



ROCKY MOUNTAIN
BIRD OBSERVATORY

2011

A N N U A L R E P O R T





www.rmbo.org

MISSION

conserving birds and their habitats

VISION

healthy, native bird populations
sustained in healthy, native ecosystems

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Steamboat Springs, Colorado

Martin Moses, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist,
Durango, Colorado

Joseph Parsons, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist,
Saratoga, Wyoming

Duane Pool, Landscape Ecologist,
Bismarck, North Dakota

Christina Santana, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist,
Gunnison, Colorado

Nathan Schmitz, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist,
Colorado Springs, Colorado

FORMER STAFF MEMBERS

EMPLOYED AT RMBO IN 2011

Abby Churchill, AmeriCorps Vista, Volunteer Coordinator

Karri Claridge, Accounting Assistant

Patty Knupp, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist

Chandman Sambuu, IT Specialist

Aaron Sisson, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist

Kelly Thompson, Accounting Assistant



The new amphitheater at RMBO's Environmental Learning Center at the Old Stone House at Barr Lake near Brighton, Colo., was first put to use on August 26, 2011, when the staff and board gathered for their annual photo.

Photo credits:

Front Cover: Sage Thrasher by David Pavlik; Inside Front: RMBO staff by Joe Ehrenberger; Page 1: Greeting governor by Greg Levandoski; Planting by Jenny Berven; Page 2: Black Swifts at waterfall by Glen Tepke; Aerial photo by Colin Lee; LandSat images by Duane Pool; Page 3: Rich Levad by Glenn Giroir; Three researchers and Black Swift by Todd Patrick; Page 4: Rafting by Nicole McDaniel; BBQ nature walk & lunch line by Jenny Berven; Jack Ferguson at live auction by Greg Levandoski; Landowners outdoor workshop by Laura Quattrini; Campers with ranger by Cassy Bohnet; Page 5: Checking map by Seth Gallagher; Handshake by Jenny Berven; Mexico bird banding by Arvind Panjabi; Page 6: Walkathon flower stop by Cassy Bohnet; Page 7: Cloud forest by Arvind Panjabi; Streambank work by Andrew Pierson; Page 8: Aerial seeding by Brandon Miller; Page 9: Amber Tyler by Jenny Berven; Page 10: Profile photo courtesy of Meredith McBurney; Page 11: Mountain Bluebird by Nancy Bell; Abby Modesitt by Larry Modesitt; Page 12: Snow Geese by Nancy Bell; Page 13: Rancher by Bobbi & Steve Olson; Broad-tailed Hummingbird by Nancy Bell; Bufflehead by Jose Hugo; Rock Wren by Nancy Bell; Yellow-headed Blackbird by Chuck Hundertmark; Common Yellowthroat by Nancy Bell

PEOPLE & TECHNOLOGY

move conservation forward

Giving people diverse opportunities to learn about and participate in conservation is a core value of Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory. We pursue our mission by involving landowners, volunteers, partners, students, donors and other community members.

Three generations stepped up to inaugurate our new Environmental Learning Center (ELC) in 2011, turning the soil and placing the first plants in the native demonstration gardens. Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper and other officials shared shovels with their children and grandchildren for the ceremony. Multi-generational engagement is a cornerstone of the ELC where people of all ages connect with nature and learn about creating healthy environments in backyards, communities and the larger world.

For youth especially, the outdoors is a vibrant learning environment, stimulating all the senses, honing a wealth of science and cognitive skills, inspiring creativity and wonder, and teaching responsibility. Teach kids to love and explore the outdoors and you set them on a path to success.

Technology – along with sound science and dedicated scientists– is increasingly contributing to conservation successes. In 2011, this winning combination unlocked the mystery of the Black Swift’s wintering grounds and gave us a better understanding of this amazing North American migrant. This discovery illustrates the importance of a big-picture approach to our mission – in this case, working across international borders to promote full-life-cycle conservation.

Vulnerable and changing landscapes often require dynamic, large-scale conservation solutions. RMBO’s stewardship staff employed a variety of best practices to move conservation forward on more than 100,000 acres of rural private land this year. Our educators raised awareness for conserving healthy, resilient lands and promoting rural/urban interfaces that harmonize with native habitats and the wildlife that live in them.

And we come full circle back to people: the members, donors, volunteers, staff, landowners and partners who inspire and motivate us and make effective solutions possible for bird and habitat conservation. We appreciate and thank you.

Tammy VerCauteren
Executive Director

Larry Modesitt
Chairman of the Board



Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper, left, greets Board Chair Larry Modesitt and Executive Director Tammy VerCauteren at RMBO’s 2011 BBQ for the Birds.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Carol Cochran, Ph.D. (term expired 12-31-11)
Steven Deitemeyer, C.F.
Charles Hundertmark, M.A., A.P.R., A.T.M.
Larry Modesitt, M.B.A., CQE, CTP, (Chair)
Shawn Nowlan, J.D., LL.M.
Joe Roller, M.D.
Larry Semo
D. Jean Tate, Ph.D.
Warren Taylor, Ph.D. (Secretary)
Tiffany Watts, CPA

Terms began 1-1-2012:

Stephen L. Bloom, Ph.D., ABPP
Grady Grissom, Ph.D.



IN MEMORIAM: Larry Semo

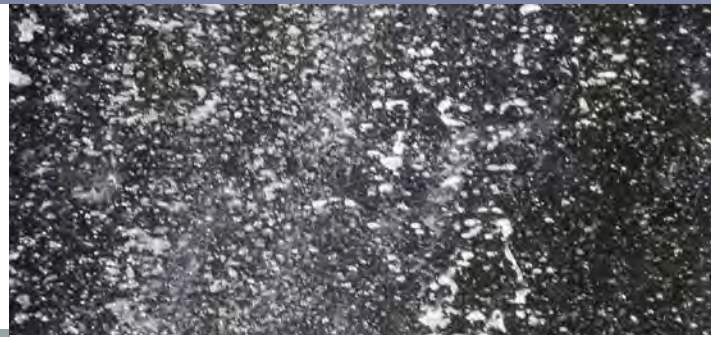
Ornithologist, ecologist, nationally known birder and conservationist, and Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory Board Director Lawrence S. Semo passed away in August 2011. He was a cherished friend and colleague, and we are grateful and honored that he served on the board since 2009. RMBO honored Larry with the 2011 Richard G. Levad Award, which recognizes those who have provided distinguished service to the ornithological community, made scholarly contributions to the field and/or have enthused others about conserving birds and their habitats. Larry excelled at all three.



State and local officials, with a hand from their children and grandchildren, put in the first plants for the demonstration gardens at the kick-off of RMBO’s Environmental Learning Center during the BBQ for the Birds in August.



HIGH TECH TOOLS Benefit Bird & Habitat Conservation



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

An aerial survey of 56 Wetland Reserve Program easements along the South Platte River in northeast Colorado helped gauge their benefit to migratory birds and other wildlife. RMBO in partnership with Colorado Parks & Wildlife and Ducks Unlimited conducted the survey in October 2011. Using digital photography and GPS to associate images with each wetland, they determined the extent of surface water available for migrating shorebirds and waterfowl. This initial survey effort will help CPW, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and others evaluate the feasibility of using this technique to identify management improvements on WRP easements.

AVIAN SCIENCE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

*Bill Tiedje,
Landowner Outreach and Program Technician*

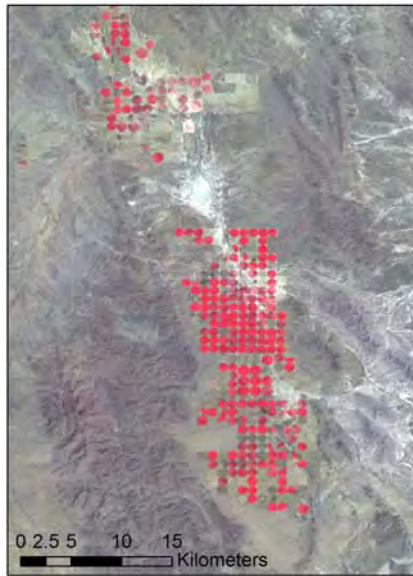
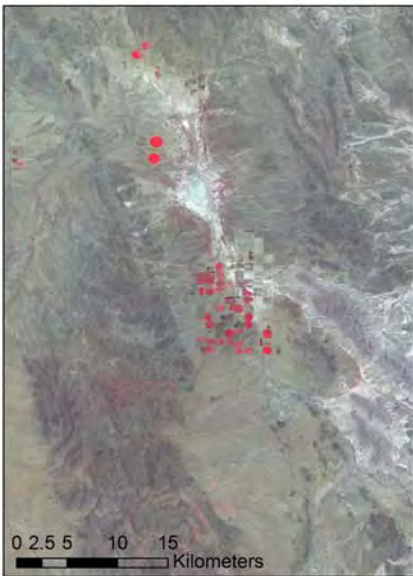
On a brisk, sunny January morning, a Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory field technician scans the horizon in the arid Chihuahuan grasslands of southwest New Mexico. He identifies a Vesper Sparrow darting from a shrub.

But this is not your typical birder. The technician raises a handheld rangefinder that shoots a laser beam to the shrub. The distance measurement it returns will be among the data that determine species population density and occupancy through computer-aided statistical modeling. This is avian science in the digital age.

The technician checks his location on a personal GPS unit containing hundreds of precise survey sites, then proceeds along a specified survey route. Each survey site was mapped months earlier in a Colorado office using geospatial satellite imaging software. The exact sites were selected from a randomized list based on spatial factors such as grassland extent, shrub cover and road access.

RMBO staff increasingly use high-tech tools to improve their science. They record rare-species calls with sound meters. They gain insights from huge stores of species data in massive online databases. Other stories in this report feature the use of geolocators, Landsat imagery, aerial surveys and radio telemetry.

Being a bionic birder dragging pricey electronics through the rugged field season isn't easy. But passion for birds combined with the power of modern technology allows our staff to learn how best to conserve these amazing creatures. Otherwise, the only birds you will see may be the angry ones on your iPhone.



SATELLITE IMAGES REFLECT GRASSLAND HABITAT LOSS

Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory used Landsat, Spot, Ikonos and other remote-sensing sources to quantify cropland in Chihuahua, Mexico's Valles Centrales region. Chlorophyll in the crops' leaves reflects near-infrared wavelengths up to orbiting satellites, giving a clear picture of irrigated cropland expansion – and the corresponding loss of grasslands. These Landsat images of the Tarabillas Valley in 2006 (left) and 2010 (right) show dramatic cropland expansion, and 2011 data indicate a 6,943 hectare increase – more than 17,000 acres – from 2010 for the Valles Centrales. The red circles show where agricultural expansion has targeted lower-slope and lower-brush grasslands, a smaller subset of grasslands, which are important to birds like Chestnut-collared Longspurs that are sharply declining in the region. This data will inform RMBO's work to promote sustainable ranching to minimize the risk of plowing grasslands, which take decades to recover.



BLACK SWIFT MIGRATION MYSTERY SOLVED

SCIENCE, GEOLOCATORS AND LUCK UNCOVER “SECRET” DESTINATION IN BRAZIL

By Jason Beason, Special Monitoring Projects Coordinator

When discussing the mysteries of the Black Swift, the late Rich Levad’s enthusiasm was infectious. As Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory’s special monitoring projects coordinator from 1998 to 2007, Rich was obsessed with birds, but the Black Swift (aka, The Coolest Bird*) fascinated him the most.

Long-time Black Swift researcher Carolyn Gunn, Kim Potter of the U.S. Forest Service and I all caught the bug from Rich. How we would discover where they go in winter was always a topic during our many outings to observe swifts at waterfalls in the Southern Rockies. This was the only remaining species that breeds in the U.S. and Canada for which this basic life-history information was unknown.

We thought it would be years before technology could help, but rapid advancements produced light-level geolocators, tiny devices that enable researchers to track small birds. Thanks to generous donors, we purchased four geolocators in 2009 and attached them to four Black Swifts using a new technique that Carolyn, a veterinarian, devised especially to accommodate the swifts’ very short legs.

We were lucky – and elated – to recapture three of the four birds a year later and remove the geolocators they had been carrying. All three yielded similar data about the birds’ paths and their winter destination: the center of all the location fixes fell in Brazil. Brazilian ornithologists’ reaction to this information will be interesting as there are no records of Black Swifts in Brazil.

Our research is in the March 2012 issue of *The Wilson Journal of Ornithology*. The 2010 State of the Birds Report listed the Black Swift as one of the species most vulnerable to the anticipated effects of climate change, making this research especially important to those involved with conservation and land management in the swift’s breeding range. We will seek funding to continue raising awareness and expanding knowledge of “the coolest bird.”

*Note: Download or read Rich Levad’s, “*The Coolest Bird: A Natural History of the Black Swift and Those Who Have Pursued It*,” at the American Birding Association web site: www.aba.org/thecoolestbird.pdf



Rich Levad evaluates a Black Swift breeding site in western Colorado.



Black Swift with geolocator attached.

PROFILE PARTNERS EMBRACE COLLABORATION

“The work we have been doing with Black Swifts has added greatly to the previously lacking life-history information about nesting phenology, nest behavior, nesting requirements, migration routes and timing, and wintering grounds. Being part of these projects and having the opportunity to work with my colleagues in this effort is extremely rewarding.”

Carolyn Gunn,
Veterinarian and Wildlife Biologist,
Dolores, Colo.

“I have a great feeling of accomplishment, taking a question to which we applied many theoretical conclusions sitting around a campfire with Rich Levad, scientifically answering that question, and finally sharing the answer in a peer-reviewed publication. ... our efforts and findings kicked off an avalanche of new questions about the winter destinations, population dynamics, genetic history and interrelatedness of the entire Black Swift population. They remain ‘the coolest birds’ in my mind.”

Kim Potter,
Wildlife Technician, White River National Forest,
Rifle, Colo.

“Researching Black Swifts is the most rewarding work I have ever been involved in. From backpacking into the Weminuche Wilderness to late-night hikes out of remote Rocky Mountain National Park waterfalls, it has all been exciting. Working with Rich Levad on the inventory project and banding with Kim and Carolyn have been amazing experiences. Discovering the winter destination is a highlight, but I feel we still have much to accomplish.”

Jason Beason,
RMBO Special Monitoring Projects Coordinator,
Paonia, Colo.



ENGAGING PEOPLE in Nature & Conservation



RMBO connected with about 22,000 people in 2011 through outreach events, school programs, summer camps, workshops and other activities. The Education Team's summer camps gave 4 to 15 year-olds plentiful opportunities for fun, recreation and learning. The On the Wing camp treated teenagers to a week in Colorado's mountains exploring nature with biologists from the U.S. Forest Service (right), Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and RMBO. They also enjoyed rafting (above), horseback riding and hiking. With a Colorado Kids Outdoors grant through the Dept. of Natural Resources, RMBO hired six high-school and college interns for the summer of 2011. Science interns gained hands-on experience conducting bird surveys in the field, while education interns designed and implemented camp activities.



2011 BBQ for the Birds. Abundant activities and two special guests drew nearly 400 people to RMBO's annual BBQ for the Birds in August. Colorado's Governor John Hickenlooper came to launch the new Environmental Learning Center (see page 1). "The Big Year" author Mark Obmascik entertained the crowd with stories about writing the book and filming the movie. Silent and live auctions were crowd pleasers, too, with Jack Ferguson (lower left) making the winning bid for one of the recovered Black Swift geolocators (see page 3). Proceeds benefited environmental education projects. Workshops, nature hikes, live raptors, a picnic lunch and live music rounded out a day of outdoor fun and learning.



RMBO's Stewardship Team reached more than 3,300 people through landowner visits, presentations, workshops, public events and restoration projects in Colorado, Nebraska and Wyoming. This engagement included 82 projects that enhanced habitat on more than 105,000 acres. In Colorado alone, the team put \$3.2 million from Farm Bill conservation programs and \$550,000 in non-Farm-Bill funds into enhancing wildlife habitat on private lands. In partnership with the National Resources Conservation Service and other organizations, Stewardship added four Private Lands Wildlife Biologists in 2011, one each in Lamar, Gunnison, Greeley and Kremmling, Colorado, which will further increase on-the-ground habitat conservation in core shortgrass prairie and sagebrush ecosystems.



RMBO's Science Team has proactively increased bird monitoring on private lands, anticipating the need for bird-population data on all lands. The 2011 field season was the most successful so far for involving private landowners in the Integrated Monitoring in Bird Conservation Regions (IMBCR) program, which has concentrated on public land. For example, 81 Colorado landowners allowed IMBCR bird surveys on their property in 2010; that number rose to 200 in 2011. This jump reflects RMBO's increased efforts to contact and maintain relationships with landowners and to engage them in bird conservation on their land. More private-landowner involvement benefits RMBO's science, education and stewardship work and people, land and birds.



To reach out to Mexican property owners and land managers, the International Team published a best-management-practices manual in 2011 to share its scientific knowledge of Chihuahuan Desert grassland birds. "Compartiendo sus agostaderos con las aves de pastizal" (Sharing your rangelands with grassland birds) was distributed at three workshops in Chihuahua, Coahuila and Durango, Mexico, that RMBO conducted along with Pronatura Noreste in 2011. The manual and ongoing workshops are designed to help private ranchers and communal land owners learn about sustainable grazing management and grassland bird habitat needs. The International Team also has trained 50 Mexicans to work on grassland bird-monitoring projects on the wintering grounds, including bird banding (left).



ROCKY MOUNTAIN BIRD OBSERVATORY: 2011 Highlights

EDUCATION

RMBO's new Nebraska Wildlife Education Coordinator Maggie Vinson joined the Scottsbluff office in June and quickly immersed herself in environmental education in the state's panhandle. Within six months Maggie saw nearly 1,300 kids at banding stations and in school programs and was elected as vice president of Children and Nature in Our Parks and to the board of Nebraska Alliance for Environmental Education.

A few hundred 8th graders learned about bird banding when Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory educators debuted a new mobile display at a career expo in November. The students learned why birds are banded, and they imitated ornithologists by removing (wooden) birds from a mist net, banding them and collecting data such as wing length.

A plan to instruct thousands of students and teachers about the importance of Colorado's grasslands for wildlife and agriculture earned Education Director Kacie Ehrenberger a 2011 TogetherGreen conservation fellowship. She was one of 40 individuals selected nationwide. Supported by a conservation alliance between Audubon and Toyota, the fellowship offers funding for her project, training in conservation planning and execution, the chance to work and share best practices with gifted conservation professionals, and assistance with project outreach and evaluation.



A beautiful, warm October day set the stage for Walk on the Wild Side: Take Steps for a Healthy Community, RMBO's first walkathon. About 50 adults and kids tackled a 1k, 5k or 10k walk, starting at RMBO's Environmental Learning Center (ELC) at Barr Lake State Park near Brighton, Colo. The event engaged community members in healthy outdoor activities, shared information about birds, education, and health, and raised funds for the ELC. Local bluegrass musicians, healthy snacks and fun educational activities for the whole family rounded out the day.

SCIENCE

RMBO biologists head into the mountains, plains and high deserts along with dozens of seasonal field techs every year to conduct Integrated Monitoring in Bird Conservation Regions (IMBCR) surveys from May into July. In 2011 these surveyors conducted 10,451 point counts, detecting 122,052 individual birds of 284 species in 13 Rocky Mountain and Great Plains states, covering an area about the size of Egypt. The IMBCR also expanded to include 15 partner agencies and organizations that contribute in various ways. RMBO biometrician David Pavlacky led a team that developed a new way to analyze the IMBCR data, generating occupancy estimates at multiple spatial scales. This allows monitoring the population status of additional species, many of conservation concern. The team's work was accepted for publication in The Journal of Wildlife Management.

Four firsts recorded in SD Breeding Bird Atlas. With one year left in the five-year South Dakota Breeding Bird Atlas II, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory technicians and volunteers have visited 95 percent of the survey blocks and have confirmed more species than in the last Breeding Bird Atlas completed in 1993. The survey has documented the first breeding records in the state for Great-tailed Grackle, Prothonotary Warbler, Sandhill Crane and Black Rail.

Nebraska landowners helped conserve Mountain Plover, with record numbers participating in RMBO projects in 2011. Seventy-six landowners, representing more than 142,000 acres, cooperated in marking the locations of plover nests and conserving them during agricultural operations. RMBO biologists monitored marked nests and documented chicks' survival rates.

Investigating migration-climate connection.

The Science Team initiated a project with the National Park Service to determine if there has been a shift in spring arrival patterns of migratory grassland birds in response to climate change. Bird songs and calls recorded by Autonomous Recording Units allow tracking the timing of species arrival to compare with historical data.

The Science and Stewardship teams collaborated on RMBO's first Conservation Effects Assessment Program (CEAP) project, which evaluated the effects of grazing management on grassland bird species in shortgrass prairie rangelands of eastern Colorado, north of the Arkansas River. Bird distribution and abundance on private ranchlands that were grazed during the breeding season were compared to lands that were not grazed. This collaboration is an example of using science to inform habitat conservation programs on private lands. A report to the Natural Resources Conservation Service, which funds CEAP, is scheduled for March 2012.

The Chihuahuan Desert wintering grassland bird monitoring program grew in its fifth consecutive year to include 15 priority areas in six Mexican states and three U.S. states. This bi-national partnership is strengthening the scientific foundation to conserve priority habitats and increasing local capacities for grassland bird conservation. See reports at www.rmbo.org under Our Work/International.

Mountains to Plains conservation project: 2011 was the sixth consecutive year of bird monitoring in northern Colorado in collaboration with the City of Fort Collins. The City's investment and leadership in regional grassland habitat protection and management has helped RMBO increase scientific knowledge of grassland birds and receive critical Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act grants. By supporting RMBO's international work, the City protects its investment in migratory bird conservation by helping the birds successfully overwinter. RMBO also collects data to guide the City's bird and habitat management on open-space lands.

Vesper Sparrow, one of many declining grassland birds that overwinter in the dwindling Chihuahuan Desert grasslands, must balance often-conflicting needs of finding food and avoiding predators. Tall grass helps these birds avoid attack by predators such as shrikes and raptors, but during droughts grass can be scarce. RMBO researchers are finding that drought and unsustainable grazing practices can have a major impact on grassland birds' winter survival. Improved radio telemetry allowed RMBO biologists to track the movements and survival of more than 100 Vesper Sparrows during two winters in northwest Chihuahua. The scientists estimated that the winter survival rate averaged only 20% in the local population. This low

number was likely due to drought, which affects two key elements for sparrows: grass and seeds. The tracked birds were among the few that remained in a drought-stricken area. Much of the population had migrated elsewhere in search of healthier grasslands, which are increasingly scarce in the Chihuahuan Desert. RMBO is seeking win-win solutions for grassland birds and ranchers in this important ecosystem.

Western Mexico cloud forests are critical habitat for endemic and migrant bird species. A new collaborative project to conserve these forests includes RMBO, the University of Guadalajara, the U.S. Forest Service, and CONAFOR – the Mexican National Forestry Commission. CONAFOR will integrate birds into its forest management programs using data the project generates. The information also will guide CONAFOR's innovative program that pays landowners to maintain healthy landscapes, which provide economically beneficial services to society, including water capture and filtration, carbon sequestration and biodiversity maintenance.



National Fish and Wildlife Foundation-ConocoPhillips SPIRIT of Migratory Bird Conservation grants were awarded to the Stewardship program in 2011 for the fifth and sixth time. They will support private-land conservation efforts for the Lesser Prairie-Chicken and Gunnison Sage-Grouse, and they leveraged Natural Resources Conservation Service funding to hire two specialized Private Lands Wildlife Biologists in Lamar and Gunnison, Colorado. The previous four grants, along with funds from other partners, supported 80 projects to enhance habitat on more than 56,600 acres in the sagebrush and shortgrass-prairie ecosystems in eastern Colorado and southeast Wyoming.

The bees and the birds. The Farm Bill makes pollinators and their habitat a priority for land managers and conservationists. Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory and the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation co-hosted two Pollinator Conservation Planning Short Courses in Fort Morgan and La Junta, Colorado. Following an overview of pollinator-specific language in the Farm Bill, the training explained how to translate that language into on-the-ground conservation. The habitat-design considerations for pollinators are also beneficial to grassland and sagebrush birds.



Nearly one-and-a-half miles of Upper Niobrara River and Box Butte Creek stream bank in western Nebraska were restored in 2011 by a partnership of Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Playa Lakes Joint Venture and Sandhills Task Force. Since 2009, the partners, plus 15 landowners, have restored or enhanced more than 16 miles of the Niobrara River and two of its tributaries through invasive species management.

continued page 8



STEWARDSHIP

The 3,800-acre site of a destructive wildfire in core sage-grouse range near Maybell in northwest Colorado was seeded with native grasses, forbs and shrubs in 2011. The aerial seeding was successful due to a big moisture year, the initiative taken by the three ranchers involved, and the cooperative efforts of the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Sage-Grouse Initiative, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Partners for Fish and Wildlife, and Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory.

Ongoing identification of high-priority Lesser Prairie-Chicken habitat on private lands by Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Pheasants Forever, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife is essential to a program designed to conserve rare, threatened or endangered wildlife. Their results inform State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE), a voluntary initiative for landowners from the USDA Conservation Reserve Program. Using on-the-ground knowledge, biology, lek location information and GIS, the partners generate a list of high-priority properties to help them maximize the conservation benefit of funding from SAFE and other sources.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2012

SCIENCE

- **The Avian Data Center** is being redesigned to allow partners quicker and easier access to the data collected each year, including occupancy and density estimates at multiple scales, transect-location maps, and raw-count data.
- **Using collected bird-monitoring data**, RMBO and its partners are developing models to determine how bird occurrence is influenced by vegetation at the local scale. The bird-habitat relationships will identify desired habitat conditions and guide management activities for species of conservation concern.

STEWARDSHIP

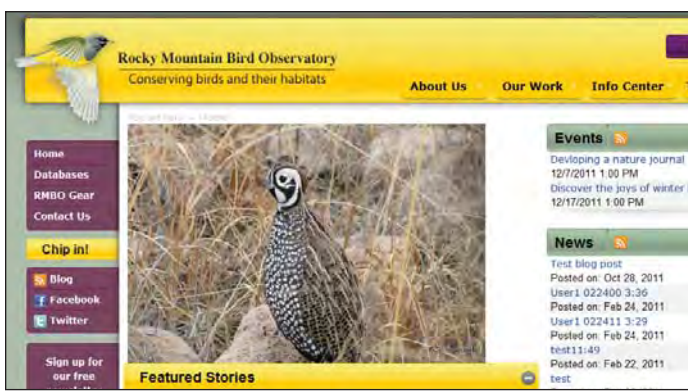
- **Along with the Science Team**, Stewardship is working with partners to develop distribution maps for species of conservation concern. These maps will help land managers identify opportunities and priorities for bird conservation.
- **The Stewardship Team will enhance thousands of acres** of habitat in 2012 with special emphasis on priority areas for sage-grouse and Lesser Prairie-Chickens.

INTERNATIONAL

- **The International Team** plans to enhance tens of thousands of acres of Chihuahuan Desert grassland in Mexico with voluntary participation of landowners. Site-specific habitat management will increase winter survival of Baird's Sparrows, Sprague's Pipits, Chestnut-collared Longspurs and other declining grassland birds.
- **Continuing to develop the science** to address grassland-bird declines in Mexico, RMBO will examine the influence of pre-winter rainfall on the winter distribution of birds over the last six years; explore relationships between late-winter bird densities and breeding-bird abundance the following summer; and develop a predictive model to investigate the impacts of climate change on habitat in the Chihuahuan Desert.

EDUCATION

- **A Community Education Coordinator** will join the Education Team in Colorado to lead summer camps and family programs and to staff the Environmental Learning Center on Saturdays. This position is possible with support from the Citizens of the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District, Vestas Nacelles America, Inc., private donations, and proceeds from the BBQ for the Birds silent auction and Walk on the Wild Side.
- **Save the date – October 6, 2012** – for RMBO's second Walk on the Wild Side walkathon.
- **Bird-banding stations in Colorado and western Nebraska** will operate during spring and fall migration. Most stations are open to the public and schools and other groups. See www.rmbo.org/v3/OurWork/Education/BirdBanding.aspx



www.rmbo.org

Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory launched a new website at the end of 2011. Visit www.rmbo.org for news, events, project information or to sign up for newsletters or make a donation. Thank you to Wirestone in Fort Collins, Colorado, for donating planning and design services for the new site.

2011 VOLUNTEERS

Citizen scientists and other volunteers add enormous capacity to Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory and its mission to conserve birds and habitat. Thank you to the 200 volunteers who donated upwards of 4,100 hours in 2011. In addition, staff members contributed 4,346 unpaid hours.

Bald Eagle Watchers spent 650 hours monitoring 18 nests and watching 32 eaglets successfully fledge on Colorado's Front Range. Volunteer Naturalists contributed more than 1,000 hours guiding youths in RMBO's school programs and camps. HawkWatch volunteers invested 1,228 hours collecting data on raptor migrations. And 432 hours were donated to the ColonyWatch program to monitor 15 species of colonial waterbirds. Other volunteers helped with bird banding, special events and various projects. Board members dedicated many hours to volunteer programs and to guiding the organization's leadership and vision.

Susan Allerton	Jim Gano	Jim Madsen	Pamela Roth
Dan Ames	Janet George	Marcia Maeda	Roger Rouch
Julia Auckland	Joan Glabach	Paul Mammenga	Niña Routh
Doug Backlund	Mackenzie	Edna Mason	Thomas Ryon
Jocie Baker	Goldthwait	Kylie Mattes & Family	Jan Sailer
Bill Bell	Lisa Haack	Meredith McBurney	Mark Schmidtbauer
Nathan Berry	Francis Haas	Kay McConnell	Bill Schmoker
Gil Blankespoor	Joanne Haller	Tom McConnell	Jim Schmoker
Michele Bloom	Frank Hatch	Brock McCormick	Kevin & Lynn Schutz
Georgiana	Alison Hazel	Merrye McGilvray	Larry Semo
Bohlender	William Helmich, III	Michael Melius	Scott Severs
Jennifer Bohn	Mike Henwood	Mary Menz	Mike Sherman
Ann Bond	Melinda Hetrick	Karen Metz	Virginia Simmons
William Bond	Allison Hilf	Adam Miller	Malinda Slaybaugh
Bob Bradley	Dona Hilkey	Charlie Miller	Paul Slingsby
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Glenda Brown	Sue Hirshman	Lucinda Miller	Sarah Smith
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Brenda Dexter	Dale Jones	Todd Patrick	Sarah Wein
Coen Dexter	Nell Jordan	Johanna Payne	Scott Weins
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Nelda Gamble	Cynthia Madsen	Gary Rossmiller	



PROFILE

AMBER TYLER, VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

After donating hundreds of hours in nearly two years as a Volunteer Naturalist, Amber Tyler was presented with Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory's Nelda Gamble Volunteer of the Year Award in 2011. Her own words reveal why she is an outstanding volunteer.

"When the Naturalists were asked why we volunteer in outdoor education, a unifying theme was that we each had been powerfully impacted by our experiences outdoors. Some found this passion as adults and others like me had parents who shared nature with us. We had all logged an amazing number of hours enjoying the outdoors. I believe that is why we want to be part of something that gets kids outside. In this high-tech, high-speed world, I worry that too many kids don't get the opportunity to build personal connections to nature.

"I have had the pleasure of sharing in so many different kids' personal connections, from a brilliant boy's fascination with Fibonacci and the spirals of plants to a lovely young girl who spent a year recovering from a drive-by shooting watching nature outside her window. My own son did his first science project about how to tackle the algae bloom problem at Barr Lake after seeing it first-hand. A great group of middle-school kids did a week-long field study to figure out the best solution to beetle kill with the least impact on native birds. I learned a lot from what they researched and concluded.

"I feel giddy when I arrive to volunteer in anticipation of the moments when a great question is asked or a wild creature crosses our path, and the kids get to have that memory forever. Volunteering for RMBO is a gift for me every day I get to be there!"

2011 Members & Donors

Thank you to the following people and organizations for supporting Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory and its mission to conserve birds and habitat. Basic one-year memberships are \$35 for individuals and \$60 for families. RMBO welcomes and appreciates contributions in any amount. Please visit www.rmbo.org or call 303-659-4348 ext. 17 for information.

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\$10,000 and up

The Dellora A. & Lester J. Norris Foundation:
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Steve Herbener

Ann & Wilmer Hines

Sharon Hobbs

Doug & Jan Hodous

Brian Hoffmann

Barbara Holme

Michael & Barbara Hughes

Joel Hurmence



PROFILE

MEREDITH MCBURNEY: FRIEND AND BIRD BANDER EXTRAORDINAIRE

Meredith is a Friend of Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, a long-time volunteer and a part-time staff member as a highly skilled bird bander. She says, "When I began volunteering in 1997, I also started donating to Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory – I thought I should put my financial support where I put my time. Over the years, I watched the staff and board work through some challenges and emerge

much stronger. I think that happens with organizations that have an essential mission and dedicated staff and volunteers. Working for RMBO has increased my commitment and respect for the organization. The staff members love their work and are passionate about bird conservation. It is rare to find so many really smart, really nice people always willing to share their expertise and work together to achieve common goals."

LEGACY DONOR

My decision to leave my estate to Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory developed as I asked myself, "What can I do to help RMBO achieve its mission?" I am confident RMBO will be around for years to come, and I want to contribute to its future. I have a strong land ethic, and I believe my investment in RMBO will inspire others to be aware of birds around us and to protect the amazing landscapes of the West.

- Anonymous



Please consider Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory in your estate planning.

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
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ABBY MODESITT MEMORIAL FUND

Abby touched many people with her knowledge of and devotion to nature and education. On the grove trail at Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory's Environmental Learning Center, an engraved bench in her honor is a tranquil place to take in inspiring views and reflect on our natural world.

- | | |
|----------------|----------------------|
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| Mary Boswell | Denis Murstein |
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| Ellen Fisher | Joe Roller |
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Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory makes every effort to maintain accurate and up-to-date records. If you were a member or donor in 2011 and your name does not appear on this list, please accept our apologies and let us know by emailing james.pauley@rmbo.org or calling 303-659-4348 ext. 14.



2011

FUNDERS & PARTNERS

ROCKY MOUNTAIN BIRD OBSERVATORY FINANCIAL SUMMARY | FY 2011 (UNAUDITED)

REVENUES

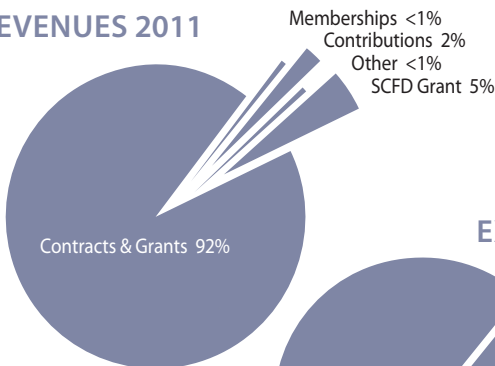
Contributions	\$77,967
Memberships	\$15,047
SCFD Grant	\$169,041
Contracts and Grants	\$3,223,735
Other	\$7,337
Total Revenues	\$3,493,127

EXPENSES

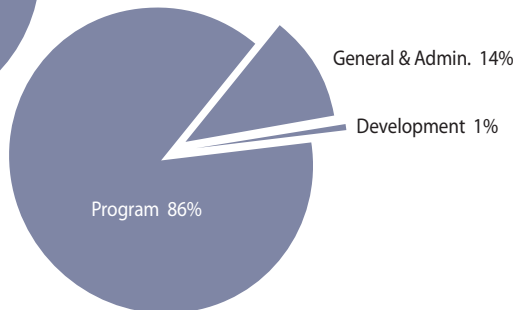
Program	\$2,930,856
General & Administrative	\$473,898
Development	\$23,082
Total Expenses	\$3,427,836

Change in Net Assets \$65,291

REVENUES 2011



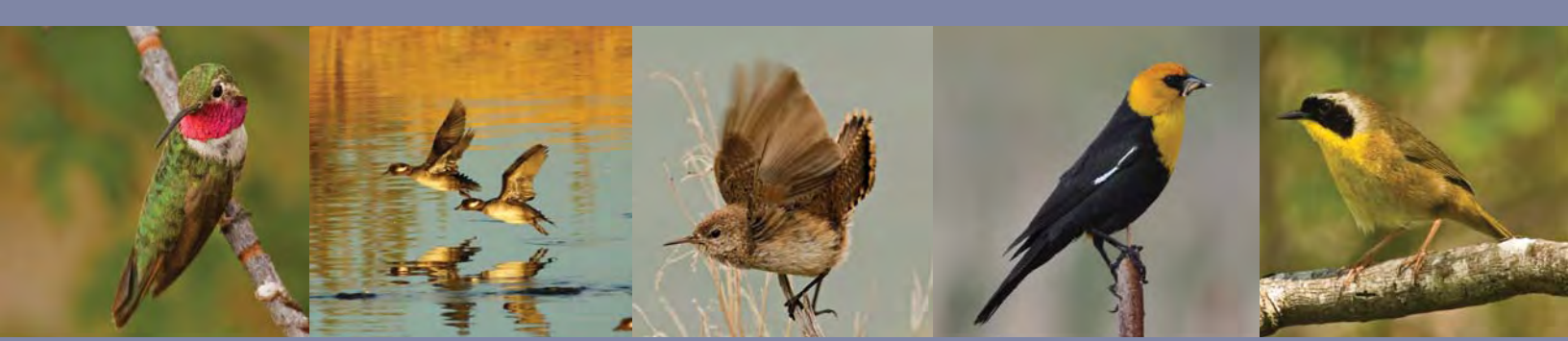
EXPENSES 2011



Percentages do not total 100 due to rounding. This summary financial information has not been audited. Please visit www.rmbo.org after May 31, 2012, for the audited financial statements including all note disclosures.

Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.

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- Adams County Parks & Community Resources Dept.
- Aiken Audubon
- Allstate Permit Services, LLC
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- American Birding Association
- AmeriCorps
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- Audubon Society of Greater Denver
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- Avian Knowledge Alliance
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- Colorado Natural Heritage Program
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- Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trail Assoc.
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- Colorado State Parks
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PROFILE

RANCHER VALUES BIRD CONSERVATION

Jean Parker, a fifth generation rancher, has been at the Cross L Cattle Ranch on the Niobrara River in the sand hills of Nebraska for 25 years.

She first became involved with Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory in 2004 when Larry Snyder, RMBO's Nebraska Prairie Partners Assistant, constructed a nest tree crib to protect a Ferruginous Hawk nest in one of her pastures.

Since then Jean has allowed RMBO to monitor Ferruginous Hawks, Burrowing Owls and other species on her ranch, and she has hosted RMBO landowner workshops and worked on several other projects to improve her ranch for wildlife, especially birds.

"I've always felt that bird and wildlife conservation is important, and I like the fact that RMBO helps landowners protect birds. They have been instrumental in helping me protect the ecosystem I have here. Through my association with RMBO, I am now much more knowledgeable, appreciative and adamant about protecting the land."



ROCKY MOUNTAIN BIRD OBSERVATORY

“may my heart always be open to little
birds who are the secrets of living...”

e.e. cummings



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