



# THE PRIMARY SOURCE

*Our mission is to conserve birds and their habitats.*

## RMBO Stewardship: Working to put conservation on the ground

*By Seth Gallagher, Stewardship Division Director*

Throughout the Great Plains and Intermountain West private lands play a critical role in wildlife conservation. Much of this land occurs in a “working landscape,” where landowners rely on the land to make a living and produce food for, well...all of us. The Stewardship Division works to find ways to maintain agricultural production while working to enhance and create wildlife habitat in Colorado, Nebraska, and Wyoming. In this article we’ll highlight our Private Lands Wildlife Biologist (PLWB) Program in Colorado.

The Farm Bill, the same federal program that provides food stamps and school lunches, has money available for the enhancement and creation of wildlife habitat on private lands, often to the tune of several million dollars a year in Colorado alone. In 2008 RMBO entered into a partnership with the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to place biologists in the state to provide technical assistance to landowners and resource professionals using Farm Bill programs. The PLWB Program’s goal is to help put these funds to the best use possible for at-risk species by creating and enhancing habitat but also ensuring that practices being implemented are not detrimental to said species.



Before and after shots of bank stabilization and revegetation work on the Florida River in southwest Colorado. *Photos by Marty Moses.*

Four biologists make up the PLWB team and are stationed in NRCS offices in all four corners of the state including Durango, Greeley, Pueblo, and Steamboat Springs. We’d like to take you around the state and tell you a little bit about each biologist’s efforts toward conserving wildlife.

**In the northeast,** Noe Marymor works out of the Greeley NRCS office. Noe’s main focus is assisting landowners to plan and implement high-quality, effective grassland and waterfowl conservation projects. One big workload for the PLWBs in eastern Colorado has been expiring Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts. CRP is a Farm Bill Program that pays farmers an annual rental rate to plant grass on a piece of ground for 10-15 years. From 2008 to 2012, millions of acres in Colorado will be coming out of contract and producers will need to make decisions on how to manage that land. In some cases this means going under the plow, a far less attractive option for wildlife than leaving the stand in perennial grass cover. Noe has written conservation plans for more than 30,000 acres of expiring CRP in Adams and Arapahoe counties alone, targeting the conservation of native grassland birds. In addition Noe is working on the South Platte River with the NRCS, CDOW, and Ducks Unlimited to enroll six new properties into the Wetlands Reserve Program to protect habitats for waterfowl, shorebirds, Northern Bobwhite, Wild Turkey, and white-tailed deer. Noe is assisting the landowner-led conservation group, The Three Rivers Alliance, in an effort to find grant monies to clear the entire South Fork of the Republican River in Colorado of invasive tamarisk and Russian-olive trees, which will enhance habitat for Bell’s Vireo, Lewis’s Woodpecker, Wild Turkey, mule deer, and many other riparian-dependant species.

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## From the director...

*Tammy VerCauteren, Executive Director*

Summer is fast approaching and Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory is in the field counting and recording birds across multiple habitats, jurisdictional boundaries, and Bird Conservation Regions. We started in Arizona in April with the majority of crews heading out in mid-May. Stay tuned to our blog for weekly updates from the field.



Our June newsletter is timely for the 20-year celebration of Partners in Flight (PIF). PIF is a collaborative of non-governmental organizations, government, and state partners working for bird conservation both nationally and internationally. PIF just released the *Tri-national Vision for Landbird Conservation*. Together Canada, the United States, and Mexico are home to 882 landbird species with more than 1/3 of the species dependent on habitats in more than one country. Arvind Panjabi, International Program Director for RMBO, is a co-author on the cooperative plan. This is the first comprehensive assessment of landbirds across three countries. Please see Arvind's article on page 6 for more information.

Conserving habitats and engaging people in conservation action are critical needs spelled out in the tri-national plan for bird conservation. Addressing these needs is where the rubber meets the road for bird conservation. Habitat loss is a leading cause for bird decline and the Stewardship Division, under Seth Gallagher's leadership, is working with private landowners who own or manage more than 70% of critical habitats that birds depend on. The Stewardship Division was recently awarded a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant to focus on Lesser Prairie-Chicken habitat restoration and enhancement in southeast Colorado. Also, we are currently printing the "Pocket Guide to Sagebrush Birds." The pocket guide will help raise awareness for the sagebrush ecosystem and the unique birds that depend on this habitat. Our private lands biologists and partners will use it as a tool for working with private landowners to conserve and improve management in this important ecosystem.

Thank you for your partnership, membership and support of RMBO. You help make our efforts to conserve birds possible. I hope you will mark your calendars and plan to celebrate with us at our annual picnic at the Old Stone House on August 28th. Have an awesome summer.

### The meaning of The Primary Source:

The feather in the logo designed for The Primary Source by Granby, CO artist David Utterback is a primary feather from a pelican. A bird's primary feathers give power to its flight. RMBO depends on its many members, friends, and volunteers to strengthen our organization. You are our primaries!

## RMBO Stewardship (from Page 1)

In the southeast, Patty Knupp works out of the Pueblo NRCS office. Patty's primary focus has been large-scale invasive species management projects, the conservation of playa wetlands, and assistance with Lesser Prairie-Chicken management issues.

Lesser Prairie-Chicken has become a high priority for the Stewardship Division and with its elevation to a Level 2 candidate on the federal endangered species list, it may only be a matter of time before it is listed as "endangered." RMBO is working with landowners to learn more about the species and hopefully stabilize and increase population numbers over time, an effort Patty leads. She has been conducting lek surveys and initiating landowner interviews to determine how they manage their land, to better identify techniques for improving Lesser Prairie-Chicken habitat. She is also working with partners from four other states to submit a multi-state Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative to the NRCS which would bring several million additional dollars to Lesser Prairie-Chicken conservation efforts in the five-state area.

Patty launched the Huerfano Watershed Invasive Species project, which is a cooperative project in multiple counties with many landowners and at least eight partners. RMBO has recently received a \$100,000 CDOW Wetland Grant for the project to control 1,500 acres of tamarisk, Russian-olive, and secondary invaders. Patty is in the process of writing additional proposals to secure multiple funding sources for the project. Besides this project, Patty is also working with partners on invasive species projects on Four Mile Creek, Chico Creek, Fountain Creek, and the Apishapa River. These projects all involve a high level of cooperation, working with numerous partners and landowners to leverage funds from multiple sources. These projects target leopard frogs, small native fish, riparian bird species/migration stopover sites, as well as turkey and deer.

Additional projects in the southeast include three ongoing Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP) projects

removing cedars from the shortgrass prairie and returning fire to the ecosystem. These projects will benefit Long-billed Curlew, Cassin's Sparrow, and other grassland birds. Also in the works are four playa restoration and management projects targeting shorebirds, waterfowl, and other wildlife species.

Brandon Miller covers **northwest Colorado**, and is based out of Steamboat Springs.

Brandon focuses on the Greater Sage-Grouse, which is a candidate species on the federal endangered species list and is high priority for RMBO and other conservation partners throughout the western U.S. In response, the NRCS recently announced a new Sage Grouse Initiative, which utilizes the WHIP and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to improve sage grouse habitat on private lands. As of the mid-May deadline, 26 producers had signed up to improve habitat for sage grouse, an unprecedented number for a new wildlife program, the majority of which can be credited to Brandon's efforts to increase awareness for the program through meetings, visits, mailings, and press releases. Brandon also has eight projects (2 CRP, 3 EQIP, and 3 WHIP) that were approved and are ready for implementation this summer/fall. A WHIP project in Routt County will restore native riparian habitat and create a shallow water area for waterbirds including the Greater Sandhill Crane. Two West Slope CRP-SAFE (Conservation Reserve Program - State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement) projects in Moffat County will protect, restore, and improve forage and cover for Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse and Greater Sage-Grouse on expired CRP lands.

The newest member of the PLWB team is Marty Moses in **the southwest**, who came on board in February 2010. Marty's

Colorado Division of Wildlife



projects include 40 acres of riparian forest buffer and stream habitat along the Animas River and the Florida River in La Plata County that have been restored to benefit round-tailed chub, various trout species, and riparian and neotropical songbird habitat. Conservation plans for the upcoming year will address riparian and stream habitat along Salt Creek in La Plata County, as well as two projects that will enhance critical winter range for elk and habitat for grassland/shrubland birds in La Plata County by converting annual crops to native grass and forb vegetation. Marty is also involved in enrolling and implementing CRP-SAFE acres for Gunnison Sage-Grouse, another federal candidate species.

The limiting factors to achieving wildlife habitat enhancement on private land are funding for the technical expertise and the ability of biologists to communicate and establish trust and relationships with private landowners. The NRCS-CDOW-RMBO partnership is a statewide leader in this effort and, with the expertise and dedication of the PLWBs, we'll continue to work to implement voluntary habitat enhancement efforts that will enable private landowners to maintain their livelihoods while maintaining sustainable wildlife populations for generations to come. We hope, with additional financial support, to increase the number of PLWBs in Colorado and Wyoming in the near future.

# Getting prescribed fire on the ground

By Laura Quattrini, Stewardship Biologist

Throughout history, fire has been one of the most powerful forces shaping ecosystems. Some ecosystems, such as the shortgrass prairie, are dependent on fire to maintain structure and diverse species assemblages. Fire's power is a result not only of the degree of change it can inflict on vegetation structure in such a short period, but also from its commanding nature — it is a force that cannot easily be controlled. Because of this and its threat to human lives and property, fire in the U.S. was suppressed for many decades. We now realize that doing so was a mismanagement of ecosystems. Fuels have built up to a level that makes them hazardous to ecosystems; widespread, catastrophic fires are occurring across the country with devastating and expensive results. In addition, fire suppression has allowed woody species like junipers to invade grassland and sagebrush ecosystems. Once these trees are established the understory vegetation is removed and fires are prevented from occurring again, resulting in a permanent shift from one ecosystem to another.



Chase County rancher John Maddux surveys the result of his burn, which was used to control the spread of smooth brome on his wet meadow north of Imperial, NE. Photo by Caleb Caton.

For decades, people have been witnessing the results of this tree invasion across the Great Plains and Intermountain West. Landowners are losing precious forage for their cattle and resource managers are losing critical wildlife habitat. We have also been learning that prescribed

burning — the controlled application of fire under a predetermined set of weather and fuel conditions to achieve specific resource objectives — is a great tool for conservation management in these ecosystems. It is being used widely for habitat and range management (as well as hazardous fuels reduction around wildland-urban interfaces) in Great Plains states such as Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas.

Anyone who has been involved with prescribed burning can tell you that it is a very slow process to get prescribed fire on the ground. The first hurdle is getting people to accept that prescribed fire can be used as a management tool. Because of decades of fire suppression being ingrained in peoples' heads as a good thing, many thought that using fire was completely out of the question. But those who have witnessed its effects can testify to its usefulness. Caleb Caton, one of RMBO's Private Lands Wildlife Biologists in Nebraska, reveals he has been witnessing the "light bulb effect." Since Caton began working for RMBO in December in Imperial, NE, he has been involved with four burns on both private and public lands for general maintenance and for controlling invasive plants (smooth brome and junipers). He explains that it is interesting to get people who are so used to fighting fires actively involved with a prescribed burn because you can see the change in their system of belief. They realize that fire can be used to their advantage and they tend to want to use it more.

Invading red cedar (a type of juniper) is a common problem throughout Great Plains states including Nebraska, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Texas. To address this problem, prescribed burning is now widely used in these states with the assistance of prescribed burn associations — groups of landowners and resource professionals dedicated to helping each other get prescribed burns on the ground. Caton contends that even with the burn associations becoming more numerous and more people not having to be persuaded about the benefits

of prescribed fire, other hurdles still exist. Because fire is such a powerful tool the fear of liability prevents some people from getting involved. Writing burn plans is the best way to decrease this liability. When a land manager decides to use prescribed fire many things need to be accounted for, which should all be included in the prescribed burn plan. The plan gives very specific prescriptions of weather conditions (e.g., wind speed and direction, humidity, and temperature), fire break locations and size, equipment and manpower needs, etc. required for a burn to occur. All of these prescriptions are in line with the vegetation and terrain of the proposed burn site. These plans are like a recipe with the purpose of ensuring that objectives of the burn can be met while not jeopardizing safety.

Even with the capability of having a burn plan written in these states, people who have not been involved with a prescribed burn still fear the liability because of their lack of experience. Therefore, in order to get more landowners interested they need to see, experience, and be convinced that the practice can be safely conducted. RMBO has seen this with our efforts to get prescribed burning more widely used in southeast Colorado through our Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG), received from NRCS in 2008. For many years, landowners in this region have been very interested in using prescribed burning. The turnout we had at our Prescribed Burning Workshop last year in Kim, CO was testament to that (see *Primary Source* Number 31, July 2009). But even with the interest and increased knowledge from the workshop, getting fire on the ground is challenging.

As we here in Colorado, Wyoming, and New Mexico try to get on the prescribed fire bandwagon, we are realizing that we have a completely different set of climatic conditions to contend with, making the use of prescribed fire a more difficult process. Tim Steffens, Colorado NRCS range specialist in Springfield, explains that writing burn plans in states such as Nebraska or Oklahoma can be somewhat easier than Colorado because they have the fine-fuel loads sufficient to carry

out a burn successfully. Due to our drier conditions, we have to come up with our own innovative, specialized prescriptions. Conducting prescribed burns under hotter, drier conditions may get burns to happen more readily, but this isn't very ideal as it makes the fire less easily controlled. A more agreeable suggestion includes doing very detailed conservation planning and grazing management, including grazing deferment, before the burn to increase the fine fuels to assist the burn. However, this creates issues for ranchers because of the loss of money they would normally make on that piece of ground. Herein lies the difficulty for ecosystem conservation in these drier states. If private landowners can't afford to defer grazing on a piece of land getting encroached upon by juniper, restoration of that prairie using prescribed fire is not likely to happen.

This is one place that RMBO's CIG can come into play. The grant has funds to offer private landowners incentives to defer grazing on lands scheduled to be

burned. In fact we've had two prescribed burns planned and two others on our radar. But as anyone involved with prescribed burns can attest to, scheduled burns will always be a wait-and-see process. For the last two winters partners of these scheduled burns have been on the lookout for the prescribed weather conditions called for in the burn plans. Unfortunately those conditions haven't happened. So we keep waiting.

This is something Steffens says that resource professionals in Colorado will have to deal with. Because of the sporadic prescribed conditions, it makes cost-share agreements difficult because it may be difficult to get a prescribed burn done during the time limit of an EQIP or WHIP (both Farm Bill programs) contract. We have to come up with some innovative ways of addressing this from a program standpoint in Colorado. And we are on our way.

RMBO and partners have been addressing the hurdles to get prescribed

burning more widely used as a management tool. With the CIG, RMBO has helped the Kim Burn Association purchase some equipment to enable them to conduct burns on their own and to offset some of the costs landowners incur from deferment. RMBO will be offering more field days and prescribed burn workshops to build knowledge and experience so that confidence can increase. This July we will be having a field tour showcasing the use of prescribed fire to help eradicate crested wheatgrass on expiring CRP land near Wheatland, WY. In addition, Colorado NRCS has been getting some of their employees trained to eventually be able to write burn plans associated with Farm Bill projects and will be coming out with their own burn plan template. All of these efforts have been a slow process but we are beginning to effect change by building capacity.

*Thanks to Tim Steffens and Caleb Caton for contributing comments for this article.*

## COMING SOON! Pocket Guide to Sagebrush Birds

Sagebrush habitats are home to unique avian species including Sage-Grouse, Brewer's Sparrow, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Sage Sparrow, and Sage Thrasher. Degradation of sagebrush is causing population declines for many of these species making them high priorities for conservation. Birds are sensitive to habitat change and are considered indicators of ecosystem health. Raising awareness for these birds will be a critical step in conserving this important habitat and the wildlife that depend on it.

Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory and PRBO Conservation Science are working cooperatively to develop the "Pocket Guide to Sagebrush Birds." This guide is designed to fit in a shirt pocket for accessibility in the field. It will emphasize 40 bird species that utilize sagebrush habitats and will include tips on species identification, biology, and conservation status. Because not all of these species require similar habitat types and not all sagebrush is managed for the same goals, this guide will discuss how avian needs can be incorporated into land management plans. It will be a tool for raising awareness with landowners and resource professionals and help open doors for voluntary efforts and conservation partnerships throughout the West.

Funding is being provided by multiple partners:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Intermountain West Joint Venture
- Bureau of Land Management
- SageSTEP
- Wyoming Game & Fish Department
- Boy Scouts of America – Longs Peak Council
- Montana Audubon
- Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Archie W. and Grace Berry Foundation
- Nevada Audubon – Important Bird Areas
- Black Canyon Audubon chapter



# Partners in Flight releases *Saving our Shared Birds*, an SOS for bird conservation

On May 11th, 2010, Partners in Flight released the first-ever tri-national report on the status and conservation needs of landbirds in Canada, the United States, and Mexico. The announcement of the report's release was made by the heads of the delegations from the three countries at the XVth annual Trilateral Committee on Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management in Halifax, Nova Scotia, a forum for cooperation among our three nations' government agencies charged with wildlife management. The meeting was a fitting venue for the release given that the primary message in the report is that international cooperation is key to protecting birds.

*Saving our Shared Birds: Partners in Flight Tri-national Vision for Landbird Conservation* highlights the 882 native landbird species found in Canada, Mexico, and the United States using a new assessment conducted by a collaboration of conservation scientists in all three countries. Among the key findings are that roughly one-quarter of these species depend on all three countries each year, whereas more than 80% of all individual birds are shared tri-nationally through the spectacular international migrations that connect our nations' birds.

Partners in Flight (PIF) is a cooperative effort involving government agencies, non-profit conservation organizations, academic institutions, professional associations, industry, and private individuals. Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory has been a key player in PIF since its inception, from its role in developing the species assessment process that is the foundation for all of PIF's work, to its role as steward of the PIF species assessment and population estimates databases (available through our website [www.rmbo.org/pif/pifdb.html](http://www.rmbo.org/pif/pifdb.html)), to continuing involvement in the PIF International Science Committee, which was behind the latest report. RMBO played an especially pivotal role in the latest effort through its leadership in the vulnerability assessment of the entire Mexican avifauna, conducted through a series of workshops in Mexico from 2002 to 2006. Together with collaborators from Mexico's National Commission for the Knowledge and

Use of Biodiversity (CONABIO), the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), and Cornell Lab of Ornithology, RMBO's International Program Director Arvind Panjabi helped facilitate seven workshops involving more than 120 Mexican ornithologists and wildlife professionals to incorporate their knowledge into the species assessment rankings. Funding for the assessment work came from the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and other partners. The release of the Tri-national Vision is the culmination of this effort.

The tri-national assessment identified 148 bird species in need of immediate conservation attention because of their highly threatened and declining populations. These include 44 species, mostly in Mexico, with very limited distributions and small populations, including the Thick-billed Parrot and Horned Guan. Many of these species could disappear within the next 5-10 years if actions are not taken to reduce threats. Also of high tri-national concern are 80 tropical residents with ranges in Mexico, such as the Scarlet Macaw and Resplendent Quetzal. Additionally, 24 species that breed in the United States and Canada continue to warrant immediate action to prevent further



Some of the participants in the 15th annual Trilateral Committee on Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management (the primary forum for intergovernmental cooperation on wildlife issues between Mexico, USA, and Canada): **Arvind Panjabi** (International Program Director, RMBO), **Humberto Berlanga** (NABCI Mexico coordinator, CONABIO), **Bob Blohm** (Chief of Migratory Bird Management, USFWS), **Martin Vargas Prieto** (Director General of SEMARNAT), **Basile van Havre** (Director of Population Conservation and Management, Canadian Wildlife Service), **Mary Gustafson** (Rio Grande Joint Venture, American Bird Conservancy), and **Eduardo Iñigo-Elias** (Neotropical Conservation Initiative Program Coordinator, Cornell Lab of Ornithology).

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declines, including Cerulean Warbler, Black Swift, Canada Warbler, and several grassland species.

In addition to the 148 species in greatest need of immediate conservation attention, the assessment identified 42 common bird species that have steeply declined by 50% or more in the past 40 years, including Common Nighthawk, Eastern Meadowlark and Loggerhead Shrike. These species are found in virtually every landscape across the continent, indicating widespread changes and degradation in our ecosystems.

The release of the report also brought attention to International Migratory Bird Day 2010, celebrating *The Power of Partnerships*. “The release of this report illustrates our three countries’ commitment to the long-term conservation of biological biodiversity and to working with each other to protect our natural heritage through forums like the Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management, the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, and the International Year of Biodiversity,” said Virginia Potter, Canadian Wildlife Services’ Director General at Environment Canada.

“The winter ranges of shared migrants show a striking geographic overlap with the ranges of species at greatest risk of extinction,” said Dr. José Sarukhán Kermez, National Coordinator of CONABIO. “More than 100 of the migrants shared substantially among our three countries depend on the same tropical and pine-oak forests in Mexico that support highly threatened tropical residents.”

This report is the latest effort by Partners in Flight to help species at risk and to keep common birds common — its mission since 1990. Partners in Flight achieves success in conserving bird populations in the Western Hemisphere through combining resources of public and private organizations in North and South America.

To view *Saving Our Shared Birds: Partners in Flight Trilateral Vision for Landbird Conservation* and see a complete list of contributors to the report, visit [www.savingoursharedbirds.org](http://www.savingoursharedbirds.org)

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## A great season for HawkWatch

This spring, RMBO’s HawkWatch volunteers got an up-close look at raptor migration. Almost daily, our volunteers were out on Dinosaur Ridge, collecting data on the numbers and species of raptors that soared by. HawkWatch is a citizen science project at RMBO, which means that citizens (our volunteers) help us to monitor and collect scientific data. With the help of these citizen scientists, we are able to collect large quantities of data, which is then entered into a national database and contributes to the knowledge of raptor migration routes and populations.

Though RMBO has been monitoring the migration at Dinosaur Ridge for several years, this was the first season that the project was primarily driven as a citizen science effort. We had an outstanding group of 13 trained HawkWatch volunteers, who helped ensure the migration over the ridge was constantly monitored with expert eyes. During the 9 weeks of monitoring, over 540 raptors were spotted. The highest count was on May 6 when 79 migrating raptors were observed. To view more data collected at our HawkWatch site, as well as other sites around the country, visit [HawkCount.org](http://HawkCount.org).

Dinosaur Ridge is a popular migration route for raptors because of the ridge lifts: wind that bounces off the ridge forms updrafts. Raptors ride on these updrafts as they soar high over the ridge. This not only makes the ridge a perfect location for our HawkWatch project, but it is also the perfect location for our educators to teach kids about raptor migration. Each spring during the migration season, RMBO uses the HawkWatch site to give kids the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors while learning about birds and their habitats. During our education programs, kids hike to the top of the ridge as they learn about raptors and the behavioral and physical adaptations these birds use during migration. Students learn how raptors use the ridge lifts to soar and get to see our citizen science volunteers in action, spotting raptors and collecting data. On a good day, the kids get to see several raptors flying by at close range.

Our HawkWatch site at Dinosaur Ridge is a great place to see migrating raptors. Though the HawkWatch season has come to end, the raptors will return again next year. Come join our citizen scientists on the ridge again in 2011!



Charles Hundertmark

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# Mark your calendars: *BBQ with the Birds, Saturday, August 28*

This year's celebration of birds and their conservation should be bigger and better than ever. Scheduled for Saturday, August 28, at the Old Stone House on Barr Lake, RMBO's annual **BBQ with the Birds** will have something for everyone. Check our website for a complete list of events, but here are some highlights:

Bird walks begin the day at 7 and 8 am. Anyone, beginners as well as experienced birders, are welcome on these hikes. The 8 am hike leader is fluent in Spanish. Bird banding will begin at 7 and continue until 11 am—later this year than before, to accommodate all those who want to see birds in the hand and learn their stories. Back at the Old Stone House, children's activities will take place from 8:30 until noon and will include

games, crafts, storytelling, face painting, and encounters with live birds. With the help of picnic attendees, staff will try something new: flush-netting the birds in the native prairie surrounding the Old Stone House. What will we find?

The morning will also be filled with talks and workshops for adults and older children: the always popular **Field Sketching** taught by artist Susie Mottashed, **Birding by Ear** with Chuck Hundertmark, **Digiscoping** with Mike Freiberg, and **Backyard Wildlife Habitats** with Steve Deitemeyer and Dave Menough of Wild Birds Unlimited. Just before lunch, you'll hear the news from RMBO—and then the traditional picnic lunch, with burgers of grass-fed beef, corn on the cob, homemade salads, and vegetarian choices as well. After lunch, RMBO Stewardship Director Seth Gallagher will talk about RMBO's grassland conservation efforts.

But wait, there's more! A silent auction benefitting RMBO's educational programs will take place all morning long. It's a great chance to support RMBO while picking up such terrific items as season ski passes, raft trips, ranch stays, one-of-a-kind guided bird tours, art, books, and all kinds of birding items. And if that's not enough, there will be vendors with bird-related offerings and information.

The cost for the picnic is \$10 for RMBO members, \$12 for nonmembers, \$5 for children ages 5 to 15 (children under 5 are free). To make your reservation, go to [www.rmbo.org](http://www.rmbo.org) or call Karri Claridge (303-659-4348).



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## The Family Corner: Recycled bird feeders

Do you need to clean out your kitchen cabinets, but can't bear to part with all of your cups and mugs you have accumulated over the years? Turn your old cups and mugs into works of art for the birds in your yard to enjoy by making a cup and saucer bird feeder!

### Materials Needed:

- 1 cup or mug
- 1 saucer
- A strong waterproof glue
- Dowel or place to set the feeder

After you have chosen your cup and saucer you are going to use, put the strong waterproof glue around the bottom of the cup and stick it to the saucer. Then place a heavy book on top of the cup and let the glue set until dry (this varies depending on the type of glue used). Once the cup and saucer are attached you can glue a dowel to the bottom

of the saucer so you can stick your feeder in the ground, or you can set the feeder in a safe location without the dowel. Be sure to remember to fill your cup with bird seed before setting it out for the birds. Place it in a location protected from rain so the seed stays dry. Now you can enjoy watching the birds in your backyard eat from your feeder and be happy you were able to reuse that old cup or mug!





# Upcoming events

## Bald Eagle Fledge Festival

**June 19:** Celebrate Father's Day with Barr Lake's Bald Eagle parents. Meet RMBO staff at the Old Stone House and we will caravan to the wildlife refuge on the southern part of Barr Lake where we will view the eaglets before they take flight. After viewing the nest and going for a hike we will return to the Old Stone House to make bird feeders you can take home and place in your own backyard! 9 am to 12 pm, \$15/family. Please register by June 17\*

## Chadron State Park Anniversary Celebration

**June 19:** Join RMBO in celebrating the 89th "birthday" of one of the most popular state parks in Nebraska! RMBO's Amanda Filipi will present wildlife-related classes. Other events include free paddle-boat rides, archery card shoot, arts in the parks, free watermelon, and bluebird workshops. 8 am to 4 pm. Visit [www.outdoornebraska.ne.gov/](http://www.outdoornebraska.ne.gov/) for more information.

## Night Hike

**June 30:** Search for night-life surrounding Barr Lake State Park on a naturalist-led hike. The program will end with light refreshments and socializing. The Old Stone House, 7 pm to 9 pm, \$6/family. Please register by June 23\*

## Celebrate Urban Birds Festival

**July 10:** Join RMBO staff and Colorado artist Sherrie York for a day of journaling and monitoring at Barr Lake State Park. An inclination for the arts is not necessary to enjoy time reflecting on nature's beauty! We will give a brief overview of urban bird journaling and monitoring from 8-9 then we will practice our newly learned techniques while on a hike around Barr Lake from 9-12. We will have lunch at 12. At 1pm adults will learn about backyard bird habitats while youth plant seeds to take home, nurture, and plant in their own backyard.

## Field Day: Examining the Effects of Prescribed Fire

**July 24:** Land managers and others interested in seeing one of Stewardship's habitat enhancement projects (using prescribed fire to help eradicate crested wheatgrass on expiring CRP land) should plan to attend this workshop. Location: outside of Wheatland, WY. For more information, contact Laura Quattrini ([laura.quattrini@rmbo.org](mailto:laura.quattrini@rmbo.org) or 970-482-1707 ext. 10).

## "Our Feathered Friends" Program

**August 10:** Presented by Amanda Filipi, from 8:00-9:00 pm at the Amphitheater at Scotts Bluff National Monument, Gering, NE. Come join us to learn about our feathered friends that call western Nebraska home!

## Night Hike

**August 11:** Search for night-life surrounding Barr Lake State Park on a naturalist-led hike. The program will end with light refreshments and socializing. The Old Stone House, 7 pm to 9 pm, \$6/family. Please register by August 4\*

## RMBO Picnic

**August 28:** See details on opposite page.

\* Register by contacting Cassy Bohnet ([cassy.bohnet@rmbo.org](mailto:cassy.bohnet@rmbo.org) or 303-659-4348 ext.15)

NOTE: The Old Stone House, RMBO's headquarters, is at 14500 Lark Bunting Lane, Brighton, CO

# Upcoming camps

## Young Ecologists Bird Camp

**June 21-25:** Did you ever wonder what an ecologist does or where they work? Campers ages 10 to 13 will spend a week as an ecologist monitoring birds, hiking through different habitats, observing wildlife, and reflecting on nature. Campers will need a sack lunch for this camp. The Old Stone House, 8 am to 3 pm, \$125/camper for the whole week. Please register at least two weeks in advance\*

## Wilderness Camp

**June 23-26:** Students in grades 3 through 6 will attend this camp sponsored by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln at Camp Norwesca. The theme this year is insects; RMBO's Amanda Filipi will be presenting information on bug/bird relationships. Contact Amanda for more information ([amanda.filipi@rmbo.org](mailto:amanda.filipi@rmbo.org) or 308-220-0052).

## Young Naturalists

**July 6, 13, 20, and 27 (every Tuesday morning in July, 9-11:30 am):** Kids ages 4 & 5 will love exploring the outdoors! Hikes, games, scavenger hunts, crafts, and nature stories are sure to interest all the kiddos at this camp. The Old Stone House, \$8/camper/day. Register 2 weeks in advance\*

## Nature Investigators

**July 7, 14, 21, and 28 (every Wednesday in July, 9 am to 12 pm):** Your 6- or 7-year-old child will love the hikes, games, scavenger hunts, crafts, and nature reflections provided by this 3-hour nature investigation camp at The Old Stone House. \$10/camper/day. Register 2 weeks in advance\*

## Habitat Explorers

**July 8, 15, 22, and 29 (every Thursday in July, 8:30 am to 3:30 pm):** Campers ages 8 and 9 will explore bugs, plants, mammals, and fish during Thursdays in July! Campers will need a sack lunch for this camp at The Old Stone House, \$30/camper/day. Register 2 weeks in advance\*

## High Plains Science Adventure Camp

**July 12-16:** RMBO is co-sponsoring this camp for students in grades 5-8. This year's theme is "Walking on the Wild Side" and will offer hands-on learning about western Nebraska wildlife. \$125/student. Please register with Amanda Filipi ([amanda.filipi@rmbo.org](mailto:amanda.filipi@rmbo.org)).



# Friends of RMBO

We have launched a new program called Friends of RMBO. The program is designed to recognize generous donors who provide critical seed money that strengthens and broadens our capacity to conserve native birds. Currently, our funding comes primarily from grants and contracts, limiting our flexibility to develop and implement new programs and projects that are key to our mission. Private contributions are critical because they allow RMBO to set its own course, maximize the value of ongoing efforts, and tackle the most pressing needs for bird conservation. Private contributions also have immense value as they will serve as match to leverage public and private grants.

Join us today and help conserve birds and their habitats. By becoming a Friend of RMBO, you become part of RMBO's efforts to leave a legacy of conservation for our children and grandchildren.

To show our appreciation for our Friends' extraordinary commitment to RMBO's mission, our program also offers exclusive, tailor-made opportunities for Friends to spend time with our biologists, educators, executive director, and board members in the field. Examples include one-on-one time in the field with our raptor biologist Jeff Birek, or a bird identification walk with one of our songbird experts.

Levels for the Friends of RMBO are based on cumulative gifts made during a calendar year:

Guardian	\$500-\$999
Steward	\$1,000-\$4,999
Benefactor	\$5,000-\$9,999
Investor	\$10,000 and above

Check out our website to learn more, or contact Amy Rotter ([amy.rotter@rmbo.org](mailto:amy.rotter@rmbo.org) or 303-659-4348 ext. 11) to become a Friend.

## Grants and Awards

Grant funding is critical to the work of RMBO biologists, field staff, and educators. The following grants and awards have been received since March:

- Nebraska Environmental Trust: \$99,634 for the project "Using Education as a Management Tool for Habitat Conservation in the Panhandle of Nebraska." This is the first year of the award with a potential for second- and third-year funding totaling \$300,056.
- Intermountain West Joint Venture: \$15,000 Capacity Grant for Private Lands Wildlife Biologist Program.
- Colorado Division of Wildlife Wetlands for Wildlife: \$160,000 grant for Huerfano River Tamarisk Removal and Jackson Ponds Wetlands Enhancement (southeast Colorado).
- Natural Resources Conservation Service: \$20,000 for Conservation Effects Assessment Project Award, to evaluate Farm Bill practices being implemented on the ground.
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act: \$240,026 to continue work on conserving high-priority and declining grassland bird species of western North America.
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and ConocoPhillips: \$150,000 to enhance Lesser Prairie-Chicken habitat in Colorado.
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service – Colorado Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program: \$50,000 for outreach efforts and materials (workshops, publications etc) that will mutually benefit the USFWS-PFW and RMBO-Private Lands Wildlife Biologists Program.
- Vestas Nacelles America, Inc.: \$4,000 plus t-shirts in support of RMBO Education Division's summer camps.
- Adams County Open Space: \$160,000 to develop our headquarters, The Old Stone House at Barr Lake State Park, into an environmental learning center.

## Changes in store at The Old Stone House

One of RMBO's primary goals is to ensure that the public understands and works toward solutions for conserving birds and their habitats. To address this issue, we focus on environmental literacy and the need for people to have the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions relating to their role in natural systems. Last June, RMBO hosted a National Association for Interpretation training course with a goal of developing our headquarters, the Old Stone House (OSH), into an environmental learning center. Board and staff who participated in the course consolidated the recommendations from all participants into a two-year action plan, which includes trails, an amphitheater, backyard habitat demonstration gardens, interpretive signage, and improvements to our classroom.

RMBO just received an award from Adams County Open Space to make these plans a reality. We are working with local partners, including Barr Lake State Park, National Park Service, Butterfly Pavilion, and Wildland Restoration Volunteers to bring our mission of conserving birds to life for Brighton and the surrounding community. We will develop and deliver landowner workshops, student field trips, family programming, and professional development opportunities for teachers that together will empower the community to take personal responsibility for local actions that conserve natural resources. Long-term implications include more teachers incorporating environmental education programming into their classrooms, backyard habitat being improved for wildlife and water conservation, native habitats being enhanced for agriculture and wildlife conservation, and more families participating in outdoor activities and incorporating nature exploration into their family culture.

# Staff migrations

**Del Benson** joins RMBO as a Research Associate to assist with our education and stewardship efforts including the development of the Old Stone House into an environmental learning center. Dr. Benson is Professor and Extension Wildlife Specialist in the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology at Colorado State University (CSU) and Chairman of the Center for Conservation Education for the Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation in Illinois. Education, research, and outreach about nature and outdoor activities are part of his offerings. He has studied, consulted, and led tours in Africa, and did professional work in Australia, South America, and Europe associated with nature conservation on private lands. He encourages stewardship of nature through community action, workshops, courses, presentations, publications, and conservation organization development.



Dr. Benson teaches upper-level courses at CSU on public relations in natural resources, leadership, wildlife policy, and field studies. His work with the McGraw Wildlife Foundation includes programs for youth and adults about local approaches to foster nature appreciation and conservation. He has received awards from Rocky Mountain Center on the Environment, Colorado Wildlife Federation, CSU Cooperative Extension, and CSU Service Learning. His most recent book, “Wildlife Stewardship and Recreation on Private Lands,” won the education award from The Wildlife Society.

**Dr. Duane Pool** joins the RMBO International Program as a Landscape Ecologist. He lives in Bismarck, North Dakota and works out of the North Dakota Game and Fish office, under a cooperative agreement with RMBO.

Duane completed undergraduate and graduate degrees in Economics with study in Natural Resource and Environmental Economics, and Econometrics. His Doctorate in Forest, Rangeland and Watershed Stewardship was earned from Colorado State University. His focus is in GIS, Remote Sensing, and spatial analysis. His career has focused on developing management guidance for migratory bird programs through the application of spatial statistical analysis and GIS. He worked for the Ducks Unlimited Great Plains Regional Office where he functioned as their Landscape Ecologist and GIS Manager. He joined The Nature Conservancy as the Science Coordinator for the Northern Great Plains Joint Venture in 2005. In March of 2008 he became the Science Coordinator for the Conservancy’s Migratory Bird Program. He looks forward to

contributing to RMBO’s mission by evaluating Grassland Priority Conservation Areas from Canada to Mexico and by providing spatial analysis and GIS support to our many International projects.

RMBO welcomes **Cindi Kelly** as Bald Eagle Watch Coordinator. Cindi grew up in a small town outside of Pittsburgh, PA. She always had a love for all animals and moved to Ohio to work at a marine life park for 15 years. She knew in her heart after her first visit to Colorado that this was the place she wanted to call home. She moved to Colorado in 2001 and began her journey of volunteering. After meeting Sigrid Ueblacker, founder of the Birds of Prey Foundation, she began volunteering with CDOW, RMBO, City of Boulder, and Boulder County doing a variety of raptor projects. She works as the Director of Marketing / Operations for Rocky Mountain Presence — a natural foods/body care/supplement brokerage company in Boulder. She enjoys gardening, reading, being a “localvore” and spending time with her pug, Moose, and two cats, Penguin and Targhee. She believes that we take so much from the earth that we need to give back as well and protect the species and environment as much as we can.



## Good news for Colorado’s kids

Colorado’s political leaders have recognized environmental education as critical in building informed decision makers and critical thinkers. In May, the state legislature passed The Colorado Kids Outdoors Program bill, and Gov. Ritter signed it into law. The new law sets up two important programs funded by gifts, grants, and donations: one to enable Colorado to develop an environmental literacy plan and the other to fund programs that get kids outdoors. In addition, the program will make the state eligible for federal grant funds through the No Child Left Inside Act, which provides incentives to promote environmental education.

Katie Navin, Executive Director of the Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education, said “This legislation will engage Department of Natural Resources, Colorado Department of Education, K-12, and community educators to develop a plan to use environmental education to help prepare students to address environmental challenges in Colorado. Being environmentally literate is essential in the 21st Century, whether entering the work force or higher education.”



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 (303) 659-4348  
[www.rmbo.org](http://www.rmbo.org)



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Call (303)659-4348 ext. 12, or e-mail [karri.claridge@rmbo.org](mailto:karri.claridge@rmbo.org)  
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