

25 Years of Bird and Habitat Conservation



Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory

2012 Annual Report

Mission | conserving birds and their habitats

Brighton Headquarters

14500 Lark Bunting Lane
P.O. Box 1232
Brighton, CO 80601
(303) 659-4348 | Fax (303) 654-0791

Rachel Bock, Staff Accountant
Tyler Edmondson, Community Education Coordinator
Nancy Gobris, Biologist/Banding Coordinator
Meredith McBurney, Biologist/Bird Bander
Kacie Miller, Education & Outreach Director
Emily Snode, School Programs Coordinator
Judith Spiegel, Chief Financial Officer*
*employment began in 2013

Fort Collins Office

230 Cherry Street
Fort Collins, CO 80521
(970) 482-1707 | Fax (970) 472-9031

Tammy VerCauteren, Executive Director
Jenny Berven, Northern Goshawk Project Coordinator
Jeff Birek, Outreach Biologist
Jennifer Blakesley, Biometrician
Francyne DeBauge, Project Coordinator
Angela Dwyer, Wildlife Biologist
Seth Gallagher, Stewardship Director
Michael Griffith, IT Support Specialist
David Hanni, Science Director
Greg Levandoski, Chihuahuan Desert Project Manager
Ross Lock, Wildlife Biologist
Matthew McLaren, Biologist
Arvind Panjabi, International Director
Teddy Parker-Renga, Communications & Membership Coordinator
David Pavlacky, Spatial Ecologist
Laura Quattrini, Stewardship Program Manager
Rob Sparks, Research Biologist/GIS Manager
Erin Strasser, Biologist
Bill Tiedje, Landowner Outreach & Program Technician
Nick Van Lanen, Biologist
Chris White, Biologist
Erin Youngberg, Biologist

Nebraska Office

330243 C.R. H
Minatare, NE 69356
(308) 783-1019 | Fax (308) 783-1021

Andrew Pierson, Shortgrass Prairie Coordinating
Wildlife Biologist
Larry Snyder, Nebraska Project Assistant
Magdalena Vinson, Nebraska Education Coordinator

Field Offices

Noah Bates, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist,
Kremmling, Colorado
Jason Beason, Special Monitoring Projects Coordinator,
Paonia, Colorado
Kelly Corman, Private Lands Range/Wildlife Ecologist,
Lamar, Colorado
Nancy Drilling, South Dakota Projects Manager,
Rapid City, South Dakota
Brandon Elkins, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist,
Gillette, Wyoming
Colin Lee, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist,
Greeley, Colorado
Alberto Macías-Duarte, Research Ecologist,
Hermosillo, Mexico
Noe Marymor, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist,
Greeley, Colorado
Brandon Miller, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist,
Steamboat Springs, Colorado
Martin Moses, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist,
Durango, Colorado
Duane Pool, Landscape Ecologist,
Bismarck, North Dakota
Roberto Rodríguez, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist,
Chihuahua City, Mexico
Christina Santana, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist,
Gunnison, Colorado
Nathan Schmitz, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist,
Colorado Springs, Colorado



The staff and board gather for a photo in August of 2012 at the amphitheater at RMBO's Environmental Learning Center at the Old Stone House at Barr Lake near Brighton, Colorado.



Former Staff Members Employed at RMBO in 2012

Cassy Bohnet, Colorado Education Coordinator
Victoria Collier, Communications & Membership Coordinator
Reesa Conrey, Wildlife Biologist
Jora Fogg, Biologist
Gina Manzo, Accounting Assistant
Joseph Parsons, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist
Jim Pauley, Chief Financial Officer
Alex Ushakov, IT Specialist

Board of Directors

Stephen L. Bloom, Ph.D., ABPP
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Charles Hundertmark, M.A., A.P.R., A.T.M.
Larry Modesitt, M.B.A., CQE, CTP (Chair)
Shawn Nowlan, J.D., LL.M. (term ended May 4, 2012)
Joe Roller, M.D.
D. Jean Tate, Ph.D.
Warren Taylor, Ph.D. (Secretary)
Ed Warner, M.S. (term began Feb. 20, 2013)
Tiffany Watts, CPA

A Quarter-Century of Conservation

As Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory celebrates its silver anniversary, it's a time to look back and ponder: What is the legacy we've created?

In 25 years, more than 500 bird species have become better understood through monitoring, bird banding, nesting ecology and habitat relationship research. Nearly 250,000 youth and families have explored, studied and grown to love nature. More than 300,000 acres of private lands are being managed for healthy bird populations, and tens of thousands of additional acres of crop fields are being tilled with Mountain Plover conservation in mind. Through your time, talents, financial resources or partnership, you have contributed to this legacy.

What does the next quarter-century look like? It includes integrating knowledge of winter and breeding bird populations to identify bottlenecks for conservation. This will ensure the right actions are taken at the right annual life stage of birds – on their wintering and breeding grounds, as well as migration routes. It includes ensuring that today's youth, our future conservationists and voters, develop a sense of place, knowledge and passion for our natural world, and the skills to be active participants in shaping their community and world.

The next quarter-century includes a network of protected and working lands that promotes economic sustainability, clean air and water, and healthy wildlife habitat. It also includes consensus among birders, wildlife watchers, hunters, anglers and other recreationists who enjoy these lands about the need to support conservation through better policies, dedicated funding and action on the ground.

Before RMBO embarks on the next 25 years, take a moment to read about our successes in 2012. On the following pages, you'll find a timeline of RMBO's milestones and learn about the impacts we've made to the birds, people and landscapes of the Rocky Mountains, Great Plains and Mexico.

Whether you have been a part of RMBO's history or are just getting to know us, you can help make the next 25 years of bird and habitat conservation successes possible. Together, we can expand RMBO's efforts to advance science, engage people and conserve western landscapes. Thank you for your continued support.



Tammy VerCauteren
Executive Director



Leave a Legacy for Birds

Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory's expansion to 13 states in the U.S. and seven in Mexico over the past 25 years has produced a national reputation in the conservation community. Leadership staff now serve on key U.S. and international steering committees and boards. As RMBO's reach has grown over the past quarter-century, so has the need for the organization to increase discretionary resources. By broadening its funding base, with your help, RMBO can continue to advance conservation locally, regionally and internationally and tackle projects not covered by grants and contracts.

To mark its 25th anniversary, RMBO embarked on a Quarter Century Campaign with a goal of \$250,000. It also created a legacy society for people who, noting its sustained progress over the last 25 years, want RMBO to continue – and expand – these valuable efforts. I made the leap and put RMBO in my will, and

I hope you do, too. By contributing to the campaign or joining the legacy society, you can make a lasting difference for bird and habitat conservation that will extend far beyond your lifetime.



Larry Modesitt
Chairman of the Board

Impacts and Milestones

Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory's mission has always been to conserve birds. What we do for birds matters to all of us. These birds represent just a few of the many species RMBO has impacted over the last 25 years.



Bald Eagle

The once-endangered Bald Eagle has recovered along the Front Range of Colorado, thanks in part to citizen scientists participating in the Bald Eagle Watch program.



Lark Bunting

Colorado's state bird, the Lark Bunting is one of the species addressed in the first-ever conservation plan for grassland birds that winter in the Chihuahuan Desert. Released in 2012, the plan is available at RMBO.org.



Piping Plover and Least Tern

In the late 1980s, the presence of nesting Piping Plovers (pictured) and Least Terns in Colorado was reconfirmed. This finding has led to conservation efforts to protect these threatened and endangered species.

We share these impacts and milestones with the many partners, funders, volunteers and supporters that made them possible.

1988



Bird banding at Barr Lake started.



Colorado Bird Observatory (CBO) founded by Michael Carter through a challenge grant from the Colorado Division of Wildlife. Bald Eagle Watch at Barr Lake began.

1990



HawkWatch site established on Dinosaur Ridge west of Morrison, Colorado.



First visit made to western Mexico to study wintering birds and establish partnerships.



Initial conservation priorities set for neotropical migratory birds in 11 western states. Partners In Flight (PIF) Species Assessment Database created.

1995



Monitoring Colorado's Birds launched as first statewide bird monitoring program in Colorado.



Prairie Partners started to engage landowners in shortgrass prairie bird conservation.





Mountain Plover

Over the last decade, more than a thousand Mountain Plover nests have been located, marked and saved from accidental tilling by farmers through a pioneering nest conservation program. Marked nests have shown higher hatching success for this priority species.



Black Swift

The winter destination for this mysterious species was revealed in 2012. Researchers tracked the Black Swift to Brazil, opening the door to full life-cycle conservation of this species at risk to the effects of climate change.

For the Benefit of Birds ... And People

At Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, we make people a part of the solution for conservation and believe a healthy home for birds is a healthy home for all of us.

For 25 years, we have provided educational activities in ornithology, natural history and other areas related to birds and nature.

In 2012, our educators and biologists connected with 29,640 people through school programs, summer camps, workshops, landowner visits and more.

2000



CBO moved into its permanent headquarters, the Old Stone House, a refurbished 1880s home located near the shores of Barr Lake.



Project ColonyWatch initiated to monitor colonial waterbirds in Colorado.



Name changed to Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory to reflect expanding reach.

2005



International team formalized to conserve migratory and resident birds in Mexico. Chihuahuan Desert Grassland Bird Conservation program founded the following year.



Integrated Monitoring in Bird Conservation Regions program launched, becoming one of the largest coordinated breeding bird monitoring programs in the U.S.



Private Lands Wildlife Biologist program established with four biologists in communities across Colorado.

2010



Volunteer Naturalist program started to involve citizens in environmental education.



2012



Students welcomed to new Environmental Learning Center at the Old Stone House. The center was dedicated the previous year by Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper.

Science

Knowledge That Drives
Conservation Action

Gathering the Data

Checking the Pulse of Bird Populations

Twenty-five years ago, biologists with RMBO (then Colorado Bird Observatory) began monitoring birds of conservation concern in Colorado. Today, they manage one of the largest coordinated breeding bird monitoring programs in the United States, the Integrated Monitoring in Bird Conservation Regions (IMBCR) program, covering all or parts of 13 western states.

In 2012, biologists and field technicians traipsed across mountains, prairies and high deserts to conduct 990 IMBCR surveys, detecting 127,000 individual birds of 309 species. The Avian Science Center, Montana Natural Heritage Program, Idaho Bird Observatory and Wyoming Natural Diversity Database assisted with data collection for the IMBCR program.



A male Western Tanager wears a geolocator backpack. In 2012, RMBO biologists attached geolocators to 10 Western Tanagers in Rocky Mountain National Park to discover important stopover sites, migration routes and the wintering locations for this local population. This study builds upon last year's breakthrough announcement of the core wintering grounds of the Black Swift in Brazil, discovered using geolocator data.

Sharing the Information

Communicating Across Databases

To be truly useful, data collected through bird monitoring programs should not sit on a shelf – or a personal computer. They must be shared. To do this, RMBO hosts the online Avian Data Center where land managers, researchers and others can access information gathered through its programs. The data center serves as a regional node for the Avian Knowledge Network (AKN), a collection of databases run by bird conservation organizations.

In October of 2012, RMBO scientists met with AKN members and other partners to discuss how to better share information across databases. By working together, RMBO and its partners can ensure data collected locally contributes to our understanding of bird populations on much larger scales.



In 2012, bird records in RMBO's Avian Data Center surpassed the 1.5 million mark. The first bird entered after hitting that mark was a Painted Redstart, recorded July 8, 2012, by RMBO's International team outside of Mascota, Jalisco, Mexico.



Birds serve as an important indicator of environmental change. As humans influence nature – and the effects of climate change become more pressing – declines in bird populations act as a “canary in the coal mine” for detecting negative impacts on the environment. To better understand bird population trends and identify the needs of common species and those of conservation concern, RMBO scientists conduct innovative monitoring and research programs. What they learn through science contributes to the big picture for bird and habitat conservation and informs management decisions that can reverse the decline of priority species.



Osprey by Bill Schmoker

Informing Managers Modeling Northern Goshawk Distribution

The Northern Goshawk is a species of conservation concern in many U.S. Forest Service regions, given its susceptibility to deforestation, catastrophic wildfires and other factors. RMBO has been working with the Forest Service to monitor this species since 2006. Using innovative modeling techniques, RMBO biometricians developed a map based on monitoring data and forest condition to show managers where Northern Goshawks are likely to reside across the Southwest Region. This map will help managers focus conservation efforts for this at-risk species on forests in Arizona and New Mexico.



Last summer, the Fontenelle Fire burned thousands of acres on the Bridger-Teton National Forest and surrounding lands in western Wyoming, including two active Northern Goshawk nests. Observation rates from RMBO surveys were low in 2012, with many goshawks likely displaced by the fire.

“The surveys conducted by RMBO and its partners ensure we are keeping our finger on the pulse of bird populations.”

David Hanni,
RMBO's Science Director

Looking Ahead

RMBO is developing a tool that shows landowners and land managers how conservation practices, such as marking fences and rotational grazing, can increase populations of sage grouse and other sagebrush birds. The tool will integrate bird population and vegetation data with feedback from end-users, ensuring cost-effective bird conservation while meeting economic objectives.

A redesign of the Avian Data Center will be released in 2013, providing a “one stop shop” for data collected by RMBO and its partners. Training sessions will be held throughout the year.

Visit: rmbo.org/v3/avian/Home.aspx

Five years of fieldwork are now complete for the South Dakota Breeding Bird Atlas II. In 2013, the data on roughly 60,000 bird observations will be proofed and then used to produce distribution maps for each species, allowing biologists to document how breeding bird populations have changed in South Dakota since the first atlas 20 years ago and evaluate what this means for future conservation.



Education

Engaging People in Conservation

Connecting with Nature

Environmental Learning Center

In April of 2012, RMBO welcomed students for the first time to its Environmental Learning Center, located at Barr Lake State Park near Brighton, Colorado. On opening day, a Bald Eagle perched in a tree by the outdoor classroom, watching over 60 fourth-graders as they learned about water conservation. It was a positive omen, said educator Emily Snode, for the day's activities – and the future of the center. In the first few months, more than 1,000 students visited the center to explore nature and to learn about water, prairies and birds.



Educator Emily Snode leads a program at the new Environmental Learning Center. The center, incorporated into RMBO's main office, a renovated 1880s home known as the Old Stone House, features a prairie trail, indoor and outdoor classrooms, demonstration gardens and access to Barr Lake, with its diversity of habitats and abundance of birds and other wildlife.

Inspiring Youth Summer Bird Camps

Last year, RMBO's summer camps gave 60 youths ages 4 to 12 the opportunity to get outside and gain a deeper appreciation for Colorado's unique wildlife and habitats. The Young Ecologists camp treated 11-year-olds to a week of learning and adventure, including field trips to a wildlife refuge, ranch and water treatment center. The girls even managed to identify 47 birds in five days using their field guides!

In addition to Colorado camps, educator Maggie Vinson helped run two camps in western Nebraska in 2012. At bird camp, third- to fifth-graders made bird feeders, learned to use binoculars and played bird games, while a weeklong paleontology camp gave older students the chance to dig for fossils, visit museums and hike through time at Toadstool Geological Park.



Campers test their bird identification skills during the Young Ecologists camp.

Reaching New Audiences

Family & Community Programs

With funding from Adams County Open Space and private donors, RMBO added a new Community Education Coordinator last year to develop family and community-focused programs.



Tyler Edmondson,
Community Education Coordinator



Cassin's Sparrow by Bill Schmoker

Bird bander Meredith McBurney places a MacGillivray's Warbler in the palms of a girl's hands. The bird lies still for a second, then springs into the air and flies off into the trees, causing the third-grader to shriek with delight. It's a brief but powerful moment, when a young person – a future ornithologist, perhaps – experiences the wonder and science of birds. For 25 years, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory has been inspiring people of all ages to care about birds, get outdoors and be good stewards of the land and its resources. To quote one of our partners, "You can't conserve birds and their habitats by changing the behavior of birds." It's people who are the true solution to conservation.

Banding Birds

RMBO and its partners operated six banding stations in the fall in Colorado and Nebraska and two in the spring in Colorado in 2012. The stations served as outdoor classrooms for studying bird migration and anatomy and enhancing the public's appreciation of birds.



A Worm-eating Warbler, a first for the Barr Lake Banding Station

Big Year at Barr Lake Station

The 26th season of banding birds at Barr Lake State Park was a big one. More than 1,700 birds were banded during the fall season, including many rare – and relatively rare – species like Red-naped Sapsucker, Philadelphia Vireo and Bay-breasted Warbler. In addition, more than 1,600 students and adults visited the station to learn about bird migration and see scientists at work. Other highlights from the season included the first-ever evening banding session, conducted for students in Adams County's Experience 9 to 5 program, and a live video broadcast from the banding station to schools across the U.S. in partnership with the Denver Museum of Nature & Science.



Bird bander Meredith McBurney teaches Maria Bustos, an Experience 9 to 5 student, the proper photographer's hold with a male House Finch. Maria had an amazing experience at Barr Lake and wants to build on it by pursuing a career with wildlife.

New Pavilion for Chatfield Station

On May 4, more than 100 guests gathered at the banding station at Chatfield State Park for the opening of a new pavilion. RMBO operates the station in partnership with the Audubon Society of Greater Denver. Students from the University of Colorado designed and built the pavilion, which will serve as an outdoor classroom for visiting school groups.



Representatives from RMBO and its partners cut the ribbon at the new pavilion at the Chatfield State Park banding station.

"You have no idea what a tremendous job the RMBO instructors have done with our elementary students. They had an absolutely wonderful time learning and experiencing science from a perspective that is rarely seen by low-income students."

From a teacher evaluation, Pinnacle Charter School, Federal Heights, CO

Looking Ahead

Outdoor restrooms, prairie restoration and other enhancements are slated for the Environmental Learning Center in the coming year.

RMBO will introduce a new summer camp to its schedule, Taking Flight. The weeklong camp for 12- to 14-year-olds will take place in Colorado in early June.

A bird banding station in Fort Collins, Colorado, is planned for fall of 2013, which will be located along the Cache la Poudre River and showcase a diversity of resident and migratory birds.

Stewardship

Because Conservation Starts with a Conversation

Working at a Local Level

RMBO collaborates with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and other partners in the U.S. and abroad to place private lands wildlife biologists (PLWB) in communities across the Intermountain West. These biologists work with landowners, land managers, agricultural professionals and others to foster proactive, voluntary conservation efforts and implement on-the-ground habitat enhancement projects that benefit wildlife. In 2012, the PLWB program expanded to 11 biologists across three western states and one in Chihuahua, Mexico.

BioBlitz Species Inventory

Biologist Martin Moses out of Durango, Colorado, initiated two BioBlitzes with a private landowner on her property along the Dolores River. Scientists, students, teachers and volunteers participated in the species inventory, which will provide a baseline for monitoring changes to the wildlife community following habitat restoration planned for the property in 2013.



An Ord's Kangaroo Rat discovered during a BioBlitz

Wetlands Restoration

Over three days last spring, more than 50 people with Wildlands Restoration Volunteers planted more than 1,200 native shrubs and trees in the riparian corridor adjacent to RMBO's bird banding station at Chico Basin Ranch, located 35 miles southeast of Colorado Springs, Colorado. The project was part of a long-term effort, funded by a wetlands grant from Colorado Parks and Wildlife, to remove invasive Tamarisk and Russian-olive and restore riparian areas at the ranch, whose habitat is a hot spot for migrating birds.



A crew from Wildlands Restoration Volunteers at Chico Basin Ranch

Sagebrush Conservation

Last year, biologist Christina Santana out of Gunnison, Colorado, worked with Lanny and Patsy Denham of Denham Ranch to initiate a project that will restore roughly 260 acres of Gunnison Sage-grouse habitat on the family's Kinikin property, just east of Montrose. The project will focus on removing invasive Juniper and Pinion trees and include perimeter fencing, reseeding and prescribed grazing to benefit the grouse, a species under consideration for Endangered Species Act listing.



The Gunnison Sage-grouse is a species of conservation concern. The property is located less than two miles from an active lek.

2012 by the Numbers

1,350 people reached through landowner visits, presentations, workshops, public events and restoration projects in Colorado, Nebraska and Wyoming

220 visits with landowners

263 projects that enhanced 66,516 acres of prairie, shrublands and wetlands

\$2.26 million in Farm Bill funds and \$95,817 in non-Farm Bill funds put toward improving wildlife habitat on private lands

In 1995, then-Executive Director Mike Carter wrote in a letter to members, "If you are going to work to conserve shortgrass prairie, you'd better be talking to ranchers and farmers." That statement is still very much true today. Grassland and arid land birds, like the Mountain Plover and Lark Bunting, remain at-risk species. To make a difference for these birds, landowner outreach is crucial because 80% of their habitat lies under private ownership. As a non-governmental organization with no gun, badge or shield, RMBO is uniquely positioned to reach out to landowners and agricultural resource professionals – in the U.S. and abroad – about the need to balance working landscapes with bird conservation.

Expansion in Wyoming

Range conservationist Brandon Elkins out of Gillette, Wyoming, joined the PLWB program last year to conserve Greater Sage-grouse in the Powder River Basin. He has been working with landowners and managers to develop and implement grazing and restoration plans on vacated energy extraction sites across private and public lands.



Brandon Elkins,
Range Conservationist



Blue-winged Teal by Bill Schmoker

Landowner Profile Rancher & Board Member

In the late 1990s, Grady Grissom, a rancher in southeast Colorado, shifted his management style at Rancho Largo Cattle Co. from a focus on cattle production to land stewardship. Grady said he was motivated by an understanding that ecosystem health leads to ranching profit.

To enhance wildlife habitat on his ranch, he enacted strategic grazing methods and stewardship projects with assistance from Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory. "It was clear from the start that the stewardship team from RMBO understood landowner perspectives," he said. "The folks at RMBO developed projects that fit my management style, and they provided the funding and expertise to make them a reality."



Grady Grissom talks about land stewardship at last year's BBQ for the Birds. Grady joined RMBO's board of directors in 2012.

"I love RMBO's style of conservation. It's on-the-ground, real stuff. You can see it, feel it and touch it."

**Grady Grissom,
Landowner,
Fowler, CO**

Looking Ahead

RMBO was asked to serve as a partner in writing and editing the *State of the Birds* report for private lands. Slated for summer of 2013, the report is a national publication produced in support of bird conservation.

Next year, RMBO will produce a training manual called *Integrating Bird Conservation into Range Management in the Sage Steppe*, which will highlight habitat needs for sagebrush birds. The manual will be used during training workshops with landowners and resource professionals in several western states including Colorado, Wyoming and Montana.

In 2013, RMBO is partnering with researchers from Virginia Tech to survey landowners in Nebraska about their motivations to participate in RMBO's Mountain Plover conservation program (see page 13).



International

Bird Conservation Across Borders

Filling Knowledge Gaps with Science

In its sixth season, the Chihuahuan Desert wintering grassland bird monitoring program covered 15 priority areas in six Mexican states and two U.S. states. In 2012, bird and vegetation data from the past six years of monitoring were used to develop the first-ever conservation plan for grassland birds that winter in the Chihuahuan Desert. The plan provides guidance for maintaining and enhancing habitat for five grassland species of conservation concern, including Sprague's Pipit and Baird's Sparrow.



A Baird's Sparrow wears a radio transmitter. In 2012, RMBO biologists placed 74 transmitters on Baird's and Grasshopper Sparrows in Janos, Chihuahua, Mexico, to determine survival rates, habitat needs and threats to these species, which have lost 70-80% of their global population since 1966. This knowledge will help identify and measure the effects of limiting factors in the life cycles of these migratory species and target future conservation efforts.

Inspiring Youth through Education

Since first visiting Mexico in the early 1990s to study wintering birds and build partnerships, RMBO has provided outreach to local communities to foster bird and habitat conservation. While in Chihuahua last year, in cooperation with The Nature Conservancy and Naturalia, RMBO biologists invited 240 students from the Janos area to learn about the birds in their own backyard. The students helped flush birds out of the grass and into nets to be captured for the winter survival study mentioned in the caption to the left. "These young people are the future stewards of this land," said Arvind Panjabi, RMBO's International Director. "They will decide whether or not to include wildlife in their management decisions."



Mexican students watch as biologist Erin Strasser releases a Baird's Sparrow.



Grassland birds have declined more steeply than any other group of North American birds. The key to reversing their decline may lie in the Chihuahuan Desert of Mexico, where 90% of western North America's migratory grassland bird species overwinter. In the last five years, an estimated half-million birds have been displaced in the Valles Centrales region of Chihuahua, where grasslands are rapidly vanishing through agricultural conversion and inadequate management. RMBO is currently the only U.S.-based, non-governmental organization with a long-term, on-the-ground program dedicated to conserving grassland birds in the Chihuahuan Desert. With the help of partners, RMBO is using its approach of science, education and stewardship to address the needs of priority species where they need it most.



Long-billed Curlew by Bill Schmoker

Engaging Ranchers in Stewardship

Using remote sensing data, RMBO scientists have shown dramatic expansion of cropland in the Valles Centrales region of Chihuahua within the last decade. To stem this habitat loss, RMBO and international partners initiated a private lands outreach, management and habitat improvement program in 2012 to engage local ranchers in stewardship. The program aims to show ranchers how to practice sustainable, profitable ranching, so they are not enticed into converting or selling their land for agriculture. To date, RMBO's private lands wildlife biologist in Chihuahua has enrolled ranches totaling 23,000 acres in the program. RMBO's goal is to enroll 300,000 acres by 2020.



Habitat loss, overgrazing, drought and loss of nest sites threaten the native population of Aplomado Falcons in the Valles Centrales region. In 2012, RMBO surveyors found only three active nesting pairs out of 25 recorded in 2000. To protect the unique and isolated desert population of this species, RMBO's private lands wildlife biologist has targeted ranches where the falcons have historically nested. In 2012, he enrolled ranches that support at least two nesting pairs of Aplomado Falcons in RMBO's stewardship program, with plans to restore an additional four pairs through supplemental nest sites and improved range management.

Jalisco, Mexico

In spring and summer of 2012, RMBO completed its first season of data collection in the pine-oak and cloud forests of western Mexico, the primary wintering grounds for most forest-dwelling migrant birds breeding in western North America. This project brings together partners from Universidad de Guadalajara, the U.S. Forest Service International Programs and CONAFOR, Mexico's National Forestry Commission, to identify and protect key habitats for migrant and endemic birds. During the inaugural season, surveyors conducted 737 point counts on 23 of CONAFOR's National Forest and Soils Inventory points, detecting 147 bird species and gathering vegetation data. CONAFOR will use information from the project to better integrate bird needs into forest management practices and guide its innovative payment for ecosystem services program.

Looking Ahead

With partner support, RMBO will expand its winter survival research in 2013 to include more study sites across the range of Baird's and Grasshopper Sparrows.

RMBO will help expand the Partners In Flight conservation status assessment to cover all bird species of Central America, completing this key vulnerability review for all birds from Alaska to Panama.

Engaging Citizens in Science

25 Years of Bald Eagle Watch

When RMBO was founded, one of the first projects for the fledgling organization was monitoring a rare Bald Eagle nest at Barr Lake. In 2012, Bald Eagle Watch completed its 25th year of nest monitoring along Colorado's Front Range, and volunteers counted the 45th Bald Eagle fledged at Barr Lake. Citizen science programs like this one allow volunteers to participate in real science while learning about the species they are helping to conserve. In addition to Bald Eagle Watch, RMBO coordinated the ColonyWatch program to monitor 15 species of colonial waterbirds in Colorado and the HawkWatch program to collect data on raptor migrations. Visit www.rmbo.org to find out how to become a citizen scientist.



In June of 2012, the High Park Fire crept dangerously close to a Bald Eagle nest northwest of Fort Collins, Colorado. A trio of citizen scientists and coordinator Cindi Kelly monitored the nest despite encroaching flames. Fortunately, the nest survived and three eaglets successfully fledged.

Protecting Mountain Plovers

Mountain Plovers can nest successfully in cropland – as long as nests are not accidentally tilled. To facilitate nesting success on cropland, RMBO launched a program in 2003 funded by state wildlife grants, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and Nebraska Environmental Trust to locate and mark Mountain Plover nests to protect them from accidental tilling by farmers. A decade later, these efforts continue thanks to the support of dedicated landowners. In 2012, 78 landowners in Nebraska, representing more than 200,000 acres, took part in the nest-marking program, the highest landowner involvement to date. With their help, 66 nests were located and 67% of those nests produced young.



Landowner Dan Culek marks a Mountain Plover nest on his property in Kimball County, Nebraska. Without a marker, a plover nest – just a scrape in the dirt, lined with pebbles or bits of grass – is hard to spot from a tractor.

DMNS Speaker Series

In 2012, RMBO and the Denver Museum of Nature & Science brought four avian experts to the museum for a speaker series on the evolution of birds. Nearly 650 people attended the series to learn about the latest in avian science and conservation. Stay tuned to www.rmbo.org for upcoming speakers at DMNS.



Cornell Lab of Ornithology Director John Fitzpatrick, pictured here with RMBO Executive Director Tammy VerCauteren, closed out the 2012 speaker series at DMNS with an inspiring talk on the modern extinction and conservation of birds.

2012 Volunteers

Thank you to these people who donated their time and talents to help RMBO conserve birds and their habitats. Citizen scientists, volunteer naturalists, bird banders and other volunteers add enormous capacity to RMBO and its mission, assisting with programs, projects and special events. Board members dedicated countless hours to volunteer programs and to guiding RMBO through its 25th year.

- Julia Auckland
- Elisa Austell
- Jocie Baker
- David Balcorta Lucero
- Bill Bell
- Gil Blankespoor
- Michele Bloom
- Steve Bloom
- Mischa Bock
- Georgiana Bohlender
- Jennifer Bohn
- Ann Bond

Bob Bradley
 Glenda Brown
 Steve Brown
 Nicole Buyck
 Hernando Cabral
 Nayeli Carvajal Acosta
 Drew Cashman
 Joel Chapa
 Karen Clark
 Carol Cochran
 Francis Commercon
 Joyce Commercon
 Meg Cooper
 Kevin Corwin
 Mike Crosby
 Arthur Dahl
 Steve Deitemeyer
 Coen Dexter
 Alejandro Donatti
 Eileen Dowd-Stukel
 Christy Dowling
 Jim Duggan
 Ken Ecton
 Bill Eden
 Lorraine Everman
 Lee Farrell
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Volunteer Profile

For the Love of Bird Banding



Megan Miller volunteers at the bird banding stations at Chatfield State Park in the spring and Barr Lake State Park in the fall. As a banding volunteer, Megan helps with capturing birds and recording data. An avid birder, Megan said she enjoys the opportunity to work with birds and interact with young people when they visit the stations. As a girl, learning about all of the interesting, colorful birds of Colorado inspired her to get into birding, so she hopes to do the same for others through her work with RMBO. Megan aspires to one day be a professional bander. One of her favorite birds is the Northern Flicker. "I spent all of the fall banding season waiting to catch one and we did. It was so exciting!"

2012 Members and Donors

Thank you to the following people and organizations for supporting Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory and its mission to conserve birds and their habitats. 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 for information.

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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 2012 and your name does not appear on this list, please accept our apologies and let us know by emailing teddy.parker-renga@rmbo.org or calling 970-482-1707 ext. 30.

Friend Profile Former Chairman & Long-Time Supporters



Jack and Joan Whiting are Friends of Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory. Former teachers and humble birders, Jack and Joan volunteered for RMBO during a time of transition at the turn of the millennium. They helped with fundraising for the remodeling of the Old Stone House, RMBO's headquarters at Barr Lake State Park, and participated in the complete refurbishing of the 1880s home. Jack served as chairman of the board from 1999-2001 and has even used his wood-carving skills to create bird decoys for RMBO studies. Jack and Joan cite the educational component and tangible impacts of RMBO as key reasons why they continue to support the organization as Friends. "We've been involved with RMBO for so long because we believe in the organization and its mission. When we're gone, we'd like to think there's a whole other generation that believes as strongly as we did about bird conservation."

Please consider Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory in your estate planning. Contact Executive Director Tammy VerCauteren at 970-482-1707 ext. 16 for assistance in making a lasting contribution to bird and habitat conservation.

Financials

Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory Financial Summary FY 2012 (Unaudited)

Revenues

Contributions	\$164,264
Memberships	\$3,862
SCFD Grant	\$199,871
Contracts & Grants	\$3,458,913
Other	\$8,365
Total Revenues	\$3,835,275

Total Revenues
\$3,835,275

Expenses

Program	\$3,164,170
Administration	\$452,945
Development	\$33,460
Total Expenses	\$3,650,575

Total Expenses
\$3,650,575

Change in Net Assets \$184,700

This summary financial information has not been audited. Please visit www.rmbo.org after May 31, 2013, for the audited financial statements including all note disclosures.

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



2012 Partners & Funders

Adams County Open Space
Aiken Audubon
Allstate Permit Services, LLC
American Bird Conservancy
American Birding Association
Arizona Game and Fish Department
Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies
Audubon Colorado
Audubon Nebraska
Audubon Rockies
Audubon Society of Greater Denver
Avian Knowledge Alliance
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Barr Lake State Park
Bird Studies Canada
Birdworks, LLC
Bismarck State College
Black Canyon Audubon Society
Brighton Chamber of Commerce
Butterfly Pavilion
Campbell County Conservation District
Canadian Wildlife Service
Chadron State Park
Chatfield State Park
Chico Basin Ranch
Chihuahuan Desert Grassland Regional Alliance
CIPAMEX
Citizens of the Scientific & Cultural Facilities District
City of Brighton Forestry
City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Program

City of Fort Collins Utilities Department
Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education
Colorado Association of Conservation Districts
Colorado Chapter of The Wildlife Society
Colorado Dept. of Natural Resources
Colorado Field Ornithologists
Colorado Mountain Club
Colorado Natural Heritage Program
Colorado Parks and Recreation Association
Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Colorado Plateau Cooperative Ecosystem Study Unit
Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trail Association
Colorado State Beekeepers Association
Colorado State Forest Service
Colorado State Land Board
Colorado State University
Commission for Environmental Cooperation
CONABIO
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Grand Valley Audubon Society
Great Basin Bird Observatory
Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative
Great Plains Landscape Conservation Cooperative
Greater Brighton Neighborhood Volunteers
Gulley's Greenhouse & Garden Center
HawkWatch International
Idaho Bird Observatory
Intermountain West Joint Venture
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Kimball County Conservation Collaborative
Klamath Bird Observatory
La Plata County Open Space
Larimer County Natural Resources
Legacy Land Trust
Malpai Borderlands Group
Middle Park Habitat Partnership Program
Middle Park Land Trust

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Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	Pronatura Noreste	U.S. Bureau of Land Management	White River Conservation District
Montana Natural Heritage Program	Pronatura Sur	U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Western SARE	Wild Birds Unlimited
Montezuma Land Conservancy	Rainwater Basin Joint Venture	U.S. Dept. of Defense	Wild Wings Environmental Education
Mule Deer Foundation	Ranchlands Learning and Research Center	U.S. Dept. of Defense: Partners in Flight	Wildcat Hills Audubon
National Association for Interpretation	REI	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	Wildcat Hills State Recreation Area
National Audubon Society	Ridgway State Park	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	Wildlands Restoration Volunteers
National Ecological Observatory Network	Rio Grande Joint Venture	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: National Wildlife Refuge Program	Wirestone, Inc.
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	Riverside Zoo	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act	World Wildlife Fund
National Park Service	Roaring Fork Audubon Society	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: Partners for Fish and Wildlife, Region 6	Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts
National Wild Turkey Federation	Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation	U.S. Forest Service	Wyoming Bird Habitat Conservation Partnership
Natural Resources Conservation Service	Rocky Mountain Raptor Program	U.S. Forest Service International Programs	Wyoming Game & Fish Department
Naturalia	S & S Optika	United Power	Wyoming Natural Diversity Database
Nebraska Bird Partnership	Sandhills Task Force	Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua	Wyoming Wildlife & Natural Resource Trust
Nebraska Educational Service Unit 13	Saratoga-Encampment-Rawlins Conservation District	Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León	Xerces Society
Nebraska Environmental Trust	Bill Schmoker	Universidad de Guadalajara	Yampa Valley Land Trust
Nebraska Forest Service	Scientific and Cultural Collaborative	Universidad Estatal de Sonora	Yuma County Pest Control District
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission	Sonoran Joint Venture	Universidad Juárez del Estado de Durango	
New Belgium Brewing	South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks Department	University of Colorado Denver	
New Mexico Ornithological Society	South Platte Natural Resources District	University of Kansas	
Nikon, Inc.	South Platte Natural Resources District	University of Montana	
North American Bird Conservation Initiative	Southern Rockies Landscape Conservation Cooperative	University of Wyoming College of Agriculture & Natural Resources	
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Northern Great Plains Joint Venture	Sul Ross State University	USGS Bird Banding Laboratory	
OtterBox	Summit County Open Space & Trails	Utah Division of Natural Resources	
Partners In Flight	Glen Tepke	Valley Bank & Trust	
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Playa Lakes Joint Venture	The Nature Conservancy	Vortex Arts	
Prairie and Wetlands Focus Area	The Nature Conservancy - Mexico	Wells Fargo	
PRBO Conservation Science	The Shortgrass Prairie Partnership	Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies	
Profauna Coahuila	The Tamarisk Coalition		
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Partner-Funder Profile Intergovernmental Group Supports RMBO's Grassland Work



The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), an intergovernmental organization of Canada, Mexico and the United States, funds grassland bird conservation. The CEC provides funding to RMBO to develop management initiatives for grassland conservation and bird monitoring, including a private lands wildlife biologist in Chihuahua, Mexico, and the development of an outreach video to ranchers. In addition, the CEC has supported RMBO's participation in meetings to design and launch a North American Grasslands Alliance. We appreciate the CEC's support in helping us stem the decline of grassland birds and build local capacity for conservation.



14500 Lark Bunting Lane
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