

THE PRIMARY SOURCE



NEWSLETTER FOR BIRD CONSERVANCY OF THE ROCKIES | SPRING/SUMMER 2022 | NUMBER 59

Taking the High Ground for Conservation

I've been a Private Lands Wildlife Biologist with Bird Conservancy of the Rockies for over six years. Each landowner I've worked with has a unique approach to how they run their ranch, their objectives, and who they will work with. I strive to find common ground between helping ensure sustainable operations while also improving wildlife habitat. This often requires compromise.



High elevation meadow on Higher Ground Ranch, surrounded by aspen. Photo by Marcella Tarantino.

The Neff family of Crawford, Colorado purchased 3,090 acres in the North Fork Valley specifically to protect it from development and provide wildlife habitat. Located in the foothills of the West Elk Mountains, **Higher Ground Ranch** supports diverse wildlife, including deer, elk, bear, turkey, quail, dusky grouse, and many non-game birds like Juniper Titmouse, Western Scrub-Jay, and Common Nighthawk. Their property is also home to a genetically pure population of Colorado River cutthroat trout, which may be used for reintroductions elsewhere.

Their approach is multi-faceted with strong ties to family and community. Cody and Stephanie run operations along with ranch manager Marta Laylander. Business endeavors include Vegetation Management West, specializing in transmission line management and which also provides employment opportunities following the closure of coal mines in the area. Their non-profit, Clef of Hope, provides first responders a peaceful ranch retreat where they can escape from the stress of work and find renewal. The ranch has active cattle operations with a lessee



Left to right: Partnership tour with the ranch manager (Marta Laylander), CPW (Stuart Sinclair and Ray Aberle), Bird Conservancy (Marcella Tarantino) and NRCS (Allison Hearne). Photo by Lauren Connell.

which follow a flexible, adaptive grazing plan that considers range condition and precipitation. This approach improves overall productivity and the health of the plants and soil, providing more food and cover for wildlife.

I started working with the Neffs in 2019 with the writing of a conservation plan funded by Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and a forest management plan from Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS). These plans help inventory natural resources, identify priorities and guide restoration.

The diverse wildlife on the ranch and the Neffs' enthusiasm has inspired others to support their efforts.



Mulching and thinning oak shrubs to improve wildlife habitat, water cycling and understory vegetation. Photo by Shad Comer (Vegetation Management West).

The Neffs' sagebrush restoration efforts—supported by NRCS, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Colorado Parks & Wildlife/Habitat Partnership Program (CPW HPP)—seeding, treating weeds and include removing invasive conifers. NRCS and HPP are also helping with brush management in overgrown areas by mulching mountain shrubs. CPW, USFWS, Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS), Western Colorado Community Foundation, Trout Unlimited, and the Pilot Rock Ditch Co. are helping support cutthroat trout habitat restoration by creating structures to increase pools for fish, shrub plantings and grazing management which also benefit migratory and resident nesting songbirds.

The Neffs are working with CSFS and the Trust for Public Lands to establish a conservation easement which limits development activities on the property in exchange for financial and technical support. This path ensures that the ranch will stay a haven for wildlife and a lasting legacy that represents the land ethic/stewardship values of the Neff family.



L to R: Emerson, Stephanie, Cody, Sydney, and Carter Neff

Thank you to the many partners, funders, volunteers and in-kind supporters of conservation efforts at Higher Ground Ranch: USDA/NRCS, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - Partners for Fish & Wildlife, Colorado Parks & Wildlife, Trust for Public Lands, Trout Unlimited, Bureau of Reclamation, Down to Earth Land Mgt., Pilot Rock Ditch Co., West Slope Bird Dogs Club, Western Colorado Community Foundation, Redemption Mill, and Western Colorado University.

Marcella Tarantino (marcella.tarantino@usda.gov) is a Senior Biologist in our Stewardship team and is based in Gunnison, CO.



THE PRIMARY SOURCE

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

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

Editing and design:

William Bevil, Communications Director

Go Paperless

If you prefer to receive an electronic-only version of this newsletter, please email info@birdconservancy.org to update your subscription preferences.



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From the Director

Together we make conservation happen



At Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, our pillars for conserving birds and their habitats are science, education and land stewardship. As we welcome spring, we are working to combine these disciplines to truly be effective and ensure our work is relevant and sustained for the future.

We are fortunate to have amazing staff who are passionate about their work and incredibly gifted in their ability to foster collaboration toward shared purpose. The cover story from Marcella about her work with the Neff family and Higher Ground Ranch, as well as the article on collaborative conservation for grasslands, highlight the power of these partnerships.

The challenges we face are many. Declining bird populations, degraded landscapes suffering from drought and other ailments, and people not feeling like they are part of the conversation are just a few. The problems are larger than any one organization can solve alone. Together, with our diverse strengths, and the contributions of existing and new partners, we can and are changing the trajectory for conservation.

This shared model broadens our reach by providing landowners more options in their land management toolbox, richer learning environments for kids, real-world field experience for college students, and opportunities to engage and welcome new audiences to the conservation conversation. The connections our staff create are like a spider web of partners, all working tirelessly and in unison to make the world a better place.

When you invest in Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, know we are leading efforts to bring people together, elevate and unify voices and ensure a healthy future for birds, people and the land.

Tammy VerCauteren, Executive Director

On the cover:

Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*)

A favorite harbinger of migration and the undisputed busy-bodies of the bird world, hummingbirds are fast, feisty and fun to watch. The Rufous Hummingbird is one many species seen in the Western U.S. during the warmer months. Such high-energy antics require high calorie food! Using their long bills and tongues, and precision flying, they make the rounds in search of sweet flower nectar. Get tips for attracting hummingbirds to your patio or garden on our website:

www.birdconservancy.org/hummingbirds



Keep on trucking! This site restoration day photo at Higher Ground Ranch illustrates the diverse array of partners who came together for conservation—including Pilot Rock Ditch Company, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Trout Unlimited, Colorado Parks & Wildlife, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Colorado State Forest Service. Photo by Marta Laylander.



Photo by Aleshia Rummel

Combining Forces, Unifying Voices

Coming together for Conservation

In addition to our hands-on science, education and land stewardship initiatives, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies staff are also playing leadership roles in collaborative efforts for conservation. Cultivating partnerships and working with others is a trademark strength of our organization, and we are excited to share updates about some of the initiatives that we are helping catalyze and deliver...

Central Grasslands Roadmap

Update from Tammy VerCauteren, Roadmap Convenor



Grasslands form one of North America's largest and most vital ecosystems, supporting crucial environmental functions like water supply, soil health and biodiversity. Grassland birds have suffered some of the greatest population declines in recent years, due in large part to habitat loss. Tensions between conserving grasslands and converting them to accommodate growing populations and resource use have revealed an urgent need to chart a more sustainable and resilient future.

For two years, over 200 partners representing eight diverse sectors across three countries (Mexico, Canada and the U.S.) have collaborated to create the **Central Grasslands Roadmap: A Collaborative Strategy for a Working Lands Biome**. In May, the Roadmap community will come together for an in-person summit meeting in Fort Collins, CO. The gathering aims to celebrate accomplishments, build shared understanding and create opportunities for networking and dialogue. Delegates will solidify commitments and collectively prioritize actions over the next 1–3 years.

To learn more about this important initiative and how it stands to benefit wildlife and human communities, visit www.grasslandsroadmap.org

Get to know our grasslands...

Visit our website to learn more about the many benefits that grasslands provide for wildlife and people. You can also download this colorful "Grasslands & You" poster to print and share with others.

birdconservancy.org/grasslands-and-you



In our fall issue of the *Primary Source*:

R2R: The Road to Recovery Initiative

Brandt Ryder, Chief Conservation Scientist, will provide an update about the collaborative effort to identify the specific causes of bird population declines and the actions necessary to reverse those trends.

Learn more at www.marralab.com/road-to-recovery

www.birdconservancy.org

FREE Webinar Series!

GRASSLANDS: Culture, Conservation, and Resiliency

Join us virtually to investigate the wonders of grasslands and the science behind managing them successfully. Over the course of this four-part webinar series, experts will explore the ecological role of birds, plants, and mammals; examine how current grassland practices impact people every day; consider the long cultural history of the grasslands, including Native & Indigenous land use practices and contemporary ranching practices; and much more. Each episode will feature a range of diverse perspectives in the pursuit of shared values and understanding.

Mark your calendar!

Episode 1: The Science of Grasslands
Wednesday, April 13 at 12 p.m. MT

Episode 2: People & Grasslands
Wednesday, April 20 at 12 p.m. MT

Episode 3: Animals of the Grasslands
Wednesday, April 27 at 12 p.m. MT

Episode 4: The Path Forward
Wednesday, May 4 at 12 p.m. MT

Register online at:
birdconservancy.org/grasslandsforum

Audience members are invited to submit questions for each session in advance or live during the presentation. All sessions will be livestreamed on Facebook and YouTube.

Presented by:



OUR MISSION

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

OUR VISION

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

OUR APPROACH

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

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

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

Connect with Us

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



Facebook

www.facebook.com/birdconservancy



Twitter

@BirdConservancy



YouTube

Search: Bird Conservancy of the Rockies



Instagram

@birdconservancyrockies

Get the Full Story

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

birdconservancy.org/stories



and Community Science Celebration! Saturday, June 4 2022

Barr Lake State Park

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

What is BioBlitz?



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

What to Expect



You'll join scientists and experts on short walks around Barr Lake State Park where you search for, identify and record as many species as possible! **Do you like birds?** Join the ornithologists group! **Do you want to learn about plants?** Join the botanists group! **Just want to hang out and enjoy a beautiful Colorado day?** There will be lots of things to do at the Nature Center base camp!

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

There will be a cookout lunch served at 12 p.m.

BioBlitz participation is FREE but registration is required to participate in BioBlitz surveys. Entry to Barr Lake State Park is included. **Lunch is \$5 per person** and includes a drink, hamburger or hot dog and a side. Participants are encouraged to purchase lunch during sign-up.

Register online at: www.birdconservancy.org/2022bioblitz

Please note that space is limited and registration closes 5/28/2022

Questions? Contact us at info@birdconservancy.org

Thank you to
our Event Sponsors:





SPRING/SUMMER PROGRAMS



Take flight at Bird Camp!

Our year-round camp experiences get kids outside to have fun and explore nature while making friends, developing leadership skills and gaining new insights. Our camp activities connect children to the outdoors using birds and their habitats as inspiration.



DAY CAMPS

Ages 4-13
June-August

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

More info at:
birdconservancy.org/daycamps



OVERNIGHT CAMPS

Ages 12-17 • June-July

Overnight Camps are a welcoming learning environment for kids who have outgrown our Day Camps, as well as those new to our programs. Camps are led by professional educators with backgrounds in science, education and youth development. Camp takes place at Highlands Camp in Allenspark, CO, with drop-off and pick-up at the camp facility and in Brighton.

More info at:
birdconservancy.org/overnightcamps



LEADERS IN TRAINING

Ages 13-17 • Year-round!

Inspired by past campers who wanted to give back, the Leaders in Training Program gives teens the chance to mentor and teach younger campers while learning about science and leadership skills. LIT training is on **Friday, June 3** at our Environmental Learning Center in Brighton, CO. LITs sign-up to assist with programs throughout the year, and come together for group presentations in the spring..

More info at:
birdconservancy.org/LIT

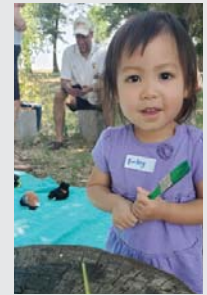


Homeschool & Family Programs

Wild Wednesdays Nature Play

Join us every Wednesday for a morning of wild fun!

This program is designed for children 4 and under and their grown-ups, however older siblings are always welcome!



Free play in nature helps kids to develop mind, body and soul; it gives them the space to explore, take healthy risks, and form meaningful connections with the world around them. Some activities might include; examining a cool bug, building with sticks and logs, playing in the mud or snow, learning about wildlife, and going wherever our curiosity and imagination takes us!

Cost: \$7/child; \$1/adult

Date/Time: Every Wednesday (except July 6!) from 9-11:00 a.m.

Location: Environmental Learning Center (Old Stone House) at Barr Lake State Park 14500 Lark Bunting Lane, Brighton CO

Birding by Canoe

Gain a new perspective on the birds of Barr Lake—from the water!



Location: Barr Lake State Park Boat Ramp

Date/Time: Wed. May 11 & Sat. May 14 from 9 a.m -12:00 p.m.

Cost: \$7/child; \$1/adult

Nature Art

Practice your budding art skills by creating masterpieces made from found natural objects!



Location: Environmental Learning Center (Old Stone House) at Barr Lake State Park 14500 Lark Bunting Lane, Brighton CO

Cost: \$7/child; \$1/adult

Dates & Times are TBD! Contact Sarah Doxon via email (sarah.doxon@birdconservancy.org) for the latest schedule information.



Nebraska Educational Programs

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

Family Nature Club

Join us as we get outside and explore various areas of Riverside Park in Scottsbluff, NE! Each family group receives an **Exploration Kit** to use as they investigate nature in the park, and complete challenges at home between sessions

Location: Elks Shelter at Riverside Park, west of the dog park

Dates/Time: May 7 and June 4 · 10–11:00 a.m.

Cost: Thanks to generous support and funding from our sponsors, Family Nature Club is available at no cost!



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



Check out our new Nebraska Programs page on Facebook!

Search "Bird Conservancy Rockies Nebraska"

Pre-registration is required for all Camps/Educational Programs.

Scholarships available for all camps and programs!
Apply online: birdconservancy.org/scholarships

Colorado & Nebraska Educational Programs are made possible with support from



NEBRASKA
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The Nebraska
Environmental Trust

and Friends Paul & Bea Sauer



Welcome to our new Staff!

Mandy Ensrud

Private Lands Wildlife Biologist
(Sturgis, SD)

Mandy comes from Sacramento, CA and received a BS in Zoology / minor in Wildlife from Humboldt State University, with her Wildlife Sciences MS in progress at South Dakota State Univ. Previous roles involved studying the impacts of wind energy on grassland birds. Mandy lives in Sturgis, SD, with her fiancé, dog, cat, and turtle, where she loves hiking, birding, and watching reality TV.



Jackie Krakow

Private Lands Wildlife Biologist
(Gillette, WY)

A Wyoming native, Jackie is currently completing her MS this spring from South Dakota State University. She recently served as a partner biologist with Pheasants Forever. She is excited to transition and use her experience toward conserving western landscapes, and looking forward to living out West again with her family.



Qing Zhao

Research Associate
(Fort Collins, CO)

Qing is a quantitative ecologist with a BS in Ecology/ Environmental Biology and a Ph.D. in Zoology from Peking University, and a MS in Statistics from the University of Toledo. Qing's current work as part of our Science Team focuses on developing population models to understand grassland bird population declines.



Skye Newman

Education Programs Coordinator
(Brighton, CO)

Skye earned their BS in Environmental Science from Cornell Univ. Lab of Ornithology, studying mycoplasma in house finches and helping develop the Lab's All About Birds website. They moved to Colorado to pursue and receive an MBA in Leadership & Sustainability in 2020. In their spare time, they enjoy cooking, strategy & adventure games, and aquaria.



Ashley Mertz

Private Lands Wildlife Biologist
(Greeley, CO)

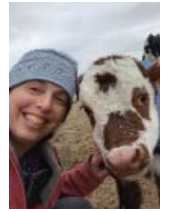
Ashley was raised in Kansas and received her BS/MS in Wildlife Biology from Fort Hays State Univ. She worked for the USFWS as a biologist at Aransas (TX) and Bosque del Apache (NM) National Wildlife Refuges. In her spare time, she enjoys hiking and exploring nature with her family, as well as a good podcast while running with her dog.



Rachel Belouin

Program Manager, Southern Plains
(Fort Collins, CO)

Rachel holds a BS in Natural Resources from the Univ. of Mass. Amherst, a MFA in Non-Fiction Writing from Antioch Univ., L.A., and a MS in Nat. Resource Stewardship from CSU. Rachel has experience working and living on a third-generation cattle ranch and enjoys riding her horse, trail running with her son, and a great book.



Kathleen Lich

Environmental Educator (Brighton, CO)

Kathleen earned a BS in Environmental Sustainability Studies & Geography from Indiana Univ. During her time at IU, she worked for the Critical Food Studies Lab and spent her summers as an environmental educator in Alaska. After college, Kathleen continued her career in Environmental Education with several organizations. She is very passionate about helping people connect to nature, especially birds.



Marion Clément

Mexican Spotted Owl Coordinator
(Fort Collins, CO)

Marion moved to Colorado in 2020 to work for the USFWS where she studied population trends and threats to the Western bumble bee, *Bombus occidentalis*. She researched habitat and resource use by Barred Owls as part of her Master's Degree, and also launched a Northern Saw-Whet Owl banding station near Fort Collins.



Taylor Dziedzina

Development Assistant
(Brighton, CO)

Taylor has experience as a wildlife biologist, most recently leading survey in Utah. She also spent time with CPW as a Statewide Volunteer Program Assistant. Taylor holds a BS in Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Biology from CSU. In her spare time Taylor can be found hiking and backpacking with her dog, Delilah, birdwatching, or curled up with a good book.



Kylie Lamoree

Motus Biologist (Laramie, WY)

Kylie lives in Laramie, WY, and, after receiving a degree in Zoology at University of Wyoming, spent some time with the Wyoming Conservation Corps leading trail building crews all around the state. Her duties at Bird Conservancy will include helping to install Motus stations across the Great Plains-Chihuahuan Desert region. Kylie says she can "thread a needle with a Bobcat", and considering the needs of our Motus work, she's going to be a perfect fit for this role!



Rob Fenwick

Program Manager - Watershed Health
(Fort Collins, CO)

Rob grew up camping, fishing, and hiking on Colorado's western slope. He holds a BS in Marine Biology and a MS in Natural Resources from Utah State. He helped lead the creation of resource and waterbird stewardship programs for CPW and the USFWS. Rob enjoys mountain biking, birding, herping, caving, growing orchids, and exploring the outdoors with his wife and children



Pam McCulloch

Executive Assistant
(Fort Collins, CO)

Pam has worked for a wide variety of organizations assisting with office coordination, billing, partner relations, and more. She brings strong planning, problem-solving skills and customer service experience. She grew up in the company of relatives who were well-known for wildlife/nature photography, and she still enjoys visiting wildlife refuges, birding festivals, botanical gardens, and hiking with family.



Photo not available at time of printing. Colorado's State Bird representing!

Farewells: Jennifer Blakesley, Michael Getzy, Faye Lamb, Justin Lambert, David McNitt, Laura Quattrini and former Board Members David Charles and Jim Strickland



MONTHLY GIVING: *Make your support soar!*

Scheduling a monthly gift to Bird Conservancy of the Rockies is a budget-friendly way to make your support soar. Please consider starting your monthly giving today. Visit www.birdconservancy.org/donate to learn more.

\$10 per month
(33¢ per day)



Can create a full scholarship for a 5-year-old to have their first nature camp experience!

\$15 per month
(50¢ per day)



Can deliver new field guides or a demonstration garden bed of native plants at our Environmental Learning Center!

\$25 per month
(83¢ per day)



Can connect a classroom of students to environmental education experiences that build the next generation of bird lovers.

\$50 per month
(\$1.67 per day)



Can provide new beacon location devices to keep our biologists safe while they work alone in remote locations.

Golden Eagle Society

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



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

Will you consider joining the Golden Eagle Society by making a planned gift? We would be proud to be part of your legacy for birds, people and the land!

It's Easy!

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

It's Not All or Nothing

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

Membership Has Benefits

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

Is Bird Conservancy already named in your estate?

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

Don't Have a Will?

You're not alone, but it's never too early to start planning! Please consider including Bird Conservancy in your estate plans. Contact Joe Pettit for suggested "bequest language" and the Bird Conservancy tax ID for you to share with your attorney.

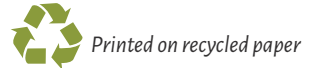
We appreciate your gift of any amount! Donations can be made online at birdconservancy.org/donate

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



Bird Conservancy of the Rockies
 14500 Lark Bunting Lane
 Brighton, CO 80603
www.birdconservancy.org

The Primary Source No. 59 - Spring/Summer 2022



YOU make a difference for birds & their habitats!

Thank You for
Chipping In!

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 Your support helps ensure a better world for people, birds and land!**



Your gift can help:

- \$50 to be part of our flock
- \$100 bring science & nature to people of all ages
- \$250 ensure healthy landscapes and communities
- \$500 to help unlock migratory mysteries
- Other: _____
- Birds Forever Endowment Fund: _____
- Count on me for a monthly gift!
- I have included Bird Conservancy in my estate plans
- Please contact me about including Bird Conservancy in my estate plans

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Bird Conservancy of the Rockies is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.
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PS59

THANK YOU for supporting bird and habitat conservation!