Bird Conservancy Migrates Across Borders

At Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, Matt Webb and Kylie Lamoree have been leading our effort to expand the Motus Wildlife Tracking System (Motus) across the Great Plains and Chihuahuan Desert region to study the movement of grassland birds. Motus (the Latin word for ‘movement’) is a world-wide collaborative research network that uses radio telemetry to track the movements of small animals such as birds, bats, and insects. Early this year, BCR was finally able to make our first trip into Mexico to begin the development of the Motus network there.

For the past 2 years we have been working on building Motus stations in Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, and South Dakota, and we’ve been working out the details of how we might also get stations built in northern Mexico where most grassland birds spend their winters. In order to answer our research questions and track birds across the annual migration cycle we need to build Motus stations in the grasslands of the Chihuahua Desert as well as across these states. Our team has been quite busy with this work, installing over 30 stations, leading workshops, and supporting others as they work on their own Motus efforts in the region. But to get answers to our research questions we’re working toward having around 150 Motus stations in the Great Plains and Chihuahuan Desert region. The system consists of a network of more than 1300 automated receiving stations across the entire world that allows researchers to track the movements of individual animals over time and across large distances. Information collected using Motus can help scientists better understand the migratory behavior and habitat use of their study species, and can help provide information to better focus efforts to stem species declines.

In January, we led a workshop to train Latin American partners on Motus station installation and grassland bird tagging techniques at Rancho El Uno, a bison conservation ranch managed by Cuenca Los Ojos near Janos, Chihuahua. Nearly 30 students and other professionals from across Latin America attended the workshop where they got a chance to learn about Motus, participate in building a Motus station at the ranch, and spend time helping with the capture and tagging of several species of grassland birds. Over the course of the week at the ranch, we captured and put Motus transmitter tags on 26 birds: 17 Baird’s Sparrows, 8 Grasshopper Sparrows, and 1 Chestnut-collared Longspur. We also netted many Vesper and Cassin’s Sparrows (which were released upon capture), giving some participants their first opportunity to handle a bird. We successfully installed the first of many Motus stations in the grasslands of Mexico, which was immediately able to detect many of the birds we tagged at the ranch.

Workshop participants left feeling empowered to be able to build out the Motus network in their communities, and to utilize this powerful tool in their own conservation efforts. We’re excited about future collaborative opportunities that this trip set the groundwork for, and look forward to seeing how the Motus network evolves across this extremely important area for grassland birds who know no borders.
From the Director

Flying into Spring

As usual, we are hitting the ground running with the New Year. Our efforts to advance the scientific understanding of birds across their annual life cycle continues with field crews returning from the wintering grounds in Texas, New Mexico and Arizona as well as Mexico. The data they collect are essential for assessing how bird populations are doing on the wintering grounds as well as helping inform conservation strategies to support their critical wintering habitat needs. We are also excited about the expansion of Motus efforts across the Great Plains with partners in Mexico. Check out the story by Matt Webb to learn more about these collaborative efforts.

With spring also comes many great opportunities to get in the field with us or your families. Get out and celebrate International Migratory Bird Day at several activities we are hosting with partners in May. You can also help with our annual bioblitz at Barr Lake State Park in June, grab your insect nets, binoculars or walking shoes and have some fun connecting with nature and helping collect biological data for the park. If you haven’t already, get your kids, grandkids, neighbors signed up for camps. Our overnight camps are nearly full and our day camps are filling up fast.

Our volunteers are also busy collecting nesting information on Bald Eagles predominately across the Front Range as well as documenting Eastern Screech Owl nesting sites along the Poudre River in Fort Collins. Banding stations are gearing up for annual spring migration as well. We hope the birds had a healthy winter and our stations across Colorado and Nebraska are inundated with eager bird migrants.

We are excited about staff migrations including our new Communications Director, Amy Burnett, as well as Eric Zach for Stewardship. Check out our new flock in the staff section on page 6. We look forward to you getting to know them at future Bird Conservancy activities. Stay tuned and in touch through our website, social media and joining us in the field. Thank you for your passion, dedication and investment in conserving birds and their habitats. Together, we are making the world a better place for our feathered friends, the places they need, and communities across the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains.

Tammy VerCauteren, Executive Director

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.

Visit www.birdconservancy.org for a complete staff list.

Advertise in The Primary Source
Looking to promote your business and help conserve birds and their habitats? Ad rates start at just $100 with distribution to over 8,000 Friends, supporters, volunteers and more! For more info: joseph.pettit@birdconservancy.org

On the cover:

Thick-billed Longspur
( Rhynchophanes mccownii )

First tagged Thick-billed Longspur (male) for the Great Plains Chihuahuan Desert Motus project, captured at Soapstone Prairie Open Space. Learn more about Motus in this issue and also at www.birdconservancy.org/motus-wildlife-tracking-roadtrip-a-year-in-review/

Visit www.birdconservancy.org for a complete staff list.
Building Resiliency from the Ground Up

By Tayler Scherr

As the days grow longer and the first traces of spring creep in, we eagerly await a return to greener grasses and sweeter songs as summer returns to the prairie. We look for the Meadowlark’s familiar yellow breast to replace the aptly named Snow Bunting, or the purple of the prairie coneflowers to fill the landscape with splashes of color. Farmers prepare their fields for the crops they have planned carefully throughout the long, dark days.

What we often don’t realize is that there is a world that has remained in the grasslands from the coldest of winter days to the hottest of summer days. A world where millions of creatures exist allowing the rest of the ecosystem to flourish. A microbiome that is just as important to the health of the grasslands as any above-ground factors.

Soil is full of living organisms, but like any living creature, these organisms have needs that have to be met. From organic matter for food to soil moisture to the right temperatures for survival, maintaining the needs of these microorganisms is just as important to the grasslands as any above-ground factors.

Implementation Plans (TIPs) focusing on regenerating soil health by converting cropland back to grasslands and developing infrastructure to help facilitate healthy grazing rotations. Although crops play an important role in agriculture, some areas are considered “marginal cropland”: that is to say, land that produces crops that are often unable to yield a profit, and are not sustainable.

The soil organic matter, which is comprised of plant and animal material, is depleted due to extensive use which can damage the microorganisms, or the below-ground “herd”. These microorganisms play an important role in decomposing plant litter and helping develop soil structure. Without the below-ground “herd”, permanent roots, and soil structure, the soil becomes susceptible to erosion. Over time, farming becomes difficult, if not impossible, as large gullies develop in fields.

Restoring these types of croplands back to perennial grass creates permanent roots that help to stabilize the soil, as well as put more soil organic matter and nutrients back into the soil, helping to feed the below-ground “herd”. It also creates above-ground shade, bringing much needed relief on the scorching summer days that the Northern Great Plains are known for—not just for the microorganisms either, but for the songbirds and other wildlife. It is easy to forget how connected all the components of this land are, but standing in a once-fallow crop field that is slowly making its comeback to grass, you are reminded how fragile and resilient the prairie is.

Resiliency is a concept discussed often in wildlife, rangelands, and human dimensions. The term itself means the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties, “toughness”. Grasslands and rural communities have this in common. When we have a strong below-ground herd, we have a resilient grassland. Drought, fire, invasive pests, these are things grasslands can often recover from. A resilient grassland has the natural ability to thrive and survive.

This story started with a conversation with one producer who wanted to reseed a bit of his cropland back to grass and a new Private Lands Wildlife Biologist who was just looking to meet landowners and look for projects that would benefit wildlife. The result of that conversation became $3 million of USDA-Farm Bill funding to restore over 10,000 acres of cropland to grass, working with 30 landowners. We can’t do it alone though. Partners like World Wildlife Fund, Northern Great Plains Joint Venture, and Pheasants Forever are also restoring the land and have come together to combine efforts and expand our conservation footprint and with further support from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Montana Game, Fish and Parks our efforts go even further. So, you never know where a conversation might lead you: All it takes is one to create a network of landowners and partners willing to build resiliency, from the ground up.

Tayler Scherr (tayler.scherr@birdconservancy.org) is Senior Wildlife Biologist for Bird Conservancy of the Rockies.
**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.

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**BIOBLITZ and Community Science Celebration!**

**Saturday, June 3, 2023**

**Barr Lake State Park**

Do you enjoy... exploring the natural world and discovering new things, building your bird list, and connecting with fellow nature lovers? Then join us for the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies BioBlitz and Community Science Celebration at Barr Lake State Park!

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**What is BioBlitz?**
A BioBlitz is a celebration of science and nature that brings together community members, students, naturalists, and scientists to find and identify as many birds, plants, insects, reptiles, mammals and other organisms as possible in a short period of time. The result is a snapshot of the biodiversity of a specific place. It's a great way for people of all ages to learn about the world around them, personally contribute to the biodiversity data for Barr Lake, and connect with fellow nature lovers.

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**What to Expect**
Join scientists and experts on walks around Barr Lake State Park where you search for, identify and record as many species as possible!

Do you like birds? Join the ornithologists’ group!

Do you want to learn about plants? Join the botanists’ group!

Just want to hang out and enjoy a beautiful Colorado day? There will be lots of things to do at the Nature Center base camp!

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Sessions run hourly. You can join groups anytime between 7 a.m. and 2 p.m.

BioBlitz participation is FREE to participate in BioBlitz surveys, however, there is a $10 park fee unless you have a State Parks Pass.

For more information: birdconservancy.org/barr-lake-bioblitz

Questions? Contact us at info@birdconservancy.org

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**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.

- **Facebook**
  www.facebook.com/birdconservancy

- **Twitter**
  @BirdConservancy

- **YouTube**
  Bird Conservancy of the Rockies

- **Instagram**
  @birdconservancyrockies

**Get the Full Story**
Bird Conservancy’s blog is the place to go for news and information about Bird Conservancy’s migratory milestones and the positive impacts we are having on bird conservation efforts across the West.

birdconservancy.org/stories
Day Camps are the perfect introduction to science and nature for younger kids, fostering a positive learning environment through hikes, games, crafts and outdoor play experiences. Day Camps take place at our Environmental Learning Center in Brighton, CO, led by a team of professional environmental educators.

Overnight Camps are a welcoming learning environment for kids who have outgrown our Day Camps, as well as those new to our programs. Camps are led by professional educators with backgrounds in science, education and youth development. Camp takes place at Highlands Camp in Allenspark, Colorado.

Inspired by past campers who wanted to give back, the Leaders in Training Program gives teens the chance to mentor and teach younger campers while learning about science and leadership skills. LIT training is on Friday, June 2 at our Environmental Learning Center in Brighton, Colorado.

More info at: birdconservancy.org

Nebraska Educational Programs

Designed for families, children, and community members living in the Nebraska Panhandle. Recurring family programs include annual State Park Bioblitzes, Family Nature Nights, Migration Celebration and more!

Panhandle Trail Feathers Bird Outing
Apr 15 & May 13
Did you know that Scottsbluff is a convergence of eastern and western bird species? Join Bird Conservancy of the Rockies to get to know the winged wonders that share our home. We will explore a different area of Scotts Bluff County each month, covering many habitats with a chance to discover new birds each time. This program is intended for anyone interested in birding; from beginners to experts.

Thanks to generous support from our sponsors, this program is provided at NO COST! However, registration is required. For more information contact Nebraska Education Manager Delanie Bruce at delanie.bruce@birdconservancy.org.

Space is limited, register now to save your spot! birdconservancy.org/events

Scholarships for camps and programs: birdconservancy.org/scholarships

Search “Bird Conservancy Rockies Nebraska” on Facebook

Growing Naturally
Nature Play

Join us every Monday for a morning of wild fun! This program is designed for children 4 and under and their grown-ups, however older siblings are always welcome! Free play in nature helps kids to develop mind, body and soul; it gives them the space to explore, take healthy risks, and form meaningful connections with the world around them. Some activities include; examining a cool bug, building with sticks and logs, playing in the mud or snow, learning about wildlife, and going wherever our curiosity and imagination takes us!

Cost: $7/child; $1/adult
Date/Time: Every Monday, beginning in May
Time: 9a-12p (stay the whole time, or drop in and leave whenever you need!)
Location: Environmental Learning Center (Old Stone House) at Barr Lake State Park 14500 Lark Bunting Lane, Brighton CO

Spring Birding Program

Spring bird banding at Chatfield State Park will be open to the public from April 29 - May 27 on weekends. Location: Audubon Center on the southwest side of Chatfield State Park, Littleton, Colorado.

Each weekend there will be 3 timeslots, hourly beginning at 7:30 a.m., 8:30 a.m. and 9:30 a.m.

Cost: $7/participant. Groups will be limited to 15 people.

For more information, contact Denver Audubon by email at info@denveraudubon.org or phone at (303) 973-9530.

We have a lot of great programs coming up this spring. Be sure to check out our Events Calendar to stay up to date and register for programs.

Colorado & Nebraska Educational Programs are made possible with support from

The Nebraska Environmental Trust

www.birdconservancy.org
Welcome to our new staff...

Xitlaly Avitia
Bilingual Environmental Educator (Brighton, CO)
Born and raised in Denver, Colorado, Xitlaly has always loved the outdoors. She worked with Environmental Learning for Kids for almost ten years. Working with youth outdoors, Xitlaly has found a passion for inspiring her community to get outside. She knows the importance of diversity in the outdoors and will continue trying to inspire everyone, everywhere that they belong in the outdoors. She has been advocating for environmental justice and hopes to reach more communities. She enjoys going to concerts, hiking, watching really long movies, and spending time with her loved ones.

Jackson Ebbers
Private Lands Wildlife Biologist, (Trenton, NE)
Jackson is originally from Cambridge, Nebraska, where he developed a passion for the outdoors. Jackson earned his B.S. in Fisheries and Wildlife at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He worked with wildlife and habitat management as a Conservation Technician for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission on Public Lands. He is finishing his master's degree in Agronomy specializing in Great Plains Studies, and enjoys hunting, fishing, and spending time at the lake. Jackson is excited to move back to Southwest Nebraska so he can help preserve the grasslands that helped spark his interest in conservation.

Stephen Howland,
Informatics Program Manager, (Fort Collins, CO)
Stephen comes to us with extensive experience as a data engineer. He has created numerous innovative programming solutions through his work with finance, construction and oil and gas. He has proven success in making fully-integrated and automated solutions using the most up to date technologies platforms especially Python and SQL databases. In his free time Stephen is a skilled glass blower and loves doing all outdoor activities.

Olivia Lappin
Private Lands Wildlife Biologist, (Sturgis, SD)
Originally, from Scarborough, Maine, Olivia spent much of her youth enjoying the outdoors. Her love of wildlife led her to pursue a degree in Wildlife Ecology at the University of Maine where she graduated in 2019. During her undergraduate career, she held field jobs ranging from tracking Eastern wild turkeys in Delaware to working as a backcountry wrangler for a fly-fishing outfitter in the Sequoia National Forest. She just recently completed her M.S. degree at Mississippi State University where she studied bobwhite quail calling behavior and roost site selection in working agricultural landscapes. In her free time, she enjoys fishing, hunting, camping, and riding horses.

Amy Burnett
Communications Director (Fort Collins, CO)
Originally from the New Hampshire seacoast, Amy has worked in the wildlife education, interpretation and communication field for over two decades. She was most recently the Public Relations Liaison/Information and Education Program Manager for Arizona Game and Fish Department. Amy holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Studies from the University of North Carolina at Asheville. When Amy is not working to connect people with the natural world around them, you may find her running the local mountain trails.

Becky Heath
Camp Manager (Brighton, CO)
Becky grew up in upstate New York before moving to mid coastal Maine, where she earned a degree in Marine Biology from Unity College. She spent summers working as a camp counselor and day camp coordinator. After graduation, she moved to the greater Houston area where she worked in several camp roles from Discovery Instructor to Camp Director. Becky is looking forward to working and learning from campers and fellow staff as she takes on the Camp Manager role at the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies. Becky enjoys hiking and camping with her dog as well as avidly knitting sweaters.

Edward Landi
Avian Ecologist (Fort Collins, CO)
Edward grew up in Raleigh, North Carolina, between the Appalachian Mountains and the Outer Banks. In high school, he volunteered at a banding station, which led him to pursue a B.S. in Wildlife Biology from NC State University. He worked field jobs across the country, spent a semester abroad studying the diverse avifauna in Ecuador, and banded birds with the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences. Edward moved to Colorado to earn his M.S. in Biology at CSU Pueblo, where his thesis explored the Spatial Ecology of Cassin’s sparrows using a remote telemetry system and solar-powered tags.

Eric Zach
Stewardship Director (Fort Collins, CO)
Eric received a Bachelor’s Degree in Natural Resources Management from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. During Eric’s 25-year career he has worked in both public and private lands management, as a Biologist for the Nebraska Department of Transportation, and the last 11 years as Agriculture Program Manager for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. Eric grew up on a farm in northeast Nebraska and enjoys hunting, fishing, live music, and traveling with his wife Allison and their dog Max.
Alejandro Carillo
Alejandro Carillo is a fourth-generation rancher in the Chihuahuan desert where he focuses on regenerative practices at his ranch, Las Damas. Alejandro established a solid relationship with bird conservation organizations 10 years ago, working closely with both Mexican and US organizations to protect migratory birds. Alejandro assists ranchers and institutions on regenerative practices mainly across the Western USA, but also in South America. He also participates as delegate to the United Nations to Combat Desertification and Land Degradation in multiple countries. Before getting his boots on the ground full time, Alejandro worked as software engineer and IT consultant in various countries. He has a BS in Computer Science from Monterrey Tech, and a MS in Technical Management from The Johns Hopkins University.

Tonie Hansen
Development Committee
Tonie's passion is to build forward-thinking, resilient, and purpose-led technology companies. At NVIDIA, she oversees corporate responsibility, a function she helped to build since starting in 2006. As a strategist and communicator, she drives initiatives that strengthen NVIDIA’s Environmental Social and Governance and brand reputation. Tonie publishes the company’s ESG report and engages with shareholders, NGOs, and customers to understand their expectations and present NVIDIA’s positioning around ESG issues. She also helps NVIDIA keep its position as an ESG leader by delivering to execs insights on societal issues and their impact on the company. Prior to joining NVIDIA, Tonie spent 15 years in a variety of marketing roles. She earned her MBA in 2000 from Babson College, has been recognized by CRO Magazine as a CR Superstar and by the Silicon Valley Business Journal as a Women of Influence. She previously served on the board and as board president of the YWCA Golden Gate Silicon Valley, and currently serves as an advisor to the CU Boulder Leeds Business School’s Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility.

Farewells

Bird Conservancy of the Rockies is excited to announce our first annual spring Block Party!

This exciting new event brings together bird lovers, outdoor enthusiasts, and community leaders from Fort Collins and beyond to celebrate our feathered friends. The evening’s proceeds will support Bird Conservancy’s science, land stewardship and environmental education projects locally and across the Rockies and Great Plains. Guests will enjoy amazing beer and wine, mingle with fellow supporters and take part in fun activities and prize giveaways. Keep an eye on our events calendar for registration: www.birdconservancy.org/events

Thanks to our generous partners and sponsors!

Become A Bird Conservancy Of The Rockies Sponsor
A Bird Conservancy Block Party sponsorship will highlight you or your organization as a supporter of Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, the environment, and the health and sustainability of the natural resources we all rely on.

Sponsorship Promotional Exposure
75-100 event attendees
25K+ social media followers
7K+ event promotions, newsletter, annual report recipients

To secure your 2023 Block Party sponsorship contact Joe Pettit at (303) 659-4348 x 12 or joseph.pettit@birdconservancy.org.
As we enter into the heart of the spring migration, our spirits are lifted with the sounds and sights of our seasonal avian visitors. Birds hold a special significance as harbingers of renewal and sources of optimism. Like you, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies recognizes the importance of birds in our natural systems and our culture and we strive to ensure a future where birds are forever abundant. Please partner with us in our efforts to conserve birds by making a donation today! Your support is crucial to protect birds and their habitats!

We appreciate your gift of any amount!

Donations can be made online at birdconservancy.org/donate

Make your core values known through a planned gift to Bird Conservancy of the Rockies!

Members of our Golden Eagle Society are forward-looking, generous donors who have included Bird Conservancy of the Rockies in their estate plans. Their gifts enable Bird Conservancy to pursue our vision of a future where birds are forever abundant, contributing to healthy landscapes and inspiring human curiosity and love of nature.

It's Easy!

You do not need to be wealthy or have a team of lawyers to make a planned gift. Whether it is naming Bird Conservancy in your will or trust, making a gift of real estate, or including us on your life insurance policy or retirement assets, there is an easy option that is right for you. The best part, a planned gift has little to no impact on your current budget.

It's Not All or Nothing

Golden Eagle Society members often include multiple charities in their estate plans in addition to leaving funds for their loved ones.

Membership Has Benefits

Golden Eagle Society members receive immediate exclusive and early access invites to Bird Conservancy special events. They also receive and are recognized in multiple publications throughout the year. Beyond membership benefits, short-term and/or long-term tax benefits may apply. Consult with your financial or estate advisor for more specifics.

Is Bird Conservancy already named in your estate?

Thank you! Please let us know about your intentions because it helps us plan for the future. If you are concerned about remaining anonymous, rest assured that Bird Conservancy takes confidentiality very seriously and will respect your wishes for anonymity.

Don't Have a Will?

You’re not alone, but it’s never too early to start planning! Please consider including Bird Conservancy in your estate plans. Contact Joe Pettit, Development Director at joseph.pettit@birdconservancy.org for suggested “bequest language” and the Bird Conservancy tax ID for you to share with your attorney.

Or mail to:
Bird Conservancy of the Rockies
14500 Lark Bunting Lane
Brighton, CO 80603

For more information, please contact Joe Pettit, Development Director joseph.pettit@birdconservancy.org | (303) 659-4348 x12