

THE DIPPER "

VOL. 46 NO. 3 MARCH 2016

EVERGREEN AUDUBON NEWSLETTER

www.EvergreenAudubon.org

WEBSITE REDESIGNED

Evergreen Audubon's redesigned website went live on Feb. 10 to rave reviews (at least from me!).

The site is still found at www.EvergreenAudubon.org, so please take a look around and click on the "Get Involved" tab to . . . get involved!

Mendhi Audlin, EA's new webmaster and communications director, is responsible for the new website design.

She also has launched an effort to expand the club's reach into the community by increasing its presence on social media.

You can help:

FOLLOW us on Twitter.

• https://twitter.com/ EvergreenNature

LIKE us on Facebook.

• https://www.facebook.com/ EvergreenNatureCenter

JOIN our new Facebook group.

- https://www.facebook.com/ groups/evergreennature
 - Debbie Marshall, Editor

NEST BOX SALE

Evergreen Audubon will hold its annual nest box sale on Saturday and Sunday, March 12 and 13, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The sale will be held at the Bergen Park and Conifer King Soopers stores.

Volunteers are needed to staff the sale in two-hour shifts: 9–11 a.m., 11 a.m.–1 p.m. and 1–3 p.m.

Bluebird boxes are priced at \$25 and chickadee boxes \$20.

All proceeds go to support

Continued on page 7

Photographers: Take your best shot

Nature and wildlife photographer Alistair Montgomery will share tips aimed at helping birders get the best shots possible when he speaks at the March 3 Evergreen Audubon chapter meeting.

"Photography for Birders," illustrated with pictures Alistair has taken in Colorado and around the world, will address several challenges faced by birders at home and away:

- Getting closer for a better shot with shorter lenses,
- Using electronic flash in low-light conditions,
 - · Taking photos of birds in flight,
- Selecting a digital single-lens reflex camera and getting the best results from "point-and-shoot" cameras,
 - Publishing your images.

We live in a time when taking a picture of a Mountain Bluebird perched in the meadow or Evening Grosbeak gobbling seeds at the feeder is easier than ever—or is it?

"For all the smartphone, digital point-Continued on page 3



How to get closer to your subject: Marsh Wren. *Photo by Alistair Montgomery*



"Photography for Birders" will help photographers get the best shots possible of the objects of their attention. Photo by Alistair Montgomery

EVERGREEN AUDUBON www.EvergreenAudubon.org

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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 KATHY MADISON

As the new president of Evergreen Audubon, I want to express my deepest gratitude to all the past presidents, especially our most recent, Brad Andres.

I will do my best to match Brad's dedication and enthusiasm. I also want to welcome our newest board members: Mendhi Audlin, Communications director, and Melissa Leasia, director at large. Mendhi has lots of creative ideas to make it easier to inform you of our activities and Melissa is diving in and volunteering for a variety of behind-the-scenes activities.

With spring just around the corner, I've already started to think about the upcoming season of Evergreen Nature Center. As some of you know, I started volunteering at the Nature Center in 2009. It was through ENC that I became involved with Evergreen Audubon.

It's one of the best things I've done. It's given me a chance to have fun, to share my interest in nature with the community and to constantly learn new things about our natural environment.

Among many other things, I've learned how long a muskrat can hold its breath, why some bird eggs might be speckled, what kind of fish are in Evergreen Lake and, of course, where to rent a paddle boat!

I encourage you all to consider volunteering at the Nature Center this season, even if it's just for a handful of shifts. You'll be surprised at how much you'll gain from the experience and who knows, maybe you'll be able to host Bob the Bear for an offseason.

Speaking of the Nature Center, I too want to salute Vanessa Hayes for her years of service as the ENC director. She will be missed, but we look forward to her inspiring a new director to take over the mission of *fostering contagious enthusiasm and life-long respect for the natural world.*

3rd-Saturday birders will visit WR Greenbelt

Join Chuck Aid for the Third-Saturday Bird Walk on March 19 from $7:30~\mathrm{a.m.}$ to noon.

This month participants will visit the Wheat Ridge Greenbelt to check

out Clear Creek and the adjacent lakes, wetlands and gallery forest for early migrants.

Bring water and a snack. Meet at the Bergen Park Park-n-Ride, where participants will consolidate into as few cars as possible for the 20-minute drive.

These walks are for Evergreen Audubon members and their guests.

Non-members won't be turned away, but will be encouraged to join Evergreen Audubon.

To reserve a space, register online at www.EvergreenAudubon.org by clicking on the Event Calendar tab.

For more information, call Chuck at 303-503-2973.

- Chuck Aid Director of Bird Monitoring



A male Pine Grosbeak (not this particular bird) was spotted on the January Third-Saturday Bird Walk on Squaw Pass. (See page 4 for trip report.) *Photo by Marilyn Rhodes*

Film investigates causes of songbird mass depletion

The Audubon Society of Greater Denver and Evergreen Audubon will present a special Denver-area screening of "The Messenger" on Wednesday, March 30, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at UA Colorado Mills.

"The Messenger" is an artful investigation into the causes of songbird mass depletion and the compassionate people who are working to turn the tide.

The film takes viewers on a visually stunning, emotional journey revealing how the issues facing birds also pose daunting implications for our planet and ourselves. What can you do to help birds?

Su Rynard's wide-ranging and contemplative documentary explores our deep-seated connection to birds and warns that the uncertain fate of songbirds might mirror our own.

"The Messenger" moves from the northern reaches of the boreal forest to the base of Mount Ararat in Turkey to the streets of New York.

The film brings us face-to-face with a remarkable variety of human-made perils that have devastated thrushes, warblers, orioles, tanagers, grosbeaks and many other airborne music-makers.

"The Messenger" is an engaging,

visually stunning, emotional journey one that mixes its elegiac message with hopeful notes and unique glances into the influence of songbirds on our own expressions of the soul.

In ancient times humans looked to the flight and songs of birds to protect the future. Today once again, birds have something to tell us.

There will be a question-and-answer session following the film. Seating is limited.

Visit www.EvergreenAudubon.org to view a trailer and buy tickets, priced at \$11.

March meeting: Photographers, take your best shot

Continued from page 1 and-shoot and digital single-lens reflex camera technology at our fingertips," Alistair said, "many of us still wish for sharper, dynamic photos that grab our eye, hold our attention and, most of all, anchor our memories of this incredible, ephemeral world we are privileged to call home."

Alistair has frequently attended EA field trips and provided photos to the club's website, *The Dipper* newsletter and Evergreen Nature Center over the last few years.

He became interested in bird and wildlife photography when, as a CH2M Hill technologist, he participated in the cleanup and reinstatement of Johnston Atoll in the northern Pacific Ocean as a wildlife preserve.

His article on the island was published in the summer 2005 issue of Nature Photographer. He recently has photographed birds in Africa, Scotland and Costa Rica, and continues to write articles for travel and wildlife publications.

The Thursday, March 3, EA chapter meeting will be at Church of the Hills, 28628 Buffalo Park Road, Evergreen. Doors will open at 6:30 p.m., allowing time for socializing with EA members and guests from the community prior to a brief business meeting and announcements at 7.

Alistair's presentation will follow, with time for questions from the audience.

- Ed Furlong, Director of Education



Using a fill flash: Montezuma Oropendola. Photos by Alistair Montgomery



Photographing birds in flight: Sandhill Cranes.

BIRD BUSINESS MARILYN RHODES, ASGD MASTER BIRDER

Yard Birds

Upper Bear Creek

On Jan. 17, Sandy and Bud Madigan emailed Chuck Aid, "We get Cassin's Finch and Evening Grosbeaks regularly at our feeder, as well as a Blackheaded Grosbeak once in a while over Christmas."

Since Black-headed Grosbeaks migrate south for the winter, Chuck suspected they may have seen a different species and requested photos, but Sandy responded that she hadn't gotten pictures.

"We've had a nesting pair for a couple of years now," she said. "What else could it have been?"

Chuck deduced, "In the summer you could have nesting **Black-headed Grosbeaks**, and, then, in the winter you could be visited by **Oregon Juncos**, which have a black hood. That all makes good sense."

Sandy and her husband live on Skyline Drive on a south-facing slope on Upper Bear Creek.

Since there are only a couple of midwinter records for **Black-headed Grosbeaks** in Colorado, from 1980 and 1981(both in Larimer County), this sighting would be very unusual.

I hope Sandy is able to document it with photos, if it shows again. It would be a wonderfully rare find!

Alderfer/Three Sisters Area

On Jan. 24, Melissa Leasia emailed in frustration, "We've never had anyone show any interest in nyger. Should we keep offering it or just give up on it?"

I use nyger regularly. It has attracted a variety of finches to my yard, including Pine Siskins, House Finches, Cassin's Finches, American and Lesser goldfinches, Common Redpoll. BUT, it has to be fresh.

I buy it in smaller quantities than sunflower seeds. If the nyger isn't pretty fresh, the finches won't eat it (and they are subject to disease).

They do love fresh, dry nyger, though. I use the narrow clear-tube feeders with little slits for the nyger. Often, every perch is occupied by either a **Pine**



Nyger reliably attracts finches—**if** it is fresh. *Photo by Marilyn Rhodes*

Siskin, an American Goldfinch or a Lesser Goldfinch.

On Feb 13, Melissa reported proudly, "The new thistle feeder is completely covered in siskins this morning."

Genesee

Kathanne Lynch had a male **Williamson's Sapsucker** at her Genesee house drilling 100-plus wells in one tree (a ponderosa pine at 7,500 feet).

"Seeing this species nesting and fledging in late June and early July is one of

our local bird highlights at Genesee. But, having it here Jan 27–30 is out-of-season and it made the Colorado Rare Bird Alert.

"Its usual arrival date is in April or as early as March 30. It left when a 12-inch snowstorm started."

This handsome individual has all the markings—yellow belly, red throat patch, black back and barred flanks.

Indian Hills

David Walker had a visit from a male **American Robin** Jan. 30.

El Pinal

Although Feb. 2 was Groundhog Day, Ruth and Jack Salter had a much more intriguing visitor that day.

They got nice long looks at a **Northern Goshawk** perched on the fence below their window in El Pinal.

Three Eurasian Collared Doves also stopped by. Since they've found piles of white feathers on their grounds, they assume the goshawk dines there occasionally.

The Evergreen East Christmas Bird Count Team has recorded goshawks in El Pinal. I'm always happy to hear they are still around.

Bear Creek Canyon

Kathanne has been away from her Genesee home for the last four years while she and Beth traveled in their motor home. Now that she's back for a while, she wants to monitor the Golden Eagle nest in Idledale.

On Feb. 11, she reported, "I located the nest. I also saw two adults flying over that ridge. One of the adults came back five minutes later with sticks, but went into the ridge face about 40 feet to the right of the nest behind a rock."

3rd-Saturday Bird Walk: Squaw Pass On Jan. 17, Chuck Aid made the following report:

Nine of us braved the single-digit temps yesterday morning up near Squaw Continued on page 5



Williamson's Sapsucker. Photo by Mark Chavez

BIRD BUSINESS MARILYN RHODES, ASGD MASTER BIRDER

Continued from page 4

Pass in search of **Rosy Finches**. While we only ended up with 14 species, we had some quality looks at the birds we saw, and came away thoroughly pleased.

Of course any day that you see a **Golden Eagle** is special. One just wonders what they are able to track down in the blowing snow.

As far as the rosy-finches, we were rewarded with three taxa, having an unusually high number of the **Hepburn's race of Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch** with their gray cheeks.

Unfortunately, we saw no Black Rosy-Finches, so we may have to go back on another day. Wonderful to watch flocks of 40- to 80-plus birds swirling around.

We had a single, quite stunning, male **Cassin's Finch**.

The real highlight of the morning for me was the incredible, close looks we had of male and female **Pine Grosbeaks**. Stunning!

Of course, not far behind them are the exotic **Evening Grosbeaks**.

We will continue to have outings on the third Saturday of each month. Sign up for them at EvergreenAudubon.org.

Northern Bobwhites at Chatfield On Jan. 17, Susan Harper and Jeanette Strom spotted several Northern Bobwhites in the prairie dog colony near the back gate entrance to the park:

"There are a few parking spots right there and your car can serve as a blind, if necessary. We needed the scope to find them.

"They were far back in the field hopping around among the snow, bushes and weeds. We were hoping for some **Burrowing Owls** but no luck. The bobwhites were a nice surprise though!

Guanella Pass

Larry White, Chris Pfaff and Chuck Aid went on a ski tour into the Mount Evans Wilderness Feb. 10 to look for wintering **White-tailed Ptarmigan**.

Larry posted, "The high winds, blowing snow and boilerplate snow made it seem a bit Arctic. But the birds were there!"



Arctic-like conditions didn't keep three searchers from finding a flock of White-tailed Ptarmigan on Guanella Pass Feb. 10. *Photo by Larry White*

Chuck said they hiked/skied seven miles in to Guanella Pass and were rewarded with seeing a large flock of 28 ptarmigans take flight!

Winter Birding in Oklahoma

In January, three birder friends and I traveled to my home state.

Our mission? To rack up 100 birds in Oklahoma over a long weekend, including our nemesis bird, the **Smith's Longspur**, and the **Le Conte's Sparrow**.

With the help of an Oklahoman knowledgeable about both species, we were able to see about 250 Smith's and five to seven Le Conte's.

Our total for the trip? 111 species!

On the way back to Colorado, we witnessed a flock of more than 7,000 **Lapland Longspurs** busily foraging and swirling in the air just outside of Cheyenne Bottoms in Kansas.

Wild Evergreen

Ever see little rodents, or signs of them, in your yard? Well, here are a couple of the usual suspects.

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Le Conte's Sparrow spotted on Oklahoma birding trip. *Photo by Marilyn Rhodes*

BIRD BUSINESS MARILYN RHODES, ASGD MASTER BIRDER

Continued from page 6

Least Chipmunk

The least chipmunk (Tamias minimus) is the smallest species of chipmunk and the most widespread in North America. Its body ranges from less than 7 inches to 9 inches long (including the tail).

The most apparent feature is the five stripes on the back and sides of their small bodies. Two of the stripes extend onto



Least Chipmunk.

the head. Only the chipmunk has stripes on its face. It can also be identified by its rapid, nervous movements.

They have large fur-lined cheek pouches that they use for carrying nuts and seeds.

This species of chipmunk has the largest range of habitat, living from the lowest

elevations to timberline and above. They prefer rocky areas and burrow beneath rocks, logs, shrubs and other shelters.

Least chipmunks are not true hibernators. They are in a state of torpor from which they occasionally arouse to feed on stored food.

Breeding takes place shortly after this period, and the gestation period takes four to five weeks. Typically there are five or six young, which do not leave the nest until they are about four weeks old.

Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel

This ground squirrel is often mistaken for a chipmunk because of its resemblance. However, it is larger and has no stripes on its head. The tail is also shorter.

On its neck and shoulders is a russet to golden "mantle." Both the golden-mantled ground squirrel and the chipmunk have cheek pouches for carrying food. Cheek pouches allow them to transport food back to their nests and still run at full speed on all fours.

The golden-mantled ground squirrel is similar to chipmunks in more than just its appearance. Although it is a traditional hibernator, building up its body fat to survive the winter asleep, it is also known to store some food in its burrow, like the chipmunk, for consumption upon waking in the spring.

Golden-mantled ground squirrels dig shallow burrows up to 100 feet in length with the openings hidden in a hollow log or under tree roots or a boulder.

The female gives birth to a single litter of four to six young



Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel. *Photos by Marilyn Rhodes*

each summer. It eats seeds, nuts, berries, insects and underground fungi.

It is preyed upon by hawks, jays, weasels, foxes, bobcats and coyotes.

This squirrel's habitat extends from low elevations to well above tree line among rocks and near the edges of

woodlands. They are quite brazen as they beg for peanuts and morsels from picnicker and hiker lunches, but please keep them wild by not feeding them.

By late summer, heavy deposits of fat have been stored in their bodies. They move into hibernation with the first snows and colder temperatures. They breed shortly after their hibernation period.

Female gestation takes about four weeks and produces five young on average. Body stripes start appearing after only about four days.

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

Birding With Mike

"Birding 101" is the next class offered by Mike Foster.

Three classes at Jefferson Unitarian Church, Golden, on Thursdays, April 21, 28 & May 5.

Two field trips on Saturdays, April 23, 30 & one on Sunday, May 8.

Total cost \$60. Beginners welcome.



More info: www.BirdingWithMike.com

For questions and signup: Mike1.foster@comcast.net

BIRDING BOOKS JOANN HACKOS, EA DIRECTOR AT LARGE

Clearly, if a book becomes a New York Times bestseller, wins the Samuel Johnson Prize and is chosen the Costa Book of the Year, it is unlikely to be a book about birding, or at least not about birding alone.

Helen Macdonald's autobiographical story, "H is for Hawk," tells of raising her Northern Goshawk, Mabel.

The story is also about Helen's hard work to recover from her beloved father's untimely death.

It is also about the novelist T. H. White and his disastrous attempt to train a goshawk (Accipiter gentilis).

And, finally it is about the fiercely wild goshawk, a favorite bird of falconers in the United Kingdom.

Goshawks are accipiters, closely related to Sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks, and native to the Evergreen area, although not especially common.

We have had an occasional goshawk visitor to our bird feeders for the past 20 years.

Their arrival causes absolute terror among the juncos and House Sparrows who frequent the feeders because they are consummate bird predators, maneuvering around the ponderosa pines as if the branches didn't exist.

Helen Macdonald had been fascinated by hawks and falcons as a young girl. She read every falconry book she could find and first met a goshawk while working at a rehabilitation center.

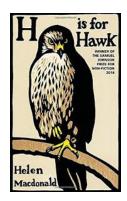
The area around her home near Cambridge University had been goshawk country until the birds were largely exterminated.

Not until the 1960s and '70s did local falconers and austringers (flyers of accipiters) sponsor their return.

Macdonald finally succeeded in purchasing a goshawk from Ireland and named her Mabel.

The story of T. H. White's goshawk runs as a parallel story line in "H is for Hawk." White is the author of the stories about King Arthur in "The Once and Future King."

You'll remember Arthur's mentor, Merlin-named, of course, for a falcon.



H is for Hawk, Helen Macdonald, Grove Press, New York, 2014.



Author Helen Macdonald and her Northern Goshawk, Mabel.

White never succeeds in training his bird, named Gos. It remained wild, mostly because of the awful mistakes that White made with his training.

Eventually Gos flies away, escapes, and is lost.

Macdonald knows that training her goshawk will be difficult. Goshawks are nervous and high-strung birds. It takes a "long time to convince them that you are not the enemy."

Her first attempt to take Mabel

onto her glove results in what falconers call bating: a 'headlong dive of rage and terror, by which a leashed hawk leaps from the fist in a wild bid for freedom.'

In time, Mabel comes to trust Macdonald, eventually flying out to hunt and coming back to Macdonald's hand.

It takes much time and enormous patience to train Mabel to hunt. Macdonald works slowly and carefully to build Mabel to flying weight and teach her to return.

Mabel is extraordinary, with incredible vision able to detect the slightest movement of a mouse, a rabbit or even a pheasant in a distant field long before Macdonald is aware of what Mabel is looking at.

She learns to read Mabel's moods, like when she narrows her eyes in bird laughter or flips her tail when she is excited or shivers with happiness. She finds her goshawk is capable of play.

"H is for Hawk" is not a simple book. It is as much a story of Macdonald's struggle with her grief as it is about the goshawk.

It is more about loss than it is about birds. She gets scars on her hands from the hawk's talons, but it is the scars in her heart that the goshawk helps to heal.

The story ends at the beginning of summer when Macdonald takes Mabel to her friend's aviary where she'll spend the summer molting into a new set of feathers. During that time, she won't fly to hunt with her falconer.

The story is a serious, sometimes troubling book. I recommend it fervently.

Nest box sales force needed

Continued from page 1

Evergreen Audubon education and conservation programs.

Please call Bud Weare, 303-679-8889, with questions and to volunteer to join the sales force, especially on Saturday.

EA's talented nest-box builders, Tom Boschen and his crew—Ginny Boschen, Chuck Aid, Brad Andres, Jim Shelton, Tom Thayer and Bud Weare, have completed construction on 90 beautiful new homes to be sold.

- Bud Weare

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 3	EA Chapter Meeting	7 pm Doors open at 6:30	Church of the Hills
March 5	Habitat Heroes Workshop http://rockies.audubon.org	9 am	Boulder Open Space
March 12–13	Nest Box Sale	9 am-3 pm	King Soopers
March 19	Third-Saturday Bird Walk	7:30 am-noon	Wheat Ridge Greenbelt
March 30	"The Messenger"	6:30-8:30 pm	UA Colorado Mills

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

VOLUME 46, NO. 3. Evergreen Audubon, P.O. Box 523, Evergreen, CO 80437, publishes *The Dipper* every month. Evergreen Audubon is a chapter of the National Audubon Society. Members may receive an electronic copy of *The Dipper* without charge or may pay \$15 a year for a mailed hard copy (members only). Evergreen Audubon encourages readers to submit original articles, creative nature writing or art to *The Dipper*. Please state if the material submitted has been published elsewhere requiring publisher's permission. The editor reserves the right to select suitable articles for publication and to edit any articles selected. Audubon Rockies Office, http://Rockies.Audubon.org

Evergreen Audubon Local Membership Application

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

Date				
	Individual		Family	
Annual dues	\$	25	\$ 40	
Electronic <i>Dipper</i>	\$	0	\$ 0	
Hard-copy <i>Dipper</i> (members only)	\$	15	\$ 15	
Additional donation	\$_		\$	
Total	\$_		\$	
Name				
Family member(s) name(s)				
Address				
City				
Phone (optional)				
Email				
		ipper)		

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.

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Artwork: Sylvia Brockner, Mildred Keiser

Film: "The Messenger" Walk the Wheat Ridge Greenbelt Book Review: "H is for Hawk"

IN THIS ISSUE

ВЕТИВИ SERVICE REQUESTED

Time Dated Material

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