

Last Month's Program: *Barn Owls*

Tim Johnson

There must be a parliament of owls advising the DFO program committee!

Thanks to a schedule change, about 90 birders got to hear Scott Rashid talk about Barn Owls on September 18, which makes owls the subject of fully half the 2017 DFO meetings so far.

Rashid, whose current position is Director of the Colorado Avian Research and Rehabilitation Institute (CARRI), has a BA in art from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

He has devoted considerable energy to becoming an accomplished naturalist, as well as artist.

Rashid has authored three books and is primarily responsible for the banding of 12,870 individual birds of 92 species at the YMCA banding station in Estes Park since 1998. This does not include an addi-

tional 5,000 or so Rosy Finches and miscellaneous other birds banded under the auspices of other CARRI projects.

The Barn Owl family contains 17 species, only about 10% of the planet's owl species, and has several unique features. The most notable is the heart-shaped facial disc, which facilitates the bird's supernal hearing ability.

Barn owls also possess retractable flaps over their ears. They have markedly long legs, which help them snatch prey from tall grass and may help the female feed young in cramped nest quarters.

Rashid presented a detailed description of a nesting season for a pair of local Barn Owls, interspersed with additional owl facts and enchanting, must-see videos from cameras placed in several nest boxes.

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Field Trips

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scope if you have one. At 75th St and Boulder Creek we should find Dippers and lingering migrants. **Register online or contact leader.**

**Chatfield State Park—
Marina sandpit
Monday, November 26
8:00 AM - 12:00 PM**

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

Trail Difficulty: Easy

Maximum Participants: 12

Directions: From the south entrance of Chatfield meet at the first parking lot which is just south east of the marina.

We will bird several locations in NW Douglas Co. We will use the Sibley app's compare feature to further study the differences between similar species. Fine tune your species ID with this great field guide. **Register online or contact leader.**

Boulder Birders' Weekend

Birds of North America

October 16-November 12, 2017

Dairy Arts Center, Boulder

An award-winning play about a father and daughter who track climate change while watching birds together in their backyard over the course of a decade.

Ticket prices, show information, and a calendar are on the [Boulder Ensemble Theatre Company website](#).

Birders' Weekend

October 27th-29th

Special events around the performances of Birds of North America include speakers and a bird walk planned that weekend. More information can be found [here](#). Use the

discount code FORTHEBIRDS to get \$5 off on tickets for the October

27, 28, or 29 performances of Birds of North America.



Mountain Plover. *John Breitsch*

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CARRI has placed over 20 nest boxes along the Front Range from Boulder to Fort Collins.

A quick overview of Rashid's description: Barn Owls begin to nest in Colorado in March, occasionally in February, and as late as August.

Males arrive at the nest box first and advertise themselves vocally. Females come calling and interact with males for a few days, if interested. Courtship can involve flying together and mutual preening.

If the owls decide to become a pair, an exhausting 10-day period of intense mating follows, succeeded by egg laying at a rate of 1 egg every two or three days. Mating does not stop during this time.

Up to 10 eggs may be laid per clutch, depending on the male owl's hunting prowess and the nest

adequacy. Rashid's research with nest box size indicates that the larger the box, the more eggs are laid, and the less chance that owlets will be trampled by their nestmates.

A brood of owlets can vary considerably in size, since laying an entire clutch of eggs might take close to a month.

Hatching to fledging takes about 60 days, considerably longer than other owls. Preferred nest sites are near tall grass, which is good vole habitat, and near dense tree foliage, allowing males to get a good day's rest away from the brood.

Male owls, while apparently clumsy and ineffective at personally feeding young, are good hunters. In the USA they hunt strictly nocturnally, although in Scotland and a few other places they will hunt by day.

They will bring back about 600 small mammals during a nesting season. Rashid has documented mice, shrews, rabbit, and even birds as prey.

Young owls can ingest entire voles at the age of 2 weeks, which must be a relief for the female owl. Rashid has even observed older owlets feeding younger ones.

Altogether, Rashid's talk was crammed with information. I hope the CARRI project continues and that the cameras will be up and running again next year.

I recommend that readers go to the CARRI web site for further information about Rashid and CARRI. Be sure to watch the video about Rashid. And speaking of videos, the video of his presentation is already on the DFO web site.



City Park DFO field trip the last day of the Big Month. *Mark Amershek*