

# Last Month's Program: *EPIC Big Year*

Tim Johnson

About 80 birders suffering from list envy gathered in Ricketson Auditorium at DMNS on August 28 to hear Christian Hagenlocher describe his recent life and times in a presentation entitled *My EPIC Big Year*.

Hagenlocher, a graduate of Principia College in Illinois and currently a science teacher at the Link School in Buena Vista, decided to do a Big Year after his job as photographer with a video production company collapsed in early 2016.

Since at that point he had already documented over 300 species, friends helped convince him to go for the gold, which he set at 700 species. By the end of July, he reached the 700 mark and decided to go for 750. He got to 752 and, probably, there were a few more, but he wanted his records to be squeaky-clean.

In a twist on the normal Big Year itinerary, in which one bags as many species as credit card limits allow, Christian decided to crisscross the USA in a less focused fashion.

For example, he stopped to replenish funds with a part-time job as resort dishwasher on Georgia's Little St. Simon's Island; paused for a few days to assist at Maine's Hog Island Audubon Camp; worked with high school students in Moab, Utah; and spent almost a month in Gambell, Alaska on St. Lawrence Island where he worked in the local school.

His funding was derived from diverse sources, such as selling deer antlers on Craigslist, conducting a crowdfunding campaign, and, in general, living as cheaply as possible in order to afford the flights to Alaska. Altogether, he logged fewer miles in the air than he did in his Subaru, which also served as lodging about a quarter of the year. He drove to 48 states in the process.

His philosophy is summarized in the Birding Project's EPIC acronym- **E**ngage others to promote learning; **P**reserve bird habitat in urban and rural areas; **I**nspire people to explore outside; **C**onnect people with nature using technology.

His blog (<http://www.thebirdingproject.com>) contains numerous short interviews with birders he met along the way. He likes to photograph people's hands holding binoculars, which he feels is an indicator of birder character.

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## *PRESIDENT, continued from page 2*

Through our programs and field trips, DFO lights the passion for birds in our members and the community. The other affiliate groups fill a similar mission in their respective fields of natural and scientific interest.

The recent meeting changes that DMNS has presented our club will make it difficult to maintain our meetings at the museum. Given the close alignment between DFO and the mission, vision and core values of DMNS, I am hopeful we can maintain our historic relationship and together we will fledge the next Ted Parker. We'll let you know how things progress.

## Field Trips

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6-mile round trip with some elevation gain at the start. We will see waterfalls and scenery. We should see many of the typical mountain birds like Steller's Jays and Evening Grosbeaks.

We will eat lunch up at the reservoir. Scopes are welcomed but not necessary (you'll have to carry it 6 miles if you bring it).

### **Chatfield State Park, The Big Sit Sunday, October 8**

**6:45 AM - 6:45 PM**

Joey Kellner (Email: [vireo1@comcast.net](mailto:vireo1@comcast.net) Phone: 303-978-1748)

Trail Difficulty: Easy

**Directions:** From the Wadsworth Blvd entrance, go past the pay station to the stop sign, turn right at this 'T' and continue around the reservoir. Cross the S Platte River and continue up the hill. Turn left at the sign for the park headquarters and make a hard left into the large parking lot labeled Heronry Overlook. At the far-right corner, a trail leads down to the Heron Overlook. State Parks pass or day pass required.

The Big Sit is an international birding event. Big Sitters count all the birds they see or hear from within a 17-foot diameter circle. Join Joey Kellner any time from before dawn to after dusk. Drop by whenever you like and stay as long as you like. Bring your own chair and a scope, if you have one.

### **Cherry Creek SP Wetlands Loop (Arapahoe County)**

**Sunday, October 8**

**8:00 AM - 12:00 PM**

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

Trail Difficulty: Easy

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Great Horned Owl at Washington Park in Denver in August 2017. *Sharon Tinianow*

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What character traits birders' hands indicate, he left unclear.

Hagenlocher's promised presentation is available on the [DFO website](#). Many of his adventures which were fragmentarily described can be sampled on his blog with accompanying photographs. Thus, I will offer only a few more features of Christian's talk that engaged me:

Hagenlocher waxed ecstatic about opportunities for seeing pelagic birds on certain repositioning cruises. He said one should contact him directly for specifics. A Google search for "birding on repositioning cruises" turns up some interesting prospects.

He mentioned the [Yellow Rails and Rice Festival](#) in Jennings, LA. Here, one can watch Yellow Rails and other birds up close as they are flushed by a combine. The next festival is November 1-5, 2017.

Hagenlocher and some Big Year friends took a side trip in Alaska to see this rare and elusive Gray-headed Chickadee, which lives in scattered patches of habitat throughout the interior.

He emphasized the significance both of birding in places few people go (e.g. the Dry Tortugas and Big Bend National Park) and taking advantage of encounters with people whenever possible.

I found it somehow reassuring that someone like Hagenlocher, who is clearly a dedicated teacher and "people person", can also be a topnotch birder. I hope The Birding Project enjoys continued success.

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## Field Trips

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Tim Ryan of Parker Water Dept. will be our guide. We will first bird Barr CCC Park, which is along Cherry Creek, and then drive to the new reservoir for grassland species and waterfowl on the lake. Bring a scope if you have one.

**Chatfield State Park  
Saturday, October 14  
8:00 AM - 12:00 PM**

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

Trail Difficulty: Moderate

**Directions:** Meet at swim beach by entering west entrance of park off S Wadsworth, 1.5 miles south of C-470. State Parks pass or day pass required.

We should see a good variety of migrating waterfowl on the lake. Be prepared to walk 1 to 1.5 miles.

**Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR  
Sunday, October 15  
8:00 AM - 11:30 AM**

Candice Johnson (Email: [candice.johnson@childrenscolorado.org](mailto:candice.johnson@childrenscolorado.org)  
Phone: 303-329-8131)

Trail Difficulty: Moderate

Maximum Participants: 16

**Directions:** Meet at the Arsenal Visitors Center, 6550 Gateway Rd, Commerce City, CO. From I-70, take exit 278; turn left onto Quebec St; turn right onto E 60th Ave; turn left onto Trenton St; continue onto Gateway Rd to Visitor Center.

We will drive the new 8-mile wildlife road to look for raptors and prairie species. We hope to see migrating waterfowl. Be prepared to carpool because parking is limited at the lakes. Bison and deer are likely to be seen. We will only walk on level

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