

BOULDER BIRD CLUB NEWS

<http://www.boulderbirdclub.org/>

*Sixty Years Dedicated to the
Field Observation of Birds*

Oct.-Nov.-Dec. 2008



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

October, 2008

My thanks to Chuck Lowrey for organizing and leading the Wednesday Roadrunner Trips this past summer. It became a very fun and lively series of outings, but September 24 was our last for this year. I am happy to announce that the Delanys, Claire and Tony will be organizing the outings for next spring. I am grateful for their participation. They have been very faithful in these past months and have added a lot to the good feeling in the trips.

Here are some of the leaders that have made the Roadrunners possible this summer:

Chuck Lowrey	Jim Eide
Claire and Tony Delaney	Lonny Frye
Pat and Walt Pollock	Diane Carter
Jim Fischer	Joe Krieg
Peggy Oakes	Joyce Takamine
Ann Tagawa and Jim Guerin	Carol Cogswell

Here are some of the local birding spots that we explored on Wednesday mornings this summer:

South Mesa Trailhead	White Rocks Trail
Dowdy Draw	Gregory Canyon
Eldorado Springs	Longs Canyon
Horse Trail and Fowler Trail	Meyers Gulch
Stearns Lake	Boulder Valley Ranch

Finally, by special invitation: The Julie Hammarstrom Ranch

I hope to see you all at the Fries for the annual Christmas party on December 6.

Jim Eide, President

Boulder Bird Club Holiday Party

Saturday, December 6, 2008 -- 5 p.m. till ?????

At the home of Vivienne and Lonny Frye,
1644 Pine St, Boulder; 303-931-9131.

Everyone is invited; bring family, significant others and your favorite finger food. The Club will supply beverages. Swap birding stories of the year and get pumped up for the Christmas Bird Count on the 14th!

From The Editor

I can't say enough in special "Thanks" to all our volunteers who help make this newsletter possible.

As usual Jan Chu and her "stuffing crew"; and also to our contributors to this issue--Suzi Plooster, Ted Floyd, Bill Schmoker and Joe Krieg. Last but not least - the assistant editor, John Ellis, who takes my "cut and paste" probably unreadable document and formats it along with getting the great photos and on-line version to our members.

Please continue to send your write ups of birding trips you have taken and special sightings. My brief but awesome first sighting was on Paula Hansley's great June 29th Golden Gate Park trip--Northern Pygmy Owl! Thanks for leading this great trip, Paula.

Always send me your suggestions, comments, what you want more or less in the upcoming newsletters.

Enjoy this great Fall birding!

Pat Heller - Editor

The **Boulder Bird Club** welcomes birders of all abilities and ages on our field trips. Children under 16 should be accompanied by an adult. Come and join us!

Trip Sign-Up Sheets and Participant Responsibility:

Everyone who attends a BBC trip **MUST** sign the sign-up sheet before being allowed on the trip. By signing the sheet and/or participating in the trip, each person declares that he/she is solely responsible for his/her safety, and in no way will hold the Club, trip leader, or any participating person responsible for his/her safety. Sign in every time. Anyone under age 16 must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

Carpooling On Trips: Please pay your carpooling fee up front to the driver at the start of the trip. At the end of trips we often forget. Have the exact amount and don't wait for driver to ask you for it. **JUST DO IT.**

BBC Scope/Radios: The BBC scope and two-way radios are available for leaders on all trips. Call Jim Eide (303-443-6236).

BBC OFFICERS

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Colorado's Reliable "Pelagic" Species:

The Sabine's Gull

by Ted Floyd

Boulder County has to be one of the most landlocked places in, well, the whole world. The nearest marine environments are the Pacific Ocean off southern California, the Sea of Cortez off Sonora, and the Gulf of Mexico off Texas. It's even farther to the nearest marine environments of the Atlantic Ocean and James Bay.

Despite Colorado's geographically inauspicious placement for pelagic birds, we in the Centennial State have hauled in a decent array of species ordinarily thought of as inhabitants of the open ocean. Each year, a few jaegers are found in Colorado, mainly in late summer and early fall. A murrelet seems to show up in Colorado every other year or so, especially around Thanksgiving. Colorado has even had such improbable species as Magnificent Frigatebird, Black Skimmer, and—just a few weeks ago—Sooty Tern.

To tell the truth, your chances of seeing any of the preceding are slim. Based on recent years' experiences, Long-tailed Jaeger seems to be about your best bet, with three or four reported each year. But ya never know...

There is one "pelagic" species, though, that we do know to be of regular occurrence in Colorado, and it is a doozie: the visually striking Sabine's Gull. If you go out to a large body of water in Boulder County in September, you actually have a decent shot at finding this beautiful bird. I suspect that about ten individuals may be present, scattered across the county, during the Sabine's Gulls peak period of occurrence here—probably sometime around the third week of September. The statewide population at that peak period of occurrence might be in excess of 100 birds. After all, there are an awful lot of big reservoirs all across eastern Colorado.

If I had to pick an absolute best place in Boulder County for finding a Sabine's Gull, I would probably say Boulder Reservoir. There are at this writing at least six of them out there. And there were even more at this time last year. Earlier this month, my kids and I went out there and honestly expected to see the species. And, sure enough, there were two juveniles sitting out on the water, pecking at the calm surface in a manner that reminds me more of a phalarope than a gull.



Yes, we expected to find a Sabine's Gull (or two), but that didn't diminish the thrill of seeing the birds. Sabine's Gull is one of those species like Blackburnian Warbler or Western Tanager. You just never get tired of looking at it! Even the most avowed of gull-haters will have to admit that the semaphoric Sabine's Gull is simply stunning.

There is still time this fall to find Sabine's Gulls in Boulder County. A few are usually present into October. Concentrate on large bodies of water—again, Boulder Reservoir is my top pick, but other places to search include Ish Reservoir and McIntosh Reservoir up near Longmont, as well as Baseline and Valmont Reservoirs just east of downtown Boulder. Even farm ponds may host a Sabine's Gull. Last fall, for example, a juvenile was present at Prince Lake No. 2, near Lafayette, for quite some time.

If you first spot a Sabine's Gull in flight, there will be absolutely no question what it is! The only other bird that looks like it is the Large-billed Tern of South America, about as likely in Colorado as Kelp Gull. (Oh, yeah, that species *has* shown up here, hasn't it?) But you may well first spot a Sabine's Gull floating out on the water. If that's the case, make note of the bird's small size overall, which is accentuated by its buoyant, "corky" manner of sitting high on the water. A great tipoff that your bird is a Sabine's is that delicate, fussy feeding style I mentioned above. But when in doubt, wait it out. Eventually, the bird will put into flight—erasing any doubt as to whether or not it's a Sabine's Gull.



Photos courtesy of Bill Schmoker.

BOB SPENCER RECEIVES LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

The annual convention of the Colorado Field Ornithologists was held in Canon City on May 16-19, 2008. Each year they award the CFO Lifetime Achievement Award. This award is intended to honor those people in the Colorado birding community who have given much to the birding community through out their lives by teaching, leading and mentoring others along the way.

This year Robert Arnold Spencer was awarded the honor. You all probably know him better as our "Bob Spencer" who loves to participate in the Wednesday Roadrunners and sometimes Sunday birding. Bob moved to Denver in 1952 from Buffalo, New York and jumped right into the Colorado birding community. He was president of the Denver Field Ornithologists and served on its board many times and led hundreds of trips for the group. His trips were always delightful and you would hear more puns and more "plays on words" on a trip that you had heard in many years, many of them were often things that helped you remember a bird or it's song. His good humor and quick wit made for a fun trip. He was always generous with tips, learned over a lifetime, on how to spot various birds (many of which I have passed on to others). He also made friends with many people near and far and led some fantastic trips to friends who had mountain homes and wonderful birds. When you birded with Bob you always learned something new.

Congratulations Bob, you deserve the recognition and we salute you as a leader, birder and most of all a friend.

Suzi Plooster

CENTRAL AMERICAN BIRDING

I will lead a trip to Panama on January 22 to February 9 that will include Darien National Park, Cerro Gaital, the Canal Zone, and the Serrania de San Blas. The Darien is one of the most magnificent and remote wild areas on the planet with 30 species either endemic to the Darien or only possible here or in adjacent Colombia. We will spend four of the nine days there on a hike to a camp on the slopes of Cerro Pirre with a hike to the summit. Included also is a three day excursion to a native village on the coast best accessible by boat where we will hike to a known nesting site for Harpy Eagle, the largest raptor in the Americas. The difficulty is moderate to difficult. Please contact me for more details at nerthal@comcast.net.

Thanks

Norm Erthal

BIRD BELIZE MARCH 1-11, 2009 WITH BILL TURNER

We will be visiting three different sites - Bird's Eye View Lodge at the world class wetlands of Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary, Lamanai Outpost Lodge on the New River lagoon (385 species of birds recorded within a 3 mile radius) and Pook's Hill Lodge in primary rainforest. All three lodges are in beautiful natural settings with wildlife right outside our door. At each location, we will have expert local birder guides.

Glide along a lagoon in a boat at dawn as wildlife awakens. Walk softly through the rainforest in the early morning, allowing your senses to absorb the myriad sights and smells of the jungle. And do the same after dark when the nocturnal cadre of critters takes over. Paddle a canoe silently along a reed-lined stream, peering into the undergrowth for rails and into the trees for wintering warblers. While out spotlighting and looking for nocturnal birds and birds on their night roosts, experience the thrill of a Morelet's crocodile submerge under your boat. While breakfasting in an open-air dining room, look out into the trees and spy an agile squirrel cuckoo or a noisy group of plain chachalacas. Marvel at the remarkable ability of our Belizean guides to spot birds and

other wildlife, even while piloting a boat or coach. Climb the steps of a centuries' old temple while your guide explains what the glyphs and other features meant to the Maya. These are typical of the memorable moments - and many, many more - you'll have in beautiful Belize.

The land cost is \$2595 plus airfare, currently about \$700 roundtrip from Denver. Maximum group size is 16. For more information, please contact Bill Turner at (303) 795-5128 or e-mail toursbyturner@aol.com.

I have back issues of "Birder's World" magazine 1990 to present that I would like to give away as well as "Birder's Digest" approximately the same years. Free.

Suzi Plooster 303-494-6708

California Birding

Just thought that I would share a recent birding trip my wife Nadia and I took to California the beginning of June. The main reason for the trip was to go to four major league baseball games in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego. We were able to fit in a lot of birding during that week. I added ten new birds to my list, which now stands at 552. My wife added twenty-eight, and she is now at 362.

When we went out there, the bird I most wanted to see was the Hermit Warbler, and the LeConte's Thrasher. I wanted the warbler because it was the only western common warbler left for me to get. We saw it up at Yuba Pass. They were so high up that a good look at one was very brief. The LeConte's Thrasher was a different story. We were expecting to spend an hour or two looking for one. I had tried in the past south west of Phoenix, west of Las Vegas, and around Barstow, CA. This time we were going to try the oil fields of Maricopa, CA. The Lane book said to try Petroleum Club Road, so we went there. As soon as we turned onto the road, a pair flew across, and perched on a bush 50 feet off the road. We got great looks of the two for several minutes as they flew and ran around. And we thought they were going to be hard to find (like my Cassin's Finch was).

Those were the two that I most wanted to see; they were not my favorite. We camped in a State Park an hour east of San Diego. When I woke up in the morning, perched on a tree IN our campsite were a pair of Lawrence's Goldfinches. We were always keeping an eye out for them, but because of our time constraints, we never really spent any time looking exclusively for them. How often one finds great birds when one does not even try!

The other seven new birds for me were Vaux's Swift, Oak Titmouse, Spotted Dove, Elegant Tern, Yellow-footed Gull, Bronzed Cowbird, and Tri-colored Blackbird. Significant misses were California Thrasher, California Gnatcatcher, Black-backed Woodpecker, and Mountain Quail.

Nadia's favorite bird, by far, was the California Condor. We saw at least half a dozen along the Big Sur area, one was flying at eye level 50 feet away from us at one of the overlooks. And she loved the California Quails. And at Salton Sea, a pair of Least Bitterns flew up and were flying along the side of our car for about 1/4 mile. It was not quite a new bird for me, since I (only) heard one at Cottonwood Marsh- I count heard birds on my list. It was my first visual sighting of one. Of my 552, I have heard, but not seen, six birds (4 owls, 2 goat suckers, and 1 quail).

Well, this ran a little longer than I thought it would. Have a good bird-filled summer.

Ed Jurkouich

(Ed started his birding career with the Boulder Bird Club a few years back and participated on many Wednesday Roadrunner trips. Nadia started hers when she met Ed and he took her birding!)

BOULDER BIRD CLUB Field Trips & Activities

REMINDER! October through April
First Sunday Birding is 9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon.

This quarter's calendar was produced by Joe Krieg.

OCTOBER

Sunday, October 5, 2008

First Sunday Birding

9 a.m. to Noon

Bird the Walden Ponds/Sawhill Ponds Complex.

Everyone is welcome. Free. Meet at the Cottonwood Marsh parking lot at 9 a.m.

Leader: Diane Carter 303-427-3371

Saturday, October 11, 2008

Bears, Turkeys and Foothills Birds

8 a.m. to Noon

Explore the Spring Brook area above Doudu Draw on what will hopefully be a great Colorado fall day; (Sunday could be an alternative if it rains or snows). Be prepared for some elevation gain. Meet at the Doudu Draw parking lot.

Leader: Linda Andes-George 303-772-3239

Saturday, October 18, 2008

Birding the East Longmont Area

8:30 to Noon

Look for waterfowl and fall migrants at Jim Hamm Park, Union Reservoir, Sandstone Park and possibly some other areas. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Jim Hamm Park (on County Line Rd, north of Hwy 119). Everyone welcome.

Leader: Chris Owens 303-772-6048

Sunday, October 26, 2008

Fall Migrants Search at Pella Crossing (a Boulder Audubon trip)

8 a.m. to Noon

Search for songbirds and fall raptors on Boulder County Open Space. Meet at the Pella Crossing parking lot on N. 75th St. just south of the town of Hygiene.

Leader: Scott Severs 303-684-6430

NOVEMBER

Sunday, November 2, 2008

First Sunday Birding

9 a.m. to Noon

Bird the Walden Ponds/Sawhill Ponds Complex.

Everyone is welcome. Free. Meet at the Cottonwood Marsh parking lot at 9 a.m.

Leader: Chuck Lowrie 303-455-8417

Saturday, November 8, 2008

November Birds in Colorado

Meet at Cottonwood Marsh parking lot at 7:30 a.m. If conditions warrant we will carpool to nearby lakes and reservoirs. Bring binoculars, scope and water. Always dress for the weather. We should wrap up around lunchtime. Please contact leader Ted Floyd with any questions by e-mail only at tfloyd@aba.org.

DECEMBER

Boulder Bird Club Holiday Party

5 p.m. till ?????

Saturday, December 6, 2008

At the home of Vivienne and Lonny Frye, 1644 Pine St, Boulder; 303-931-9131.

Everyone is invited; bring family, significant others and your favorite finger food. The Club will supply beverages. Swap birding stories of the year and get pumped up for the Christmas Bird Count on the 14th!

Sunday, December 7, 2008

First Sunday Birding

9 a.m. to Noon

Bird the Walden Ponds/ Sawhill Ponds Complex

Everyone is welcome; Free. Dress for the weather! Meet at Cottonwood Marsh parking lot at 9 a.m.

Leader: Joe Krieg 303-651-0565

Sunday, December 14, 2008

Christmas Bird Count

Dawn to Sunset (You can participate for a portion thereof.)

Take part in one of the oldest counts in the nation. Join one of the teams of 2 to 5 birders to count all or part of the day or at your backyard feeder. Please call contact Count Coordinator Bill Schmoker at 303-702-9589 or bill@schmoker.org.

BBC MEMBERSHIP AND DUES: We invite you to join the Boulder Bird Club. Membership is \$8.00 per year for all persons at one address. Bird family members are free. As our dues are so minimal, no partial-year memberships are available. Members receive our quarterly newsletter, 10% discount on merchandise (5% on optics) from the Wild Bird Center, 10% discount from Wild Birds Unlimited, and the opportunity to take part in over 50 field trips each year. Send your check with completed membership form to Janet Chu, 964 Ravenwood Road, Boulder, CO 80303.



NEWSLETTER DEADLINE: This newsletter is published four times a year. We welcome articles, pictures, and news of your birding activities. Deadline for the Jan-Feb-Mar 2009 issue is **December 22, 2008**. Send your contributions to Pat Heller, 2155 Dogwood Circle, Louisville, Co. 80027, 303-604-1163 (leave message), or pat_heller@msn.com.



ADDRESS/PHONE NUMBER CHANGES: Please send all address and phone number changes (or problems with your subscription, etc.) to Janet Chu, 964 Ravenwood Rd., Boulder, CO 80303, phone 303-494-1108, or e-mail chuhouse@hotmail.com

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Connie and Frederic Walker