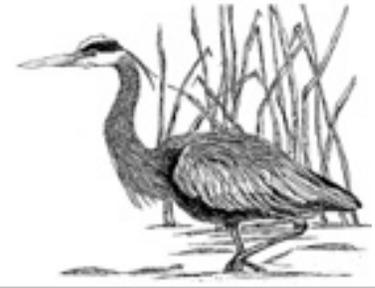


# Chukar Chatter



## The Grand Valley Audubon Society Newsletter

### Remembering Helen

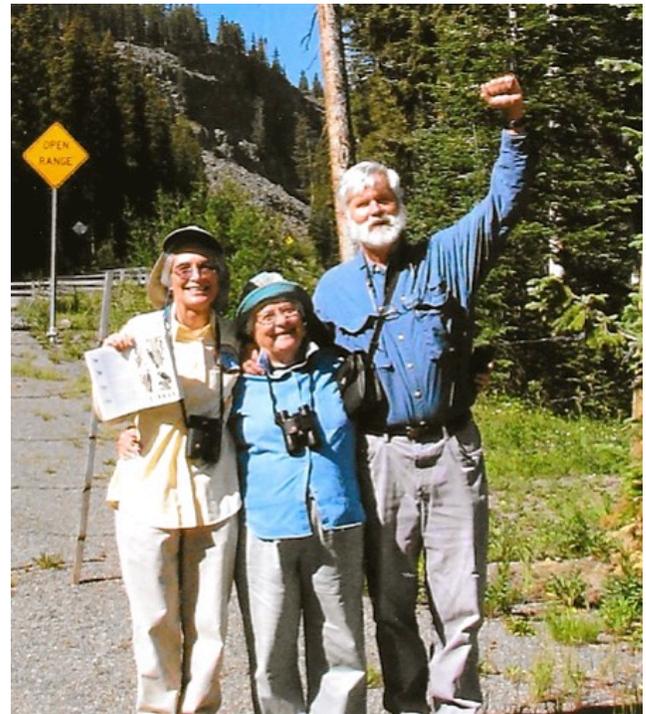
Special by Kathleen McGinley

**Grand Valley Audubon Society** lost a long-time member, leader, and supporter when Helen Traylor passed away on February 2, 2017. Helen was an avid birdwatcher and a founding member of the Audubon Society of Western Colorado, formed in 1972. As a firm advocate for preservation of natural areas, Helen served on the **Colorado Riverfront Commission** and **Colorado Natural Areas Council** for several years.

Helen also made enormous contributions to the beginnings of the **Riverfront Trail**. In 1985, Mesa County was awarded grant money for trail construction. Since the Parks Department had recently been abolished and the Riverfront Commission was not yet in existence, the county needed a sponsoring organization for the new trail. As president of the club, Helen was approached to see if the **Grand Valley Audubon Society** would sponsor the trail, guarantee assistance with maintenance, and provide trash pick-up. Through Helen's efforts and enthusiasm, the Audubon Society agreed to sponsor the trail.

Helen then planned numerous brush-clearing work days to get trail construction started. Volunteers from Audubon and other organizations showed up with chain saws, hand saws, shovels, and even machetes to clear the way. Both Helen and her husband, Charles, worked diligently on the project. After the trail was asphalted, Helen organized more work days to build retaining walls and other features.

She also enlisted a group of volunteers to do trail duty and pick up trash for two weeks every six months. Now, 31 years later, with the excellent scheduling of Cecelia Barr, Audubon volunteers are still cleaning the trail and keeping it nice for the community.



July 29, 2008 on Grand Mesa -- Helen Traylor (center) finally sees her first (and only) American Three-toed Woodpecker with Ron Lambeth and Kathleen McGinley!

Thanks to Helen's leadership, enthusiasm, organization, and persistence, the Audubon Trail became the first section of a wonderful trail system in Mesa County.

On a personal note, I was privileged to be Helen's friend, birding buddy, and travel companion for 36 years. She was a delightful person, easy to be with, so interested and interesting. Helen's positive attitude in all aspects of life, and death, is truly inspiring.

## Why We Need A Strong EPA excerpted from Audubon Magazine

Editor's Note: The full article dated January 17, 2017 was written by Hannah Waters and is available at the Audubon website <http://www.audubon.org/news/why-we-need-strong-epa>.

The **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** was founded in 1970 to enforce new environmental laws passed by Congress to protect people and wildlife from pollution. Before the EPA was founded, factories dumped waste directly into waterways and black smoke streamed from industrial stacks. Here are just some of the ways the EPA has kept our drinking water clean, our breathing air clear, and the environment safe for birds and wildlife.

### Environmental Poisons

In the 1960s, birds became potent symbols of the way human industry infiltrated the environment and threatened human health. After World War II, the use of the pesticide DDT became widespread in U.S. agriculture. Rainfall washed the pesticide from fields into streams, where it was absorbed by plants and fish, and then consumed by raptors and other birds. Bald Eagles that ingested DDT laid eggs with shells so weak that parents crushed them just by sitting on the nest. By 1963, less than 500 nesting pairs of Bald Eagles survived.



Photo: National Geographic

After Rachel Carson publicized the effects of DDT in her 1962 book *Silent Spring*, it wasn't hard for Americans to imagine the myriad health problems caused by blindly consuming the offerings of industry. Soon, research provided evidence DDT could be [linked to certain cancers](#). In 1972, the EPA limited the use of the pesticide. Within a few decades, Bald Eagle populations (and other affected species) recovered.

### Smog and Air Pollution

In the 1950s and 1960s, people in Los Angeles breathed some of the dirtiest air in the world. Today, thanks to the Clean Air Act, it's much cleaner—although there's still more work to do.

Major amendments to the Clean Air Act, passed by Congress in 1970, called on the newly formed EPA to set national standards for healthy levels of common air pollutants. The agency helped states put together plans to reduce pollution from sources like cars, power plants, and other polluting industries by installing new technologies to capture particle pollution and dangerous gases and reduce emissions. As a result, today's vehicles are 99 percent cleaner for common pollutants, and new power plants are 90 percent cleaner for dangerous gases, according to the EPA. Studies have shown that the Clean Air Act saves hundreds of thousands of lives every year, while saving Americans trillions of dollars in healthcare costs.

### Clean Waterways and Wetlands

In 1969, an oil slick on Ohio's Cuyahoga River caught fire and became a symbol of the country's abundant water pollution. At the time, factories regularly discharged pollution and sewage directly into rivers killing aquatic life and turning waterways into cesspools. Outcry about water pollution led to the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972 making it unlawful to dump pollution into navigable waters without a permit, seeking to make all U.S. waters "fishable and swimmable" by 1985. The EPA set standards for how clean water should be, and worked with local authorities and companies to design programs to clean wastewater, redesign sewer systems, and restore degraded rivers and lakes.

## Why We Need A Strong EPA continued

### Carbon Pollution and Climate Change

While black smoke is a rarer sight today than it was in 1970, not all pollution is visible to the human eye. Fossil fuel-powered industries continue to emit colorless greenhouse gases—such as carbon dioxide and methane—into the atmosphere. These pollutants prevent heat in our atmosphere from escaping to space, and as a result the planet is warming and its climate is changing, with dire consequences. Rising temperatures threaten the habitats birds need by redistributing their food and shelter, while rising seas encroach inland and put wetlands and beaches at risk. In North America, climate change threatens the survival of over 300 bird species, according to Audubon scientists.

In 2012, the Supreme Court upheld an EPA finding that greenhouse gases threaten public health, and that the U.S. government is required to regulate them under the Clean Air Act.

The EPA's progress on cleaning the country's air and waterways in the past 40 years has been remarkable. But carbon pollution is a different beast; the impacts of climate change cannot be undone once they're set into motion. If we want to see similar progress with carbon pollution and avoid the worst impacts—including forced migration, habitat loss, and rising seas—we need to keep our focus on the long-term gains for everyone instead of short-term profit for the few. And to do that, we need a strong EPA.

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### Erasure

This January meadow empties me.  
 Winter has erased what three seasons drew—  
 took sound & smell & heat  
 down to this sketch tablet.

Down to three quarters myth,  
 one quarter truth & two magpies,  
 who so love a mystery, perched  
 like Rorschach's on red-barked willows.

Against absence, they ask the questions  
 they never tire of, of what is this?  
 and why that? Of course, they say  
 there are no right or wrong answers.

But of course, there are.

Frank Coons

### GVAS Conservation Alert List

GVAS maintains a Conservation Alert List notifying participants of critical environmental concerns. Alerts usually ask for participants to call or email local representatives regarding significant conservation issues. In the past, alerts were sent 3-4 times a year; during current times the frequency may be several times a month.

If you would like to be added to the Conservation Alert List, contact Nic Korte, Conservation chair, at [nkorte1@hotmail.com](mailto:nkorte1@hotmail.com).

### Are you on our email list?

Our **Members & Friends of Audubon** (fondly referred to as MFOA) sends out monthly reminders and alerts to various birding events and activities. It is an easy way to stay connected (and not too intrusive.) If you are not receiving our emails and would like to simply send a request to [karen.levad@gmail.com](mailto:karen.levad@gmail.com) and she'll add you to the list.

## The President's Corner

### New Possibilities and Partnerships in 2017!

The right combination of opportunity, timing and talent during the month of January has given our Chapter some refreshing new possibilities. With the urging of Allison Holloran and Abby Burk of *Audubon Rockies* and the tireless persistence and writing skills of both Abby and our Executive Coordinator, Meredith Walker, we raced to the January 31st deadline with an application for a *Five Star Urban Waters Restoration Program Grant*. This is a big deal!

If successful, our \$50,000 contribution would become a \$100,000 award. This grant could breathe new life and opportunity into the 57 acres of riparian habitat owned by Grand Valley Audubon adjacent to Connected Lakes State Park. These former gravel pits, having been nurtured and transformed over the years by the energies and vision of Bob Wilson, Susan Rittenhouse and many, many others are used daily and in all seasons by walkers, birders, photographers and fishermen. Because the land lies in the floodway of the Colorado River, an earlier plan for a Nature Center building is not viable.

The grant application forced our Board to define and articulate improvement goals and to devise community-based projects that would improve the land and allow for broader involvement. In other words: **THINK BIG!!**

We proposed six community based projects: floating islands in the large pond to improve bird habitat for nesting species; adding water infrastructure to improve the quality of the ponds; establishing an educational pollinator garden; upgrades to the existing birding trail on the north (Ela section) property; improving

wetland habitat for priority bird species, including Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Cinnamon Teal and American Avocet; and establishing ongoing water and wildlife citizen science programs.

This is all rather breathtaking in scope. Grant applications such as this one have a specific format and conditions that must be met to even be considered. Among the requirements in this case was the recruitment of 5 diverse partners to contribute a variety of expertise to the project. Drawing on the great collaborations we'd had in past projects, and thanks to Abby and Meredith's connections and ideas, we received firm commitments from **TEN** partner organizations including *Colorado Parks and Wildlife*, *Western Colorado Conservation Corps*, *High Desert Riparian Nursery*, *Ducks Unlimited*, *The Tamarisk Coalition*, and *CSU Extension Service*.

Although we won't know the outcome until July, I'm heartened by how much we have learned from the process. The Nature Preserve feels alive with new potential and possibilities for renewal. This little gem of ours, so close to downtown, has been the source of great ideas and dashed hopes for Grand Valley Audubon leadership. Even if we don't receive this grant, we will have laid a solid groundwork for other grant opportunities. I feel confident that our well-defined vision and specific plans will engage our community of nature lovers and build ongoing partnerships. Stay tuned as we keep you informed on this outcome and please consider how you might contribute to these new possibilities for our Chapter and the community.

Happy Spring!

*Cary Atwood*

## Spring Birding Adventures

**Please Note: Pre-registration is required unless otherwise noted! To register please call or email trip leader. Fee: \$10/adult, students and kids under 5 are free. Detailed information is available at our website: [www.audubongv.org](http://www.audubongv.org).**

### Montane Owl Trips

#### Multiple Dates March - May 2017

GVAS will offer 5 montane owl trips this Spring. The trips are limited to 4-5 participants (one extra car plus the leader's). The trips will go to various locations in Mesa County in search of Northern Pygmy-Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Flammulated Owl, and Western Screech-Owl. Trip leader: Mike Henwood, (720) 840-5070 or [mhawkhen@gmail.com](mailto:mhawkhen@gmail.com).

#### Trip dates and locations:

March 9: Escalante Canyon/Escalante Forks  
March 29: Pinon Mesa  
April 19: Pinon Mesa  
May 18: Uncompahgre Plateau  
May 24: Uncompahgre Plateau

### Sagebrush Sparrow Field Trips

#### April 7 and April 8, 8am-12pm, Meet at Fruita Rest Stop off I-70

Explore the Utah/CO state line to watch/listen to singing Sagebrush Sparrows. Then Brewster's Ridge looking for raptors and a Long-billed Curlew. Return by noon. Trip limited to 10 participants. Trip leader: Mike Henwood, (720) 840-5070 or [mhawkhen@gmail.com](mailto:mhawkhen@gmail.com)

### Valley Owls: Burrowing Owls, Western Screech-Owl, Great-Horned Owl, Barn Owl

#### Saturday April 8, 2017, 2:30-8 or 8:30 PM

Search for Western Screech Owls, Great-Horned Owls and Barn Owls traveling I-70 to Mack and west on 6&50 and back through Connected Lakes. Car-pooling is required for safety reasons. Please bring all water and snacks.

Leader: Nic Korte, [nkorte1@hotmail.com](mailto:nkorte1@hotmail.com), (970) 242-3779

### Boreal Owl Prowl

#### Saturday April 8, 9pm-1am

We'll leave town at 9pm and go to the Grand Mesa National Forest. We'll work our way across the Mesa, stopping to listen for Boreal Owls. Participants need to be prepared for a late night cold weather. The prowl will conclude at midnight (possibly sooner) depending on the success of finding and hearing the Boreal Owl. Leaders: Mark & Denise Vollmar, [Lone-Pine@charter.net](mailto:Lone-Pine@charter.net) or 970-623-4488.

## More Spring Birding Adventures!

**Spring Bird Walks** will be happening again this year on Wednesday and Saturday mornings (8:30 AM) starting April 19- May 13. Final schedule is being developed so check our website, FB, and email notices for meeting locations.

### Migratory Bird Day Saturday May 13

Dave Price is lining up a great group of leaders to scour the Grand Valley for migrating birds on this international day of ornithological observation. Birders of all levels are encouraged to join in. Details will be available on our website, FB and MFOA emails.

**Western Screech Owl Banding Friday May 19** Kim Potter will once again head to GJ to band screech owls in various locations in the Grand Valley. The adventure will start at 8:30 AM. Starting location is yet to be determined. We'll keep you posted.

## Science & Conservation News by Nic Korte

**A PERSONAL CONCERN:** I have worked within the *Department of Energy (DOE)* system on long-term pollution programs, mostly created during and just after World War II. I've had a Q-clearance and have been within most of the DOE sites. In the Reagan years, non-technical leadership led to grievous waste of money as buildings were built for projects that never occurred, and knowledgeable people with long-term experience lost jobs in an attempt for more privatization.

What happens when you change contractors constantly is that the new contractor does too many things all over again. President Trump has appointed Rick Perry to run DOE and it wasn't until after acceptance that Perry learned most of DOE's budget went to nuclear issues and high-energy physics. Read this editorial written by the most recent Secretary of Energy and decide if Rick Perry is an adequate replacement. Even though Perry is "in," take the time to call our representatives and tell them what you think of this choice. Hopefully, there won't be safety or international issues that endanger lives, but it is unlikely taxpayer funds will be expended appropriately with such unknowledgeable leadership. (<http://science.sciencemag.org/content/early/2016/11/30/science.aal4864>)

**WHY NO HARRIS SPARROWS ON OUR CHRISTMAS COUNT?** I recall that in the past we had Harris Sparrow frequently on our Christmas counts. I checked the Cornell website, "the species declined by 1.8% per year between 1965 and 2003 (amounting to a cumulative decline of 49% over that period). Additional surveys conducted since then show a continued decline. The decline is not well-explained because these birds breed so far north, but global warming on their breeding grounds is implicated.



**FAITHFUL FALCONS:** Early in the last century, Peregrine Falcons lived in cliffs and bluffs along the Mississippi River. By the mid-1960's they were wiped out by DDT-thinning of their eggshells. In the 1980's, scientists repopulated the mid-West by releasing birds in cities such as Chicago. Because there is so much prey (a good use for feral pigeons!), scientists noticed the birds were nesting much closer together than they typically do in truly wild settings. Because of the high competition for nest sites and mates, scientists wondered whether there might be higher rates of infidelity. Paternity tests performed on 350 Peregrines showed that despite a few indiscretions, falcon pairs faithfully shared hunting duties and egg-incubating responsibilities ([Chemical and Engineering News: August 8, 2016](#)).



**CONSIDER THIS:** Limiting use of DDT was no easy undertaking. To learn more I recommend *The Real Story Behind the War Against DDT* by Charles Wurzer. A review is available in [Audubon: http://www.audubon.org/news/the-real-story-behind-war-against-ddt](http://www.audubon.org/news/the-real-story-behind-war-against-ddt).

## Spring Program Schedule

### March 20:

#### Parks and Recreation Riverfront Update

1st Presbyterian Church  
3940 27 1/2 Road  
7-9 PM

Traci Wieland, Recreation Superintendent with the City of Grand Junction, is responsible for overseeing recreation programs and facilities and special projects such as new park development, master planning, and grant writing. Traci will provide an update on the efforts to develop Las Colonias Park and other nearby riverfront properties such as Jarvis, Riverside, and more.

### April 17:

#### Dr. David Inouye: How climate change is affecting wildflowers and their pollinators

Colorado Mesa University, room TBD  
7-9 PM

David has worked at the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory since 1971, and is focusing on projects that involve long-term observations of the timing and abundance of flowering, how they are changing in response to the changing climate, and how those changes are affecting consumers like pollinators. He has worked on bumble bees, hummingbirds, and other pollinators, and on the population biology of some species of wildflowers, tagging individual plants that he has followed since as far back as 1973.

## Become a Member!

## Invite a Friend!

### The Grand Valley Audubon Society Local Membership Application

Please enroll me/us in the Grand Valley Audubon Society!

Name/s: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Individual \$35    \_\_\_\_\_ Family \$40    \_\_\_\_\_ Student \$20

\_\_\_\_\_ I want to donate more to support the mission of Grand Valley Audubon Society! Please accept my tax deductible donation!

Make checks payable to GVAS and mail to PO Box 1211, Grand Jct. CO 81502 or apply on-line at [www.audubongv.org](http://www.audubongv.org).

Join or donate to National Audubon Society directly and receive the AUDUBON Magazine! Call 1-844-428-3826 or go online to [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org). Use chapter code D04.

Grand Valley Audubon  
PO Box 1211  
Grand Junction, CO 81502-1211

Website: [www.audubongv.org](http://www.audubongv.org)

**Check your expiration date!**

**Renew today!**



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### Chukar Chatter

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This newsletter is published four times a year:  
Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer  
by the Grand Valley Audubon Society,  
a chapter of the National Audubon Society.

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Board Member	Volunteer needed!	



#### GVAS Executive Coordinator

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The Grand Valley Audubon Society strives to foster an appreciation for birds and other wildlife, preserve a diversity of habitats, and provide a sustainable healthy environment through education, research and individual action.