



# THE DIPPER



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EVERGREEN AUDUBON NEWSLETTER

www.EvergreenAudubon.org

## WILDLIFE HAZARDS

Join Evergreen Audubon members and Denver Mountain Parks staff to remove old barbed wire on the southern portion of Evergreen Golf Course.

We have concerns that this fence has become a hazard to the elk, other wildlife and pets.

We will meet at Evergreen Lake House at 8 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 21.

Please respond to Brad Andres at heatherbrad1@yahoo.com or 303-670-0101.

If you can, bring your own tools and gloves, but some will be provided.

- Brad Andres, EA President

## GBBC MEET-UP

Be a global citizen scientist and join the 2015 international Great Backyard Bird Count!

Simply sign up for eBird.org or use your existing account and submit up to one bird list a day for the entire GBBC event, Feb. 13-16.

On Sunday, Feb. 15, Evergreen Audubon birders are hosting a GBBC meet-up at Chatfield State Park.

Plan to meet Susan Harper and JoAnn and Bill Hackos at Chatfield at 9 a.m. on Sunday morning for a few hours of counting birds.

We are assured of huge numbers of Canada Geese and Cackling Geese. Last year we spotted Barrow's Goldeneyes.

Please send an email to JoAnn at jthackos@gmail.com to let her know you're coming. We will provide exact meeting places, depending on how many people decide to come.

## Colorado is actually a shorebird hotbed

What comes to mind when you hear the word shorebirds?

Killdeer leading you away from a nest by dragging a wing?

Flocks of Dunlin flying up in synchrony along a seaside beach?

For those of us living in the foothills of the Rockies, shorebirds are not the first birds that come to mind.

However, Colorado has an abundance of reservoirs, and is centralized between the Arctic breeding grounds of many shorebirds and the wintering grounds they use in Central and South America.

We actually live in a world of shorebirds, hiding in plain sight, from tundra to prairie.

Evergreen Audubon members will have the opportunity to learn much more



Monica Iglecia will speak at the February chapter meeting.

about shorebirds when Monica Iglecia, assistant director of Shorebird Habitat Management, Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, speaks at the next chapter meeting.

Monica's presentation, "Bringing

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## Volunteer awards presented at banquet

Several individuals were honored for their contributions to Evergreen Audubon at its annual banquet Jan. 15 at Mt. Vernon Country Club.

Awards were made by Brad Andres, EA president, and Vanessa Hayes, Evergreen Nature Center executive director.

### Royal Order of the Dipper

The President's Award added **Joan Ridgely** to the Royal Order of the Dipper for her outstanding job organizing and tracking EA's finances.

Besides attending to the financial business of Evergreen Audubon, Joan has been a steady volunteer at Evergreen Nature Center.

She also instituted a more automated,

timely way to send receipts and thank-yous to EA's many donors.

### Bird of the Year

The 2014 Bird of the Year was awarded to **Louise and Sharon Mounsey** for discovering a Little Blue Heron at the Evergreen High School pond on Sept. 7.

Many other great sightings were recapped at the banquet, including the Magnolia Warbler found by Allan and Shirley Casey at the Soda Creek pond and a Lark Bunting discovered by Larry White near Tallgrass Spa.

A Pinyon Jay was spotted by Inga Brennan on Lookout Mountain.

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**2015 OFFICERS**

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Meetings first Thursday, 7 p.m., Church of the Hills, 28628 Buffalo Park Road, Evergreen, except January. Meetings in June, July and August are held at Evergreen Nature Center.

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE** BRAD ANDRES

In this issue, you will find the summary of our wintery 46th Evergreen-Idaho Springs Christmas Bird Count. You will see that despite the difficult viewing and driving conditions, the snow pushed many finches downslope and we ended up with a decent 52 species.

To continue the winter birding theme, please see the article on the Great Backyard Bird Count, which will held be from Feb. 13 to 16 ([birdsource.org/gbbc](http://birdsource.org/gbbc)). Vanessa Hayes plans to put together a program for area schools.

As I mentioned last month, the EA board members have agreed to slightly increase annual membership dues. You will soon be receiving a letter asking you to renew your membership as an individual for \$25 or as a family for \$40.

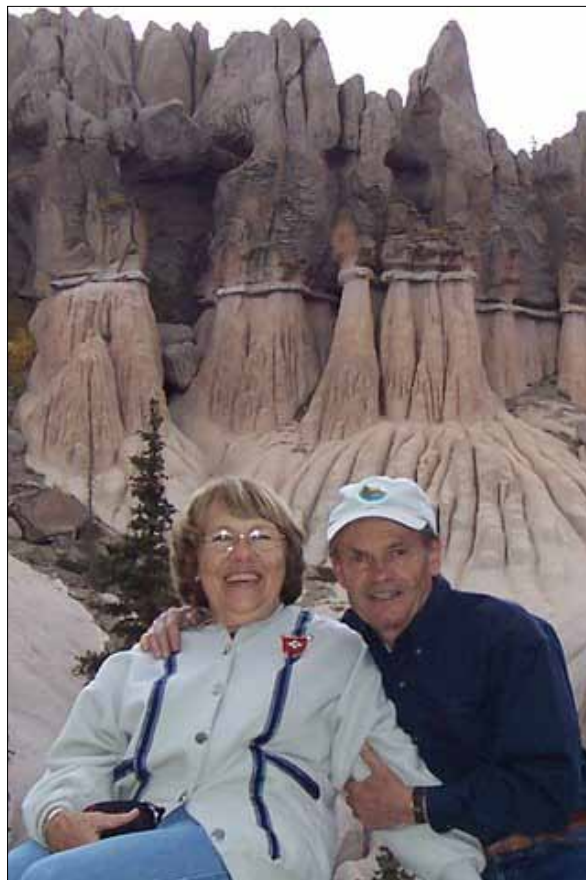
As many of you know, your membership funds operation of Evergreen Nature Center, supports our bird-monitoring projects, and supports monthly meetings and other events.

I hope you will join me in renewing your membership in Evergreen Audubon. This is the first increase in membership dues in the last 10 years.

Although January and February are often thought of as rather slowing birding months, we will be busy reporting accomplishments of past grants and submitting applications for new funding.

Vanessa Hayes and Kathy Madison will be participating in a capacity-building training that was awarded to us from the Hoosie Martin Foundation.

Through Margaret Herzog's work with the Bear Creek Watershed Association and with input from Evergreen resident Bill Noonan, we will be developing a plan to enhance the wetlands at Evergreen Lake, which will be done in conjunction with the bridge replacement and lake dredging.



Juanita and Bud Weare at the Wheeler Geologic Area in the La Garita Wilderness Area east of Creede. They were honored with the Evergreen Audubon Founders' Award at the EA Annual Banquet. See story on page 1.



# Top EA volunteers honored at annual banquet

Continued from page 1

## Bear Creek Watershed Birding Challenge

In the inaugural year of the Bear Creek Watershed Birding Challenge, **Chuck Aid** pulled in the top honor with a submission of 137 species for 2014.

A revised watershed checklist including the Little Blue Heron was distributed at the banquet. The challenge has been issued again in 2015, so get birding!

## Founders' Award

The Evergreen Audubon Founders' Award was instituted in 2010 to recognize members who promote and exhibit the essence of Evergreen Audubon's mission of conserving and protecting the natural environment and educating the community about the natural world.

This year's recipients, Bud and Juanita Weare, have been Evergreen Audubon members since 1978, although they were not living in Colorado at that time. See photo on page 2.

Since moving back in 2000, they have been involved in numerous activities of Evergreen Audubon and with a myriad of other organizations in the mountain community.

On Sundays, they are often volunteering at Evergreen Nature Center.

## Board Thank-yous

Brad thanked departing board members who gave so much of their time to the organization: Ginny Ades, Joan Ridgely and Jean Thayer. "Without them, my job would have been so much more difficult," he said.

He also welcomed new board members Janet Warner (treasurer) and David Walker (Conservation director), and returning directors JoAnn/Bill Hackos (at-large), Peg Linn (at-large), Ann Dodson (Development), Chuck Aid (Bird Monitoring).

The board is still seeking a new vice president.

Vanessa Hayes shared some personal observations of the three Nature Center volunteers honored at the banquet for their service in 2015.



Bird of the Year winners Sharon and Louise Mounsey with Brad Andres at the EA banquet. *Photo by Heather Johnson*



Joan Ridgely, now a member of the Royal Order of the Dipper, at the San Diego Zoo. *File photo*



Chuck Aid was the top Bear Creek Watershed birder in 2014, tall. *File photo*



Nature Center volunteer extraordinaire Lynn Gumas with a pal.

## New Volunteer Award

This past spring, **Lynn Gumas** skipped into Evergreen Nature Center like a warm breeze.

My first impression, stamped by a generous hug and smiling announcement of her long-set intention to become a weekly volunteer, was of an exuberant teacher, perfect for making ENC guests feel at home.

At her group volunteer training session and subsequent volunteer shadowing shifts, she quickly showed her ease, as a retired science educator, in interpreting exhibits and enthusing guests.

Then taking personal ownership of her new volunteer home, Lynn eagerly sought projects, Nature Center chores or any means of welcomed aid during quiet shifts.

If you have not yet had a chance to meet Lynn, do yourself a favor and say hello to this engaging new member of Evergreen Nature Center when you have the chance. Thank you, Lynn, for helping to grow ENC!

## Volunteer of the Year

**Donald Randall** is a wonderfully

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# Top EA volunteers honored at annual banquet

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familiar face in the Evergreen Audubon family. As a 2008 founding volunteer and part of the backbone of Evergreen Nature Center, Donald offers constant support in making ENC stand out as an enticing and fun hub of environmental learning in Evergreen.

Most importantly, he clearly has fun doing it and takes personal pride in our success. In 2014 Donald contributed more than 98 hours assisting visitors to ENC and training new volunteers.

A lifelong nature enthusiast, Donald's passion for discovery drove his career in veterinary science and defined his respite in outdoor recreation, as well as taking him across the globe to explore and observe. Luckily for Evergreen Audubon, he is happy to share!

Some of my favorite stories center on his eventful adolescence living with a constant flux of school groups in the residential nature camp where his father was director. Thank you, Donald, for all you do!



Brad Andres



Donald Randall

## Behind the Scenes Volunteer

In truth, **Brad Andres** is involved in almost every Evergreen Audubon scene or role. He is a tremendously dedicated, productive, knowledgeable and energetic leader and ornithologist.

Brad simultaneously drives EA's financial development and spearheads the Bear Creek Breeding Bird Atlas and nest-box projects he designed, but will happily dig into the track sand table he built to teach young ENC visitors as well.

He was on the EA committee to find a Nature Center location in the early 2000s, and as EA's president for the last three years, Brad is constantly seeking ways to grow the Nature Center into the community asset he envisions.

Brad's exuberance for birds began in the Pennsylvania hills of his childhood, sent him surveying through the beautiful shores of Alaska for many years, and motivated his more

than 30-year leadership in Audubon chapters all over the United States.

All this experience, combined with his natural enthusiasm, make working with and learning from Brad a pleasure I hope all EA members seek. Always the selfless leader, Brad doesn't seek the praise he constantly deserves, and would prefer helping hands to accolades.

Thank you, Brad, for helping to make Evergreen Audubon such a wonderful way to be involved!

# Colorado shorebirds are out there, hiding in plain sight

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Shorebirds Back: Shorebird Ecology, Habitat Management and Collaborative Conservation," will be offered at Church of the Hills in Evergreen Thursday, Feb. 5, at 7 p.m. (Doors open at 6:30 p.m. for socializing.)

Shorebirds are some of the world's champion migrants, relying on distinct geographic locations with reliable food resources along their migratory routes.

Despite immense habitat losses at important sites, significant opportunities exist to ensure high-quality habitat and refuge for migrating shorebirds at key coastal and wetland locations across the flyways in the Western Hemisphere.

Monica will lead us in discussing shorebird ecology and migration, threats facing shorebird populations today, and opportunities to support and enhance shorebird and wetland conservation in North and South America.

Monica Iglecia joined the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences' Shorebird Recovery Program in 2014. In

this capacity, she helps lead the Habitats for Shorebirds Project where she is working with a diverse set of partners to meet the goal of enhancing 500,000 acres of habitat for shorebirds on public and private land.

Monica works with national wildlife refuges, state wildlife management agencies, farmers and private organizations to incorporate shorebird habitat needs into land management practices.

Prior to joining Manomet, Monica was a conservation project director with Audubon California in the Working Lands Program. There she worked with conservation partners to enhance the value of agricultural lands and managed wetlands to achieve large-scale conservation impact for shorebirds in California's Central Valley.

Monica received a master's degree in zoology from North Carolina State University and a bachelor's in Environmental Studies from the University of California at Santa Cruz.

Manomet Center for Conservation



American Avocet. Photo by Bradford Winn

Sciences' mission is to conserve natural resources for the benefit of wildlife and human populations. Through research and collaboration, Manomet builds science-based, cooperative solutions to environmental problems.

Learn more about Manomet at [www.manomet.org](http://www.manomet.org).

- Ed Furlong, Education Director

# Finches hit record heights on wings of winter weather

The 2014 Christmas Bird Count, on Dec. 14, will be remembered for its icy roads, cold temperatures, low cloud ceiling and newly fallen snow blanketing the area.

While the day initially seemed like one in which it was going to be difficult to find many birds at all, our hearty volunteers were not deterred, and by the end of the day had found 52 species.

That equals our average over the past six years (two additional species, the Brown-capped Rosy-Finch and Common Redpoll, were seen during count week).

The weather did keep our overall number of individuals down, with only 5,805 counted, just a 1 percent increase over our total from the windiest Christmas Count ever in 2013.

Ultimately, this intense winter weather played a meaningful role in

our resulting tally. The 2014 numbers and average counts for past years are provided in the accompanying table.

So, what were the highlights? For starters we had only one Golden Eagle—it was a difficult day for soaring aloft.

However, we matched or beat previous high numbers for several species, including Sharp-shinned Hawks (three), Great Horned Owls (five) and White-crowned Sparrow (one).

Of particular interest is that we had 81 White-winged Juncos (35 percent above average), and we had 923 Dark-eyed Juncos overall (40 percent above average).

However, of even greater interest, we had 103 Pine Grosbeaks (858 percent above average) and 519 Cassin's Finches (335 percent above average). Thank you, winter weather!

As always, we pay particular at-

tention to our numbers of Mountain Chickadees and Pygmy Nuthatches, 530 and 585 respectively, as we have previously led the nation for these species.

Our numbers were higher than average this year, but these may not be high enough to reclaim our prior elite status.

Participation in 2014 was with 63 field observers, who spent 122.5 hours afield, and an additional 14 feeder watchers.

Thanks to all section leaders, participants and Barbara Jean Gard for coordinating the feeder watchers.

A huge thanks, once again, to the Walds for hosting the Tally Rally, to Bill and JoAnn Hackos for making the meat-eaters' chili, to Lisa Wald for providing the veggie chili, to Marge Petersen for organizing the dinner, and to all of you for contributing to the potluck.

- Chuck Aid, Bird Monitoring Director

Summary of birds observed on the 2014 Evergreen-Idaho Springs Christmas Bird Count, the average number seen from 1969 to 2013 and the high count and year recorded. Bolded entries are high counts recorded in 2014; "cw" indicates seen during count week but not on count day.

Common Name	Number per Year		High Count	
	1969-2013	2014	number	year
Cackling Goose	<1		2	08
Canada Goose	8	2	70	90
Wood Duck	<1		2	93/07
Gadwall	<1		1	10
American Wigeon	<1		2	96
Mallard	59	125	248	12
Northern Pintail	<1		1	96/98
Green-winged Teal	<1		1	81
Chukar	<1		1	80
Dusky Grouse	<1		12	94
Wild Turkey	40	36	110	04
Great Blue Heron	<1		1	88/90
Black-crowned Night Heron	<1		1	09
Bald Eagle	1		5	10
Northern Harrier	<1		2	04
<b>Sharp-shinned Hawk</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>06/11/14</b>
Cooper's Hawk	<1	1	2	09
Northern Goshawk	1	1	3	72/87/11
Red-tailed Hawk	14	14	44	11
Ferruginous Hawk	<1		2	98

Common Name	Number per Year		High Count	
	1969-2013	2014	number	year
Rough-legged Hawk	1		11	85
Golden Eagle	3	1	8	89
Wilson's Snipe	1	1	4	78/91/00
Rock Pigeon	75	87	212	81
Eurasian Collared-Dove	4	35	66	12
Mourning Dove	<1		2	10
<b>Great Horned Owl</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>09/12/14</b>
Northern Pygmy-Owl	1	2	4	95
Long-eared Owl	<1		1	74/82
Northern Saw-whet Owl	<1		1	70
Belted Kingfisher	2	2	6	04
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	<1		1	80
Downy Woodpecker	29	47	51	08
Hairy Woodpecker	45	56	81	11
Am. Three-toed Woodpecker	<1		3	79/89
Northern (Red-shafted) Flicker	15	24	39	09
American Kestrel	1		4	87/12
Merlin	<1		2	10
Prairie Falcon	<1		1	82

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*“When I heard the storm I made haste to join it; for in storms nature has always something extra for us.”*  
 - John Muir

(Quote offered by Larry White shortly after the Christmas Bird Count “For those of us who braved the snowy weather on Sunday, I offer some writings of John Muir when he was hanging out in Yosemite in 1897.”)

### A Wintry CBC

(Please see Chuck Aid’s story and results summary on page 5.)

The Evergreen East Team saw Abert squirrels during the CBC at the Casey home in The Ridge.

Our team enjoyed a bonanza of birds at the Caseys’ and at Dee Sacks’ home next door.

We saw five subspecies of junco, both chickadees, **Cassin’s** and **House finches**, **American Goldfinches** and three species of woodpeckers.

Shirley and Dee both reported **Brown Creepers** in their yards, too. Let’s hope they have a breeding pair.

Driving conditions were treacherous the day of the CBC. Four of our team members slid off the road in the Hiwan Country Club in Barbara Klaus’ all-wheel-drive vehicle and I understand Susan Harper’s team barely escaped a four-car collision.

I call that a true testament to the stamina and determination of Evergreen Audubon birders!

Susan Harper is looking for a replacement to lead the Evergreen West CBC team.

“I’ve led it for many years, and now that I live in southwest Littleton, it would be nice to have a new leader who lives closer to the area.

“I still love doing it, and could be available to be a team member. Anyone who’s interested in learning our route, please let me know and I’ll be happy to take you around.”

Rob Raker joined Peggy Durham and Sylvia Robertson for the Idaho Springs West count for the first time this year.

Rob gave us a great review: “Enjoyed



This charm of Rosy-Finches is mostly Gray-crowned, but the one third from right (standing on the side) has an all gray head and neck and is a Hepburn’s subspecies of the Gray-crowned. Great find! *Photo by Ruth Brown*

joining your count. Quite the well-oiled machine you have there in Evergreen!”

### Yard Birds

#### Red-winged Blackbirds

On December 15, David Walker shared, “My main feeder was overtaken by about two-dozen **Red-winged Blackbirds** during the snowstorm.

“I’ve had a few before during storms but not this many. Interesting to see the first-year males which look like a cross between adult males and females.”

The Evergreen East CBC team stopped at the home of Greg and Jami Fernette, who have created a wonderful yard for birding in Hiwan Country Club.

Greg saw two large flocks of **Red-winged Blackbirds**, numbering about 35 each, that day.

Dan Frelka said, “Many, many **Red-winged Blackbird**’s at my feeder in Aspen Park, too. Dozens of **Ravens** as well.”

#### Rosy-Finches

Fran Enright visited Ruth Brown Dec. 16 on Squaw Pass and they saw about 50 rosy-finches, mostly gray crowned, possibly with a few brown-capped.

There’s a reliable spot in Golden for viewing Rosy-Finches. Ira and Tammy

Sanders live near Heritage Square, where they’ve created a wonderful habitat for birds at their home.

In December and January they have enjoyed as many as 50 **Rosy-Finches** of all species/subspecies, **Cassin’s Finches**, **Red Crossbills**, **White-throated Sparrows** and a **Northern Goshawk**.

I also saw huge flocks of **Red-winged Blackbirds** there. Ira posted his address and phone number on CoBirds and, like Ruth and Dan Brown, welcomes visitors.

#### Evening Grosbeaks

Carol Chapman posted to Evergreen-Birders on Dec. 29.

“For the last several days I’ve had about a dozen **Evening Grosbeaks** crowding one of my feeders to get at the sunflower seeds.”

The same day, Margaret Jones, on Paintbrush Circle in Hiwan Hills, reported, “I have a lone **Evening Grosbeak** at my feeder. Shouldn’t it have left by now?”

JoAnn Hackos responded, “They are winter birds here.”

#### Dark-eyed Juncos, Cassin’s Finches and a bonus bird!

JoAnn and Bill Hackos reported 18 **jun-**

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The 2014 Christmas Bird Count through the lens of Rob Raker: clockwise from top left, Mountain Chickadee, Cassin's Finch, Slate-colored Dark-eyed Junco. Below, Peggy Durham and Sylvia Robertson.



months. Today they finally decided to show up in greater numbers.”

### Bushtits

Bob Santangelo and I led a Denver Urban CBC team which began at the Denver Botanic Gardens Jan. 1.

A flock of 15 **Bushtits** met us at the entrance—my first bird species of the New Year! The same day, Bob Holmes and Jeanette Strom had **Bushtits** at their Washington Park home feeders.

On Jan. 4, Bob Santangelo commented, “Have had **Bushtits** (20 or so) at my feeders every day in Wheat Ridge (Crown Hill).”

### Mountain Bluebirds

On Jan. 5, Joan Schrader wrote, “We live up Golden Gate Canyon. The last two days I have seen a male **Mountain Bluebird** near where I have my feeders. I have never seen one in January. Is this unusual?”

“Since they eat insects what would it be surviving on at this time of year?”

JoAnn Hackos shared what she knew. “There have definitely been reports of **Mountain Bluebirds** in the area. Not unexpected, since a few seem to hang around through the winter.”

According to AllAboutBirds.org, “Mountain Bluebirds eat mostly insects, especially during breeding season.

“Beetles, grasshoppers and especially caterpillars top the menu.”

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**cos**, all four types, at their home in Soda Creek on Dec. 29.

“**Gray-headed, Pink-sided, White-winged** and **Oregon**. Haven’t seen a **Slate-colored** yet today.”

Larry White, Upper Bear Creek, jumped in quickly, “Snow birds! We have your **Slate-colored** along with numerous **White-winged** which I like to call the “Black Hills” junco. Surprising abundance of **Oregon** this year.”

Not to be outdone, Barbara Jean Gard, who lives near Evergreen High School, anted and raised, “I also have all the juncos except the **White-wings**. Never have had **White-wings** at my home.

“However, my best bird the last three days has been a **Harris’s Sparrow**! In fact,

I’m watching him right now, pecking at the seeds along with the rest of the birds.”

Karel Buckley, off **Little Cub Creek** Road, responded, “I’m at 7,600 feet and I have Cassin’s today.”

Dan Frelka also chimed in, “I’m in Aspen Park at 8,200 feet and have had Cassin’s regularly for a month or so.”

Chuck Aid, from the Brook Forest area, reported Jan. 3, “I have had a shortage of **juncos** at my house for the last few

### Eagle

Kathleen Davis alerted us to an unusual sighting.

“We just (5 p.m. Dec. 29) found a very large bird (pretty sure it’s an eagle) down in the snow in front of our garage.

“It may have been stunned by hitting the house, although we heard nothing.

“We were finding blankets and preparing to call EAPL for help but it flew off.”

**To contact Marilyn Rhodes, call 303-674-9895**

**or email [cloverlane@aol.com](mailto:cloverlane@aol.com).**

**To subscribe to the Evergreen Birders email list to report and view local sightings, go to [www.EvergreenAudubon.org](http://www.EvergreenAudubon.org) and click on the Local Sightings link.**

# Finches hit record heights on wings of winter weather

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Common Name	Number per Year		High Count	
	1969-2013	2014	number	year
Loggerhead Shrike	<1		1	several
Northern Shrike	4	3	13	86
Gray Jay	13	5	53	77
Pinyon Jay	4		200	72
Steller's Jay	266	224	446	00
Blue Jay	<1		1	95/00
Western Scrub-Jay	3	6	18	11
Clark's Nutcracker	27	12	108	78
Black-billed Magpie	190	257	370	12
American Crow	677	909	1,519	00
Common Raven	115	133	200	72
Horned Lark	<1		15	86
Black-capped Chickadee	75	86	170	95
Mountain Chickadee	485	530	786	75
Hybrid Chickadee	<1		1	13
Juniper Titmouse	<1		1	82
Bushtit	<1		15	09
Red-breasted Nuthatch	48	14	127	93
White-breasted Nuthatch	70	86	123	10
Pygmy Nuthatch	413	585	1,046	12
Brown Creeper	13	9	23	75
Canyon Wren	1	1	5	81
Winter Wren	<1		2	75
American Dipper	19	9	37	87
Golden-crowned Kinglet	3	1	18	84
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	<1		2	83/91
Mountain Bluebird	<1		2	92
Townsend's Solitaire	67	30	202	82
American Robin	131	9	1,500	72
Brown Thrasher	<1		1	several
Northern Mockingbird	<1		1	78
European Starling	127	80	301	00
Bohemian Waxwing	41		580	80
Cedar Waxwing	8		163	87
Spotted Towhee	<1		4	75
Cassin's Sparrow	<1		1	71

Common Name	Number per Year		High Count	
	1969-2013	2014	number	year
American Tree Sparrow	3	1	37	84
Chipping Sparrow	<1		1	12
Clay-colored Sparrow	<1		1	83
Fox Sparrow	<1		1	several
Song Sparrow	5	8	15	11
White-throated Sparrow	<1		1	84/06
Harris's Sparrow	<1		2	80
<b>White-crowned Sparrow</b>	<b>&lt;1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>several</b>
Golden-crowned Sparrow	<1		1	93
Dark-eyed (Gray-headed) Junco	161	254	293	76
Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco	87	70	232	74
Dark-eyed (Pink-sided) Junco	18	104	276	80
Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco	84	107	413	82
<b>Dark-eyed (White-winged) Junco</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>14</b>
Dark-eyed (Cassiar) Junco	<1		1	13
<b>Dark-eyed Junco (All subspecies)</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>923</b>	<b>923</b>	<b>14</b>
Red-winged Blackbird	54	94	586	91
Brewer's Blackbird	<1		15	12
Common Grackle	<1		3	93
Great-tailed Grackle	<1		1	07
Brown-headed Cowbird	<1		1	09
Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch	127	2	429	84
Black Rosy-Finch	7	1	70	04
Brown-capped Rosy-Finch	16	cw	140	04
All Rosy-Finches	161	3	429	84
<b>Pine Grosbeak</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>14</b>
House Finch	172	309	443	11
<b>Cassin's Finch</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>14</b>
Red Crossbill	63	43	643	82
White-winged Crossbill	1		16	70
Common Redpoll	4	cw	30	70
Hoary Redpoll	<1		1	12
Pine Siskin	217	81	723	08
American Goldfinch	17	3	176	00
Evening Grosbeak	130	246	420	95
House Sparrow	100	40	377	00
<b>Number of Species</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>09/10</b>



I was so impressed by Bernd Heinrich's *The Homing Instinct*, which I reviewed in the November 2014 *Dipper*, that I had to read another of his many books on the natural world. *Life Everlasting* won the 2013 PEN New England Award for Nonfiction, which made it a perfect choice.

The Introduction is a bit surprising. Heinrich begins with a letter from a friend who has a severe illness and wants to prepare for his "final disposition." He asks about a "green burial," with no casket and no cremation. He wants to return from death to life by simply being buried in the ground.

A casket, he feels, seals him off from returning to life through recycling. A cremation takes too much fuel and emits greenhouse gases. The letter moves Heinrich to explore the relationship of life and death, the theme of *Life Everlasting*.

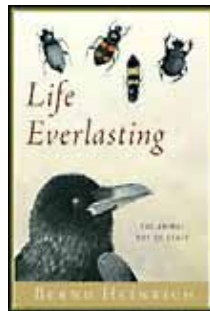
Recycling is nature's norm. It might find it the most obvious with large animals but more of it occurs with plants. Although we think that scavengers are responsible for most of redistribution of the stuff of life, humans also recycle plants and animals. But scavenging is not the only recycling activity. Predators recycle, as do animals that eat plants and fruits.

Heinrich devotes each chapter to different types of recycling. He begins with the most amazing beetles and continues with vultures, plant undertakers and watery deaths. He explains that only one group of animals, the Nicrophorus beetles, move carcasses to a good spot and methodically bury them. The dead animals are food sources for their larvae.

He recounts an experiment with a fresh mouse. By evening, the mouse he put outside in the morning is no longer visible. The burying beetles arrive within minutes, homing in on the scent.

They crawl under the mouse and excavate a hole for the body. If the earth is too hard for digging, they move the carcass until they find a suitable site. Even when he placed a shrew in a jar, the beetles quickly moved it out of the jar.

What fascinates me about Heinrich



*Life Everlasting: The Animal Way of Death*, Bernd Heinrich, First Mariner Books, 2013



A dung beetle performs a handstand, walking backward kicking the ball along. Dozens of other beetles were trying to steal the ball away.

is his experimental and observational approach to problem-solving and even problem-revealing. He stages experiments and spends many hours just watching, obviously taking meticulous notes that he later recounts. He observes behaviors and then tries to understand the meaning of the behaviors, a truly scientific approach.

He discovers for example, that the bright orange beetles and the bright yellow beetles are actually the same insect. When they fly, they flip colors so that they resemble yellow bumblebees and are thus avoided by predators.

He spends a chapter discussing vultures, after observing hundreds of them fighting over a cow carcass in Africa. They wait for other scavengers, like lions or hyenas, to break through the skin and provide access to the meat. He points out that undertaking is a very ancient practice, an essential link for the continuity of life.

He wonders what recycled an apatosaur, which at 38 tons would make a very large meat pile. Perhaps, he theorizes, it was a pterosaur that might have

resembled our modern Andean condor, like a super-vulture.

After all the larger scavengers have finished, the dung beetles clean up the remains. Heinrich explains, "The beetles fashion animal dung into round balls, which they roll for long distances and then bury, to serve as food for their offspring."

Heinrich points out, by the way, that our North American vultures, the Turkey and the Black, have been moving north as the climate warms. Elsewhere, vultures are in trouble, much like condors, because of poisons people have placed in their environment.

Did you know the sparrow-sized elephant dung beetle is "built like a tank, flies like a hawk and tunnels through hard-packed soil like a bulldozer?"

Hundreds or thousands of them descend on a dung pile within minutes. He counted 3,800 beetles on a half-liter sample in 15 minutes. They eat the dung on the spot, pull it into underground tunnels, or roll it into balls to be buried somewhere else.

Apparently, many North American dung beetles went extinct with the bison. As you can easily tell walking around the Colorado plains, no dung beetles are recycling the cowpats. That means no soil is fertilized or aerated; pathogens and disease organisms are spread.

In the drought of Australia, cowpats degrade grazing land and breed the pesky bush fly. Scientists have carefully introduced exotic beetles, saving pasture and ridding Queensland of those awful flies.

Heinrich ends by returning to his friend's request for a green burial. Clearly, he cannot legally put his friend's body out in the woods. Yet, he understands the urge to think about the end as a beginning.

The human way of death, he believes, rejects the circle of life. He prefers a pine box under a tree. That way he will be able to "join in the party of the greatest show on earth, life everlasting."

I hope you'll read *Life Everlasting* yourself. It's fascinating, not repelling. It's really all about life.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Feb. 5	EA Chapter Meeting	7 pm	Church of the Hills
Feb. 10	<i>Dipper</i> deadline	Midnight	
Feb. 13–16	Great Backyard Bird Count		
Feb. 15	GBBC Meet-up	9 am	Chatfield State Park
Feb. 21	Wildlife Hazards Cleanup	8 am	Lake House

Please submit *Dipper* newsletter content by the 10th of the month to [dipper@EvergreenAudubon.org](mailto:dipper@EvergreenAudubon.org). Your submissions will be forwarded to both *Dipper* editor **Debbie Marshall** and **Kathy Madison**, EA Director of Communications.

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Date \_\_\_\_\_

	Individual	Family
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