



Our mission is to conserve birds and their habitats.

RMBO Spearheads Meeting in Panama

By Staff at Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory and Zamorano Biodiversity Center

In late March, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory facilitated a workshop in Panama to continue assessing the conservation status of the birds of Central America.

Over 30 bird experts gathered in the City of Knowledge to define the conservation status of avian populations in each Central American country, concluding that more than half of Central American bird species have shown sharp declines. The meeting was the second step of an evaluation process for birds of each country that began in March 2014 and is projected to finish in 2016.

In the meeting, the experts analyzed and assessed threat levels and population trends for bird species in each Central American country. The national representatives, including biologists and wildlife authorities, will present the results in validation meetings in their respective countries in 2015.

During five days, more than 1,180 species of wild birds were evaluated by the specialists. Preliminarily, they found that 593 species (52%) appear to have strong or severe population declines in Central America, a worrying situation. In comparison, a similar analysis in Mexico and the rest of

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More than 30 avian experts gathered in the City of Knowledge to assess the conservation status of Central American birds.



Supporters Celebrate Migration to New Name

By Teddy Parker-Renga
Communications Manager

On May 21, over 150 people gathered at the Old Stone House to raise a glass to Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory's future and its upcoming migration to Bird Conservancy of the Rockies.

The celebration was held during the BBQ for the Birds, the organization's annual picnic and member get-together. Despite wet weather all May along the Front Range, the clouds cooperated during the BBQ and the sun even poked out for a short time.

Many longtime members and Friends, partners and other supporters were in attendance, including RMBO's founding director Mike Carter, who sported a Bird Conservancy T-shirt during the event, and City of Brighton Mayor Richard McLean.

The evening kicked off with birding around Barr Lake State Park, one of the best places to bird in all of Colorado. Groups were led by staff members and board chairman Larry Modesitt.

After birding, attendees enjoyed live music, libations and a delicious BBQ dinner, including cakes featuring the new and old logos for the organization.

Executive Director Tammy VerCauteren led a toast to the migration to Bird Conservancy of the Rockies.

Bird Conservancy of the Rockies officially launches in late summer of 2015.

See page 2 for details.

Thank you to the following sponsors of this year's BBQ: United Power, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, New Belgium Brewing Co., Gallegos Sanitation, Fiesta Time, Scientific & Cultural Facilities District, and directors Joe Roller and Larry Modesitt.

Thank you as well to the many supporters who joined us for this momentous celebration. Proceeds from the BBQ will support conservation and education programs.

From the Director:

Bird Conservancy to Launch Late Summer

In our 2014 Annual Report, we announced our upcoming migration to a new name: Bird Conservancy of the Rockies. Since then, we've been busily finalizing everything ... and it's been really exciting!

We've got everything from a new logo (see cover) to new T-shirts (see back page) to a new website that will launch with the name (www.birdconservancy.org). We decided to officially launch in late summer since we're right in the throes of our busiest time of year, with summer camps in full swing and bird surveys taking place all over the western United States.

We are receiving positive feedback from our partners and supporters, and I encourage you to help spread the word



and let people know about the change, maybe even sport it on a T-shirt (wink, wink, they're pretty cool!).

I'm excited about the future of our organization and our ability to make a positive impact on our mission of bird and habitat conservation, which hasn't changed. This past year, we've continued our efforts with partners to assess the conservation status of the birds of Central America.

We've also been busy studying survival of grassland birds on their wintering grounds in Mexico. This spring, we began studying habitat use and survival of Baird's and Grasshopper Sparrows on their breeding grounds in the Dakotas to help gain an understanding of what's driving population declines across the full annual life cycle of these birds.

Later this year, we'll expand our stewardship program with a new position in

western South Dakota, and we've got habitat enhancement projects on the ground across Colorado, Wyoming and western Nebraska to benefit the diversity of birds that breed here.

Our summer camps have once again expanded with new sessions and the return of On The Wing for teenagers aspiring to a career in natural resources. We've also brought bird festivals to four schools this spring in the Denver area, plus western Nebraska. Very exciting!

For now, please make checks for donations and all else to Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory until we launch Bird Conservancy of the Rockies this summer. We'll be sure to let you know once we've officially made the transition.

I appreciate your continued support in our shared mission of conservation. I look forward to migrating with you to Bird Conservancy of the Rockies!

- Tammy VerCauteren
Executive Director

The Primary Source

The Primary Source is the member newsletter of Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory.

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The Primary Source logo with a baby Killdeer and a primary feather from a Pelican was designed by Granby, Colo., artist David Utterback. Primary feathers give power to a bird's flight. Our members, Friends, volunteers and partners are the primary source of RMBO's power to accomplish its mission to conserve birds and their habitats.

Editing and design: Teddy Parker-Renga

Plovers Thrive Despite Rains

By Angela Dwyer
Wildlife Biologist

May was an unusually wet and chilly month in western Nebraska.

Mountain Plover nesting got off to a slow start on dryland fallow fields. Tilling by farmers was delayed due to wet crop fields; therefore, plover habitat seemed less abundant than in dryer years.

Soon enough, though, the heat arrived and farmers were able to get back on their tractors, which has been fortuitous for the plover. As of June 19, 45 Mountain Plover nests have been located, marked and protected by our nest-marking crew for the 11th year of this conservation program. That number is right on track with what we typically find midway through the season.

Interestingly, when the land appears unsuitable (not as many tilled fields), it still boasts many nests. The birds seem to be able to adjust quickly to the changing conditions and re-nest, or delay nesting, until conditions are suitable.

According to our data, Mountain Plover populations appear to be stable in southwestern Nebraska, seemingly more so than on historical grassland sites.

Future, proposed research will test this hypothesis as we will compare current population estimates to estimates from surveys 5-plus years ago to see if the birds are stable or increasing in the area.

In addition, it has been a busy spring for Golden Eagles in Nebraska. For the second year, RMBO assisted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with tracking eagles here.

In an unusual fashion, three chicks in Nebraska from one nest were outfitted with satellite tracking units. It is normal for one chick to fledge – and maybe two – but three from one nest is a rare treat! The rains likely increased the overall food supply.

Thank you to the landowners, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Nebraska Environmental Trust, Cooper Foundation and individual donors for making this work possible.

2015 Calendar of Events

For the latest on events, activities and programs, visit www.RMBO.org, sign up for our e-newsletter on our website or become a fan of RMBO on Facebook.

July 11: 10th annual Barr Lake Appreciation Day, 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., Barr Lake State Park, Brighton, Colo.

Aug. 15: Outdoor Mentors, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Barr Lake State Park, Brighton, Colo.

Late August to mid-October: Bird banding stations, various locations in Colorado and western Nebraska. Visit www.RMBO.org for info.

Sept. 5: Fall Birding Festival, 7 a.m. to 12 p.m., Barr Lake, Brighton, Colo.

Sept. 10-14: Yampa Valley Crane Festival, Steamboat Springs and Hayden, Colo. <http://coloradocranes.net/>

Sept. 12: Nature's Harvest Fest (formerly NoCo Nature Festival), 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Gardens on Spring Creek, Fort Collins, Colo. \$2/person suggested donation.

Sept. 12-13: Sustainable Living Fair, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. both days, Old Fort Collins Heritage Park, Fort Collins, Colo. \$10/day or \$15 both days. Kids under 12 FREE. www.sustainablelivingfair.org

Sept. 29 to Oct. 1: America's Grasslands Conference, Fort Collins, Colo. RMBO is a proud co-host of this biennial meeting. www.nwf.org/grasslandsconference

Oct. 7: Speaker Series at DMNS with Dr. John Marzluff, author of *Subirdia*, Denver Museum of Nature & Science. Info and tickets posted soon at www.dmns.org/afterhours

Oct. 21: Speaker Series at DMNS with Dr. Pete Marra, head of the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, Denver Museum of Nature & Science. Info and tickets posted soon at www.dmns.org/afterhours



Northern Saw-whet Owl by Quinn Burrell

Oct. 28: Speaker Series at DMNS on the "Sagebrush Sea" with John Bowman, multimedia director at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Denver Museum of Nature & Science. Info and tickets posted soon at www.dmns.org/afterhours



Summer Nature Camps

Get your children outdoors with RMBO this summer through fun, educational day camps.

Remaining camps are available for kids ages 2-9 and run through mid-August. All camps are about getting kids outside exploring nature while making new friends.

Most camps are held at RMBO's Environmental Learning Center at Barr Lake State Park in Brighton, Colo.

For information on camps, visit www.RMBO.org or contact Tyler Edmondson at tyler.edmondson@rmbo.org or 303-659-4348 ext. 15.

Warbler Caught at Chatfield Nears Longevity Record

The male Yellow Warbler pictured below was caught during this spring's bird banding season at Chatfield State Park southwest of Denver.

He was first caught as a second-year bird in 2006 and has been recaptured at the Chatfield station every year except 2008. That's a lot of trips to and from Central America!

The official longevity record for a Yellow Warbler is just near 11 years. At 10 years old, this guy is close!

Thank you to Francis Commercon for taking the photo.

Band Number	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
2330-80819 Male 6/A	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	-			
2410-70838 Male 6/A		X	X	X	X	X	-	X	X	-			
2410-70848 Male 5/2		X	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X			
2410-70851 Male 6/A		X			X	X	-	-	-	-			
2410-71426 Female 5/1								X	X	-			
2410-71437 Male 6/A													

The Power of Kids Teaching Kids About Birds

By Emily Snode-Brenneman, School Programs Coordinator, and Peggy Watson, Outreach and Volunteer Coordinator

“Teaching is really hard ... but fun.”

This was one of the many insights gained by a fifth-grade student who participated in a bird festival put on by Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory this spring.

Bird festivals are a unique program RMBO offers to schools along the Front Range of Colorado. The individuals who do the actual teaching are what make this program so exceptional.

The festivals are full, one-day events that occur in the school. RMBO educators train upper elementary, middle- or high school students during the first half of the program on bird-related activities. The student leaders then become teachers, leading the younger elementary students through the activities.

On the surface, student leaders become bird conservation role models. However, the benefits for the leaders go much deeper. The students who are teaching the activities develop social and interpersonal skills, exercise teamwork, improve their communication skills, increase confidence and self-

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A student from Flagstaff Academy helps a younger student during the Migration Challenge activity. In this activity, participants discover challenges birds face during migration. Photo by Emily Snode-Brenneman.

Volunteer Profile: Skills Learned as Volunteer Save a Life

By Randy Siebert
Friend of RMBO

My wife, Glenda Brown, and I went on a great birding trip to Chile at the end of 2014. We travelled almost the entire length of the country from Tierra del Fuego in the wind-swept and almost barren south all the way up to the northern desert and high elevation parts of the Andes.

One day, in the southern Andes, we walked a trail in search of some special forest species, including the magnificent Magellanic Woodpecker. We were fortunate enough to see one of these woodpeckers and returned to our waiting bus. We had been on our walk for quite a while and the bus driver had left the door open while he waited for us.

As we started to board the bus, someone screamed that there was a bird inside the bus. Somehow it must have flown inside through the open door. As people got on and started to point at the bird, it got very scared and tried to fly out through one of the closed windows.



RMBO Friend and longtime volunteer Glenda Brown holds a Rufous-collared Sparrow on a recent trip to Chile. The bird had gotten stuck on Glenda's tour bus on a stop in the southern Andes. Photo by Randy Siebert.

Well, Glenda got on, saw the bird in distress and took charge. She has been a volunteer at the Barr Lake Banding Station since (at least) 2001 and has taken hundreds of birds out of nets over those years. She did not hesitate to put her training to good use. She walked right up to where

the bird was frantically trying to get out, reached down and snatched it using the bird bander's grip that she had learned. With the captive now secure in her hand, she walked out of the bus.

Out in the open of the parking lot, the bird calmed down quickly. All of the folks on the tour were treated to a great view, and just like at the banding station, people got some amazing close-up photos of the bird, a Rufous-collared Sparrow. Some of the people who had not been to a banding station were amazed at how calm the bird was.

Who would have known that the skills acquired as a volunteer at Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory's banding station could be put to such good use? And Glenda added a fine species to the "fondled list" that she keeps for all birds that she gets to handle.

Bird-Friendly Living: How Can You Help Birds Beat the Heat?

By David Menough

Owner of Wild Birds Unlimited - Arvada

Summer and hot can be used interchangeably in Colorado. As the season heats up, have you ever wondered how birds cool off? There are many different answers to the thermo-regulation processes in our avian amigos.

Some birds cool off by ululation, which is fluttering the gular sac in their throats to cool their bodies. This is similar to a dog panting. Other birds find shade and reduce their activity to keep their metabolism and caloric activity low.

How can we help birds beat the heat, you may ask? Frequently, during simmering mid-day heat, you will see birds drinking from and standing in birdbaths. Birds will regulate their temperatures by standing in water. The blood vessels in their legs will enlarge, allowing the blood to flow freely in their legs below the surface of the cooling water.

In this way, the birdbath functions as a radiator, cooling the bird's blood and in turn cooling the bird. In winter, these same blood vessels will contract, keeping the blood up inside the body where it retains heat.

The proper birdbath will always attract more birds than feeding alone. A birdbath should be about 2-and-a-half inches deep

at its deepest point. It should have gradually sloping sides so all sizes of birds can enter and leave the bath easily.

Placement of the bath is also important. The bath should be no closer than 5 feet to the nearest bushes or cover. That way cats and other predators can't hide in the bushes and pounce on the birds. The bath should be no further away from cover than about 15 feet. Wet birds don't fly well and need to get to safety easily if predators approach. Proper placement will ensure better activity at your birdbath, as the birds will feel safer.

Rippling water can help birds find your birdbath. Light refracts off the ripples, catches the bird's eye and works like a bird magnet. This can be done by hanging a clean water jug over the bath with a small hole poked in the bottom. The water can drip several times a minute, which is sufficient to attract them. I use a Wild Birds Unlimited water wiggler. This battery-operated device simply stirs the



American Robin in birdbath by Steven Depolo

water creating ripples. It also slows algae growth and keeps mosquitoes from breeding in the bath.

David and his wife, Kathy, own the Wild Birds Unlimited store at the southeast corner of 88th and Wadsworth in Arvada. Call them at 303-467-2644, or visit <http://northmetro.wbu.com>.

Other WBU Front Range locations:

- Denver, 2720 S. Wadsworth Blvd.
- Fort Collins, 3636 S. College Ave.

For more tips on bird-friendly living, visit the RMBO Blog at www.RMBO.org. Click on the "bird-friendly living" tag.

Live along the Front Range? Tune in to Scott and David Menough for BirdTalk Radio at noon on Saturdays on 710 KNUS.

PANAMA *continued from cover*

North America reported population declines of 40% of bird species, not including Central America. The population declines are associated with high rates of deforestation, agricultural expansion and urban growth of the last four decades in Central America. Another major threat identified by the experts is the lack of legal protection and forest rangers in many natural areas of the isthmus.

"We have not finished evaluating. We have other criteria to analyze and we cannot yet say what are the priority species for conservation in each country. However, our preliminary results clearly indicate that bird populations require much more conservation effort in Central America," said Arvind Panjabi, workshop facilitator and international director at RMBO.

"Of highest concern are large birds of prey, such as the Harpy Eagle, other birds of the lowland tropical forests that are being rapidly deforested, and also the birds of cloud forests that are vulnerable to the effects of climate change," said Oliver Komar, regional coordinator of the evaluation process and professor of

natural resources at the Zamorano University in Honduras.

To assess population trends, the experts applied the same methodology developed by the Partners In Flight (PIF) program in the U.S. (RMBO maintains and houses the PIF database). They also consulted the eBird database of Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology (www.eBird.org/camerica), containing more than 3 million bird observations for Central America, generated by professional scientists and citizen birdwatchers. This source of free information is widely used in the world and in Central America as a platform for information on the distribution and abundance of birds.

The workshop was organized by RMBO, Zamorano Biodiversity Center (Honduras) and CONABIO (Mexico), with sponsorship of the governments of Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. Sponsors included Environment Canada, Southern Wings Program (Missouri Department of Conservation), U.S. Geological Survey and CONABIO. The Ciudad del Saber Foundation also supported and helped organize the event.

Bird Feats: Making Strides for Conservation



appears in the episode assisting at the bird banding station.

SciGirls is an Emmy-winning series where middle-school girls participate in citizen science projects in their own backyards and communities.

Check out “Feathered Friends” at <http://pbskids.org/scigirls/> (search under Videos, then Nature Nurture).

Biologist Stars on SciGirls

RMBO Senior Scientist Viviana Ruiz-Gutierrez appeared on a recent episode of the PBS Kids show SciGirls.

In the episode “Feathered Friends,” Viviana mentors three young girls interested in birds. She teaches the trio bird observation and data collection skills during adventures at RMBO’s bird banding station at Chatfield State Park, City Park in Denver and other locations.

RMBO biologist Erin Strasser also

Festival Focuses on Poudre River

On May 30, RMBO co-hosted the second Poudre RiverFest at Legacy Park in Fort Collins, Colo.

About 2,000 community members attended the festival to restore, celebrate and learn about the Cache la Poudre River, put on by RMBO, Sustainable Living Association, Save the Poudre, Synergy Ecological Restoration and Fort Collins Museum of Discovery.

Participants were treated to an up-close look at resident and migrating birds at a banding station run by RMBO. They also participated in a scavenger hunt to learn about the river and wildlife, hands-on service projects and nature walks.

In the afternoon, participants were able to connect with nearly 50 local partners in conservation, dance to live music and enjoy food and libations on a beautiful, sunny day in Fort Collins.

Learn more about the festival and get info on the third iteration of the event at www.poudreriverfest.org.

Lark Bunting Award from CPW

RMBO received the Lark Bunting Award for environmental education from Colorado Parks and Wildlife during a ceremony at the end of last year.

The annual award honors people and organizations that model excellent programs in conservation education or interpretation, utilize innovative and creative approaches, and exemplify leadership.

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esteem, and discover intrinsic value in their efforts – all of which are qualities of a good leader.

The younger students participating in the variety of hands-on, active experiences not only learn about bird conservation in a fun, interactive way, but they get more individualized attention since the student-to-teacher ratio is often 2:1. Plus, they learn from role models in their own school community.

A Growing Program

Over the course of two weeks in 2015, RMBO educators engaged more than 1,000 students at four schools along the Front Range. In 2013, RMBO piloted the festival concept at one school and held bird festivals at two schools in 2014. Each festival was customized to the school’s curriculum and goals.

At RMBO, educators enjoy the chance to have multiple experiences with students in and across grade levels. Seeing students several times in a year – or over a few years – allows the educators to build upon student knowledge and skills. Not only does this help students understand birds and their conservation needs, but cultivates a culture of environmental literacy.

As of early June, RMBO had provided at least one additional program with three of the four schools that had a bird festival.

All four of the schools that participated in the bird festivals received scholarship assistance. Thank you to Adams County Open Space, Scientific & Cultural Facilities District, Ed Warner



Top: Students wear their new bird masks. Photo by Peggy Watson.

Bottom: Westminster High School students were exhausted at the end of the day, but they had such a good feeling about what they had done. Photo by Emily Snode-Brenneman.

and Jackie Erickson, the late Pam Norris and The Dellora A. & Lester J. Norris Foundation for the generous financial support for RMBO education programs.

Staff & Board Migrations

Welcome ...

Gillian Bee, a native New Englander, received her bachelor's in wildlife biology from the University of Vermont and her master's in wildlife biology from Clemson University. She has spent many seasons working on avian-related projects throughout the U.S., with the high-desert flora, fauna and local culture being her favorite. Prior to joining RMBO in December of 2014, Gillian worked as a private lands biologist in western South Dakota and southeast Montana to conserve the Greater Sage-Grouse. She is passionate about building relationships that encourage proactive conservation for wildlife and the rural culture of the American west. Gillian is RMBO's new stewardship director and works out of the Fort Collins office.



Steve Fischer brings to RMBO's board of directors more than 50 years of experience in the field of finance and accounting, including a recently retired CPA license. He added general management in the business world to his résumé when he came to Colorado in 1976 as vice president of finance and administration at Jeppesen, the aviation publishing company. His most recent background includes 23 years as executive director at Denver's oldest law firm, Sherman & Howard. Steve enjoys hiking with his wife, Nancy, in Colorado's mountains and along the Front Range. He also pursues trout on float trips along the rivers of the western U.S.

Becky Jones received her bachelor's in wildlife biology from Colorado State University. After graduating, she worked for the U.S. Forest Service on the Routt National Forest for 12 years doing habitat work for a variety of species, from elk to boreal toads. At the same time, she has been working with Colorado Parks and Wildlife for 10 years assisting with Greater Sage-Grouse monitoring. Becky has partnered with various nonprofits in northwest Colorado to promote environmental education and joined RMBO in January of 2015 as a private lands wildlife biologist. Becky provides technical resources for private landowners and land managers to incorporate wildlife management into their conservation efforts utilizing Farm Bill and other programs. She works out of the Steamboat Springs NRCS field office.

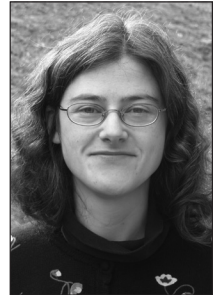


Wendy Lanier received her bachelor's degree in ecology, evolution and organismal biology from Vanderbilt University. She became passionate about research with conservation applications while conducting avian field work in California and Colorado. This passion led her to Colorado State University, where she received her master's degree in wildlife biology in 2015. Briefly leaving the avian world, her thesis focused on the effects of introduced greenback



cutthroat trout on boreal toad recruitment. Wendy is currently applying her knowledge of population biology, ecological modeling and conservation biology to monitor the threatened Mexican Spotted Owl in Arizona and New Mexico as RMBO's spotted owl project leader, based out of Fort Collins.

Allison Shaw is originally from Ann Arbor, Mich. She obtained a bachelor's degree in biology from Grinnell College and a master's degree in ecology and evolutionary biology from Iowa State University. She has worked on forest and wetland conservation projects across the United States and Central America for The Nature Conservancy, National Park Service, Colorado Natural Heritage Program, Peace Corps Guatemala and others. She joined RMBO in the fall of 2014 to assist the International team with data and project management.



Kristen Winter has spent her career in nonprofit environmental conservation working with community organizations and nature centers, as well as some of the largest conservation organizations in the world, including Hawk Mountain Sanctuary and The Nature Conservancy, Worldwide Office. She has experience in many areas relating to both conservation and nonprofit efforts, such as environmental education, green building certifications, wildlife monitoring, conservation easements and land trust efforts, and all areas of development/fundraising, operations, program creation and management. Kristen has a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and a Master of Science in Environmental Protection and Safety Management from Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia, and has done some additional work in applied ecopsychology. She now works with RMBO's science team as the science project administrator.

That's all the room we have for bios in this issue. We'll welcome more staff members in the next *Primary Source*.

Farewell ...

Thank you to the following people for their service to RMBO:

- Noah Bates, Private Lands Range/Wildlife Ecologist
- Casey Cardinal, Private Lands Range/Wildlife Ecologist
- Fran DeBauge, Science Project Administrator
- Christine Fabian, Chief Financial Officer
- Seth Gallagher, Stewardship Director
- David Hanni, Science Director
- Colin Lee, Private Lands Wildlife and Wetlands Biologist
- Brandon Miller, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist
- Teddy Parker-Renga, Communications Manager
- Chase Taylor, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist
- Warren Taylor, Board Member
- Mike Wright, Staff Accountant



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The Primary Source No. 47 • Spring/Summer 2015



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Please make check payable to Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory
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Chip in at www.rmbo.org
 or call 970-482-1707 ext. 30

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PS47

Get Your New T-shirt!

We've got new
 T-shirts to celebrate
 our migration to
 Bird Conservancy of
 the Rockies. Sweet!

Shirts feature
 the new logo and
 are made from pre-
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Order yours
 today and show your
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Styles: Men's
 and women's

Colors: Navy (pictured), charcoal and ash gray

Sizes: Small to XXL (some sizes in select styles and
 colors may be out of stock, but we plan to order more!)

Cost: \$12, or \$10 for RMBO members and volun-
 teers (additional costs will apply for shipping)

To order: Email erica.grasmick@rmbo.org or call
 970-482-1707 ext. 30, or stop by the Fort Collins office.
 A limited supply is also available in our Brighton office.

