



# Great Blue Herald

Grand Junction, Colorado

## Rethinking Membership: Keeping Your Dollars Local

When you choose to become a member of Grand Valley Audubon, we suspect that you recognize the value of local membership. So do we. That's why the GVAS Board is restructuring our chapter membership into one that will provide increased resources on behalf of birds, wildlife, our Preserve property and our community.

**DID YOU KNOW:** When you join the National Audubon Society (NAS), you automatically become a member of Grand Valley Audubon Society. Unfortunately our chapter receives very little of your \$20 annual membership dues, typically less than \$2. NAS is an important and needed conservation voice on the national scene as it advocates on behalf of birds, wildlife and habitat efforts across the U.S. Chapters, like GVAS, provide the programs, education and conservation efforts at the local level.

**A LITTLE BACKGROUND:** For many years, chapter volunteers have done the often frustrating work of reconciling both local and national membership information, as some people are local chapter members only, others became members when they joined NAS, and some joined both organizations separately.

Managing annual membership renewal reminders has proven to be a daunting, time consuming, and frustrating task.

**FROM MEMBERSHIP TO FRIENDSHIP:** The GVAS Board of Directors is implementing a different membership structure in which we invite you to become a contributing *Friend of Grand Valley Audubon Society* (GVAS) instead of joining or renewing annually as a member. There will be no annual dues and your friendship will not expire like a membership (unless you request to be removed from our mailing list.)

*Friends of Grand Valley Audubon* will be asked (infrequently) to donate either financially (at whatever level they choose) and/or volunteer their time. 100 percent of your contribution remains local and directly supports GVAS and our local chapter efforts. All Friends of GVAS will receive the *Great Blue Herald*, our quarterly newsletter.

**HERE'S THE PLAN:** In September, we are test driving a non-profit management program called Neon to help us manage donations and track volunteer hours. Volunteer hours count as in-kind donations when we apply for grants to support our education and habitat restoration programs. The time you donate to the chapter is worth

**MEMBERSHIP CONTINUED:**

money and we need to keep track of all your contributions and make them count!

We will also develop a variety of giving levels, providing people with a wide choice of options to better support our programs and activities. We will include a sustaining level, in which an amount of your choosing could be automatically withdrawn from a bank account or charged to a credit card such as they do with PBS and Public Radio.

Nearly 850 individuals and families are affiliated with GVAS! Tapping more effectively into this source of local giving will supercharge our restoration work on the Preserve, our fall bird banding program and Western Screech Owl projects, and increase the potential to offer more classes, field trips and programs.

**HOW THIS WILL AFFECT YOU:** Well, you'll no longer receive reminders that your membership is about to lapse. You will receive invitations to help support specific activities or programs. You will have more options on how to contribute to GVAS. We will implement an easy to use donation system on our website to streamline the giving process. Your volunteer hours will be tracked more efficiently ensuring that time spent is benefitting GVAS's bottom line. You will rest easy knowing that we've reduced the burden of membership management for chapter volunteers. And you will be partnering with the 850 other folks in the Grand Valley (and beyond) who support our mission "to foster appreciation for birds and other wildlife, preserve a diversity of habitats, and provide a sustainable, healthy environment through education, research and individual action."

## Fall Bird Banding Program Flying High

In collaboration with Colorado Parks & Wildlife and Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, we are again offering a half day field trip for local 4th graders to come and witness science in action during fall migration. Each class pays a fee to visit, but we underwrite the bus transportation fees for each school attending. In addition, our two bird banding educators, Tracy Baron and Renee Herring help students draw connections about bird migration, adaptations and habitat with an interactive nature walk and time with the bird bander.

Our base of operations is Connected Lakes State Park where, beginning Monday, Sept. 17, migrating and resident wild birds including warblers, jays, thrushes and kinglets will be the main attraction.

Bird bander Adam Cupito, along with a great group of assisting volunteers will help weigh, measure and record data on every bird mist-netted during our Monday through Friday season, ending October 12.

This year Public Banding Day will be Saturday, Sept. 29th from 8:00-11:30 am. If you, your family or friends cannot attend on the public day, you are welcome to stop by and get up close and personal before 9:00 a.m. (when students arrive) with wild birds and the important scientific work done at banding stations across the United States each fall and spring. It's truly magical!

## The President's Corner with Cary Atwood

This summer has seen the worst heat, some of the lowest river runoff and most intense fires of our state's history. Smoke from distant and local fires has persisted in the Valley. I'm not an expert on trends, but as a 30-year resident here, I've observed summer heat arriving earlier, persisting longer and winters trending milder. Of the articles I read relating to our current climate, these conditions are the face of our future. The big question is what steps do we take to adapt and become more resilient to these shifts?

Amid this summer intensity, a cadre of dedicated volunteers have pumped water into barrels, watered the many perennials, shrubs and trees planted during April's Earth Day event at the Preserve and kept their fingers crossed all or most will survive into fall and beyond. This sustained effort is grounded in an attempt to grow a diversity of resilient native plants on the property, which have been made possible by a couple of generous grants.

Evaporating right before our eyes, the waters of the north ponds transformed almost overnight from oozing mudflats to lush green basins colonized by thickets of noxious weeds. Our once great semi-wetlands and best bird habitat on the Preserve is gone, baby gone, unless winter precipitation and spring runoff from heavy winter snows feed it. At this point it's a waiting game. We have taken some control by keeping plants alive, but for now must yield to these inevitable cycles.

We will, of course do contract weed spraying, and hope you might join us for fall clean up days in late September and October. Meredith, Leon, Chuck and the many other volunteers who helped with shrub and tree watering are due a tremendous THANK YOU for their efforts and intentions to improve our little slice of riparian habitat.

*Cary Atwood*

### Fall 2018 Public Bird Banding Day

Saturday, September 29

8:00-11:30 a.m.

Connected Lakes State Park\*

Kingfisher Parking Area

**Open to All!**

\*Park entrance fee required to enter park.

### Bird Banding Set Up

Sunday September 16

There is lots to do to get ready for our avian visitors and the 100s of 4th Grade Students who will be coming to our Banding Station.

Primarily net runs need to be cleared and nets need to be set.

A few hours of committed labor should do it.

If you are able to help, please contact Cary Atwood to get the details.

catwood814@gmail.com

## Meet our Audubon Preserve Manager--Chuck Hunt

Charles "Chuck" Hunt has always been a lover of nature and the great outdoors. After many years working as a trim carpenter and cabinet maker in Denver, he specifically chose Grand Junction as his new home because of its great recreational opportunities within and just beyond the city's edge.



Long active in Defenders of Wildlife and the Sierra Club, Chuck was drawn to Grand Valley Audubon's monthly programs on environmental topics as well as the solace and wildness of the Audubon Preserve property. Regular walks around the Preserve encouraged him to share ideas and suggestions about its present and future use.

During Spring stewardship days and Earth Day at the Preserve, Chuck was an enthusiastic and energetic participant. When nominated for volunteer Preserve Manager at our May Chapter meeting, he willingly took on the task.

Since then he's toiled solo and alongside Meredith and other volunteers to fill water barrels in the oppressive summer heat, keeping shrubs and trees from almost certain death. Part of his managerial duties are bi-weekly walkabouts on the Preserve, organize crews for trail and vegetation maintenance, and assess our need for additional tools and other work.

Thank you, Chuck! We appreciate you taking the Preserve under your wing and keeping it wild yet welcoming.

## New Dimension offers Classes for Birders

**New Dimension Lifelong Learning Institute** offers Grand Valley adults 50 and over the opportunity to enroll in a variety of non-credit classes focused on academic and personal enrichment. \$75 fee allows you to select and take as many classes as you wish. Two classes should be of interest to area bird watchers. Register online September 7 at <http://www.newdimensionsgj.org/>

**Birding: Fall Migration in the Grand Valley.** Instructors are Mike Henwood & Kathleen McGinley. Class is open to both beginning and intermediate bird enthusiasts. Participants must have a pair of binoculars and be able to walk a mile on uneven trails. We will bird at a different location each week in search of migrating waterfowl, raptors and songbirds. Class starts on Thursday, September 27, 8:00 a.m. - noon. (September 27-October 11)

**Birdwatching Basics for Beginners.** Instructors are Cary Atwood & Dave Price. New to bird watching? Wonder where to begin? Learn the basics of bird identification in order to identify unfamiliar birds. Learn more about choosing the right binoculars and effective use of a field guide. Get better at developing a practiced eye and ear. Change the way you spend time out of doors. This class includes 4 separate in-the-field sessions birding in different habitats over a 2 week period. Class starts Wednesday, September 26, 9:00 a.m.-noon. (September 26-November 4).

## Book Review by Nic Korte

**The Wizard and the Prophet: Two Remarkable Scientists & Their Dueling** by Charles C. Mann. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2018.

Have you read Charles C. Mann's brilliant book 1491? The author who so aptly described the Americas prior to Columbus has another well-written and researched book: this one about our present and future entitled The Wizard and the Prophet. Prompted by contemplating the future to be encountered by his daughter, Mann writes of two titans of the last century: William Vogt who was an early leader in Conservation/Population Control and Norman Borlaug, often called the father of the Green Revolution. He uses their views of humans and technology to assess energy, water and food supply. The book tackles our basic dilemma: will humans address the future assuming that no matter what the problems "technology will find solutions" or by deciding there are limits to consumption? The book is detailed, thoughtful, well-referenced and mostly dispassionate. I recommend it for anyone wishing to be more knowledgeable on these issues.

## Christmas in August?

With temperatures continuing to soar to triple digits, it seems a bit early to be thinking about December, but dates have been set for our Christmas Bird Counts: **Sunday December 16** for the Grand Junction Count and **Tuesday January 1** for the Mesa Count.

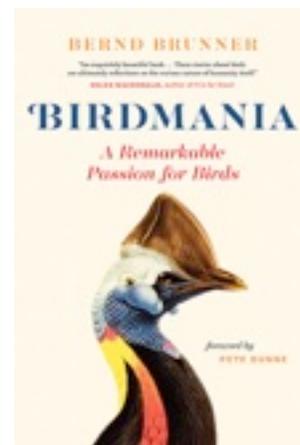
Everyone is welcome to participate, regardless of level of experience. Area teams will be formed. When the roster of area leaders is finalized it will be listed in the Great Blue Herald and on the GVAS website.

We're More Than Just Birds

**Birdmania: A Remarkable Passion for Birds** by Bernd Brunner. Greystone Books, Vancouver/Berkley, November 2017.

Now for something completely different! Do your family and friends think you are obsessed with birds?

If you think their assessment might be correct, Birdmania, by Bernd Brunner is for you. The book is a compilation of vignettes on bird-obsessed people, amateur and professional, throughout the ages. The book is beautifully-illustrated with historic paintings. Fortunately, you will probably also learn that you are not nearly as obsessed as some of our ancestors.



**KEEP ON GOING:** I have been writing about Conservation issues in various forums for 30 years. In my opinion, now is the worst of times. I look to one of my heroes, the ornithologist and philosopher, Alexander Skutch for inspiration. In his 80 years of working in the neotropics, he witnessed incredible devastation. His approach was to keep doing what he knew was right. He recognized that, "perfect realization" of his ideals was not possible, but "Whatever I achieved in this endeavor would be highly satisfying to me." I have read his books and marvel at his equanimity. It is something to strive for.

**GOOD NEWS:** Finding good news for the future of wildlife, especially migratory birds, is difficult. However, a couple of visible, familiar migrants are doing well (if not for the best of reasons). Both Western Tanager and Black-headed Grosbeak populations are stable and possibly increasing. As noted on Cornell's "[allaboutbirds](#)" website, Western Tanagers use open habitats, not requiring large forest patches to breed. Similarly, Black-headed Grosbeaks aren't fussy about breeding habitat or nest materials, and inhabit disturbed landscapes such as orchards, and suburban greenbelts. Both avoid intense human activity, but their spring serenades should continue in our City Parks.

**NOT JUST THE SAGE GROUSE:** A collaborative agreement, supported by industry and many environmental groups, to protect sea turtles and whales was just overturned by the Trump Administration on economic grounds. In a similar vein, in 2010 the US implemented a plan for managing coastal waters and the Great Lakes. This plan acknowledged climate change and emphasized conservation. An Executive Order this past June rescinds the plan in favor of economic development.

**THEY POISON YOUR BIRDS TOO:** In 2012, Scotts was fined \$12M for selling birdseed containing prohibited pesticides added to prevent spoilage. This was done knowingly as the company pled guilty and admitted there had been complaints from their own employees. Our system worked! Or did it? The company sold 70 million units of seed. In the year Scotts paid their fine, their CEO's salary was twice as much, and the fine was not even 0.5% of revenue. Is this the system that reflects our values as a society?

**THINK LOCALLY:** Local "owlers" have tried to replicate some monitoring, led by Rich Levad 10-20 years ago, for Boreal and Flammulated Owls. While every attempt was made to duplicate previous protocols, our 2018 re-enactments are not "hard" science. Nonetheless, where ~5-15 owl boxes had held Boreal Owls, zero owls were found. A route that had produced 10-30 Flammulated Owls produced 4. A singular feature of the areas studied is massive logging occurring at present, including, in some cases, large slash piles and large clear-cuts. In one case, a "boreal owl box" was preserved and encircled by a small copse of trees. Unfortunately, easily available research shows that: Boreal Owls are negatively affected by logging, typically have home ranges of several thousand acres, and have low nest site fidelity. The preserved box may have been useful for "show and tell" that an attempt was made to save something for the owls, but the reality is that it was functionally useless. If you see additional examples of problems such as this, please send documentation to the GVAS Conservation Chairman—contact information as noted on the back page of this issue.



Flammulated Owl

## More Science & Conservation News

**SYMPATHY FOR ORPHANS:** At least our government has sympathy for orphans--orphaned oil and gas wells that is. Recent reports show the BLM charges \$25,000 as a bond for all of a company's wells in a given state. Often, through eventual sales to shell companies that claim bankruptcy, many operators avoid responsibility and the wells are abandoned. The BLM (read that as "we" the taxpayers) face at least \$46M in reclamation costs in Wyoming alone. Meanwhile, in Colorado, the state was able to force out an oil and gas company that refused to perform required safety tests or pay the resulting fines. Colorado claimed the \$60,000 bond the company had posted. The only problem is that more than 50 wells were left abandoned. The estimated cost for cleaning up orphaned wells according to the BLM: ~\$30,000 apiece.

### Fall Program Line-up

Meet at 1st Presbyterian Church  
Come at 6:30 for Social Time  
Program begins at 7:00

#### September 17: Bird Listing & Photography

Two talented GVAS members, Denise Vollmar and Hank Schoch, lead off our schedule with photos of their experiences in listing and photographing birds. Denise and husband Mark have quite an impressive list of 273 species they have seen in Mesa County. Denise will share a selection of some of her best photos.

Hank has decades of experience as a photo "hobbyist" but over the past couple of years added the challenge of capturing bird images. He'll present some of his work along with stories of where and under what circumstances the pictures were taken.

#### October 15: Climate Change & Activism in the Grand Valley: Citizens Climate Lobby (CCL) and Beyond

Citizens' Climate Lobby is a non-profit, nonpartisan, grassroots advocacy organization focuses on national policies to address climate change. Join local CCL leaders Ken Scissors and Mary Thom for an overview of the basics of climate change and proposals for addressing climate change through a carbon fee and dividend model. These ideas have brought community members and legislators together to seek fair, equitable solutions for addressing our greatest environmental challenge.

#### November 19: National Audubon's 2018 Audubon Photography Exhibit

The National Audubon Society and Canon are sponsoring a traveling exhibit of photos from the 2018 Audubon Photography Awards. GVAS is hosting the exhibit November 14th through December 5th! Our November Program will be a reception for the exhibit. We are still in the process of finding an exhibit space, once that is secured we will provide a location and details about the reception on our website. Stay tuned!

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### The Great Blue Herald

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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.