



THE DiPPER

VOL. 47 NO. 1
JAN/FEB 2017

EVERGREEN AUDUBON NEWSLETTER

www.EvergreenAudubon.org

2016 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT: THE YEAR OF THE JUNCO

BY CHUCK AID

The 2016 Christmas Bird Count, on Dec. 18, was a new milestone as we had our highest number of field observers ever - 80; we had 23 feeder watchers (over twice as many as the previous year); and we had our best effort in the field with 147 field party-hours recorded.

While this great outpouring of effort did result in a good number of individual birds at 6301, it did not translate into good species diversity, and for the second time in the last twelve years we had less than 50 species, recording just 49. In contrast, last year we set a record high with 57 species, and we had 7643 individual birds.

Two factors may have contributed to the difference between last year and this. First, we had a dry fall this year, with less snow cover than usual, so the birds may not have been as concentrated in the areas where we've seen them in the past. Even before the count, many people remarked to me that they were seeing fewer birds than in previous falls, both in their yards and at their feeders. And then, of course, the day of the count was very cold—starting out at 9°F—and it was quite windy all day.

Overall, we had below average numbers for most of the species recorded, though we did have good numbers for our three common woodpeckers: 46 downy woodpeckers, 70



Photo courtesy of Marilyn Rhodes

hairy woodpeckers, and 34 northern (red-shafted) flickers.

However, the real story of the day was our grand total of 2171 dark-eyed juncos - 34% of the total birds seen during the count were of this one species. We set new highs for gray-headed - 587, Oregon - 258, white-winged - 91, Cassiar - 7, and for those that we could not identify to subspecies, we had 781. That's a lot of juncos!

As many of you know, we have been leading the world for the last few years in numbers of mountain chickadees, last year getting 712. However, our number was down to 459 for this

count, so we will just have to wait and see how the results from other count circles compare. We have also periodically led the world in numbers of pygmy nuthatches, though last year we fell about 60 short of retaining that honor. Our count this year was pretty good at 765, so we have a shot at being tops again.

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 JoAnn Hackos for making the meat chili, to Lisa Wald for providing the veggie chili, to Peg Linn for organizing the dinner, to all of you for contributing to the potluck, and to Brad Andres for compiling our data.



Photo courtesy of Sherman Wing

The table on pages 6 and 7 shows our numbers from 2016, the average for the previous 47 years, and the high count for each species and the year it was recorded.



Evergreen Audubon

2016 OFFICERS

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|--|
| President | Kathy Madison | 303-670-0209 president@evergreenaudubon.org |
| Vice President | Brad Andres | 303-670-0101 vicepresident@evergreenaudubon.org |
| Secretary | Lisa Wald | 303-810-5083 secretary@evergreenaudubon.org |
| Treasurer | Rachel Hutchison | 301-768-3523 treasurer@evergreenaudubon.org |

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

| | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|--|
| Bird Monitoring | Chuck Aid | 303-674-3331 birdmon@evergreenaudubon.org |
| Communications | Melissa Leasia | 303-674-6406 communications@evergreenaudubon.org |
| Conservation | David Walker | 303-881-6998 conservation@evergreenaudubon.org |
| Development | Ann Dodson | 303-670-8264 development@evergreenaudubon.org |
| Education | Ed Furlong | education@evergreenaudubon.org |
| Social Events | Peggy Linn | 303-674-2239 socialevents@evergreenaudubon.org |
| At Large | Mendhi Audlin | 817-296-5817 atlarge1@evergreenaudubon.org |
| At Large | JoAnn/Bill Hackos | 303-670-8517 atlarge2@evergreenaudubon.org |

OTHER CONTACTS

| | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|--|
| Nature Center | Colleen Kulesza | 303-900-8586 enctdirector@evergreenaudubon.org |
| Webmaster | | webmaster@evergreenaudubon.org |

Chapter Meetings first Thursday, 6:30 p.m. except January, at the Audubon Education Center, 29997 Buffalo Park Road.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE KATHY MADISON

We are barely into 2017 and I know it's going to be a great year.

We had our Open House at the new Education Center on Saturday January 28, and I was extremely pleased with the turnout. We had over 50 people including existing members, new members, a teacher, and several families. As expected, there was lots of interest in our new After School Programs and Summer Camps. What wasn't expected was the number of folks who expressed interest in volunteering. As you may know, getting involved has been one of my messages since I took over as president. For ideas on how you might contribute to the success of our organization visit my recent article at www.evergreenaudubon.org/evergreen-audubon-volunteer-opportunities.

Earlier this month we celebrated at the Annual Banquet, honoring Fran Enright, Rachel Hutchison, Chuck Aid and all the volunteers, donors and members. You can read more about the banquet highlights at www.evergreenaudubon.org/annual-banquet-highlights.

During the banquet, Brad announced the birding challenge for 2017; we're calling it "The Third of the Birds" challenge. The goal will be to sight a third of the species previously recorded in a specific area. You can achieve the challenge by finding 106 species in the Bear Creek Watershed or 129 species in Jefferson County or 71 species in Clear Creek County or 166 in Colorado. That provides a lot of opportunities to get out and Explore the birds around you. Of course, you can try to win the challenge in one or all four areas. I've got over 25 species in Colorado already!

Don't forget about National Audubon's Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), Friday February 17 through Monday February 20th. The GBBC is a fun, and easy event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as you wish) on one or more days of the four-day event. Report your sightings online at birdcount.org. Evergreen Audubon is kicking off its own GBBC on Friday February 17th with a children's event at the Evergreen Library from 1:30 -4:30pm.

During the month of February, we'll be promoting the Evergreen Nature Center in the Evergreen Library's front lobby. Stop by and check in out.

-Kathy

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING COLLEEN KULESZA

We are dedicated to getting people of all ages outdoors adventuring and learning more about the world around them. Kids who spend time outdoors have better physical and mental health, appreciate nature, and are more likely to participate in conservation efforts as they get older. Our educational programs work to meet all these goals. And of course they are fun as well!

Register the children you know for our individual programs or schedule a program for your group.

Summer Day Camp

This marks the first year we'll be offering summer day camp and we are excited! There are three weeks available for kids age 4 to 10.

June 19-23, Nature Detectives, kids 6-7 yrs old
July 17-21; Wee Creatures, kids 4-5 yrs old
July 31-Aug 4; Wildlife Myths, kids 8-10 yrs old

After-School Program

When the school day is done, have your kids join us for a couple hours of adventure and learning. Every Wednesday afternoon from 3:30 to 5:30 we'll take them outside on hikes, learn about plants and animals of our area, and do some fun crafts and games.

Scout Programs

Young girl and boy scouts can participate in a wide variety of programs we've created specifically to help them meet the requirements of their patches and badges.

Go to our website at www.evergreenaudubon.org and look in the Programs tab to learn all about each program in more detail and to register your nature loving kids for camp or to schedule a scout program.

Evergreen Audubon Members get a 10% discount on all programs and early registration access. If you aren't a member, consider joining today. A family membership is only \$40. See the last page of this newsletter for details.



Great Backyard Bird Count

Winter white makes the perfect backdrop for local birds. Learn more about our feathered neighbors through games, conservation crafts and bird watching. Start a family tradition as Evergreen Audubon and Evergreen Nature Center celebrate the 20th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). It's easy to become a citizen scientist for the world right in your own backyard! Stop by the library for activities, crafts and a scavenger hunt.

Drop-in between

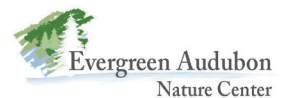
1:30–4 p.m. Friday, Feb. 17

Suitable for: Ages 5–12

Evergreen Library

303-235-5275

Online anytime at jeffcolibrary.org



American Sign Language interpreters upon request. Please contact us at least one week in advance: 303-235-5275 or marcy.james@jeffcolibrary.org
46037_EV_Backyard_Bird_Count_11x17

Summer Camp Registration OPENS SOON!

Evergreen Audubon
Members
February 6th

Non-Members
March 3rd

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES KATHY MADISON & COLLEEN KULESZA

Evergreen Audubon programs and membership are growing, along with our outreach to the community, especially children and families. We need your help! Whether you enjoy working with children or adults; prefer to work alone or with others; outside or inside; periodically or regularly; we invite you to get involved! There are volunteer opportunities behind the scenes to make it all happen as well as opportunities to work with the public at the nature center or through educational programs. Let us know how you'd like to get involved.



Behind the Scenes Opportunities

Bird Monitoring: Assist with nest box surveys (help record number nests, eggs and fledglings); Assist with the Breeding Bird Atlas Study (help identify and track species breeding in specific areas of the watershed); Lead or participate in the annual Christmas Bird Count groups.

Communication: Contribute articles to the Evergreen Audubon website and Dipper Newsletter; Proof-read the website and the Dipper; Maintain Facebook pages and Twitter; Organize and maintain electronic photo files; Distribute flyers for special events; Post events to local news sources including newspapers and on-line calendars.

Development and Fundraising: Stuff and sort mailings; Assist with fundraising events; Set up and tear down; research new sources of funding and help prepare grant proposals; provide help during oth-

er fundraising events like the Evergreen Triple By Pass, Dam Duck Derby, Christmas wreath sales; next box construction and sales.

Social: Greet member and guests at chapter meetings and special events; set up/take down refreshments and snacks at chapter meetings; help organize food and activities for the annual membership picnic; assist with organizing the Tally Rally (December pot-luck dinner) and the Annual Meeting (January catered dinner and program).

Nature Center Opportunities

Special Task Forces: Coordinate database design and data entry for membership; fundraising, volunteer and program participation records; Provide financial and organizational consulting for the possible launch of an Evergreen Audubon endowment.

Visitor Assistant at Nature Center: Our biggest need throughout the summer is volunteers opening, staffing, and closing the Nature Center during the week from Thursday to Sunday. The Visitor Assistant helps all visitors learn new and exciting things about the nature of the Bear Creek Watershed. This opportunity requires commitment of 12 hours of volunteering at the ENC during the open season. Volunteers are required to attend three training sessions to become skilled at staffing the nature center.



Educator/Program Leader: We offer custom and designed programs for a variety of groups from youth groups, scouts, 4-H, school groups, and adults. Leading a tour or a program for these groups requires someone outgoing, comfortable

speaking to large groups, knowledgeable, and willing to learn more. If you have a desire to teach or lead groups this could be a great opportunity to get even more people exposed to nature and becoming better stewards of the land.



Exhibit Assistant: Every year the Nature Center likes to change up exhibits so that there is always something new and different to see. We like to create interactive exhibits that get people thinking and doing new things. If you have a creative streak, are skilled with graphic design, or are handy with power tools, consider helping with the new exhibit creation. This is often done starting in September through the winter season but planning happens during the summer.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer with the Evergreen Nature Center, please contact the Director, Colleen Kulesza, at encdirector@evergreenaudubon.org or by calling the nature center at 303-330-0489.

If you want to participate in the Behind the Scenes opportunities, contact Kathy Madison, Board President at president@evergreenaudubon.org.

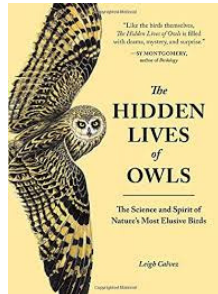
In **The Hidden Lives of Owls: The Science and Spirit of Nature's Most Elusive Birds**, Leigh Calvez recounts her adventures learning about owls, many of which she was seeing for the first time. She teams up with leading owl experts, especially in the Pacific Northwest, to visit the locations of eleven species.

Human interest in owls goes back a very long time. In the Australia outback, one tribe believes that Gordon the Owl first created the world. Hunter-gathers in Europe carved a Long-eared Owl in the 32,400 year old Chauvet Cave in France. The Greek goddess of wisdom, Athena, was associated with an owl. The Sami people in northern Scandinavia believe that owls are good luck. In South Africa, native people associated owls with witchcraft and bad luck.

Owls have been around for the past 67 million years. They inhabit every possible habitat from the extreme arctic, to deserts, to forests. To survive in all these places, they've developed special characteristics like tubular eyes that face forward. Their eyes have more black-and-white cones, helping them see well in the dark. Their round faces and asymmetric ears enable them to hear voles moving under feet of snow. Their specialized feathers let them fly almost completely silently. Their talons have something like opposable thumbs to help them grasp wriggling prey.

Calvez is so fascinated by owls that she decides to make a special project to learn as much about them, especially the ones near her home on Bainbridge Island, WA. She begins her account with the tiny Northern Saw-whet Owl, just six to eight inches from head to tail. Saw-whet Owls can be found in the Bear Creek drainage, although they are much easier to hear than to see. The same can be said of all of the small owls like the Boreal, Northern Pygmy, and Flammulated Owls, all of which can be found in Colorado.

Calvez finds her first Saw-whet Owl on an owling trip at 2 am. Her first Saw-whet sighting is quick. The tiny owl lands



The Hidden Lives of Owls: The Science and Spirit of Nature's Most Elusive Birds, Leigh Calvez, Sasquatch Books, 2016

briefly in a nearby fir and is quickly gone again. Calvez is a scientist and naturalist, with her work originally focused on whales, which then inspired her to look for spirit bears, Bengal tigers, polar bears, and even coyotes. Exploring the winged world of owls was simply the next step.

The Hidden Life of Owls covers eleven species: Northern Saw-whet, Flammulated, Snowy, Northern Spotted, Barred, Burrowing, Northern Pygmy, Long-eared, Short-eared, Great Gray, and Great Horned Owls. All but three of these, the Northern Spotted Owl, the Great Gray Owl, and the Barred Owl, are found in Colorado. We have our own Spotted Owl, the Mexican.

The Barred Owl is a relative newcomer to the western US, moving into the Pacific Northwest about a hundred years ago. Barred Owls followed the settlers as they crossed the prairies, planting trees. We've seen other species, such as Blue Jays, move into Colorado this way. The Barred Owls found the clear-cut forests in the Pacific Northwest a welcoming new habitat because the disturbed areas eliminated their predators, the Northern Goshawk and the Great Horned Owl. The clear-cuts also caused the near extinction of their other primary occupant, the Northern Spotted Owl. Barred Owls, Calvez tells us, are opportunistic birds with a wide range of prey species. They even prey on several species of small owls.

Now the more aggressive Barred Owls outnumber the less aggressive Spotted Owls four to one. A controversial program has been put in place to cull Barred Owls in some areas to give Spotted Owls

an opportunity to recover. However, since the Barred Owls moved in as a result of human activity, some see it as fitting for humans to help give Spotted Owls their chance. Hard to tell, of course.

Leigh Calvez's **The Hidden Life of Owls** is particularly entertaining to read because she describes the adventures she has looking for and finding the owls. Her stories of hunting for a Snowy Owl in Barrow, Alaska, reminds us of the bird's amazing ability to withstand frigid temperatures. She travels by ATV with Snowy Owl expert, Matt Larson, to check on a slowly developing female owlet that is being fed by her father. She finds herself cradling a baby Snowy Owl. The baby has fluffy down mingled with adult feathers, which means she still cannot fly. But she is feisty enough to bite Calvez's hand, which suggests to Larson that she has a chance, as long as the father stays around to help her.

You will enjoy following Calvez's adventures, as she begins to understand that the owls provide her with a way of "knowing something more" about her world than she has known before. She begins to learn to think like an owl.

In case you haven't heard yet, we are starting an Evergreen Nature Book Club so that everyone gets a chance to read and discuss some of the great books you've read about in these reviews. Let me know at joann@jhackos.com if you're interested in joining. Our next meeting is March 6, at 5:30pm.



Christmas Bird Count Summary

Summary of birds observed on the 2016 Evergreen-Idaho Springs Christmas Bird Count, the average number seen from 1969 to 2015, and the high count and year recorded. Bold entries are high counts or equaled high counts recorded in 2016; 'cw' indicates seen during count week but not on count day.



photo by Sherman Wing

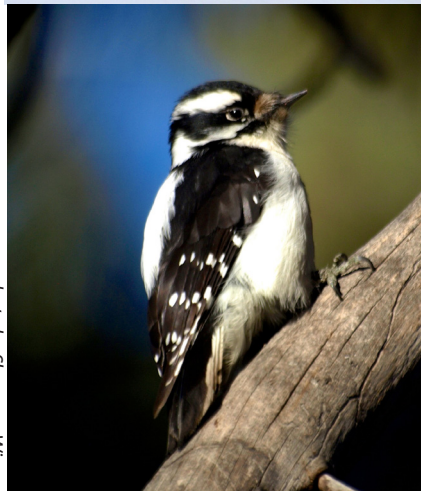


photo by Sherman Wing



photo by Sherman Wing

| COMMON NAME | NUMBER PER YEAR | | HIGH COUNT | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|------|------------|----------|
| | 1969-2015 | 2016 | NUMBER | YEAR |
| cackling goose | <1 | | 2 | 2008 |
| Canada goose | 8 | 17 | 70 | 1990 |
| wood duck | <1 | | 2 | 93/07 |
| gadwall | <1 | | 1 | 2010 |
| American wigeon | <1 | | 2 | 1996 |
| mallard | 61 | 36 | 248 | 2012 |
| northern pintail | <1 | | 1 | 96/98 |
| green-winged teal | <1 | | 1 | 1981 |
| chukar | <1 | | 1 | 1980 |
| dusky grouse | <1 | | 12 | 1994 |
| wild turkey | 40 | 63 | 110 | 2004 |
| rock pigeon | 75 | 79 | 212 | 1981 |
| Eurasian collared-dove | 6 | 21 | 83 | 2015 |
| mourning dove | <1 | 3 | 2 | 2010 |
| Wilson's snipe | 1 | 2 | 4 | 78/91/00 |
| great blue heron | <1 | | 1 | 88/90 |
| black-crowned night heron | <1 | | 1 | 2009 |
| bald eagle | 1 | | 5 | 2010 |
| northern harrier | <1 | | 2 | 2004 |
| sharp-shinned hawk | 1 | 3 | 9 | several |
| cooper's hawk | <1 | | 2 | 2009 |
| northern goshawk | 1 | cw | 3 | 72/87/11 |
| red-tailed hawk | 14 | 23 | 44 | 2011 |
| ferruginous hawk | <1 | | 2 | 1998 |
| rough-legged hawk | 1 | | 11 | 1985 |
| golden eagle | 3 | 2 | 8 | 89/15 |
| great horned owl | 1 | 2 | 5 | 09/12/14 |
| northern pygmy-owl | 1 | | 4 | 1995 |
| long-eared owl | <1 | | 1 | 74/82 |
| northern saw-whet owl | <1 | | 1 | 1970 |
| belted kingfisher | 2 | 2 | 6 | 2004 |
| yellow-bellied sapsucker | <1 | | 1 | 1980 |
| downy woodpecker | 29 | 46 | 51 | 2008 |
| hairy woodpecker | 46 | 70 | 81 | 2011 |
| am. three-toed woodpecker | <1 | | 3 | 79/89 |
| northern (red-shafted) flicker | 16 | 34 | 45 | 2015 |
| American kestrel | 1 | 2 | 4 | 87/12 |
| merlin | <1 | | 2 | 2010 |
| prairie falcon | <1 | | 1 | 1982 |
| loggerhead shrike | <1 | | 1 | several |
| northern shrike | 4 | 3 | 13 | 1986 |
| gray jay | 13 | | 53 | 1977 |
| pinyon jay | 4 | | 200 | 1972 |
| Steller's jay | 267 | 207 | 446 | 2000 |
| blue jay | <1 | | 1 | 95/00 |
| woodhouse's scrub-jay | 3 | 7 | 18 | 2011 |
| Clark's nutcracker | 27 | 45 | 108 | 1978 |
| black-billed magpie | 194 | 296 | 370 | 2012 |
| American crow | 703 | 750 | 1,786 | 2015 |
| common raven | 117 | 116 | 200 | 1972 |
| horned lark | <1 | 1 | 15 | 1986 |
| black-capped chickadee | 77 | 48 | 184 | 2015 |
| mountain chickadee | 491 | 459 | 786 | 1975 |
| hybrid chickadee | <1 | | 1 | 2013 |
| juniper titmouse | <1 | | 1 | 1982 |
| bush-tit | 1 | | 17 | 2015 |

photo by Sherman Wing



photo by Marilyn Rhodes



photo by Sherman Wing



photo by Sherman Wing



| COMMON NAME | NUMBER PER YEAR | | HIGH COUNT | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| | 1969-2015 | 2016 | NUMBER | YEAR |
| red-breasted nuthatch | 47 | 27 | 127 | 1993 |
| white-breasted nuthatch | 72 | 64 | 142 | 2015 |
| pygmy nuthatch | 424 | 743 | 1,046 | 2012 |
| brown creeper | 13 | 9 | 36 | 2015 |
| canyon wren | 1 | | 5 | 1981 |
| winter wren | <1 | | 2 | 1975 |
| American dipper | 18 | 7 | 37 | 1987 |
| golden-crowned kinglet | 3 | | 18 | 1984 |
| ruby-crowned kinglet | <1 | | 2 | 83/91 |
| mountain bluebird | <1 | | 2 | 1992 |
| Townsend's solitaire | 68 | 84 | 202 | 1982 |
| American robin | 136 | 48 | 1,500 | 1972 |
| brown thrasher | <1 | | 1 | several |
| northern mockingbird | <1 | | 1 | 1978 |
| European starling | 127 | 143 | 301 | 2000 |
| bohemian waxwing | 39 | | 580 | 1980 |
| cedar waxwing | 8 | | 163 | 1987 |
| house sparrow | 99 | 26 | 377 | 2000 |
| gray-crowned rosy-finch | 124 | 25 | 429 | 1984 |
| black rosy-finch | 7 | 2 | 70 | 2004 |
| brown-capped rosy-finch | 15 | 18 | 140 | 2004 |
| pine grosbeak | 14 | 6 | 103 | 2014 |
| house finch | 175 | 206 | 443 | 2011 |
| Cassin's finch | 162 | 66 | 519 | 2014 |
| red crossbill | 62 | 24 | 643 | 1982 |
| white-winged crossbill | <1 | | 16 | 1970 |
| common redpoll | 4 | | 30 | 1970 |
| hoary redpoll | <1 | | 1 | 2012 |
| pine siskin | 211 | 67 | 723 | 2008 |
| American goldfinch | 16 | 13 | 176 | 2000 |
| evening grosbeak | 130 | 75 | 420 | 1995 |
| yellow-rumped warbler | <1 | | 13 | 2015 |
| spotted towhee | <1 | | 4 | 1975 |
| Cassin's sparrow | <1 | | 1 | 1971 |
| American tree sparrow | 2 | 1 | 37 | 1984 |
| chipping sparrow | <1 | | 1 | 2012 |
| clay-colored sparrow | <1 | | 1 | 1983 |
| fox sparrow | <1 | | 1 | several |
| song sparrow | 5 | 12 | 15 | 2011 |
| white-throated sparrow | <1 | | 1 | 84/06 |
| Harris's sparrow | <1 | | 2 | 1980 |
| white-crowned sparrow | <1 | | 1 | several |
| golden-crowned sparrow | <1 | | 1 | 1993 |
| dark-eyed (gray-headed) junco | 163 | 587 | 587 | 2016 |
| dark-eyed (Oregon) junco | 86 | 258 | 258 | 2016 |
| dark-eyed (pink-sided) junco | 21 | 253 | 276 | 1980 |
| dark-eyed (slate-colored) junco | 83 | 194 | 413 | 1982 |
| dark-eyed (white-winged) junco | 53 | 91 | 91 | 2016 |
| dark-eyed (Cassiar) junco | <1 | 7 | 7 | 2016 |
| dark-eyed junco (all subspecies) | 557 | 2,171 | 2,171 | 2016 |
| red-winged blackbird | 57 | 27 | 586 | 1991 |
| brewer's blackbird | <1 | | 15 | 2012 |
| common grackle | <1 | | 3 | 1993 |
| great-tailed grackle | <1 | | 1 | 2007 |
| brown-headed cowbird | <1 | | 1 | 2009 |
| Total Number of Species | 47 | 49 | 57 | 2015 |

ANNUAL BANQUET HIGHLIGHTS KATHY MADISON

The annual banquet was a success in celebrating Evergreen Audubon. Thanks were given to all the volunteers, donors and the board members, with special honors to Fran Enright, Rachel Hutchison and Chuck Aid.

Fran Enright received the well deserved Founder's Award for her dedication to Evergreen Audubon. Fran has been a member of our organization since its name was just "TEN" (The Evergreen Naturalists, 1968 – 1977). Fran received the "Bird of the Year" in 1978 for spotting white throated sparrows and a fox sparrow. She has served on our Board of Directors, as President, Secretary, and Treasurer and also on many committees. In the 1990s, she started and maintained the nest box trail in Elk Meadow. Outside of the organization, Fran was a high school biology teacher involved in national-level development of biology curricula. She served on the Clear Creek County Open Space Commission, was a long-time supporter of the Mountain Area Land Trust, and was active in the Colorado Native Plant Society, with one recent project addressing the effects of Mountain Goats on the flora of Mount Evans. Fran has artistic and athletic interest as well. She's studied with master felt artists and has taught felting in Colorado and Argentina, and she also completed a half marathon in Monterrey California in 2013. We are so pleased Fran is part of our organization and we congratulate her all her achievements.

Rachel Hutchison received the President's award for her ongoing dedication to many behind



(l to r) Sylvia Robertson, Fran Enright, Peggy Durham. Photo by Heather Johnson

the scenes activities. She has been a leader in the bluebird nest box study; trudging through snow or rain in early spring to count nests and eggs and showing off the fledglings to the Explore More kids and other interested birders. She's kept us happy with refreshments at past chapter meetings, quietly organizing the snacks and making coffee. She is currently serving as our board Treasurer where she is unbelievably meticulous and timely with her work, spending hours keeping tracking our financials and making sure we are on budget. It is good to know we are in such good hands.

Brad Andres did a fantastic job walking us through the Birding Year in Review, ending with honoring Chuck Aid with the "Bird of the Year" for his sighting of a western screech owl, which is rarely seen or heard in the watershed. Chuck identified the owl near the junction of Blue Creek and Brook Forest roads. Other exciting sightings included Lark Bunting and

Clay-colored Sparrow at the Lake during Dawn Chorus, Blackburnian Warbler and Northern p\Parula at Bear Creek Lake Park, and Pinyon Jay and Lewis' Woodpecker at Margo Constable and Don McKenna's house.

Finally, Brad honored the folks who rose to the Centennial Bear Creek Watershed Birding Challenge. The group, who each saw at least 100 species in the watershed, collectively saw 183 species. The 2016 Centennial Club included: Chuck Aid, Brad Andres, Ron Belak, Margo Constable, Fran Enright, Mike Foster, Barbara Jean Gard, Steve Gorman, Rachel Hutchison, Heather Johnson, Peg Linn, Kathy Madison and David Wald. Special hats were awarded to these birders. Details of the 2017 birding challenge will be posted soon.

For those who missed the banquet, we hope you can join us next year!

Robin Wall Kimmerer is a most unusual author. She is both a scientist and professor of environmental biology and a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation.

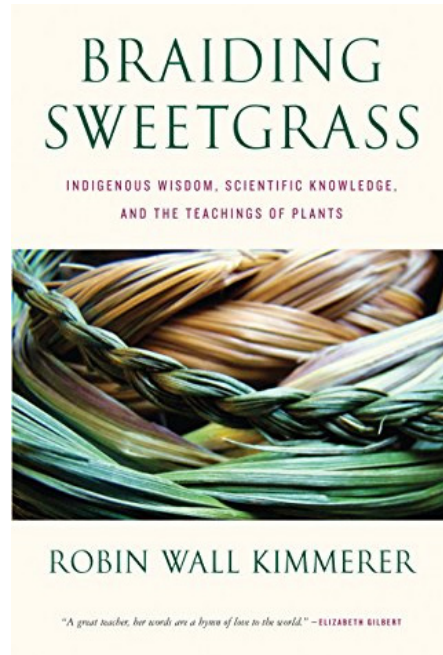
In **Braiding Sweetgrass**, she combines both perspectives in her focus on making the earth both welcoming and sustainable. She reminds us of our responsibility to give back to the earth in return for her gifts to us.

Kimmerer begins her story with sweetgrass itself, its fragrance like honeyed vanilla. Its scientific name is *Hierochloa odorata*, which means fragrant, holy grass. Its name in Potawatomi is *wiingaashk*, which means the sweet-smelling hair of Mother Earth. It is the center of all the experiences that Kimmerer relates throughout this delightful and troubling story.

The best way to braid sweetgrass, we learn, is to share the activity with someone else. One person holds the ends while the other creates the braid. Then, you shift roles and make another braid. Her book is itself a braid, a woven strand that combines science with the spiritual knowing of the Anishinabekwe people. Her goal is to help us understand and alter our broken relationship with the earth.

Braiding Sweetgrass is presented in five sections: planting, tending, picking, braiding, and burning sweetgrass. In each, we learn both of the Native American ways of valuing the natural world and the importance of restoring areas that have been damaged.

In the first section, **Planting Sweetgrass**, Kimmerer relates the story of Skywoman, from the oral tradition of the Shenandoah natives. Skywoman falls to the earth in this creation story, carrying the seeds of all the grasses, flowers, trees, and medicines for the new earth. The first plant that grows is sweetgrass.



Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants, Robin Wall Kimmerer, Milkweed Editions, 2013

Sweetgrass is a powerful ceremonial plant used as a medicine and to make beautiful baskets. It is the flowing hair of Mother Earth.

Throughout **Braiding Sweetgrass** we learn both about the botany of plants valued by the native Americans and the legend and practices that are associated with them. We learn about the pecan trees that they found after being moved from the upper midwest to the Kansas territory and brought with them to Oklahoma Indian territory to replace the hickories, black walnuts, and butternuts of their northern homeland.

In her story of picking wild strawberries, Kimmerer introduces a major concept of the book, that of a gift economy. When she picks strawberries or sweetgrass or anything else that the earth offers, she is careful to thank the earth for its offering and to be certain to take some but not too much. By leaving some, she ensures that more will grow and will be there the next

time she comes. In a gift economy, objects remain plentiful because they are treated as gifts. She claims that the modern economy is not based on gifts but on destruction. She urges us not to buy food that has been wrenched from the earth, “depleting the soil and poisoning our relatives in the name of high yields.”

Kimmerer’s focus on the destruction of the earth is most pronounced in the final section, **Burning Sweetgrass**. Here she describes the Windigo, the legendary monster of the Anishinaabe people, described in stories to scare children into safe behavior. But the new Windigo is not a monster but a human without self-control, one that insatiably devours the earth’s resources, “not for need but for greed.”

Her story centers on the incredible pollution of Onondaga Lake, near Syracuse New York, which was completely destroyed by the production of soda ash, used in various industrial processes. Onondaga Lake was the center of the Iroquois people’s area and, in their stories, the location of the Great Tree of Peace. Today the lake is the location of nine Superfund sites, its water and banks utterly destroyed by those who take from the earth and never worry about what they take. The lake is so polluted that almost nothing lives in it today. It’s famous whitefish are gone, as are the resorts that once lined its banks. Only in the last few years, we learn, are there signs of hope for a slow restoration.

Robin Kimmerer’s **Braiding Sweetgrass** is a powerful book. It has wonderful stories of beauty and plenty and restoration and disturbing stories of destruction. Reading it is both disturbing and uplifting. In one of the final stories of encouragement and hope, Kimmerer tells us about rescuing salamanders as they try to cross a busy road on their way to their (cont. next page)

BOOK REVIEW CONT.

breeding areas in the spring. People come out in the middle of the night to move the slow-moving salamanders from the middle of the road before they are run over. Her family meets a group of students researching the salamanders to persuade the highway departments to install culverts that will take the amphibians under the road. All these volunteers work to save a beautiful but easily overlooked creature.

I strongly recommend Braiding Sweetgrass to you. It is both distressing and inspiring. We are, Kimmerer tells us, the people of the Seventh Fire. We have to choose which path we follow—one where the earth is soft and green or one where it is scorched and black. The choice is a fundamental one facing us today.



Bruce King's portrait of Skywoman

TIME TO ORDER BIRD SEED!

Help support Evergreen Audubon while you feed the birds this winter.

We are working with Front Range Birding Company to bring you some of the best bird seed available. A portion of every sale will be donated to us to support our programs and initiatives. You can purchase your seed on our website at www.evergreenaudubon.org/events/bird-seed-sales. There is also a PDF form you can download on that page and mail back to us if you'd rather not purchase your seed online.

Submit your orders, both online and via mail, in by February 24th. Then pick up your order between 5:30 and 7:00 PM on Thursday, March 2nd, right before our monthly chapter meeting at the Education Center at 29997 Buffalo Park Rd. If you cannot get your seed on this day/time, please arrange to have someone else pick it up for you. We will not have any extra seed on the pick up day, so order now to be sure you get some!



Seed Selections

Patio Blend Hulled sunflower, hulled millet & peanut pieces: no mess and no sprouting! Attracts chickadees, nuthatches, woodpeckers, and jays.

Song Bird Blend - Black oil sunflower, millet, safflower, peanut pieces & hulled sunflower.

Black Oil Sunflower - Attracts wide variety of seed-eating birds.

Medium Sunflower Chips - No mess and no millet.

Safflower - Deters squirrels. Attracts chickadees, nuthatches, and finches.

Nyjer - Goldfinch and Pine Siskin favorite!

Finch Blend - Nyjer, fine sunflower chips, hulled millet.

Shelled Peanuts - Woodpeckers, chickadees, nuthatches, jays and squirrels.

Hulled Millet - Great for winter juncos, and no sprouting in the spring.

Cracked Corn - Ducks, doves, and squirrels.

Nut and Fruit blend - Attracts chickadees, nuthatches, and woodpeckers

Nature Blend - corn, peanuts-in-shell, etc. Attracts jays and squirrels

Peanuts in the shell - Attracts jays, woodpeckers, and squirrels

High Energy Suet 12/case - Attracts chickadees, nuthatches, and woodpeckers

UPCOMING PROGRAMS & EVENTS

FEBRUARY

| | | | |
|----------------|--|-----------------|-------------------|
| Thursday, 2nd | Chapter Meeting | 6:30 pm | Education Center |
| Monday, 6th | Summer Camp Registration Opens for Members | | |
| Friday, 17th | Great Backyard | 1:30 - 4:00 pm | Evergreen Library |
| | Bird Count | | |
| Saturday, 18th | Bird Walk | 7:30 - 11:30 am | Harriman Lake |

MARCH

| | | | |
|----------------|--|----------------|--------------------------|
| Wednesday, 1st | Rosy Finch Bird Walk | 7:30-11:30am | Bergan Park, Park-n-Ride |
| Thursday, 2nd | Chapter Meeting | 6:30 pm | Education Center |
| Thursday, 2nd | Bird Seed Pick Up | 5:30 pm | Education Center |
| Friday, 3rd | Summer Camp Registration Opens for Non-Members | | |
| Wednesdays | After School Program | 3:30 - 5:30 pm | Education Center |



Evergreen Audubon Local Membership Application

I/we would like to join the Evergreen Audubon. I/we may participate in all chapter activities, receive the newsletter electronically, and vote (two Family members may vote) on chapter issues. Dues remain locally.

Name _____

Family member name(s) _____

Address _____ City _____ State ____ Zip _____

Phone (optional) _____ Email _____

(include to receive electronic newsletter and updates)

| | Individual | Family |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Annual dues | \$ 25 | \$ 40 |
| Additional donation | \$ _____ | \$ _____ |
| Total enclosed | \$ _____ | \$ _____ |

Enclosed is my check payable to: Evergreen Audubon, P.O. Box 523, Evergreen, CO 80437.

I DO NOT want solicitations from National Audubon.

If you would like to join or donate to the National Audubon Society directly and receive the AUDUBON Magazine, use chapter code C9ZD090Z and call 1-800-274-4201.