



# Canyon Wrenderings

The Journal of the Black Canyon Audubon Society

Representing Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Montrose, Ouray, San Juan, and San Miguel Counties of Western Colorado

Fall 2024

Volume 39 Number 3



Western Bluebird feeding fledgling © Verlee Sanburg

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## Notes from a Novice Bluebird Box Tender

By Mary Miller

For as long as I can remember, I have been enamored with the beautiful display of the mountain bluebird in flight. The bright blue colors seem to outshine any other blue found in nature, including two of my favorite wildflowers—lupines and cornflowers—so, when I moved to Montrose, I was happy to be closer to their habitat.

My husband Todd is a landscape and wildlife photographer by avocation, with a recent dedication to birds of all types. It is like he turned 60 and started noticing birds! I am not as enthusiastic about every bird as he is but remain dedicated to the Mountain Bluebird. We joined the Black Canyon chapter of the Audubon Society last summer and I was thrilled to find that the group participated in monitoring bluebird boxes at Ridgway State Park and Billy Creek State Wildlife Area. That was something I wanted to help with!

Fast forward to April of this year. Bruce Ackerman and Susan Werner kindly offered to have me ride along on their bluebird box checks at Billy Creek SWA. It was egg-laying season, and I was surprised to learn that you need to lightly touch the eggs to see if they are warm or cold. If the eggs are warm, Mama

*Continued page 9 ►*

# President's Message

by Bruce Ackerman

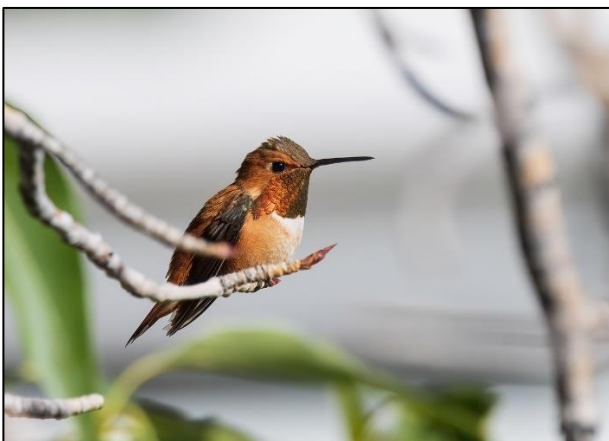
Fall Migration is happening! Be sure to get out and see what is moving through our area. I think some birds have already headed south, like Bullock's Orioles. Others are getting ready to go soon, like the hummingbirds and swallows.

Please read about our upcoming great events. We have five field trips lined up during the next two months which will cover the bulk of the Fall Migration. We also have the Bird Banding station at Ridgway State Park from September 3 to 13. You could visit on the public day, Saturday Sept. 7. Or you could volunteer to help with student activities on another day.

Thank you so much to our dedicated Board of Directors, who plan and lead the field trips, the meetings, and all the other fun events every month. I so much appreciate having their help. New Board members this year (starting in July 2024) are Alida Franco, Todd Miller, and Abe Wilson. Thanks so much jumping on board!

If you are interested in participating at a higher level, we would love to have you. You do not need any special skills, and you do not need to be an expert birder. You could coordinate a field trip, in a county we do not visit as often. You could help us staff a booth at a local event. You could author an article for this newsletter or for the Outdoor Column of the *Montrose Daily Press*. Dive in!

Finally, the Marine Road Wildlife Area has finally seen its first real construction this year. The trails are laid out and mulched. The north Bird Blind has been completed by our chapter volunteers and some others from our community. Sandy Beranich and Jon Horn are leading the work. And there is more to come. Check it out!



Rufous Hummingbird. Photo © Verlee Sanburg.

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### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Audubon CO Council rep.—**OPEN**  
Education— Carrie Krickbaum (see above)  
Conservation—Sallie Thoreson (see above)  
Field Trips—Don Marsh (see above)  
Membership—Missy Siders (see above)  
Publicity—**OPEN**  
Newsletter—Mary Menz 719-684-4009  
Programs— Kristal Stidham (see above)  
Website Manager—Jon Horn (see above)

### AD HOC COMMITTEES (ANNUAL EVENTS)

Montrose County Fair — **OPEN**  
Bird Banding—Ridgway State Park  
Christmas Bird Count Team—Arden  
Anderson, Adam Petry, Amy Seglund,  
and Missy Siders  
Eckert Crane Days— Alida Franco

**A note about email addresses in this newsletter:**  
All emails have an extra space before the @ sign or "[at symbol]" in the email address to discourage spam coming from web crawlers.

Would you like to volunteer? Talk to an officer to see where we need help and where your talents can be used! Volunteers are always needed and welcome.

## First Tuesday Field Trips

**First Tuesday Field Trips are September 3, October 1, at 8 AM and November 5 at 9 AM** at the public parking lot at the intersection of N. 2nd St. and N. Cascade Ave. in Montrose.

A leader will accompany the group to a nearby birding hotspot. Return should be by about noon. Bring a snack, water, binoculars, and field guides. **Please RSVP for all field trips** and include your name, field trip date, and contact information in case weather or illness forces a cancellation. RSVP to [black.canyon.audubon.fieldtrips@gmail.com](mailto:black.canyon.audubon.fieldtrips@gmail.com)

### **Bird Banding Ridgway State Park (Ouray County) Saturday September 7**

Stop by and watch a professional bird bander at work. This is a drop-in opportunity and there will be no leader, but volunteers will be present to answer your questions. This is a great opportunity to see birds up close and personal. The state park charges a \$10.00/car entrance fee unless you have an annual "Keep Colorado Wild" pass. Banding usually starts early (6:30 - 7 AM) and is done by noon or earlier (weather dependent). Enter Ridgway State Park at the Dallas Creek entrance and head to the southernmost parking lot. The banding station is just over the bridge.

### **Dave Wood Road and Sims Mesa (Montrose and Ouray Counties)**

**Tuesday, September 17**

Meet in Montrose at **8:30 AM**; Leader Bill Harris will take birders to the eastern edge of the Uncompahgre Plateau. The Sims Mesa Trail is off Dave Wood Road in an area of Ponderosa Pine that usually hosts lots of birds including Red Crossbill, Pygmy Nuthatch, Lewis Woodpeckers, and Red-naped Sapsuckers. Hiking is easy, but it may cover some uneven ground. Expect to hike approximately three miles. Be sure to wear sturdy shoes and bring water, snacks, and lunch. The trip is limited to ten people so please RSVP to [black.canyon.audubon.fieldtrips@gmail.com](mailto:black.canyon.audubon.fieldtrips@gmail.com) early to reserve your spot

### **Fall Colors in the Cimarron Valley (Montrose County)**

**Wednesday, September 25**

Meet in Montrose at **8:00 AM** (Leader: Don Marsh). Late September is usually a beautiful time to be out in Colorado. We will travel up Cimarron Road and stop at various points to look for birds and enjoy the fall colors. We will start heading home around noon. Two return options are possible: 1) retrace the route back to

Highway 50 and Montrose, or 2) continue over Owl Creek Pass to highway 550 near Ridgway. Regardless, we should be back by mid-afternoon.

### **Ouray County Fall Colors**

**Saturday, October 5**

Meet at the Ridgway town Visitor Center near the intersection of Highway 550 and Highway 62 at **8:00 AM** (Leader: Don Marsh). We will explore various backroads in Ouray County as we search for birds and incredible fall colors. As weather and birds can be unpredictable in October, we will stay flexible in our options. Dress in layers, bring water, lunch or snacks, and your camera. We will wrap up in the early afternoon.

### **Ridgway State Park (Ouray County)**

**Thursday, November 14**

Meet at the Ridgway State Park Visitor Center near the Dutch Charlie entrance at **9:00 AM** (Leader: Don Marsh). Ridgway State Park in November can host a variety of migrating birds, including ducks, gulls, shorebirds, and late migrant songbirds. The park charges a \$10.00/car entrance fee unless you have an annual "Keep Colorado Wild" pass. We will try to carpool with annual pass holders to minimize expenses. Dress in layers, bring water and lunch or snacks, and a spotting scope if you have one. We will wrap up around noon.

## Would You be a Field Trip Leader?

We need a few more trip leaders. The same few people have been leading trips for years. Would you consider being a trip leader? Just once in the coming year? Here is all you must do.

- Choose a location with which you are familiar.
- Pick a date.
- Meet the participants at the designated location. Introduce yourself and get their names.
- Arrive and leave from there on time.
- Spot and identify the birds seen. BUT you do not need to be an expert birder. Hopefully, you can spot MOST of the birds and identify them. But there will also be experienced birders along who can help with this. (We need the leader to be an organizer more than a bird-spotter!)
- Keep track of the birds seen. Or assign that to someone else.
- Enter the bird sightings into eBird and share this with the participants (or someone else does the eBird list). Or, if this is too much, you could be a co-leader. Splitting the duties with a friend would make it more fun! Some other chapters pay their trip leaders. Would you consider being a trip leader if you got paid? Contact Bruce Ackerman for more information. ■ Page 3



# Monthly Meetings

**Thursday, September 12, 7:00 PM**  
**Montrose Field House Summit Room**  
**Melissa Schreiner: Biodiversity**

Melissa Schreiner is an entomologist with the CSU Extension Office that serves Mesa, Delta, Ouray, and Montrose counties. She will be speaking to us about our local pollinators, which include insects, birds, bats, and animals. Spoiler alert: Biodiversity is Key! We will have the opportunity to examine the Western Colorado Bug Collection and take home free posters and publications. Are you buzzing with excitement?

**Thursday, October 10, 7:00 PM**  
**Montrose Field House Summit Room**  
**Brewster Moseley Photo Tour of Fort Myers FL**

Brewster Moseley has newly arrived in Montrose and BCAS. He will be presenting a photo tour of one of his favorite birding spots, near Fort Myers, Florida. His presentation "Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary: A Primitive Journey Through Ancient Florida" will be interesting! This is a 13,000-acre property that has been owned and operated by the Audubon Society since 1954. It is a great place to see a wide variety of plants and animals and more than 200 species of birds – the fascinating Wood Stork, in particular.

**Thursday, November 14, 7:00 PM**  
**Montrose Field House Summit Room**  
**Dr. David Inouye, RMBL, Plants that Support Pollinators**

David Inouye, PhD, is a researcher at the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory (in Gothic, near Crested Butte), where he has worked for 54 years. He is also Professor Emeritus in the Biology Department at the University of Maryland, and serves on Boards of the Hummingbird Conservation Networks, North American Pollinator Protection Campaign, Endangered Species Coalition, and Paonia's Citizens for a Healthy Community. He helped author the forthcoming reports on establishing a national monitoring plan for native bees. His long-term research was featured in the April 2023 issue of *National Geographic*, and a short documentary about his research with his son and daughter-in-law was featured at the Telluride Mountainfilm Festival and Crested Butte Film Festival this year. He has been banding and studying hummingbirds for decades at RMBL, and also bands hummingbirds at his house near Paonia. He will talk about research on the wildflowers that support pollinators, and the work being done on hummingbirds at RMBL.



**Belted Kingfisher (photo by V. Sanburg)**

## A "Thank You" to an Anonymous Friend:

Shortly after the BCAS banquet this past June, when Bill Harris bestowed an honorary title on me, I received an envelope addressed to me with a return address of "BCAS friends, Montrose 81401." The note inside read: "To Rebecca - For Banquet Dinner or for bird seed or for you!

From a friend" and \$40 cash was enclosed. Because I have no idea which kind person did this, or why, I am asking the editor of the BCAS newsletter to publish this thank you note from me.

Yes, I received the note and the money, and I appreciate both!

from Rebecca Kindred, the "Old Broad for Birds"



**1st place winner at fair (lower left), Photo by B. Ackerman**

## Board Meeting Highlights

by Sallie Thoreson, Secretary

These are highlights from the July board meeting.

- Regular projects and programs are continuing. Book club meetings are going well on the third Tuesdays of each month at 2 PM. The schedule of books for the rest of 2024 is on the BCAS website and in this newsletter. Future spring and summer birding trips are planned and publicized through the normal channels. Kristal has programs booked through fall 2024.
- We had a successful annual meeting and banquet on June 6. The guest speaker was Ben Goldfarb who gave a great presentation from his recent book *Crossings*.
- BCAS volunteers led a Gunnison sage-grouse educational station for 250 4<sup>th</sup> graders, and members presented two additional well-attended educational events in Montrose and Delta.
- BCAS currently has 373 paid members.
- BCAS continues to contribute an article to the *Montrose Daily Press* every five weeks, coordinated by Caroline Evans.
- The Motus committee has received most of the equipment for the tower (to detect bird migration and contribute to research and information gathering) and is on track to put the tower online this fall.
- The Marine Road Wildlife Area project continues to move forward, with extensive work on the north pond bird blind and landscaping. Members are encouraged to bird the site.
- The Board has scheduled two planning sessions to determine which projects BCAS will work on in the next year, using the National Audubon Society's Flight Plan (its five-year strategic plan) as a model. A budget will be set for the upcoming year.

**The next Board Meeting is September 19 by Zoom.**

Contact Bruce Ackerman for details. ▀

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## Help Colorado Bat Watch Find Roosting Sites

By Missy Siders

Black Canyon Audubon Society was recently contacted by Colorado Bat Watch to see if our members could assist them in learning more about bat roosts. Bat roost sites are where bats live. Roost sites are critically important in the daily lives of bats. Monitoring and protecting bats at roost sites can help conserve bat populations.

Unfortunately, little is known about where bats are

roosting in Colorado.

You can help by acting as eyes and ears for Colorado Bat Watch. You can share your observations of bats and your knowledge of bat roost site locations. Colorado Bat Watch is especially interested in sightings of



bats using bird nests as roosts.

Check out <https://www.coloradobatwatch.org> for more information about how you can help, and to learn more about bats in Colorado.

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## BCAS Fall Book Club Selections

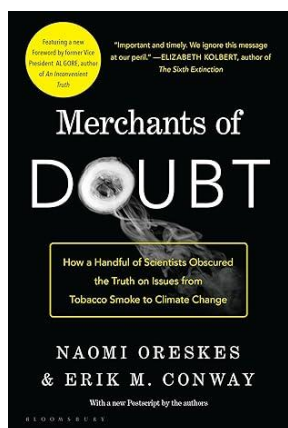
Looking for a way to meet new people or to expand your reading genres? Join the Audubon Book Club! Here are the next three book selections. The Book Club list for the rest of the year is on the BCAS website.

Meetings are in-person in Montrose on the third Tuesday of each month at 2:00 PM. Meet at Sheryl and Don Radovich's house in September and October, and on Zoom in November. Please join us, even if you have not read the book yet!

### September 17, 2024

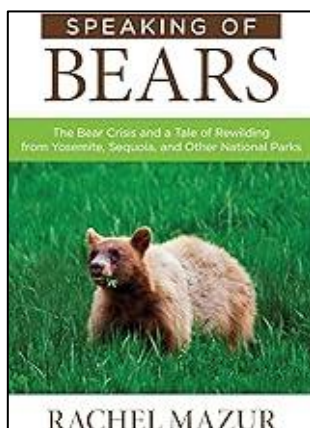
**Merchants of Doubt:** How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming" by Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway (2011)

How science works well and how scientific information can be hijacked by politics. The U.S. scientific community has long led the world in research such as public health, environmental science, and issues affecting quality of life. Our scientists produced landmark studies on the dangers of DDT, tobacco, acid rain, and global warming. This book tells how a group of high-level scientists and scientific advisers, with deep connections in politics and industry, ran effective campaigns to mislead the public and deny well-established scientific knowledge over four decades.



### October 15, 2024

**Speaking of Bears:** The Bear Crisis and a Tale of Rewilding from Yosemite, Sequoia, and Other National Parks" by Rachel Mazur (2015)



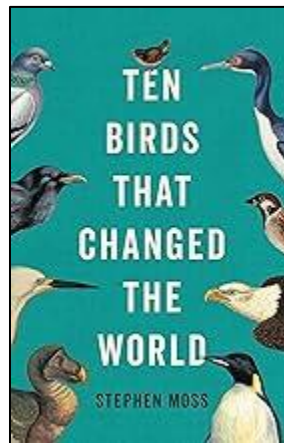
A history of bear management, problems, and solutions, in three major national parks. Speaking of Bears is the history, compiled from 100 interviews of how these parks created a human-bear problem so bad there were eventually 2,000 incidents in a single year. It then describes how the park employees used trial and

error, conducted research, and invented devices to get the crisis back under control.

**November 19, 2024** (by Zoom – contact Bruce for the link)

**Ten Birds that Changed the World** by Stephen Moss (2023)

A very readable blend of science, history, and culture; how birds have influenced mythology, including ravens, turkeys, egrets, cormorants, bald eagles, and more. For



the whole of human history, we have lived alongside birds. We hunted and domesticated them for food; venerated them in our mythologies, religions, and rituals; exploited them for their natural resources; and have been inspired by them for our music, art, and poetry. Stephen Moss tells the gripping story of this long and intimate relationship through key species from all seven of the world's continents. This is a fascinating, eye-opening, and engaging work of natural history.



**Leucistic Gambel's Quail (Photo by B. Ackerman)**

This is one of two leucistic (white) young quail that have visited Bruce and Susan's house this summer.



## Lop and Scatter

### Volunteer for a Local Project on National Public Lands Day

**Saturday, September 21, 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM**

By Kristal Stidham

One of the goals of National Public Lands Day is to encourage conservation efforts by volunteers. For the second year in a row, BCAS members will celebrate by sending a team out to the Crawford area to make the landscape safer for Gunnison Sage Grouse. On this day, we will locate saplings that will become perches for predators, cut the fledgling trees down, and chop them into smaller chunks and toss them back on the ground to improve the soil's moisture retention

The work is not strenuous, but the terrain is uneven and there are occasional surprise cacti. Expect to walk at least a mile and be exposed to the elements for up to six hours. Wear a hat and sunglasses, leather gloves, long sleeves, pants, socks, and sturdy shoes. Bring a picnic lunch, water, and sunscreen. Work tools will be provided.



**Whit Blair identifies a sapling at his knee and prepares to demonstrate how**

You will earn a new t-shirt, a federal fee-free daily parks pass, and enjoy an encounter with the charming Whit Blair.

This is a great opportunity to get outdoors and do something that really makes a difference for birds while building

partnerships with our friends at BLM

and Colorado Canyons Association. Please join us! To sign up, find the link at [ColoradoCanyonsAssociation.org](http://ColoradoCanyonsAssociation.org) and provide your contact info. They will respond with the exact meeting location, which will be somewhere near the north rim of the Black Canyon, 75-minutes' drive from Montrose. If you'd like to carpool, please send me an email at [Black.Canyon.Audubon.Events@gmail.com](mailto:Black.Canyon.Audubon.Events@gmail.com) ▪

## BCAS invests in local Motus station

By David Sinton

Black Canyon Audubon Society decided to invest in a radio tower called a "Motus station." Motus is an international research network for wildlife tracking. From a series of towers, scientists receive data on migrating birds, bats, and even insects. More information can be found at <http://www.motus.org>. Funds for this station were raised from a variety of sources and project funding is complete.

Nearly all the components have been ordered and have arrived in preparation for installation. These include a 20-foot antenna mast, six Yagi antennas, a "computer" that transfers data to the internet, and a few odds-and-ends. The antennas took the longest to arrive. They were ordered in July and most of the pieces finally arrived. They were custom-built for BCAS in Ontario, Canada.



The antenna masts will need to be mounted on a large concrete base. The hole for this base has been excavated. The next step will be to pour the concrete and put all the pieces together.

This tower will be in Montrose.

**David Sinton digs a hole for Motus equipment on his property.**

## Help Prevent Bird-Window Collisions

Bird-window collisions are highest during fall and spring migration when birds are on the move and looking for food sources. The American Bird Conservancy publishes an informative brochure about preventing these potentially deadly collisions. Window curtains, tape, tempura paint, and decals are just a few creative options. To decorate your window and help prevent fatal bird-window collisions, check out these tips:

<https://abcbirds.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/ABC-Collisions-Flyer-2016.pdf> ▪

# Conservation Conversations

by Sallie Thoreson, Conservation Chair

## Happy Birthday Wilderness Act!

Sixty years ago, on September 3, 1964, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Wilderness Act into law, establishing a National Wilderness Preservation System “for the use and enjoyment of the American people.” The original act set aside 9.1 million acres of wilderness in 54 national forest areas in 13 states. The Act said Congress could add new areas to the system. Since 1964, Congress has passed legislation to designate an additional 111 million acres in 806 areas in 44 states and Puerto Rico.

“Wilderness designation provides the strongest and most permanent protection of our laws for Wilderness values such as adventure, solitude, spiritual communion with and respect for nature, a respite from the pressures of civilization, clean air and water, scenery, wildlife, and scientific understanding of how the natural world works,” said President Johnson.

<https://www.sierraclub.org/indiana/blog/2024/02/60th-anniversary-wilderness-act-and-indiana-wilderness-areas>

## Conservation Tools

A variety of tools are needed to combat threats to legislation such as the Wilderness Act and to protect species, habitat, and land. Here are a few examples of how conservationists (like us!) can be effective.

The Audubon Colorado Council reported on the efforts of the policy committee in the past state legislative year. Audubon Rockies provided testimony in support of Wetlands Protection Bill HB1379 and set up an action alert for local Audubon chapters that generated over 2000 emails to legislators. The Audubon lobbying team was engaged in monitoring the whole process while pushing for strong language in the final bill.

A proposal to build a 480-foot communications tower in the middle of Bears Ears National Monument was withdrawn. The proposed tower, and its blinking red lights, would have been visible from across much of the monument, as well as from Natural Bridges National Monument—the first ever Dark Sky Park. Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance and seven other groups submitted a formal challenge to the application and asked for a full Environmental Impact Statement. The SUWA credits its win to the more than 4000 people who signed their petition and spoke up in opposition at local meetings. <https://suwa.org/category/bears-ears/>

Recently the Advocates for the West, an environmental law firm, and partners “won a significant legal victory against the federal Animal and Plant Health Inspection

Service (APHIS) over its program allowing pesticide spraying on millions of acres of public lands in 17 western states to kill native grasshoppers and Mormon crickets that compete with domestic livestock for forage. The judge found that APHIS violated the law by focusing only on reactively spraying pesticides, ignoring any other pest management techniques.

<https://advocateswest.org/case/rangeland-pesticides-spraying/> ▪

## Bluebird Houses at the Montrose County Fair

By Bruce Ackerman

Black Canyon Audubon Society had a great time at the Montrose County Fair July 22 to 27. We sold 38 Bluebird Boxes and Birdhouses this year by Silent Auction. Minimum bids were set between \$15 and \$50 for each bird house. Final bids ranged as high as \$200. By the time bidding ended Saturday at noon, we had raised a total of \$1941. This is the highest amount we have raised in any year. BCAS will use the funds on education programs for youth and adults.

We especially thank the Montrose Woodworkers and Woodturners for their continued support in crafting creative and attractive bluebird boxes. This is the 16<sup>th</sup> year they have supported BCAS. The woodworkers made boxes that ranged from basic to fanciful, showing off their different expert woodworking skills, different tools, and different kinds of wood. This year, some that got the most attention were gorgeous boxes turned on lathes. These also included boxes described as Mr. and Mrs. Gnome, a Cat, and a Tree Hugger. (*Continued page10*)



Eliot Reeder with tree hugger bird house (Photo by B. Ackerman)  
Page 8



### ***Novice Birder continued from cover***

bird is done laying eggs and has started incubating. This brief disturbance by humans does not deter her from caring for the eggs one bit!

One of the boxes we checked lay demolished on the forest floor with littered eggshells all around it. Bruce explained that it was probably bear depredation and pointed out the claw marks on the box pole. Then I learned about all the critters that could get in and bother the eggs. Bruce mentioned that he once opened a box to be greeted by a large Bull Snake! As he put it: "The drama!" Meanwhile Susan entered the new information into a Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's database called "Nestwatch." Scientists at Cornell University collect data on bird nesting from around the world. Using this rich information, they can see larger trends about population sizes, nesting habits, and much more.

After returning from some travel in May and June, I was ready to take over some boxes of my own. Carrie Krickbaum generously coordinates all the volunteers. She sent me some links to videos of bluebird nesting behavior, and I dutifully watched them. Next, I met with her, so she could show me the boxes I would be taking over near the Visitor's Center of Ridgway State Park. I was surprised how far they were off the ground! (Note to self: bring a stepstool or a tall companion along on box checks.) All the boxes had nests, but no eggs and no live young. Carrie explained that the resident bluebirds had already had two clutches of eggs that had hatched, and nestlings had fledged. She said there might not be any more activity this summer. I was disappointed, but determined to check every week just in case

The next week Todd (my tall companion) and I checked the boxes. The procedure is to knock on the box (anybody home?), undo the nail or screw closure, and carefully swing up the door while being prepared to jump backward. There were no bull snakes; but much to our delight, there were 4-5 eggs in every box! We were lucky! The birds had 3 clutches of young this summer. The enchantment of finding those beautiful aqua-blue eggs is hard to describe.

One box harbored cream-colored eggs: the work of the Violet-green Swallows swooping and dipping nearby. Mama swallow had taken over the box sometime in June. We found out this was common. Some of the eggs were cold, and some were warm, so we knew they were not all on the same hatch timing. We looked around for adults and found pairs near every box. Once we spotted the adults, we would back off to give them their space—and, from a safe distance—watch them fly around. I never tired of seeing them.

The next week's chick checks were exciting. Some of the eggs had hatched! The new hatchlings were quite hideous: all naked pink and purple goose-pimpled skin, with large, unseeing eyes and a gaping mouth that stretched the width of the little birds' faces. They were faces only a mother could love. The parents were nearby, but not on the nests.

The following week, Todd got a surprise when Mama swallow flew out of the box, narrowly missing his face! Her babies had started growing feathers and could now see, but their huge mouths still dominated their little heads.

One drizzly day, we opened a box to find Mama bluebird sitting on her newly hatched young. She had her back to us, and we could see her brilliant azure tail feathers. Her attitude was "look all you want, but I'm not going out in that rain." We quietly closed the door and left her for her important business.

Over the weeks, we followed the progression of hatching, feather accumulation, and growth. We knew the time for fledging was near and it was with mixed feelings that we opened the boxes to find them all empty. We were happy that a new generation of birds had joined their parents, and a little sad that this special time was over. At least until next year!



**Large Baby Mountain Bluebirds (photo by B. Ackerman) Page 9**

# Avian Ramblings—Fall 2024

By Bill Harris

I have enjoyed birding for many years. What makes it even more enjoyable is to go with people who share my passion for finding and identifying birds. I have developed some lasting friendships with my birding buddies. One of the benefits of birding with others is getting more than one set of eyes on the birds we are seeing. I learn new techniques and clues for identifying birds from birders with more experience than me.

Once I started reading more about birds in books and online, I realized how important it was to do something to help birds. That is when I started participating in avian citizen science projects. Of course, the granddaddy of all citizen birding projects is eBird. Not only can I keep track of what I see and where I see them, I am feeding information into a huge international database for the Cornell Ornithology Lab. I have posted bird sightings 3,000 times.

Another citizen science project I enjoy doing is the NestWatch project. For the last five nesting seasons I have monitored nest boxes for mountain bluebirds. I check the boxes regularly and report nesting activity. As with the eBird project, my data is fed into a huge database. Mountain Bluebirds are not the only bird species that use the boxes. I have had Tree Swallows and Ash-throated Flycatchers nest in the boxes. It is encouraging to see eggs hatch, then the young eventually fledge.

A third project in which I participate, starting in August of 2023, is the Intermountain West Shorebird Survey organized by the Blue Point Conservation Service. Following a strict protocol, I visit Fruit Growers Reservoir several times during specific times of the year to record what shorebirds I see. I then fill out a data sheet and send it to Blue Point. I am not particularly well-versed at identifying shorebirds, especially peeps, so I invite some of my birding friends to join me. Don Marsh, Jon Horn, Steve Dike, Verlee Sanburg, Alan Reed, David Sinton, and Missy Siders helped with the project. A few of us visit Fruit Growers, bring our scopes and high-powered cameras to ID the birds. The August visit is a bit more challenging requiring us to walk far out on the shore by the shrinking lake to get closer to the shorebirds. It can be muddy, and we can potentially spook skittish birds.

If you are interested in doing bird citizen science, keep an eye out in this newsletter for information about projects that welcome citizen scientists. It is a rewarding and interesting pursuit. ▀

## ***Bluebird Boxes continued from page 8***

Woodworking leaders John Renzelman and Jim Norfleet, along with Rich Barker, Doug Bowman, Al Head, Jon Horne, Debra Houts, Dennis Murphy, Rusty Olson, and Pat Pilz donated hand-crafted bluebird boxes. Thanks also to NextHomeVirtual.Com Real Estate for donating the \$75, \$50, and \$25 prize money that went to the first, second, and third place winners of the judged contest. Doug Bowman captured the First-Place ribbon for his lathe-turned cylindrical birdhouse. Second Place went to



**Photo by B. Ackerman**

Debra Houts for the A-frame birdhouse with twigs and antler, and Third Place went to Rusty Olson for his Siberian elm log cabin bird house.

The bird houses do not auction themselves. This year, 19 BCAS members worked at the booth over the week to talk with fair attendees: Sandy Beranich, Caroline Evans, Stephen Fisher, Bill Harris, Gayle Johnson, Pete Loncar, Rebecca Kindred, Lynn Lewis, Don Marsh, Todd Miller, Dennis Murphy, Carol Pierce, Verlee Sanders, Sallie and Ron Thoreson, Dian Torphy, Marilyn Westerdahl and Fred Simon, and me. We got to talk to many people about the boxes and about lots of other bird and Audubon topics. We would love to have YOU help at our booth in July next year! ▀.

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### Please remember to renew your membership!

Local memberships expire December 31.  
Please pay online or by check and extend  
your membership through December  
2025. Dues paid to the Black Canyon  
Audubon Chapter stay in the chapter and  
help fund activities, public outreach, and  
more!

#### Black Canyon Audubon Society (NAS Chapter D14) Chapter Membership Form

Local Audubon chapter members may participate in all chapter activities, receive the chapter newsletter *Canyon Wrenderings*, and vote on chapter issues. Annual membership dues are \$20 for individual and \$30 for family membership. These annual dues remain local. If you are a member of National Audubon, you are already a member of BCAS!

(Check one)      Renewal ☐ New Member ☐

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