



# *Great Blue Herald*

*Grand Junction, Colorado*

## *End of Year Appeal*

Grand Valley Audubon is a community of birders and nature lovers and this year we learned we are even larger than we thought. In the second half of 2018, we embarked on a major reorganization effort in order to assess our chapter's strengths and better serve our supporters. Devoted and hardworking volunteers consolidated the various list of folks that are affiliated in some way with Grand Valley Audubon. It was staggering to learn we have over 900 individuals associated with our local chapter. Wow! That was wonderful news. It tells us that there are a lot of folks who are interested in and support our mission.

Here is what we accomplished in 2018 to support the three prongs of our mission:

### ***GVAS strives to foster an appreciation for birds and other wildlife***

Throughout the year, GVAS's talented field trip leaders organized and led a variety of excursions to get both novice and skilled birders outside and appreciating all the wonderful birds in our area. Field trips included Tumacac bac raptor viewing trips in the winter, owling adventures, Spring bird walks in the Grand Valley and excursions to the Grand Mesa.

Our Bird Banding Education Program, headed up by Cary Atwood, introduced a whole new generation to the wonder of birds. Almost 800 area fourth graders enjoyed a field trip to our banding station at Connected Lakes, where they saw birds up close and learned about their habitat and ecology. During the mid-September to mid-October banding season a cadre of dedicated volunteers made sure our bird bander, Adam, and educators Tracy and Renee had daily support.

### ***GVAS works to preserve a diversity of habitats***

This year we launched ambitious projects to improve the habitat on our Audubon Nature Preserve property. With the support of Patagonia and National Audubon's *Plants for Birds* program we planted over 50 native shrubs and trees on the property and built a demonstration garden that showcasing native plants that benefit birds. Volunteers worked very hard to keep all these plants watered through one of the hottest and driest summers on record. We are really proud of our success in keeping these plants alive as they established.

We were also awarded a grant for over \$30,000 from Colorado Parks and Wildlife *Wetlands for Wildlife* program to help improve the old gravel pit ponds on the southern portion of the Preserve. We are partnering with Ducks Unlimited who will provide the expertise in engineering wetlands that provide ideal habitat for waterfowl and wading birds. In addition, we received a \$2000 grant from the Desert Ecosystem Analysis & Restoration organization to purchase native plants for the revegetation stage of this project.

## **GVAS works to promote a sustainable healthy environment through education, research and individual action**



Our citizen scientists have been busy hard at work this year. GVAS birders participated in two Christmas Bird Counts and the Annual Spring Bird Count organized by Dave Price and compiled by Jackson Trappett. We also continued our Western Screech-owl monitoring program headed by Nic Korte, installing nest boxes, counting and banding owls in the Grand Valley. The result is that GVAS remains Number 1 owl-wise in the nation for the 2018 Christmas Bird Count census.

Our monthly public programs tackled important conservation topics including climate change and endangered fish recovery as well as engaging topics like bird photography. We even hosted the National Audubon's 2018 *Photography Awards Exhibit* at Lithic Bookstore as part of the celebration of the *Year of the Bird*. In addition, our aforementioned Bird Banding Education program brought an appreciation of birds and the importance of preserving habitats to a school-age audience.

Finally we have strengthened our relationships and formed partnerships with a number of conservation oriented organizations who share our goals. These include Ducks Unlimited, RiversEdge West, Audubon Rockies, and Bird Conservancy of the Rockies. Coordinating with these organizations has helped us secure funding and made our conservation efforts more effective.

**All of this was possible because of our wonderful supporters who contribute their time, talents and treasure to make GVAS a vibrant and effective conservation organization. Thank you!**

But, of course, your *continued* support is needed! We need both your volunteer talents and your on-going donations to ensure that local dollars continue to promote conservation, education and bird appreciation here in the Grand Valley. We've made it easier than ever with our new donation management system. All you need to do is go to [audubongv.org](http://audubongv.org), click on the **Support GVAS** tab, and you can both volunteer *and* donate your dollars! This year we are encouraging our supporters to consider making an automatic monthly donation to GVAS. Even a small amount can significantly help our efforts while taking the pressure off your memory and wallet. Please know that whatever you contribute will be appreciated!

We are so excited about our new way of doing business that we're hoping to see 25 birding enthusiasts and GVAS supporters sign up to make a monthly donation.

**Won't you be one of them?**

**Wishing you a Bright & Bird-i-ful 2019!**

The Grand Valley Audubon Board of Directors & Committee Chairs:

Cary Atwood, Larry Collins, Judy West, Stephanie Matlock, Leon Thurman, Dave & Diane Trappett, Colleen Welch along with Chuck Hunt, Nic Korte, Karen Levad, and Meredith Walker

## Area Christmas Bird Counts Planned for Dec. 16 & Jan. 1

Grab your hats and mittens. A warm coat. And, of course, your binoculars. The Christmas Bird Count is your opportunity to join thousands of other bird enthusiasts across the nation in an annual count that not only is fun, but also adds important information about the status of birds.

**What is the Christmas Bird Count?** The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is a long-standing program of the National Audubon Society, with over 100 years of community science involvement. It is an early-winter bird census where thousands of volunteers across the U.S., Canada go out over a 24-hour period on one calendar day to count birds.

Each count takes place in an established 15-mile wide diameter circle. Volunteers follow specified routes counting every bird they see or hear all day. We are fortunate to have 2 circles that we monitor. The Grand Junction count held on December 16 has a nice variety of habitat: riparian, desert, agricultural and urban. The Mesa count held on January 1 brings volunteers to the higher and colder altitude of the Grand Mesa with a different variety of species.

Dave Price has been working hard lining up leaders who will guide participants through the designated segments of the CBC circle identifying as many species as possible and estimating the numbers seen. All of that information will be compiled and submitted to National Audubon.

To participate in the Dec. 16 Grand Junction Count, select an area that interests you in the chart (page 4)

and contact the leader by either phone, email or on-line! (it is easy to register on-line. Look for the cute owl with the Santa hat on the GVAS home page and click on the Events page to register and then follow the instructions.) Closer to the count date, the leaders will provide you with specific details about meeting times and location.

For the New Year's Day Grand Mesa Count, meet at the Blink Coffee Shop in the town of Mesa at 9 a.m. Teams will be formed then...over coffee. How civilized!

Check Audubon's **Christmas Bird Count** website. It has a wealth of information about this event.

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**Don't Forget the Owls!** Mesa County has ranked consistently high nationally in the number of Western Screech Owls counted each year. That's due in large part to Nic Korte and his team of volunteers who commit to providing owl boxes throughout the Grand Valley so that nesting and roosting sites are consistently available for these owls. And the team members also track locations of the owls in the area. CBC Owl Counters are given specific routes to check in the early morning hours. Some folks choose to do the pre-dawn owl count, go enjoy a hot breakfast, and then join another team of CBC counters in a designated sector of the count circle. What a great way to spend a December day! If you're interested in helping or to learn more contact Nic at [nkorte1@hotmail.com](mailto:nkorte1@hotmail.com) or 970-242-3779.

### Christmas Bird Count Chili Supper!

Barbara and Dick Churchley will generously host a compilation dinner at their home on the evening of December 16. It is a great opportunity to warm up, share stories and enjoy the company of other birding enthusiasts. No need to bring anything except your enthusiasm for a day well spent!

Time: 5:30-8:00 p.m.

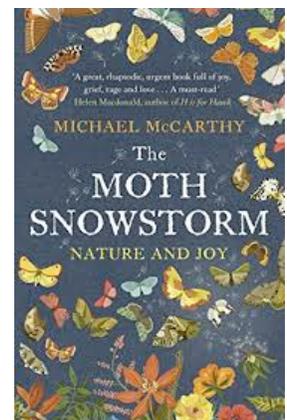
Where: 982 Kite Court- 2 miles north of I-70 just off 22 Rd.

Survey Area	Leader	Phone	Email
Owling - multiple areas	Nic Korte	970-242-3779	<a href="mailto:nkorte1@hotmail.com">nkorte1@hotmail.com</a>
1a Upper Colorado River	FULL		
1a Lower Colorado River	FULL		
2 Adobe Creek	Peter Robinson	970-250-0409	<a href="mailto:parobinson66@hotmail.com">parobinson66@hotmail.com</a>
3 Appleton	Dave Price	970-640-4508	<a href="mailto:djprice50@msn.com">djprice50@msn.com</a>
4 Connected Lakes	Lee Stigen & Cecelia Barr	970-241-3905	<a href="mailto:lstigen531@gmail.com">lstigen531@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:cbarr1951@gmail.com">cbarr1951@gmail.com</a>
5 D Road	Mike Henwood	720-840-5070	<a href="mailto:mhawkhen@gmail.com">mhawkhen@gmail.com</a>
6 Fruita Northeast	Jackson Trappett	970-433-1758	<a href="mailto:jacksontrappett@gmail.com">jacksontrappett@gmail.com</a>
7 Fruita Southeast	Dave & Diane Trappett	970-241-1581	<a href="mailto:dentrada@msn.com">dentrada@msn.com</a>
8 GJ North	Janet Galenstein	413-250-4101	<a href="mailto:jagbell2@gmail.com">jagbell2@gmail.com</a>
9 Gunnison River	Kathleen McGinley	970-712-0980	<a href="mailto:mcginley@acsol.net">mcginley@acsol.net</a>
10 Monument East	JT Toolen	970-985-9089	<a href="mailto:jtoolen@bresnan.net">jtoolen@bresnan.net</a>
11 Monument West	Doug Diekman	970-858-2373	<a href="mailto:dadiekmn@msn.com">dadiekmn@msn.com</a>
12 Orchard Mesa	Denise & Mark Vollmar	970-210-6421	<a href="mailto:Lone-Pine@charter.net">Lone-Pine@charter.net</a>
13 Redlands East	Mike Campbell	970-846-8517	<a href="mailto:mcampbell641@gmail.com">mcampbell641@gmail.com</a>
14 Redlands West	Ron Lambeth	970-773-1233	<a href="mailto:rolambeth@yahoo.com">rolambeth@yahoo.com</a>

## Book Review by Nic Korte

### **The Moth Snowstorm: Nature and Joy, by Michael McCarthy**

My favorite podcast is NPR's "On Being" with Krista Tippett which usually addresses philosophical topics. One day last summer, the guest was Michael McCarthy--the longtime "environmental editor" for a newspaper in the UK. I enjoyed the podcast (<https://onbeing.org/programs/nature-joy-and-human-becoming-may2018/>) so much that I purchased the book on which it was based: *The Moth Snowstorm*, subtitled "Nature and Joy." I recommend the book with a qualification. The book is beautifully written. McCarthy paints some exquisite word pictures demonstrating the rapture he has experienced in nature, and how those experiences helped him cope with personal tragedy. My qualification is that despite the author's stated attempt not to do so, much of the book is an elegy for experiences no longer possible. I believe the author intended his stories of joy to inspire readers to protect what remains. They do. But, his descriptions of what has been lost are sobering.



## Some Things to Look Forward To:

### Tumacanbac

A variety of raptors (hawks, eagles, falcons) winter in the Grand Valley with the open fields and desert among their favored habitats. Tumacanbac is our most popular field trip conducted annually since 1987. To ensure a positive birding experience we do limit our trips to 10 participants per trip.

Groups will meet at the west parking area at Canyon View Park off of 24 Rd at 9 a.m. Carpools will be arranged from there. We'll return by 3. Dress for the weather, bring food and drinks.

A donation to Grand Valley Audubon will be appreciated.

To sign up, please call or email the leader of the date you prefer.

### Tumacanbac Leaders & Dates

- **Wednesday January 23** – Dave Price 970-640-4508 [djprice50@msn.com](mailto:djprice50@msn.com)
- **Sunday January 27** – Brett Walker 406-546-4709 (text message only please) or email [pancaminando@hotmail.com](mailto:pancaminando@hotmail.com)
- **Saturday February 2** – Nic Korte 970-250-8144 [nkorte1@hotmail.com](mailto:nkorte1@hotmail.com)
- **Thursday February 7** - Mike Henwood 720-840-5070 [mhawken@gmail.com](mailto:mhawken@gmail.com)
- **Sunday February 10** - Mike Henwood 720-840-5070 [mhawken@gmail.com](mailto:mhawken@gmail.com)

### February GVAS Program

Feb. 18, 2019

6:30 p.m. Social 7:00 p.m. Program

### *Palm Oil & Tropical Land Use: What You Can Do*

GVAS will show a 30-minute documentary produced by indigenous people in Colombia describing the social and environmental devastation of palm oil production followed by a discussion led by Nic Korte.



### SANDHILL CRANES COMING TO EVENING ROOST

Tues., Jan 8 and Wed., Jan. 16

Mike Henwood, Leader

Meet at City Market on Orchard mesa (SW corner) at 3 PM

We'll return by 7PM

Each trip is limited to 10 participants.

You must register with Mike before the trip.

[mhawken@gmail.com](mailto:mhawken@gmail.com) or 720-840-5070

Turn to Page 7 for more information on viewing SandHill Cranes in the Delta Area

### Grand Valley Owls with Nic Korte

Feb 7 at the central Mesa County Library in GJ, Nic will be presenting at 6:30 "Grand Valley Owls" highlighting the work and the success of the Grand Valley Audubon's monitoring of Western Screech Owls.

Free & Open to the Public.

## Science & Conservation News by Nic Korte

### CONSERVATION RELIANT:

I'm sorry to see the phrase, "conservation reliant" come into regular use, although it is better than the phrase "now-extinct." An example of a "conservation reliant" bird is the Kirtland's Warbler recently highlighted in the journal [Bird Conservation](#). Down to fewer than 200 singing males in the mid-70s, the population has rebounded to at least 2000 breeding pairs. This is another example of the success of the Endangered Species Act (ESA)!

The Kirtland's Warbler is soon expected to follow the Black-capped Vireo and be removed from the "endangered" list. The problem is that both species are "conservation reliant," meaning that once ESA funding is removed, an entity other than the federal government must pay for the measures now proven necessary to maintain a viable population. In the case of Kirtland's warblers those measures include prescribed burns and cowbird trapping. Private groups, such as the *American Bird Conservancy*, are organizing the necessary fund-raising for the Kirtland's Warbler.

The question has to be addressed: *Should a species be removed from the ESA when constant human intervention is required to maintain a sufficient population?* Intense pressure to cut the federal budget for conservation efforts is driving the delisting efforts. If you do not agree, please let our local leaders know, or help elect some different ones.

**WHITHER GMO/NUANCE:** I've been silent on the GMO issue in my columns. I think both sides of the usual argument ignore the real issue. I have an analytical chemistry background which leads me to accept the argument that GMO produced foods are safe to eat. My reasons for opposing GMO are that we don't know what will happen when GMO-crops are grown. Supporters still insist that GMO crops won't "escape" from where they were originally-planted. Unfortunately, escapes continue, as with a recent report about a golf course turf-grass engineered to endure herbicide treatment. The grass "escaped" from seed farms and is costing nearby farmers hundreds of thousands of dollars to manage—often with other pesticides. It has already been

admitted that eradication of this turf grass is impossible. Predictably, the company responsible, Scotts-Miracle-GRO, has been relieved of responsibility by the Trump Administration.

### AMERICA'S EXCEPTIONAL USE OF PESTICIDES:

I have always been bothered by the phrase "American Exceptionalism" at least when it is used as a means of insisting that anything the US does is better than what is done elsewhere.

The Trump Administration has either cancelled or delayed several regulations with respect to pesticides implicated in honeybee death or with "drift," whereby unintended plants are affected. Those policy decisions emphasize increased and continued use of chemicals.

A recent article in the journal [Science](#) recounted France's government-led effort to cut pesticide use by 50%. The original plan, begun ten years ago, is now considered a failure, in part, it is admitted because funding was insufficient. What was the response of the French government to this "failure?" Try again! A revised plan, relying on many of the lessons learned in the first phase has now been implemented. Hard to imagine that happening here under the current administration.

**THE RIGHT THING TO DO:** The late ecologist and philosopher Garret Hardin is famous for "The Tragedy of the Commons," his postulate as to why lands for which many have a claim always results in ruin. Many years after his initial publication, he made a modification which stated that "unregulated commons" always led to ruin. Against that backdrop, the anti-regulatory fervor in the US is, indeed, tragic. For example, according to [Chemical and Engineering News](#), the US burns about 13% of its garbage to produce energy. Because of increased regulations and fees regarding landfills, the EU burns approximately 25% of its garbage, Germany more than a third and Norway and Sweden more than half.

### Another Advantage of Logging In

We've already mentioned that you can register for the Christmas Bird Count on-line...any time. Day or Night. In your jammies! By logging in you can also tell us how you prefer to get information from GVAS.

- email only
- Postal only
- Either email or postal is fine

For years we've tried to figure out a way to communicate with you in the manner you prefer. We've also wanted to go paperless. But we didn't have the tools to do it effectively or accurately. Now we do!

By using [www.audubongv.org](http://www.audubongv.org) to sign up for an event, or volunteer, or donate you create a LOG IN link that allows you to make sure that we have your most up-to-date information. Logging In provides a variety of options...Including choosing how you want to hear from us!

## *Sand Hill Cranes Viewing -- Delta Area by Mike Henwood*

Each winter several thousand Sandhill Cranes roost in the area along the Gunnison River west of Delta. The best viewing is from Thanksgiving through mid- February, although there are cranes present earlier in the fall and into early March (just not as many). Sandhill Cranes roost in shallow water at night and use the Gunnison River in this area to roost for the night. When the ponds and lakes in the area aren't frozen, they will also use them to roost and spend the night. During the day the Sandhill Cranes utilize farm lands and fields to feed traveling up the Uncompahgre River to the Olathe and Montrose areas, up the North Fork of the Gunnison River towards Hotchkiss, and down the Gunnison River to the Grand Valley. Late in the afternoon the Sandhill Cranes return to the Delta area to roost. It is quite a sight to see and hear them returning to the roost area the last hour before dark - 5 here, then 15, maybe 20, another 8 over there...they just keep coming back to the area that last hour before dark. The sights and sounds are awesome and a thing of beauty.

**Directions:** From Grand Junction take Highway 50 to Delta. As you near Delta, you will pass a power line crossing Highway 50. Shortly after this the road curves and there is a right hand turn lane for Delta County G50 Road. Turn right here and follow G 50 Road. You will pass

Escalante State Wildlife Area on the south side of the road, a large lake across the road to the north opposite the SWA, then some farm lands, a narrow road (1250 Road) heading north back toward Highway 50, a small pond just east of 1250 Road, and then some farm and ranch buildings before the road curves and crosses the Gunnison River and the Railroad tracks.



There is a large pullout on the north side of the road at this curve, and is the safest and best place to view the cranes, although cranes can be seen on both sides of the road between the Escalante SWA and the Gunnison River crossing.

**Caution:** The speed limit is 50 mph on this section of G50 Road. It is a busy road without much of a shoulder. Only pull over in areas where there is a wide turnout and you can pull your vehicle completely off the road. Also, this is all private land (except for the Escalante SWA), and the farmers resent folks pulling over on their private land, blocking gates, and parking in areas where there is no pullout.

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### The Great Blue Herald

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by the Grand Valley Audubon Society,  
a chapter of the National Audubon Society.

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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.