

BOULDER BIRD CLUB NEWS

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

*Sixty Years Dedicated to the
Field Observation of Birds*

Jan., Feb., Mar. 2010



Prez Letter - December 2009

I am pleased to announce that we have new copresidents for the BBC. They are Ann Tagawa and Jim Guerin and they will serve for a 12 month period. Our vice president, Chuck Lowrie, will continue in that post and has agreed to move to the presidency one year from now and to serve his one year presidents term. We feel that it will make the position much less formidable to have a guaranteed end date unless the president begs to continue for a second year. This change to the term length will be ratified by the board at its January meeting. Thanks, Ann and Chuck for putting this creative arrangement together!

I have enjoyed my turn at the presidency, even if it did appear that it may be permanent! In particular, the opportunity to associate with you all and to "guide you" in the joys of bird watching and nature in Boulder County.

Please join me in thanking Lonny and Vivien Frye for hosting our Christmas party on December 12. By all means let us thank those who make this bird club work in all these many ways:

- Leading birding outings and scheduling them.
- Editing newsletters and printing and mailing.
- Managing our website and our treasury.
- Membership chair.

Please read your newsletter, however you choose to receive it. Please note the names of our many volunteers. Congratulate them on their contributions. Use and enjoy our trips! On First Sundays throughout the year come out for the morning birding walks at Walden Ponds. On Wednesday mornings during the warm months enjoy our weekly walks at a wide variety of Boulder County locations. I intend to see you on these outings.

Your ex - president, Jim Eide

From The Editor

In this issue of the newsletter, note the cards for membership dues renewal. Please renew your membership, for only \$8.00 per year, what a bargain! Even though the newsletter is now available on-line, BBC still needs regular members and dues paid.

As many of you know Sigrid Ueblacker of the Birds of Prey Foundation passed away on October 31. I remember her well from my experience many years ago of taking an injured bird to her. One very cold December night my neighbor came by and asked if I could look at an injured dove. Behind our house shivering in the wood pile was a mourning dove with an injured wing. I scooped up the dove into a box and took it to Sigrid. She immediately took the frightened dove and later I heard back from her that the wing had been repaired and the dove was back "on the wing" the next week. I will always remember her kindness to all birds, not only just raptors. We all will miss her.

Hope all those CBC participants enjoyed the warm weather on this year's count. Thanks to Bill Schmoker and all the trip leaders for organizing this event.

Good birding and looking forward to the Spring trips!

Pat

Spring Meeting

Saturday, March 13, 2010, 7 p. m.

Golden West Manor, 1055 Adams Cir, W on Euclid from 30th St, park on street and use main entrance or E from 28th St Frontage Rd to golden West parking lot and use door 4. Ring buzzer for entrance.

Distinguished bird photographer **Paul Bannick**'s work has appeared in Audubon, Sunset Magazine, Pacific Northwest, and PotoMedia Magazines; both the National Wildlife Federation and the Smithsonian Guides to North American Birds and in many other books, magazines, parks, refuges and other venues in North America and Europe. Paul has been featured on NPR and Travel With Rick Steves. He is Director of Development for Conservation Northwest. Explore his website, www.paulbannick.com, to learn more of his work. His keynote program, featured at festivals across the country, combines stunning images, powerful audio and stories from thousands of hours in the field. Paul will make available and sign his new book, *The Owl and the Woodpecker: Encounters with North America's Most Iconic Birds*.

Please bring snacks or sweets to share. Beverages will be provided. Call Chuck Lowrie at 303-455-8417 for questions.



Valmont Reservoir Team – Bill Schmoker photo

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

The Gulls of Valmont by Ted Floyd

Anybody can recognize a “seagull,” of course, and many people will tell you that seagulls live near the sea—in and around coastal waterways, along sandy beaches, and even out on the ocean. True, seagulls—let’s just call them gulls—can be found in great abundance in maritime habitats, but they are also increasingly abundant inland.

Even way inland, like, in Boulder County.

Indeed, Boulder County is a superb place for the “larophile,” or gull-lover. At least seventeen species of gulls have been reported in the county. Beautiful Franklin’s Gulls pass through the county in large numbers in early spring each year, while dainty Bonaparte’s and stunning Sabine’s gulls visit our reservoirs in smaller quantities every fall. But the truly impressive show is staged in the dead of winter, believe it or not. And check this out: The colder, the better.

When it gets cold—really cold—impressive numbers of gulls roost at the Valmont Reservoir complex just east of downtown Boulder. Let’s just refer to the complex, which consists of three different reservoirs, as “Valmont.” The water at Valmont is heated by the Xcel power plant, and even during brutally cold weather, at least some of the water remains open. If it’s cold enough, the only open water in the entire county is at Valmont.

And that brings in the gulls. Many thousands of them, including rarities. During the coldest stretches, especially from early January to mid-February, species like Lesser Black-backed and Glaucous gulls are actually expected. If gull numbers are in the four digits, you have a great shot at finding a Thayer’s Gull; I’ve seen as many as ten there at one time. In recent years, rarities like Mew and Great Black-backed gulls have been essentially annual.

Tips for Viewing

1. Timing. This is crucial! It’s more important than anything else. *Get there late in the day.* The hour before “topographic sunset”—that is, when the sun sinks below the Flatirons—is the best. If you are there at noon, you might see literally five or six gulls—and they’ll probably all be Ring-billed Gulls. By sunset on the same day, you might be looking at five or six *thousand* gulls, among them multiple Thayer’s and “Lesser-backs” and maybe even a genuine rarity or two.

2. Legion Park Overlook. Access is very easy; just drive in from Arapahoe Road between 63rd and 75th streets. If you angle your car the right way, you don’t even have to go out in the cold. When I’m in a hurry, or if I just happen to be in the area, I’ll make a quick check from the Legion Park overlook. However, this is not the best vantage point, because the gulls are really quite some distance away. A better strategy is to walk in from 75th street. Speaking of which...

3. Access from 75th Street. Park *carefully and respectfully* along the access road to Open Space headquarters off 75th Street. This access road is called Red Deer Drive, although it is not actually indicated as such. Do not drive in past the gate, or you run the very real risk of getting locked in. Spending the night at Valmont is a horribly miserable experience. Anyhow, park your car, walk west along the access road, then west across the prairie dog colony, then up to the obvious high point beyond. You are on open, public land, but please

be respectful. Don’t make an ass out of yourself. ’nuff said. You are now much closer to the gulls than when you were back at the Legion Park overlook.

4. Annual Xcel Energy Birding Trip. This is incontestably the best way to view the gulls (and many other rarities). For ages, Boulder Bird Club has been running a mid-winter trip to Valmont, kindly hosted by Xcel Energy. This is the only day of the year when birders can actually get inside of the plant, where the gulls and other birds are *much closer* than from either the Legion Park overlook or the 75th Street point of access. In recent years, Bill Schmoker and I have been your friendly, feckless co-leaders, and one of us—neither of us will fess up to it—came up with the curious idea of starting the trip at the decadent hour of noon. The birding has been brilliant. We have seen as many as eight species of gulls in a single outing, plus rare grebes and ducks, and even a decent list of notable passerines—among them Chihuahuan Raven, Carolina Wren, Brown Thrasher, and Swamp Sparrow. We also get great looks at many raptors, with fine viewing on most outings of Prairie Falcon, Ferruginous Hawk, and Bald and Golden eagles.

5. You Need a Scope. If you want to be able to identify any of the gulls, that is.

Don’t Miss the Upcoming Valmont/Xcel Outing!

The trip will be Saturday, January 9th, 2010. We will meet at noon in the main parking area of the Xcel power plant. Access is from 63rd Street. Carpooling is advisable, as the lot has completely filled up in recent years. Please bring a scope, if you own one, and please be prepared to share. Trip leaders are Ted Floyd and Bill Schmoker, plus others who will be forcibly conscripted upon arrival. Our host is Xcel plant engineer Dave Madonna. This year’s outing is sponsored by the Boulder Bird Club and Xcel Energy, of course, with co-sponsorship by Colorado Field Ornithologists and the American Birding Association.

Inquiries by e-mail only to Ted <tedfloyd57@hotmail.com> and Bill <bill.schmoker@gmail.com>. Stay tuned to COBirds for more details.

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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 2010

January 3 (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: Pete Plage PJPLAGE@aol.com

January 9 (Saturday): Inside Valmont Reservoir. Bird with DFO members 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.

January 24 (Sunday): Raptor Auto Tour. Meet at Lagerman Reservoir and drive to various spots to see winter raptors from 10AM to 3. Leaders: Jim McKee 303-651-2414 and Sue Cass.

FEBRUARY 2010

February 7 (Sunday): First Sunday Birding. Walden Wildlife Habitat.* (See January for write-up). Leader: Walter Szeliga 303-547-0068.

February 20 (Saturday): Wheat Ridge Greenbelt. Meet at East Boulder Rec. Center at 8AM to carpool to Wheat Ridge for waterfowl and winter birding. Then a stop at Vincenza's Italian Restaurant nearby for brunch/lunch. Return early afternoon. Leader: Paula Hansley 720-890-2628

February 27 (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. Lunch at a favorite restaurant in the hills. Leader: Bill Kaempfer

kaempfer@colorado.edu or 303-954-8998

MARCH 2010

March 7 (Sunday): First Sunday Birding. Walden Wildlife Habitat* (See January for write-up) Leader: Pat Heller 303-604-1163.

March 13 (Saturday): Signs of Spring. Meet at East Boulder Rec Center at 8AM and carpool to area locations for spring migrants and waterfowl. Bird until noon. Leader: Pete Plage PJPLAGE@aol.com

March 20 (Saturday): 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 1 or 2PM. Visit hot spots to ID our winter visitors including water fowl and grebes. Leader: Chris Owens 303-772-6048

March 27 (Saturday): East Boulder Rec. Center. Meet at the Rec. Center** at 8:00AM, bird until 11:00. An easy walk, good for beginners. See marsh and riparian early spring migrants and local residents. Everyone welcome. Leader: Jan Chu 303-494-1108.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE: This newsletter is published four times a year. Deadline for the Apr., May, June issue is **March 23, 2010**. 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

The Warbler Tree

Lonnie Frye

While visiting my Great Aunt Annie last summer, I saw a huge flock of warblers gleaning on a sickly River Beech near the Blue Ridge Parkway at Blowing Rock, NC. After watching them through the window, I finally had to excuse myself from the dinner table so I could use my binocs on the porch. In the space of a quarter hour I had found 11 species before they all mysteriously disappeared in the gloaming.

The next morning they were back for an early morning feeding and I added Blackburnian Warbler for the 12th species on one small tree! Observed warbler species: Blue Winged, Northern Parula, Magnolia, Black and White, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Yellow Throated, Kentucky, Canada, Hooded, American Redstart, and Blackburnian.

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).

Thank You, Volunteers!

I want to send thanks out to all the great leaders who have been showing us the birds this year. I especially appreciate the leaders who regularly agree to trips, sometimes 3 times a year. Ted Floyd, Bill Kaempfer, Paula Hansley, Peter Plage, Christian Nunes, Raymond Davis and Joyce Takamine are always there for us, even when they are busy. There are quite a few members who will step up and lead a First Sunday or grab a couple of Wednesday Roadrunners on short notice. I have been experimenting this year with getting new leaders from our community that have not led for us before. I think it has been very successful with folks like Jeffrey Mitton, David Waltman, Walter Szeliga and our young birders Marcel and Joel Such leading interesting and exciting walks. A big thanks to Joe Krieg and Claire Delaney and Jean Morgan who do much of my job and keep our calendar filled year around. We are also trying to do more with our friends in the Boulder County Audubon Society, the DFO and other local groups. Everyone in the Boulder Bird Club thanks all of our volunteers who lead our walks, and those who help with all the other duties that a group like ours needs to stay vibrant.

Lonny Frye, Field Trip Coordinator