

THE PRIMARY SOURCE

Bird
Conservancy
of the Rockies



NEWSLETTER FOR BIRD CONSERVANCY OF THE ROCKIES | SPRING/SUMMER 2018 | NUMBER 52

Celebrating 30 Years of Bird Conservation



Migratory Milestones Impact through the Decades

by William Bevil, Communications Manager

In preparation for our 30th Anniversary, I've gained a new appreciation for our organization that comes from seeing it through a retrospective lens. Looking back through time at our organizational milestones reminds me of how a hawk must experience the world while soaring high overhead. It enjoys sweeping views of the landscape, with transitions in color and texture that change from one mile to the next. But its keen raptor eye, suited for hunting tiny prey, also enables them to make out the details and finer points.

As I've been poring through old newsletters, annual reports and articles, identifying the most notable accomplishments in our 30-year history, what has really struck me is how interconnected each of those things are. Individually, a project or initiative may seem isolated. But from a high-level view, you see them as part of a larger story. Each piece is part of a larger tapestry, new elements that contribute to something greater.

For example, the evolution of our bird monitoring programs and protocols are evident in early initiatives like Monitoring Colorado's Birds and targeted programs

aimed at special species. They're the foundation of the Integrated Monitoring in Bird Conservation Regions program, which today spans 15 states across the west. The seeds of our private lands stewardship approaches were planted in the early days through efforts such as Prairie Partners. With pride, we can point to children who took flight through our educational programs two decades ago and have since excelled at careers in science and conservation.

We often measure achievements in numbers, such as acres enrolled or kids attending camps. Some results are less tangible but equally important. By being in this for the long haul, we have unlocked mysteries and made a positive difference for people, birds and the landscapes we share.

Passionate and dedicated staff, partners, volunteers, supporters—YOU—make this possible. Relationships are the threads that hold it all together and ensure a lasting, impactful organization. Our work continues! We invite you to soar with us, riding the thermals of past successes and drawing inspiration to help ensure birds are a part of our world for the next 30 years and beyond.

Celebrate with us! *Anniversary Celebration & Kite Festival*

April 21, 2018 • 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Barr Lake State Park Nature Center

Join Bird Conservancy of the Rockies and celebrate 30 years of conserving birds and their habitat during Earth Day weekend. Enjoy guided bird walks, bird banding, live raptor presentations and educational activities for kids and adults, followed by lunch and cake. The kite festival is hosted by Friends of Barr Lake.

Admission is \$5 per vehicle and includes park entrance fees, lunch and kites for the kite festival.

To register, visit:
www.birdconservancy.org/30years

Thank you to our sponsors and event partners!



THE PRIMARY SOURCE

The Primary Source is the member newsletter of Bird Conservancy of the Rockies

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The Primary Source refers to a bird's primary feathers which power its flight. You, our members, Friends, volunteers and partners are the primary source of Bird Conservancy's power to accomplish its mission to conserve birds and their habitats.

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William Bevil, Communications Manager

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From the Director

Return to Mexico

Tour group visits with the Perez family at Tres Papalotes Ranch near Janos, Chihuahua.

I was excited and anxious to return to Mexico after a 20-year hiatus from the field. I knew based on our research the landscape had changed dramatically, especially with center pivot irrigation. That was very apparent as we drove through what should have been lowland grassland habitat. Pivot after pivot and stacks of cotton dotted the landscape.

However, there was hope nestled in the pockets of grass that still exist and the ranchers who have a passion for the grasslands. Jorge and his daughter, Ana, joined us in the field to share their management efforts including mesquite removal to increase productivity of the grassland. Removing mesquite is also critical in our efforts to enhance habitat for the benefit of grassland birds. While in the field, Jorge's daughter lit up when she saw her first Cinnamon Teal in the binoculars provided by Kathanne Lynch, long-term supporter, birder and land conservationist. It was a reminder to take a moment, share your passion and create a spark in someone else.

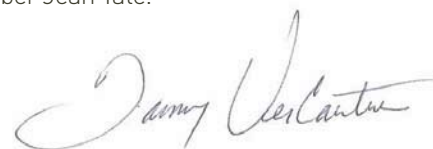
We also visited with Alberto, a young rancher who wants to carry on the ranch traditions. His mother is a 7th generation rancher and Father a 3rd generation rancher. All his brothers and sisters moved to the city, but his heart is on the ranch. Working with our partners at IMC- Vida Silvestre, he is changing the traditional ways of grazing and forcing the cattle to utilize the forage differently. The dollars and technical assistance we are providing with our partners

are improving the productivity of the ranch and ensuring Alberto has a future as a rancher. In turn, he is ensuring our grassland birds have a healthy home for the winter.

Our partners at IMC-Vida Silvestre work with a network of 30 landowners to enhance the resiliency of their rangelands and bring back natural disturbance processes through grazing to improve the health of the land benefiting the cows, birds and people. IMC is also collaborating with the community to change the landscape and use their knowledge and tools to develop better watering systems for grazing.

I was also excited about the conversations that are getting started with farmers to look at the whole system — from the grass, to the crops, to the aquifers and birds, and the people who live there.

By working with people, we can find common ground and values and ensure a healthy future for people, birds and the land. I left Mexico inspired by all the wonderful ranchers we met, our dedicated partners at IMC, our collaborators with the Forest Service International Programs and our long-term supporters including Kathanne and Board Member Jean Tate.



- Tammy VerCauteren
Executive Director

Special Interest Groups

Highlighting the unique role of monitoring efforts aimed at specific species

by Jenny Berven, Science Program Manager

As the Integrated Monitoring in Bird Conservation Regions (IMBCR) program celebrates its tenth year and we recognize what it has done for bird conservation, we also want to take a step back and acknowledge how our special species projects fill in knowledge and conservation gaps not covered by large scale monitoring programs like IMBCR.

Bird Conservancy has several special species projects that are helping to fill in those informational gaps. Before 2012, a seemingly basic question, such as 'where do Black Swifts go in the winter?' did not have an answer. Through a collaboration with Kim Potter (U.S. Forest Service), Carolyn Gunn, some geolocators, birds returning to the same nest area every year, and the willingness of researchers to climb challenging terrain, we now know where Black Swifts spend their winters.



Biologist Rob Sparks releases a Black Swift affixed with a lightweight GPS backpack. Focused monitoring efforts helped shed light on this species' migratory behaviors and wintering locations in Brazil. Photo by Todd Patrick.

Most of our teams travel off the beaten path to study birds, but some hike off-trail and in the dark. Biologist Wendy Lanier runs a crew monitoring Mexican Spotted Owls in Arizona and New Mexico. Along with our partners at the U.S. Forest Service, we have been counting spotted owls for four years to help the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service decide if and when the Mexican Spotted Owl can be safely removed from the list of threatened species.

Sometimes special species projects focus on birds in specific locations. Biologist Nancy Drilling is looking at American Dipper nest site occupancy and reproductive success in the

Black Hills for South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks. Science Director Luke George is collecting genetic material from Brown-capped Rosy-Finches in collaboration with Denver Museum of Nature & Science, University of California Santa Cruz, Colorado Parks & Wildlife, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the U.S. Forest Service to obtain a better understanding of the genetic variation and movement patterns of the species.



Remote wilderness night hikes are necessary for gathering data about Mexican Spotted Owls. Photo by Danny Hofstadter.

All of these projects share at least one thing in common: the species' populations seem to be in trouble. Throughout the West, Black Swift breeding sites are disappearing. The Mexican Spotted Owl is federally listed as Threatened. Biologists once found American Dippers in most streams in the Black Hills, but now there are few. Brown-capped Rosy-Finches have already declined significantly and changes to Colorado's alpine environment may further limit their habitat. Our scientists are working hard to determine the causes, the first step in reversing these trends. ■



We're studying Brown-capped Rosy-Finches in their alpine habitat to identify causes of population decline. Photo by Joel Such.



Levad Award: Recognizing Excellence in Ornithology

The **Richard G. Levad Award** honors the memory of Rich Levad who, after 30 years as an English teacher, turned his lifelong love of birds into a second career with Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory. In 2005, Staff and Board chose to honor Rich by establishing this award in his name.

The award is presented to a person who, like Rich, inspires others to conserve birds by sharing knowledge and experiences, and provides distinguished service to the ornithological community.

Do you know someone who is deserving of this special award?

Visit www.birdconservancy.org/levadaward to submit your nomination!



Rich was especially passionate about research on 'special' species like the Black Swift, Purple Martin, Western Screech Owl and colonial waterbirds—efforts which are often difficult to find funding for precisely because they're so specific.

Rich died of Lou Gehrig's Disease in February 2008. In his final days, Rich and his family worked to establish the **Richard G. Levad Memorial Fund**. This fund is dedicated to continuing special species research efforts. For more information about how to contribute to this fund, visit the **Chip In!** page on our website. Be sure to indicate your donation is dedicated to the Richard G. Levad Memorial Fund in the appropriate box.

ON THE COVER: American Dipper
Photo by U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



OUR MISSION

Conserving birds and their habitats through science, education and land stewardship

OUR VISION

A world where birds are forever abundant, contributing to healthy landscapes and inspiring human curiosity and love of nature.

OUR APPROACH

Our mission is advanced through sound science, achieved through empowering people, realized through stewardship and sustained through partnerships.

Our work radiates from the Rockies to the Great Plains, Mexico and beyond.

Together, we are improving native bird populations, the land and the lives of people.

Connect with Us

For the latest on our upcoming events, visit www.birdconservancy.org, sign up for our e-newsletter on our website or become a fan of Bird Conservancy of the Rockies on Facebook.



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A Partnership for the Birds

Working together to deliver conservation science on working lands

by Ty Woodward, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist

Set at the confluence of the open grassland prairies of eastern Colorado and the unique coniferous extension of the Palmer divide is Kiowa Creek Ranch. Named for the headwaters which flow into the South Platte River, this property is owned by Audubon Rockies and managed by High Country Land Management (HCLM). HCLM's charismatic owners, Dan and Adrian Lorenz, focus on stabilizing natural processes that provide bird habitat which supports their multi-species livestock production business "Corner Post Meats."

Audubon Rockies recognized the property's importance when securing it for their Conservation Ranching Initiative as many parcels in the area had already been lost to development. They also saw in the Lorenz's kindred spirits who shared their vision for ranching in harmony with the natural ecosystem. Now, they work together to enhance bird habitat through grazing and share that conservation land ethic within their local community as well as the wider ranching industry.



Kiowa Creek Ranch provides diverse habitat for plants, such as this wild iris, as well as wildlife and livestock.

Bird Conservancy of the Rockies recently got involved to help address concerns within the forested habitats on the ranch. When the 2014 Black Forest Fire hit the property, it severely burned about 1/4 of its forest, with high-intensity crown fires that killed entire stands of ponderosa pine.

We worked with contributing partners including Colorado Parks and Wildlife, U.S. Forest Service (Research Division) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to preserve and restore the forest while selectively removing some of the severely burned trees. This enhances existing habitat while improving and providing new opportunities for select groups of birds.



The work at Kiowa Creek improves habitat for Great Horned Owls and other birds.

A more resilient and vigorous forest improves habitat for species such as Western Bluebirds, Pygmy Nuthatches, Wild Turkey and Northern Goshawks. The adjacent edge habitats and transitions between mixed-grass prairie and forest provide additional benefits for grassland species such as Western Meadowlarks, Vesper Sparrow and Red-tailed Hawks. Future monitoring of bird populations at the site will verify how well the enhancements are working.

This unique partnership between bird conservation organizations and engaged land managers/livestock producers highlights how practical, win-win solutions can achieve multiple outcomes. We're excited to help create a lasting legacy, improving the livelihood of both people and birds at Kiowa Creek for generations to come. ■

New Banding Coordinator

A look ahead at the future of Bird Conservancy's bird banding programs

One of Bird Conservancy's longest-running programs is bird banding. At banding stations, birds are caught, measured, banded and released by skilled biologists, while educators interpret the process for the public. Much of what we know about bird migration, dispersal, annual survival, species' life-spans and population trends comes from long-term studies involving banding. We are proud to contribute to that knowledge every year by facilitating multiple bird banding stations in Colorado and Nebraska. As we enter our 30th year studying and conserving birds, a focal point of our strategic plan is expanding our bird banding program and finding new ways to share the information gleaned with the scientific community and the public.

This year, we welcome Colin Woolley as our new Banding Coordinator, a position that was made possible in part through the generous support of one of our donors. He will be responsible for managing the state and federal permits that allow Bird Conservancy to capture, band and release wild birds. A lifelong lover of birds, Colin

grew up in Oregon and began birding on family trips to Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. Colin took his first field job in 2004 studying sagebrush shrub-steppe birds and has been working in avian monitoring and research ever since. He partnered with Bird Conservancy for his Master's thesis, studying breeding ecology and habitat use of Mountain Plovers.



BIRD BANDING



Visitors are welcome to visit our spring bird banding stations at Chadron State Park and Chico Basin Ranch in Colorado. For more information, check out our website: www.birdconservancy.org/what-we-do/education/bird-banding

Banding stations offer a unique opportunity to study bird demography and population dynamics as well as provide up-close educational experiences that can have a lasting impact on visitors.

~ Colin Woolley

Bird banding is a crucial component of many studies that allow us to individually identify birds and track their movements. The top priority of a banding coordinator is to ensure the safety of the birds that we capture and release. Bird Conservancy biologists are trained in the proper handling of wild birds and continually assess their banding efforts to uphold safe practices. Colin is eager to work with the talented Bird Conservancy biologists and educators as he continues to grow a safe and scientifically robust banding program. ■



STAFF MIGRATIONS

Welcome to our new Staff!



Jennifer Timmer is our Conservation Delivery Biologist and is based in our Fort Collins, CO office. Jen is focused on developing tools and resources for our partners utilizing our scientific research and bird monitoring data.



Rita Sims, Accounting Manager, works closely with the CAO and Accounting team to oversee accounts payables, payroll needs and to generally ensure our financials are in good working order! Rita is based in our Brighton, CO office.



Lauren Connell, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist, works closely with private landowners and managers in northeastern Wyoming (based in Gillette, WY) to enhance and restore habitat in sagebrush and grassland ecosystems.



Kelli Hirsch, Development Manager, is a central Nebraska native (now living in Brighton) who brings considerable skills in fundraising and philanthropy to our organization. She also plays French horn with the Denver Philharmonic Orchestra!

Welcome to our new Board Members!



Jim S. Strickland has spent his career growing innovative, science-based organizations — most recently as founder and president of FAST BioMedical. He enjoys helping research-based entities thrive and is a passionate advocate for conservation and sustainability.



Eileen Dey is owner of Dey Consulting and brings a wealth of experience working within the energy sector to utilize science and best practice management approaches that reduce environmental impacts and improve community relationships.

Farewells:

Tyler Edmondson, Allison Fowle, Peggy Marston, Sonja Macys, Alexandra Mayes, Jeff Birek, Greg Levandoski, Valerie Marshall, Nancy Gobris, Mary Ferraro, Jason Beason, Steve Deitemeyer



CALENDAR

Pre-registration is required for all Camp/Educational Programs



2018 CAMP PROGRAMS

DAY CAMPS (Ages 4-12)

Day Camps are the perfect introduction to science and nature for younger kids, fostering positive learning experiences through hikes, games, crafts and outdoor play.

Wild Nestlings Mini-Camp (Ages 4-5)

July 12 and 13 from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. daily
Tuition: \$18/child/day

Budding Birders (Ages 6-9)

July 16-20 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily
Tuition: \$200/week

Raptor Camp (Ages 6-9)

July 30-August 3 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily
Tuition: \$200/week

Amazing Adaptations (Ages 10-12)

July 23-27 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily, with an optional campout on Wednesday night.
Tuition: \$275/week

Big Week Camp (Ages 10-12)

August 6-10 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily, with an optional campout on Wednesday night.
Tuition: \$275/week

OVERNIGHT CAMPS (Ages 12-17)

Overnight Camps offer a welcoming learning environment for kids who have aged out of our Day Camps, as well as pre-teens and teens who are new to Bird Conservancy programs. Overnight camps take place at Highlands Camp in Allenspark, CO, with drop-off and pick-up at our Environmental Learning Center at Barr Lake State Park in Brighton, CO.

Taking Flight (Ages 12 to 14)

Dates: June 11-16
Location: Highlands Presbyterian Camp
Tuition: \$750/week

On the Wing (Ages 15 to 17)

Dates: June 20-29, 2018
Location: Highlands Presbyterian Camp
Tuition: \$1,250/week



Leaders-in-Training Program

(Ages 12 to 17)
Older campers increase leadership skills by sharing their knowledge and passion for birds and the natural world with younger campers. LITs assist camp staff in delivering programs and providing an enriching experience. Space is limited to 5 per session, so apply early! Visit the web address below to learn more.



HOMESCHOOL PROGRAMS

Homeschool programs are offered at our Environmental Learning Center located at Barr Lake State Park.

All About Grasslands

Monday, April 9 from 1:30 - 3:30 PM
\$5/child, \$1/adult
10% multi-child discount

Annual Bald Eagle Hike

Monday, May 7 from 9 AM - 12 PM
\$5/child, \$1/adult
10% multi-child discount



VOLUNTEER!

Are you passionate about connecting others with nature and science? Become a Bird Conservancy volunteer and be part of the solution for conservation! Volunteers assist with in-class programs, field trips and special events around the Denver area.

For more information contact Sherry at (303) 659-4348 x11 or e-mail: sherry.nickolaus@birdconservancy.org



FAMILY CAMPOUT

Bring the whole family out to Barr Lake for a night under the stars! Participants enjoy hikes, games and some quality time around the campfire. Get to know our camp staff and meet other camp families. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Includes dinner and breakfast.
June 2-3, 2018 • 5 p.m. - 10 a.m.
\$5/child and \$10/adult



For the past 30 years, the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) has been a catalyst for culture across the Denver metro region. With one powerful penny collected from every ten dollars spent in seven participating counties, SCFD provides invaluable financial resources, creating an ecosystem of unparalleled access for all to experience art, culture and science. SCFD funding supports Bird Conservancy's education programs, helping us connect, engage and inspire thousands of people in nature each year.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Half, full and partial scholarships are available thanks to Bird Conservancy donors and grants from the Brighton Legacy Foundation, The Dellora A. and Lester J. Norris Foundation, Society for Science & the Public and Adams County Open Space.

For more information, contact Jennifer Watson at (303) 659-4348 x19 or e-mail: jennifer.watson@birdconservancy.org

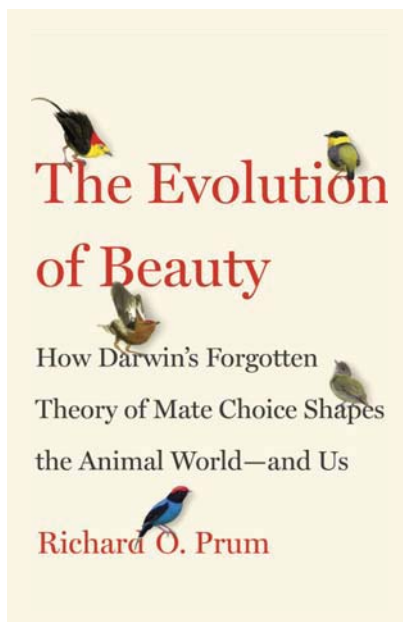
The Evolution of Beauty

In his new book, *The Evolution of Beauty: How Darwin's Forgotten Theory of Mate Choice Shapes the Animal World—and Us*, evolutionary ornithologist Richard O. Prum, PhD, examines how mating preferences—what Darwin termed “the taste for the beautiful”—create the extraordinary range of ornamentation in the animal world.

Join us for our first 2018 Speaker Series event with Richard as he explores amazing examples of bird beauty, from intricate courtship dances to elaborate plumage with bright colors.

Take a closer look at club-winged manakins who sing with their wings, and great argus pheasants who dazzle prospective mates with a four-foot-wide cone of feathers covered in golden 3D spheres. You will also discover how this framework provides important insights into the evolution of human sexuality.

Presented in partnership with



Tuesday, May 1 • 7 p.m.
\$12 Bird Conservancy/Museum member • \$15 nonmember
Book sale & signing after the talk!

In the News

Bird Conservancy recently received a \$5,000 grant from the **Society for Science and the Public**, a nearly century-old nonprofit that works to expand scientific literacy. The grant supports expanded delivery of STEM-related educational activities for low-income students in the Nebraska Panhandle, a predominantly rural community, and enables our educators to magnify the use of bird banding stations to engage underserved youth in scientific research.



Brighton Legacy Foundation awarded a \$2,500 grant to Bird Conservancy of the Rockies to support educational programs at our Environmental Learning Center at Barr Lake State Park. The foundation works to encourage a spirit of philanthropy, improving the quality of life for all residents in Brighton, Colorado.

Bird Conservancy's summer camp program “On the Wing” was recently recognized with the 2017 Innovative Environmental Education Program Award from **Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education** (CAEE). The award was presented at the Advancing Environmental Education Conference on March 3, a gathering of CAEE members from across the state representing educators, non-profits, nature centers, government agencies, higher education, businesses— all working to advance environmental education.



Do you have any of these?



If so, you might want to consider having a will.

Planned Giving: A Lasting Legacy for Birds and People

Including Bird Conservancy of the Rockies in your estate planning will benefit people, birds and land. Your gift makes an impact beyond your lifetime, and helps ensure Bird Conservancy is here for the next 30 years and beyond.

To find out easy ways you can support Bird Conservancy of the Rockies beyond your lifetime, please contact Kelli Hirsch, Development Manager, at (303) 659-4348 ext. 12 or kelli.hirsch@birdconservancy.org.

When there's a will, there's a way!



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BIRD CONSERVANCY OF THE ROCKIES

Donations in any amount are welcome and can be made securely at
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PS52