with her successors to assure a smooth transition. "I can't imagine the progress we've made in DFO without Kay," Hundertmark said.

eBird Tip of the Month: *Customize profile*

Gregg Goodrich

Each eBird user can share a photo and a little personal birding information with other eBird users. You can customize your user profile by logging onto eBird.org and going to the “My eBird” tab. Click on the “Your Profile” link in the upper right hand of this screen.

If this is the first time you have gone to your profile, you will be asked to upload a photo, write a few words about your birding self, enter a personal website if you want, and select a default location for a graphical display of your birding data. Be certain to select the save button at the bottom of the screen.

You will be amazed at the wealth of birding information that can be rendered from your checklists.

Your name on your checklists will now be linked to your profile, so eBird users can learn a little bit about you and you can learn about them. Check out the top eBird users in Colorado by clicking on the “Explore Data” tab. Then select the “Top 100” link in the Your Totals box on the upper right.

In the upper right of the next screen, select “All Time” or the year for the Top 100. Each name that is highlighted in blue can be selected to access their profile. This is how you can learn about your fellow eBirders.

You can control what data you wish to share. From the “My eBird” tab on the first line just after your name, select “Preferences.” On this screen, you can restrict certain data from being seen by other eBird users. Remember to save at the bottom of the screen if you make changes.

Check out [Chris Wood's profile](#). He is the speaker at the February DFO meeting—a Colorado boy who is an eBird expert.

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One of the great things about eBird is it makes you an instant citizen scientist. Your reports immediately become available to researchers who are working to understand avian population dynamics. But as you can see from my experience, this tool also provides a wealth of ways to track your own birding history.

Another statistic in “My Profile” caught my attention. I’ve logged 183 species with photos. That’s a number upon which I’d like to improve. Photos can contain a lot of information and, along with recording of vocalizations, are becoming an important auxiliary to the skin collections that were the gold standard of field work well into the 20th century.

When used along with the smartphone app for data collection, eBird simplifies the record keeping process for you. It also becomes a motivator, kicking the competitive impulse into high gear. While striving to be the top eBirder in Boulder County may not be a lofty goal, if it gets me away from the computer and into the field, it can’t be all bad.

DFO members have a chance to learn more about eBird at the February 19, 2018, meeting—7 p.m. at Ricketson Auditorium, Denver Museum of Nature and Science.

Field Trips

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Cañon City Sunday, March 18 6:00 AM - 6:00 PM

Mark Amershek (Email: mamershek@msn.com
Phone: 303-329-8646)

Trail Difficulty: Moderate

Maximum Participants: 15

Directions: Meet at the Safe-way at 9229 East Lincoln Ave, Lone Tree, Co 80124.

Expect to see Scaled Quail, Canyon Wren, Rock Wren, Mountain Bluebirds. We can hope for Juniper Titmouse, and Pinyon Jay.

Colorado Eastern Prairie Tuesday, March 20 4:30 AM - 6:00 PM

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

Trail Difficulty: Strenuous

Maximum Participants: 10

Directions: Meet near Bennet off I-70 at the south side of the King Soopers parking lot.

This full day trip will explore eastern Colorado, possibly visiting Yuma, Kit Carson, Cheyenne, or Lincoln counties.

We can hope for longspurs, raptors, and hopefully eastern specialties and rare birds. Plan to carpool from the meeting spot.

South Platte River Reservoir and River Trail Wednesday, March 21 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Edmund J Holub (Email: edmund.holub@gmail.com
Phone: 303-979-2194)

Trail Difficulty: Easy

Maximum Participants: 11

Directions: Meet at parking lot adjoining the South Platte Reservoir. See field trip listings

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Field Trips

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on DFO website for detailed directions.

After exploring the reservoir, we will walk along the South Platte River looking for shore-birds and ducks. The walk is 2-4 miles.

Rueter-Hess Reservoir

(Douglas Co.)

Friday, March 23

7:30 AM - 12:00 PM

Mary Cay Burger (Email: mcburger3@juno.com
Phone: 720-940-8394)

Trail Difficulty: Moderate

Maximum Participants: 11

Directions: Meet at Barr CCC Park, 18964 S Twenty Mile Rd, Parker, CO.

Tim Ryan from Parker Water Dept. will lead us on a 2-part field trip. We will bird around the pond and bike trail at Barr CCC Park. Then take the PWSD van to visit Rueter Hess Reservoir. Bring a scope, if you have one, for the lake.

Park County Explorations

Monday, March 26

5:30 AM - 4:00 PM

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

Trail Difficulty: Moderate

Maximum Participants: 10

Directions: Meet at SW corner of Safeway parking lot at NE corner of Yosemite and Lincoln Ave in Lone Tree about 1 mile west of I-25. Park away from store.

This trip will visit forests and open areas of the southern area of Park County. Returning sapsuckers and Pinyon Jay are possible and we will plan to visit the open waters of 11 Mile Reservoir to look for migrating ducks.

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January flight log

by David Suddjian

DFO's Big Year 2018 is up and flying, with 131 species recorded by the end of January. That is above the 85 species that is the average for the month of January in past years by a far measure.

We fielded 14 field trips in January. Two planned trips were cancelled. Highlights among the field trips were those reaching farther afield, such as Cañon City/Pueblo, Victor in Teller County, Bobcat Ridge in Larimer County, and a wide-ranging chase trip.

As a reminder, species on the Colorado list were coded to help our planning:

Code 1 – expected without special planning (193 species)

Code 2 – expected but some basic planning is needed (77 species)

Code 3 – specialties requiring trips to particular places at the right time (69 species)

Code 4 – rarities that we can't specifically plan to encounter (163 species)

By the end of our first month this is where we stand:

- Code 1 species - we have found 98 (51%)
- Code 2 species – we have found 18 (23%)
- Code 3 species - we enjoyed 9 (13%) including White-winged Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Red-necked Grebe, Great Black-backed Gull, Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, Black Rosy-Finch, Brown-capped Rosy-Finch, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, and Rusty Blackbird.
- Code 4 species – we found 6 (4%) of the best prizes: Brant at Parker, **Yellow-billed Loon** at South Platte Park Reservoir, **Snowy Owl** at Pueblo Reservoir, **Red-breasted Sapsucker** at Colorado Springs, **Varied Thrush** at Colorado Springs, and Prairie Warbler at Pueblo Reservoir.

Those in **bold** are all first records for DFO field trips in DFO's 10 years of online records!



Big Year field trip to Mueller State Park and Victor on January 30, 2018. Mark Amershek

2018 Bird Festivals

by Mary Cay Burger and Sharon Tinianow

Now is the time to make plans to attend one (or more) of the birding festivals in Colorado and surrounding states. Here is a list to get you started with your planning.

March 2, 2018 - April 8, 2018

Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary Guided Sandhill Crane Viewing Experiences
Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rose Sanctuary,
Gibbon, Nebraska

Every March, over 600,000 Sandhill Cranes converge on the Platte River valley. For information on how to see them, visit [Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary Guided Sandhill Crane Viewing Experiences](#).

March 3, 2018 - April 2, 2018

2018 Crane Migration Tours
Wood River, NE

Experience the magic of half a million Sandhill Cranes coming in to roost in the evening on the Platte River or waking up to greet the sun each morning near Grand Island, Nebraska. Guided viewing blind tours at the largest crane roost in the world can be scheduled. Speaking events follow morning tours or precede evening tours each weekend. Visit the website at [Crane Migration Tours](#). Reservations can be made online or by phone after January 4th. For information, call 308-382-1820 or email info@cranetrust.org. Book now as these tours fill quickly.

March 9 - 11, 2018

34th Monte Vista Crane Festival
Monte Vista, Colorado

Every year, nearly 20,000 Sandhill Cranes descend on Colorado's scenic San Luis Valley before continuing their northward spring migration. Activities during the Monte Vista Crane Festival include interpreter-led bus tours to view the cranes as well as field trips to the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, Penitente Canyon Recreation Area, and tours to view local raptors. For information, visit [34th Monte Vista Crane Festival](#) or contact Deb Callahan via email at mvcfpub@gmail.com.

March 22 - 25, 2018

Audubon's Nebraska Crane Festival
Kearney, NE

Enjoy crane migration, scientific and general talks, as well as vendors and guided general birding tours with Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary. For information, visit [Audubon's Nebraska Crane Festival](#), call 308-468-5282, or email nebraska@audubon.org.

Welcome to new DFO members: Richard Bieser, Denver; Brian Brooks, Castle Rock; David Chernack, Denver; Denise Curran, Westminster; Jean Davis, Denver; Kathy Duerr, Littleton; Gary Ellis, Highlands Ranch; Paula and Stan Gudder, Denver; Allen Adinoff and Mary Klinnert, Greenwood Village; Anna Edgren and Brad Kloewer, Denver; Shannon Koen, Denver; Roger Koester, Golden; Phil Lyon, Lakewood; Megan Miller, Aurora; Catherine Olin, Cañon City; Sue Riffe, Lyons; Lisa Roemer, Denver; Marjorie Roosevelt, Englewood; Steve Ryder, Wheat Ridge; Irvin Savidge, Arvada; Dennis Scherrer, Denver; Lynne Scholfield, Denver; Milton Shaw, Littleton; Frank and Barbara Shissler, Littleton; Laurel Starr, Golden; Karen Strong, Conifer; Tom Whitten, Denver

Field Trips

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A state park pass or daily fee are required.

Chase Trip

Saturday, March 31

5:30 AM - 5:30 PM

Pratyaydipta Rudra & Sreemala Das Majumder (Email: pratyayr@gmail.com Phone: 919-699-4043)

Trail Difficulty: Moderate

Maximum Participants: 10

Directions: Meet at the Colorado Parks and Wildlife, 6060 N Broadway to carpool.

We will go to 2-3 different sites, which will be decided upon based on recent sightings, likely in Jefferson and Douglas counties. Expect to walk up to 5 miles and some elevation gain. Walkie talkies will be very helpful. We will carpool in 3 cars and drivers will be reimbursed for mileage.

Walden Ponds Wildlife Habitat/Sawhill (Boulder County)

Saturday, March 31

6:30 AM - 11:00 AM

Chuck Hundertmark (Email: chundertmark8@gmail.com Phone: 303-604-0531)

Trail Difficulty: Easy

Maximum Participants: 10

Directions: Meet at Cottonwood Marsh parking lot in Boulder County. See field trip listings on DFO website for detailed directions.

We'll walk 2-3 miles on level ground. We will head for Boulder Creek to listen for Eastern Screech-owl and Great Horned Owls.

We'll walk back through the lakes to look for waterfowl. Bring a scope if you have one. At 75th St and Boulder Creek, we should find Dippers.

Last Month's Program: *Brown-capped Rosy-Finches*

Tim Johnson

NOTE: A video of the January program can be seen on the [DFO website](#). Select Past Programs and click on the arrow icon to the right of the program title.

DFO's first program of 2018 featured Colorado's iconic and near-endemic Brown-capped Rosy-Finch (BCRF) and was given by Garth Spellman, Curator of Ornithology at Denver Museum of Nature and Science.

Dr. Spellman's major research interest is a central question in evolutionary biology: how changes in the environment faced by a species show up in that species' genes.

He described the organization and objectives of an ongoing study of BCRF involving many institutions, including DMNS, the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, and the University of California at Los Angeles and Santa Cruz.

The project aims to obtain enough genetic and behavioral information about this poorly-studied bird to inform conservation strategies and clarify its relationship to other members of the rosy finch complex.

The BCRF is North America's highest altitude breeding bird. It is close to endemic to Colorado, some breed in Wyoming and, at one time, they bred in New Mexico.

Nesting occurs on cliff faces, making nesting studies a dicey proposition.

During breeding season, they feed on wind-blown insects and seeds that accumulate on snowfields.

In winter they descend to lower elevations and flock with two other

North American species, the Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch and the Black Rosy-Finch.

In addition to detailing the distribution of BCRF, the project includes other specific objectives and questions to be answered.

One of these is population trends. The current estimate of the BCRF population is about 45,000 birds. One hundred years ago, this number could have been 1 million or more.

Studies on recruitment of BCRF, based on the fraction of 2nd-year birds in the total population, indicate that the species is rapidly losing ground.

This is confirmed by Christmas Bird Count data, which suggest that the birds are declining at a rate of 3.7% per year.

By contrast, the Black and Gray-crowned species recruitment ratios suggest stable populations at present. Why does the BCRF differ?

Climate change effects are also being studied. One important factor for BCRF survival is snowfields, which trap food during breeding season.

Snow and ice groundcover in their breeding range has decreased about 40% in the last half-century. Has this affected the birds' breeding success?

Movement patterns are also of interest. A key question for potential managers and geneticists is whether BCRF exists in Colorado as a mixed breeding population or a collection of isolated populations.

Limited data obtained from band

recapture studies suggest that the birds only move 30 miles or so between winter and summer ranges.

See Dr. Spellman's article in this issue for details.

Genetic analysis is being done, as well. DNA sequencing will be conducted on 60 birds. Although most of the birds are BCRF, representatives from the 4 Asian rosy finch species and the other two North American species are included.

These data will help answer a number of questions, such as how different are the three recognized North American species from one another?

How closely related are they to Asian species?

Is the BCRF the youngest, as range data suggest?

Do BCRF have any adaptive genes, for example, relating to temperature and altitude tolerance?

Do sequence data support a mixed breeding population or isolated populations?

Hopefully, genome sequencing will identify short sequences specific to defined geographic populations, so that a single feather could quickly and inexpensively identify where a bird came from.

Other objectives and future directions for the project include chemical and isotopic analysis of feather samples to assess food sources and stress levels, measurements of annual survival, effects of disease, and studies of competitors, like the American Pipit or, interestingly, introduced fish which could compete for insects.

Brown-capped Rosy-Finch data needed: You can help

by Garth Spellman, PhD

Calling all birders, color-banded Brown-capped Rosy-Finches coming your way.

Researchers at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies and the University of California Santa Cruz are trying to uncover the broad distributional movements of Brown-capped Rosy-Finches.

Field ornithologists can help by reporting banded bird sightings on eBird or CitSci.org.

Finches are being banded in the Winter (nonbreeding season) and Summer (breeding season) and the goal is to reveal how tightly Winter and Summer distributions are connected.

If a bird is banded during the Summer (June 15th-August 15th), the bird will be banded with a color band on its right leg.

If a bird is banded during the winter, the bird will be banded with a color band on its left leg.

The colors correspond to broad areas across the Rosy-Finch distribution throughout Colorado and Southern Wyoming. See the adjacent map for details.

A gold band indicates the bird was captured and banded in the northern Front Range, a green band indicates the bird was banded in Evergreen, CO, and a blue band indicates the bird was originally banded near Telluride, CO.

More colors will follow as

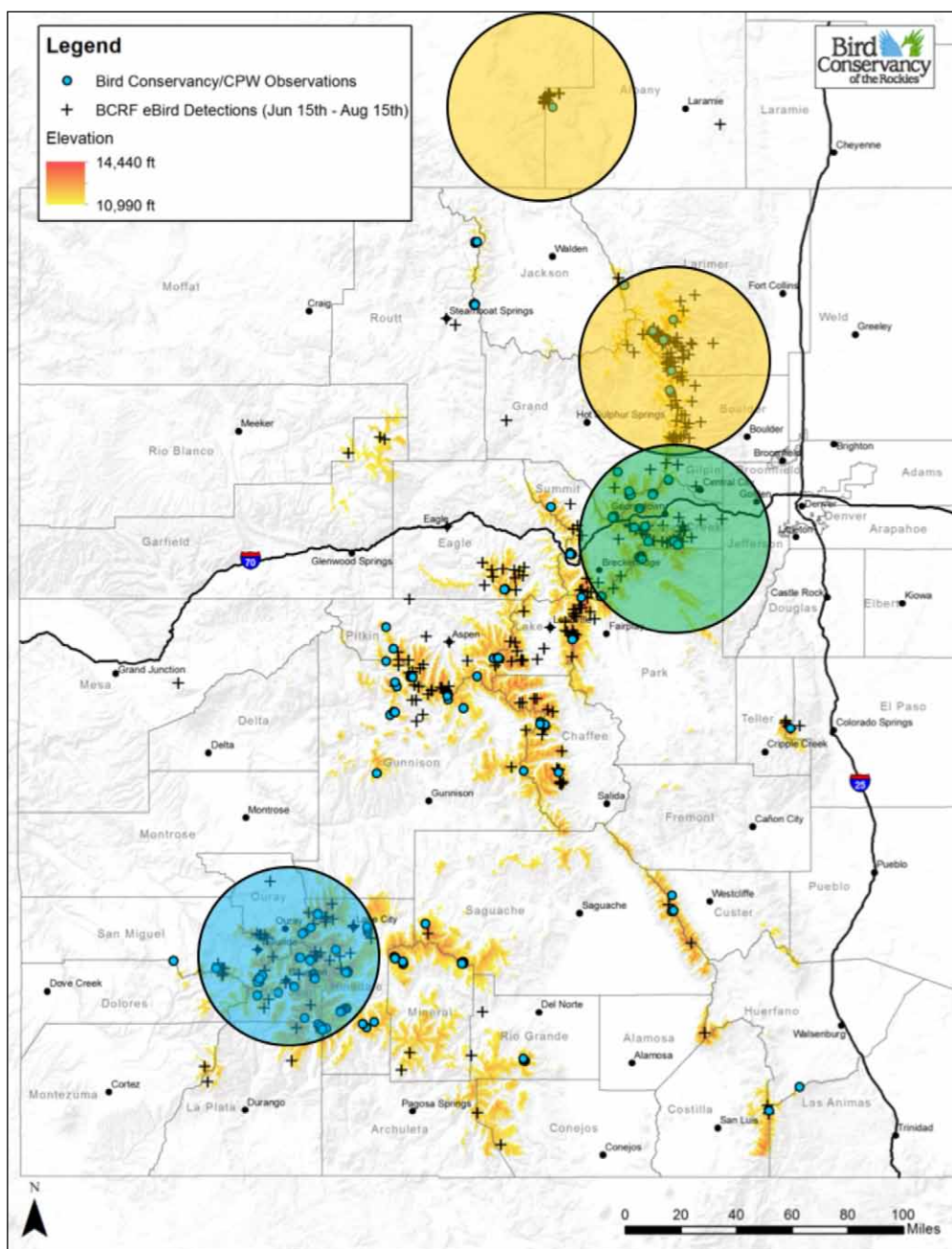
we expand banding operations, but this will not occur in the beginning of 2018.

If you sight a color banded Brown-capped Rosy-Finch, please record the following information and report your sighting.

- Date/Time
- 15 June-15 August most valuable at this time (Most birds have thus far been banded in the Winter so sum-

mer sightings are crucial. However, all resightings are important.)

- Location
 - Latitude/Longitude
 - A picture or description of the bird
 - Colorband (blue, gold, green)
 - Leg (bird's right or left)
 - Number of birds observed
 - **Submit on eBird or CitSci.org.**
- Thank you for your help!



2017 Denver Christmas Bird Count highlights

by *Joey Kellner, Compiler*

The 2017 Denver Christmas Bird Count (CBC) took place on December 16th.

This is the 64th consecutive year that the Denver Field Ornithologists has conducted a Christmas Count within the same 15-mile diameter count circle established in 1954 and centered just north of the old Ken Caryl Ranch entrance.

The weather on count day started out mostly cloudy and relatively calm. Morning temperatures started at 20F, but thankfully, no wind to light wind.

It was a nice day to be out with the team reporting a respectable 37,776 individual birds of 108 species recorded by 169 field observers and 14 feeder watchers.

Unfortunately, one Count Area was not able to be covered due to sudden illness.

No new species were added to the cumulative Denver CBC list. The grand total of species seen since 1954 thus remains at 201.

Rare birds, defined as having been seen on less than 10% of the previous counts, found this year included:

- Spotted Sandpiper at Chatfield Reservoir—only the 2nd time recorded on the Denver CBC and found in Area 8,
- Gray Catbird at Chatfield Farms—only the 6th time recorded on the Denver CBC and found in Area 10 (Lower Deer Creek).

Uncommon birds, defined as having been seen on 10–24% of the previous counts, found this year included:

- Pacific Loon - 7th time recorded on the Count,
- Northern Saw-whet Owl - 8th time recorded on the count,



Bushtit. *Jim Esten*

- Golden-crowned Sparrow - amazingly the 13th time recorded on the count, found and photographed by a feeder watcher on Count Day near the town of Morrison,
- Eurasian Collared-Dove – at multiple areas, a recent explosive addition to the annual count,
- Ross’s Goose – 13th time recorded,
- Cackling Goose – at multiple areas, split from Canada Goose and tracked starting in 2004,
- Lesser Goldfinch – 13th time recorded,
- Barrow’s Goldeneye – 14th time recorded,
- Rock Wren - 15th time recorded,
- Pine Grosbeak – 16th time recorded on the Count.

Record-high individual numbers were established for several species this year: Cackling Goose (6,367), Common Loon (7), Great Horned Owl (43), Common Raven (188), Bushtit (194), and White-breasted Nuthatch (214).

These ten species accounted for 62.7% of the birds counted:

- Canada Goose (9,850)
- Cackling Goose (6,367)
- Mallard (1,258)

- House Finch (1,070)
- American Crow (1,046)
- European Starling (965)
- Red-winged Blackbird (958)
- Northern Shoveler (750)
- Black-billed Magpie (731)
- Black-capped Chickadee (714).

Christmas Bird Counts must be performed on a single calendar day. Any species seen outside that date can be added as “Count Week” if the sighting falls within three days prior or after the count date.

One additional “Count Week” species was noted in the three days prior to count day in 2017: Several Rusty Blackbirds were found along the shore of Chatfield Reservoir near the Plum Creek delta.

That makes the overall count for this year an amazing **109 species**.

As compiler of the 64th Denver Christmas Bird Count, I thank all of the field observers and feeder watchers for participating.

Special thanks go to the Area Leaders whose efforts and knowledge make this count a success and to Cheryl Teuton and Dan Brooke, who did an amazing job once again of coordinating this year’s potluck.

Thank you, Bob Shade, for contacting, coordinating, and compiling all the Feeder Watcher data.

Thanks also to Colorado Parks and Wildlife for the use of the Chatfield State Park Multi-Purpose Room for our compilation meeting.

Lastly, thanks to all who brought drinks and food to share! Sharing food and friendship after a day in the field was a great way to relax before the holidays.

I hope to see you all at the compilation next year.

Denver Field Ornithologists

OFFICERS

President	Chuck Hundertmark	chundertmark8@gmail.com
Vice President		
Treasurer	Sue Summers	summerssue@hotmail.com
Secretary	Debbie James	paradox002@aol.com
Membership Chair	Mary Cay Burger	mcburger3@juno.com
Past President	Joe Roller	jroller9@gmail.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Tom Behnfield (2019)	behnfield@q.com
Susan Blansett (2019)	susanblansett@gmail.com
Will Burt (2018)	willburt43@gmail.com
Kristine Haglund (2020)	kahaglund1@aol.com
Candice Johnson (2018)	candice.johnson@childrenscolorado.org
Kay Niyo (2019)	kay@kayniyo.com
Karen von Saltza (2020)	kvonsaltza@yahoo.com
Ira Sanders (2020)	zroadrunner14@gmail.com
Sharon Tinianow (2020)	sharontinianow@gmail.com
Bill Turner (2020)	toursbyturner@aol.com

HISTORIAN

Kristine Haglund	303-906-8044	kahaglund1@aol.com
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FIELD TRIP SCHEDULERS

January	Mary Cay Burger	720-940-8394
February	Wendy Wibbens	303-330-1175
March	Bill Wuerthele	303-333-2519
April	Jill Boice	303-863-7580
May	Wendy Wibbens	303-330-1175
June	Mary Geder	303-981-8823
July	Jill Boice	303-863-7580
August	Mary Cay Burger	720-940-8394
September	Mary Geder	303-981-8823
October	Wendy Wibbens	303-330-1175
November	Mary Cay Burger	720-940-8394
December	Jill Boice	303-863-7580

DFO logo by Radeaux

COMMITTEE DIRECTORS

Field Trips	Karen von Saltza	kvonsaltza@yahoo.com
Grants	Candice Johnson	candice.johnson@childrenscolorado.org
Nominating	Susan Blansett	susanblansett@gmail.com

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

Communications Director	Will Burt	willburt43@gmail.com
Web Managers (http://dfobirds.org)	Will Burt, Jim Esten, Kay Niyo	admin@dfobirds.org
The Lark Bunting Editor	Sharon Tinianow	sharontinianow@gmail.com
The Lark Bunting Photo Editor	Jim Esten	jcesten@gmail.com
The Lark Bunting Designer	Debbie Marshall, Marshall Publishing	marshallpublish@gmail.com

LINKS AND CONTACTS

DFO Facebook	Photos and discussion	facebook.com/groups/dfobirds
COBirds	Internet bird-sighting discussion list	cobirds@googlegroups.com
DMNS Liaison	Jeff Stephenson	jstephenson@dmns.org
Tuesday Birders	Mary Keithler	mkeithler@yahoo.com
	Backup contact, Dave Hill	d_d_hill@comcast.net

DFO MEETING LOCATION

Meetings are held each month except May, June, July, and December at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science and are open to the public. Exact dates, speaker information, and cancellations will be posted on the DFO website (<http://dfobirds.org>).

The Lark Bunting

DFO publishes *The Lark Bunting* monthly. Readers are encouraged to submit original articles, book reviews, or photos for publication. Please submit articles by the 1st of the month to Sharon Tinianow, editor, at sharontinianow@gmail.com. Please submit photos of birds or of bird outings as image files to Jim Esten, photo editor, at jcesten@gmail.com. Credit will be given to authors and photographers. The editors reserve the right to select suitable articles and photos for publication and to edit any selected materials. © 2017 Denver Field Ornithologists. All Rights Reserved.

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Upcoming Speakers

The Denver Field Ornithologists monthly meetings are held in Ricketson Auditorium at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science in City Park.

These meetings are free and open to the public and occur from 7 to 8:30 p.m. on Mondays of each month August through April (except December).

Check below for the dates. Park on the north side of the Museum and enter in the north side security/employee entrance and tell the guard that you are there for the DFO meeting.

Occasionally, a meeting may be moved to a different location in the museum. These changes are announced in *The Lark Bunting* and posted on this website.

Chris Wood Feb. 19
eBird and the Elephant's Child

Nathan Pieplow Mar. 19
End of the World: Siberian Wildlife

Francis Commercon Apr. 16
Bird Conservation in China

Denver Field Ornithologists Membership Application

Join online at <http://dfobirds.org>, or by mail.

DFO memberships expire Dec. 31; valid for the next year if paid after Oct. 1.

DFO provides grants to individuals or organizations whose mission includes ornithological research, education, and conservation.

DFO is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and contributions are deductible to the extent allowed by law.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Annual family membership (electronic <i>The Lark Bunting</i>)	\$	25
<input type="checkbox"/>	Annual family membership (mailed <i>The Lark Bunting</i>)	\$	40
<input type="checkbox"/>	Student membership (age ≤ 26)	\$	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	Research, Education, & Conservation Grant Fund donation	\$	_____
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10826 E. Maplewood Place
Englewood, CO 80111-5742

Featured This Month

Kay Niyo Honored

January Flight Log

The Iconic BCRF