

BOULDER BIRD CLUB NEWS

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

*Sixty Years Dedicated to the
Field Observation of Birds*

Jan.-Feb.-Mar. 2009



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

January, 2009

We have had a wonderful birding year and we had a wonderful BBC Christmas party! My most sincere thanks to Vivienne and Lonny for hosting the party at their wonderful house.

We are way too slow to recognize the many volunteers who make this club work. Lonny Frye supervises the birding trips. Pat Heller and John Ellis edit the newsletter. Elease Miller is our treasurer. Jan Chu is our membership chair person. Peggy Oakes is our secretary. Leif Saul is our web manager. Ann Tagawa is our vice president and coordinates the annual spring meeting. Claire and Tony Delaney will organize the Roadrunner trips next summer.

Please consider volunteering for the club. It is fun and it makes the club work! Think for a minute of the important people who were not mentioned by name above. They are our trip leaders, our trip drivers, and all those who help with the newsletter mailing and those who assist Lonny in the trip coordination .

We did not get to a meeting at the Party. You all should know some of the details of the club operation. Our club treasury totals \$4000 after our annual round of gift giving during the past month. The giving to bird related charities is possible because of your generosity in adding donations to your normal \$8 dues.

Please remember, folks! We don't stop birding just because it is winter!

January 4 is First Sunday Birding at Walden Ponds.

Jim Eide



Slaty-backed gull courtesy Bill Schmoker, © 2008

From The Editor

The Christmas season and excitement has caught us all in Holiday Gala ... so some hoped-for submissions for this Newsletter may show up on the BBC website later!

For those of you BBC members who chose to receive only the electronic version of the newsletter, check the website under "Calendar" and voilà! - you will magically find the current newsletter with even possibly added pictures (in color) and updates.

(You are receiving this issue because it contains membership renewal material.)

Good Birding and Stay Warm!

- Patricia Heller, Newsletter editor

Christmas Bird Count - Preliminary Report *December 14, 2008*

Here's a very preliminary report of the 67th Boulder Christmas Bird Count which was held today. Temperatures stayed within a few degrees either side of zero and there was plenty of fresh snow throughout the circle, but mercifully, the wind kept mostly out of the equation. Most large water bodies were still at least partially open, leading to extensive fog and poor viewing in these areas. We have 96 species reported so far today, with 5 more count-week species, for 101 total. Several of our 30 territory reports are still outstanding as are most of our feeder-watcher reports, so I hope to fill a few more gaps and perhaps add to the highlights. One new species was added to the all-time count list with the detection of a Great Black-backed Gull (the 206th species on the Boulder CBC list, found at Teller Lakes.) Other highlights include Western Bluebird & Brown Thrasher (each the 11th time on count day), Lesser Goldfinch (9th time), Eared Grebe & Hermit Thrush (each for the 5th time), Lesser Black-backed Gull (4th time), and Brown-capped Rosy-Finch (3rd time, complementing Gray-crowned's 14th appearance.)

Thank you to everyone who headed out into the arctic air mass to participate today. If anyone in the Boulder area stayed home and watched their feeders instead, I'd love your results, however exciting or mundane- you can email them to me along with your name and address. To count, addresses must be within 7.5 miles of the count circle center at 19th and Alpine, but if you have any doubt just send everything along and I'll check on Google Earth to see if you made it within our boundary.

Enjoy, & tuck in tight tonight!

-Bill Schmoker, Longmont (currently at -9° F)

The great Cold Christmas Bird Count

I went on my first Christmas Bird count with Joyce Takamine leading and compiling. It was bitter cold and snowing December 14th, but the small group of us - Joyce, her sister, Connie, Jan Chu, Larry, and Petrea all bravely headed out with handwarmers, hot cider, and coffee supplied by Petrea for a break after a few frigid hours. I really don't recall seeing much of any birds at all for the first hour as Jan, Larry, and I trudged through the snow, trying to stay warm.

However later in the day, as the weak winter sun managed to peak through ice fog layering over Boulder Reservoir. Not one gull in sight ... except a very brief view of the "mystery gull" - see Joyce's description along with her compiling for the count. It actually turned out to be quite a beautiful sight out there in the arctic cold. You can find Joyce's count of our sightings here in the newsletter, and Bill Schmoker's compiling. Thanks a bunch, Joyce and Connie for leading this frigid but fun CBC!

- Patricia Heller

Lesser Black-backed Gull Sighted

at Christmas Bird Count

We could see a gull flying towards us through the fog/mist. When we could make out details with our binoculars we saw a dark mantled gull with black bill and dark wing linings. The mantle was not that of a first year bird, it had patches of gray like an older gull. What we could make out of the bill was all black. We all knew that it was not the usual Ring-billed Gulls that we see since it was darker and the bill was wrong. When we got back to the car we consulted Western Sibley since that is what we had available and thought that Lesser Black-backed was the best fit.

When I returned home I consulted the Howell/Dunn and the Olsen/Larson books on gulls. The best match for the gull that we saw is the second-winter gull pictured in flight on Plate 53 of the Olsen/Larsson book. Our gull is a second year Lesser Black-backed Gull because it is starting to get a dark mantle of an older bird (making it second year or older) and since it still has a black-bill it is a second year bird since older birds no longer have all black bills.

- Joyce Takamine

Winter Vignettes

The first full day of winter, I was treated to the following scenes on a wide-ranging bike outing ...

- A bald eagle heading for Walden Lakes (and a meal?).
- A large crow hopping a grudging couple feet out of my way as I pass roadkill he was tending to.
- A lonely eight-bird group of widgen on the lone unfrozen patch of lake near Paradise Valley in Larimer County.
- Crows mobbing a hawk or golden eagle, to get it to drop its prey (which it did).
- Western meadowlarks in a flock, the males already yellowing up in anticipation.

- John Lee Ellis, asst. editor

Christmas Bird Count 2008

- Joyce Takamine

SPECIES SEEN

From 12/14/2008 to 12/14/2008 ~ All Places ~ 36 seen

DUCKS GEESE

AND SWANS

Snow Goose

Cackling Goose

Canada Goose

American Wigeon

Mallard

Common Goldeneye

Common Merganser

HAWKS EAGLES

AND KITES

Bald Eagle

Northern Harrier

Sharp-shinned Hawk

Red-tailed Hawk

Rough-legged Hawk

Golden Eagle

FALCONS

AND CARACARAS

American Kestrel

Merlin

RAILS GALLINULES

AND COOTS

American Coot

GULLS

Lesser Black-backed Gull

PIGEONS

AND DOVES

Rock Pigeon

Mourning Dove

OWLS

Great Horned Owl

WOODPECKERS

Downy Woodpecker

Northern Flicker

THRUSHES

American Robin

CHICKADEES

AND TITS

Black-capped Chickadee

CROWS JAYS

AND MAGPIES

Blue Jay

Black-billed Magpie

American Crow

Common Raven

STARLINGS

European Starling

OLD WORLD SPARROWS

House Sparrow

SISKINS CROSSBILLS

AND ALLIES

House Finch

American Goldfinch

BUNTINGS SPARROWS

SEED EATERS

AND ALL

Song Sparrow

White-crowned Sparrows

Dark-eyed Junco

TROUPIALS

AND ALLIES

Red-winged Blackbird

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!

Field Trip Coordinator: Lonny Frye (303-931-9131). **Contact trip leaders for information on their trips.** Our weather is unpredictable. For questions about details or whether the trip will take place, contact the trip leader.

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 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 April-May-June issue is **March 21, 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

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BOULDER BIRD CLUB Field Trips & Activities

REMINDER! January through March,
First Sunday Birding is 9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon.

This quarter's calendar was produced by Jean Morgan.

JANUARY 2009

January 4 (Sunday): First Sunday Birding. Walden Wildlife Habitat.* Meet at Cottonwood Marsh parking lot at 9:00AM, bird until noon. Look for wintering waterfowl and other birds. Dress for cold weather, with warm footwear and hat. Bring binoculars, scope, water and a snack. Everyone welcome. Leader: Pat Heller 303-604-1163

January 17 (Saturday): Inside Valmont Reservoir. Bird within the Excel Company property. A rare opportunity to visit these lakes up close. Meet at 12:00 noon, bird until sunset. Bring water and snacks and have boots and clothing appropriate for cold weather. From Arapahoe take 63rd Street north to the power plant entry gates on the east side of the road. Leaders: Ted Floyd (contact by e-mail only: tedfloyd@aba.org) or Bill Schmoker 720-201-5749.

FEBRUARY 2009

February 1 (Sunday): First Sunday Birding. Walden Wildlife Habitat.* (See January for write-up). Leader: Joyce Takamine 303-554-9785.

February 15 (Sunday): Ducks and Water Fowl along the So. Platte River. Meet at 8:30 at the NW corner of the north parking lot of the East Boulder Rec. Center** or at 9:15 at 88th and Colorado Blvd. in the parking lot for the Open Space on the SE corner. Bird until 1:30 and bring a light lunch. There's a possibility of seeing 17 duck species, Barrow's goldeneye and Long-tailed ducks. Leader: Davis 303-823-5332.

February 28 (Saturday): Mountain Feeder Birds. Meet at 8AM in the parking lot of Boulder Justice Center at 6th and Canyon, bird until noon. Visit mountain feeder spots to try for rosy finches, grosbeak, woodpeckers and crossbills. Leader: Bill Kaempfer kaempfer@colorado.edu or 303-9548998

MARCH 2009

March 1 (Sunday): First Sunday Birding. Walden Wildlife Habitat* (See January for write-up) Leader: Lonny Frye 303-931-9131.

March 15 (Sunday): Birding East Longmont. Meet at 8:00AM at Jim Hamm Natural Area parking lot at County Line Road and 17th Ave, East Longmont, bird until 12:00. Visit hot spots in east Longmont to ID our winter visitors including water fowl and grebes. Leader: Chris Owens 303-772-6048

March 20, 21, 22 (Friday-Sunday). Sandhill Cranes of Nebraska. Carpool to Pat Heller's favorite private ranch to view the cranes close up and personal. Stay at the ranch and bird the area. Limited availability, so call early for the particulars. Leader: Pat Heller 303-604-1163.

March 22 (Sunday): East Boulder Rec. Center. Meet at the Rec. Center** at 8:00AM, bird until 11:00. An east walk, good for beginners. See marsh and riparian early spring migrants and local residents. Everyone welcome. Leader: Jan Chu 303-494-1108.

New Member!

Anne Kaltreider Boulder, CO

SATURDAY MORNING BIRDERS: Wild Bird Center, 1641 28th St., Boulder 303-442-1322. We host walks every Saturday leaving from the store promptly at 7:30am. No reservations required.

Gull Puzzling

From Bill Schmoker's blog ... 11/28/2008

Yesterday afternoon I got some distant digiscoped pics of the bird, but today I was able to get much better pics thanks much to the bread and sardine-flinging efforts of another gull savant, John Vanderpoel. The sticky point seems to be that 1st-winter hybrid Herring x Glaucous-winged Gulls may be nearly indistinguishable from 1st-winter Slaty-backed Gulls. Some young Herring Gulls may share much in appearance, too. Early opinions from several gull experts differ- some whom I deeply respect are leaning towards the presence of Herring Gull genes, while others are leaning towards a "good" Slaty-backed Gull. A couple of online references I'll be sorting through include this Gull ID page and a page with all ages of Slaty-backs from Japan. I'll also rely on my *Gulls of the Americas* and *Gulls of North America, Europe, and Asia* in addition to the standard field guides as I look into the case more. In any case, I'm posting these pics for folks to study and form their own opinions of what the bird is or isn't.



Slaty-backed gull photos courtesy Bill Schmoker, © 2008

PLEASE SAVE YOUR NEWSLETTER AS A FUTURE RESOURCE FOR TRIPS AND ACTIVITIES.