

Great Blue Herald

Grand Junction, Colorado

The Value & Challenge of Providing Sanctuary by Karen Levad

“Refuge. Haven. Harbor. Oasis. Shelter. Hideaway.” Those are words synonymous with the word “sanctuary”. Those words describe the vision and hope that community leaders had in mind when they invited Grand Valley Audubon in 1987 to partner with them in establishing the first segment of the Colorado Riverfront Trail. They connected with a formidable ally in the person of Helen Traylor who helped put the pieces in place to achieve that goal. Their primary audience wasn’t the birds of the area but rather the citizens of Mesa County who they believed would benefit from a space within the county boundaries that would provide respite from the challenges and tribulations of life. The Audubon portion consists of less than 2 miles of the 22 mile Riverfront Trail and provides secluded, wooded surroundings in close proximity to busy downtown Grand Junction.

The tranquility of that section of trail has been visually disrupted by the erection of a 5 foot chain link fence bordering the northern edge of the walkway. Not only was the fence erected but cottonwoods and native 3 leaf sumac native understory have been removed leaving a wide barren strip along the entire fence line.

Cary Atwood, Grand Valley Audubon Society president, wants people to know that it’s not our property that has been denuded. “I don’t want folks to think we had a hand



in this destruction. It’s very upsetting for all. The entire trail provides necessary sanctuary for birds, wildlife and people.” The GVAS board acknowledges that private land owners have the right to build a fence, but are most upset by the way in which it was done....no warning, no conversation or dialogue from the county or the land owners about what was about to happen. “Had we been notified we would have tried to work with the land owner to protect wildlife habitat to the greatest extent possible,” Atwood said. The board continues to discuss and explore any potential opportunities with trail stake holders to avoid similar situations in the future.

A 2014 review of the Audubon trail section was posted on Trip Advisor. The reviewer wrote, “What’s good about this trail? It is wooded and non-urbanized, meaning peaceful. The Audubon section is lined with behemoth old cottonwoods, and directly parallels the Redlands Canal. There is a spiritual energy in the Audubon that rejuvenates your very soul.”

While still a wonderful area providing peace and tranquility, the Audubon trail has received a significant wound through a rash and destructive decision. GVAS remains committed to its mission “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.”



Earth Day Volunteer Event by Meredith Walker

In April, over Earth Day weekend we joined forces with **RiversEdge West** and **Audubon Rockies** to host a habitat restoration volunteer event at the Audubon Nature Preserve. The event was funded by generous grants from the outdoor gear company **Patagonia** that Audubon Rockies and RiverEdge West applied for and used to help us improve bird habitat on our property.

Over 70 volunteers participated in the two-day event. They removed invasive shrubs, planted 9 native trees and 50 native shrubs and made 50 Do-it-Yourself ollas (terracotta watering vessels) to help water the shrubs. Species planted include Box Elder, Hackberry, Golden Currant, and New Mexico Privet- all native plants that benefit birds and will improve the plant biodiversity on our property.

In addition, volunteers began construction on a raised bed garden on the south side of the property near the Audubon section of the Riverfront Trail. This garden is funded by both the Patagonia grant and a generous grant from National Audubon’s Coleman and Susan Burke Center for Native Plants.

Volunteer and garden expert Elizabeth Neubauer has been working hard designing and constructing this garden. It will feature plants that are beneficial to birds as well as pollinators. We will also have signs that will explain the garden and encourage the public to use bird-friendly plants in their own yards.

**Plants for Birds Garden
Grand Opening**
Saturday, June 16th 9-11 a.m.
We will raffle off gift certificates to a local garden center as well as High Country Gardens!
Please Stop By!



Golden Currant



Hackberry

The President's Corner with Cary Atwood

As we spring into summer, the fullness of the season is resplendent with flowers, returning hummers and all manner of nesting migrants. Our recent May program was an intimate look at the lives of Sandhill Cranes given by Van Graham. His time as a wildlife biologist at Colorado Parks & Wildlife (CPW) yielded great knowledge about crane behavior and became his life's work. Many of us expressed wonder at how many new things we learned during his presentation.

Such learning experiences have marked this, my second year, as Grand Valley Audubon chapter president. I've learned it takes a collaborative effort to write grants which bring clarity to our chapter's mission and vision. I've learned that disappointment in *not* receiving a grant sets up opportunities to pursue others. I've learned we have incredible, talented board members and staff with all manner of skills: advocacy, engineering, grant writing, publishing, money management, botany and more!

I've learned that trying to do it all brings stress, but delegating just makes sense, and keeps one sane! I've

learned that so many people care: about birds, our Preserve acreage, about being part of something greater than themselves. Members and others are willing to step up to dig holes for shrubs, record data at a bird banding station, arise at dawn on a windy spring day in search of birds, run a chainsaw, pull weeds, fence cottonwoods, pile brush, sweep a shelter, run a water pump, offer up ideas, energy and positive reinforcement. Others do their work quietly: build relationships with landowners who might have a rare bird on their property, take ailing members on outings, leave a substantial financial gift in their will.

As I close out my first two-year term, I value the vote of confidence from the board to guide the current projects and prospects ahead. Thanks to all for being a part of my learning curve. It has been gratifying and I look forward to what lies ahead for our chapter.

Have a great summer. See you in September!

Cary Atwood



Barbara Churchley, an accomplished artist and GVAS member, is helping to support our projects in a much appreciated way.

Packets of beautifully illustrated 4" x 6" cards featuring Western Colorado birds illustrated by Barbara are available for

sale at monthly Audubon meetings, and also at **Wild Birds Unlimited** in Grand Junction.

The 4 card assortment sells for \$10.00, or you may purchase individual cards for \$3.00/card. Proceeds from the sale of the packets benefit GVAS.

You can learn more about Barbara and her art at <https://barbarachurchley.com>.

SPRING DOINGS—BY THE NUMBERS

- 8 Guided Spring Bird Walks
- 1 GVAS Sponsored Trip to SLC Area (thanks, Dave!)
- 3 New Dimensions Birding Classes offered
- 45+ Volunteers working on Earth Day at the Preserve
- 12 Spring Count teams + dozens of birders counting birds
- 6 Pies consumed at the May program meeting
- 9 Screech Owls nestlings banded on Banding Day
- 60 Participants counted birds on Spring Count Day

Bear River & Antelope Island Bird Trip reported by Karen Levad

The birds were wonderful!
The camaraderie of shared interests with interesting and kind people was best!
Janet Gallenstein

The Bear River & Antelope Island Birding trip led by Dave Price and held April 23-26 brought together 8 women with a variety of birding backgrounds and skills. We were looking for adventure, companionship and yes...birds. All three goals were accomplished. In total we spotted 82 species. Not bad. Most of us added to our "Life-List" making many of the sightings particularly exciting. (I got 12!)

Dave Price was a kind and patient leader who made sure that all accommodations were comfortable and affordable. He deftly guided our skill development and wisely allowed others to contribute their knowledge for the good of the group. He earned that beer at the end of the journey enjoyed at Green River on the ride home.

Of concern was the water level at the Great Salt Lake. Where water once lapped the causeway leading to Antelope Island, there was instead long stretches of sandy shore. We certainly didn't see the abundant numbers of shore birds that we expected. Too early? Maybe. But Utah, like Colorado, did not receive the hoped for and needed snow that would replenish the Great Salt Lake.



Short Eared Owl & Long billed Curlew

This out of state "road trip" provided a great deal of fun and laughter as well as new life birds for me. My favorite birds were the abundant Curlews; the Short-eared Owl, which appeared just where Dave Price thought he might find it; and the Chucker at the visitor center which I had wanted to see for years.

Judy West

Spring Bird Count Results submitted by Dave Price

For the second year in a row, the Spring Migratory Bird Count was hampered by high winds in most parts of Mesa County making it a challenge to locate birds among waving branches and leaves. Small birds were mostly hanging on for dear life, and their songs were carried far beyond ear shot.

None the less, the sixty some participants had a good time and some interesting birds were found, sometimes in unusual places. For example, Flammulated Owls in pinyon-juniper rather than preferred ponderosa on the Uncompaghre Plateau and Yellow-headed Blackbirds far away from feedlots where most of us find them. A Band-tailed Pigeon, Caspian Tern, Northern Goshawk, and a Merlin were other good finds and after being mostly absent during the winter months, flocks of Pine Siskins reappeared in a few areas.

As of this writing, Jack Trappett is still receiving and compiling the count data. We'll get it posted on the GVAS website when completed.

A big thank you to everyone involved, especially Jack for data management and map creation and all of the team leaders: Peter Robinson, Dave & Diane Trappett, Leon Thurmon, Mike Campbell, Paul & Fran Didier, Kathleen McGinley, Nic Korte, Cecilia Barr, Dave Price, Eileen Cunningham, Mike Henwood, Ronda Woodward, and Mark & Denise Vollmar.

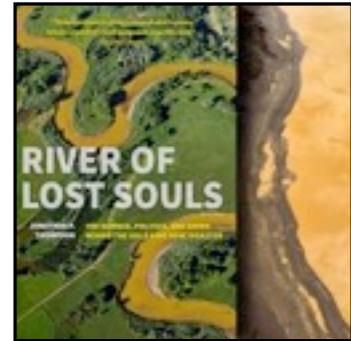
Its not too early to mark your calendars for the next big count, the Grand Junction Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, December 16.

Book Review by Nic Korte

RIVER OF LOST SOULS: The Science, Politics, and Greed, Behind the Gold King Mining Disaster by Jonathan Thompson. Torrey House Press. Salt Lake City, Utah. March 2018.

This book reveals so much about Western Colorado's political, social, and environmental ethos that I recommend it to all residents. Jonathan Thompson was uniquely positioned to write the book. Not only is he a native of the Silverton-Durango area, but for many years, he was a newspaper reporter based in Silverton. Most of us are familiar with the narrative that was championed by our local politicians after the big spill; that is, EPA was at fault and the agency's malfeasance required millions of dollars of taxpayer dollars be paid to downstream residents. In contrast, Thompson's detailed history shows how corporate greed

and lobbying controlled the political and regulatory landscape. The result was private profit and avoidance of responsibility for enormous destruction of public lands all subsidized by taxpayers. Thompson weaves his personal story throughout the narrative keeping it light and easy to read all the while explaining the inevitability of a major spill. The only questions left unanswered are how soon will the next disaster occur, and how much will the taxpayers pay for that one.



CMU Capstone Project Helps GVAS

Hands on application of their environmental science skills was the culmination of four years of study for a group of Colorado Mesa University Students. Jason Tipton, Joel Henderson, Matt Stewart and Cody Vandenbrink, in collaboration with the CMU Environmental Science Department and Grand Valley Audubon were tasked with completing an environmental site assessment on the south ponds at our Audubon Nature Preserve.

With our chapter's Ducks Unlimited partnership and funding from Colorado Parks & Wildlife to survey, plan and complete remediation of ponds at the Preserve, collecting and analyzing data is one of the first steps in understanding the site's suitability for a future makeover into wetlands for wildlife.

The students completed rigorous water quality tests, assessed soil quality, conducted a vegetation inventory, performed a basic bathymetric profile of water depths in the ponds as well as a wetland delineation.

In brief, the ponds in their current state have high concentrations of chloride and sulfates, high soil salinity and steep banks that need to be recontoured for a shallower slope. With a better seasonal water flow into the ponds and putting into place the CMU recommendations, along with the DU site survey modeling, we should have an excellent plan moving forward towards our preserve restoration goals.

Their impressive final report and work plan, as well as the students' public Capstone project presentation summarized the results of their assessments, addressed the current suitability of the ponds for native fish and waterfowl and outlined some recommendations to enhance the site for future wetlands remediation. We appreciated their time and skill in collecting and synthesizing pond data. They welcomed the opportunity to apply their learning towards a meaningful end. Win-win for everyone!



Spring without Yellow Warblers/More Genomics of Climate Change:

Yellow Warblers are one of the most numerous warblers in North America, but their populations have been slowly declining, having decreased

by 25% during the past few decades according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey. Although, this overall population decline is modest when compared to most migratory species, larger, local declines have raised concerns regarding the species ability to adapt to climate change. The adaptive potential of various populations of Yellow Warbler can be examined by combining high-resolution genomic sequencing with population trends to determine which populations are most at risk. The researchers were able to correlate adaptive potential with climate change trends which predicted the population declines. The most vulnerable populations largely reside along the Rocky Mountains.

No Time to be a Coffee-snob: I hated coffee, and I still do-- a lot of it anyway. In 2010, merely to be polite, I tasted some fresh, light-roast coffee at an organic/shade-grown coffee farm in Costa Rica. I was like the fussy, staid cat on its first encounter with catnip, as described by one of my favorite writers, Joseph Wood Krutch, "Can such things be? Indubitably they can. He flung himself down and he wallowed." No hours-old dregs in a coffee maker for me! No oily dark roasts! Only freshly-brewed, lightly-roasted *coffee arabica* for me!



Sadly, *arabica*, in today's world, as noted in a recent article in Chemical and Engineering News, may be "genetically predisposed for extinction." Coffee leaf rust, a fungal disease, has already reduced world-wide production by 15%. The rest is seriously threatened. Coffee rust has been known since the beginning of commercial coffee production. What happened? Climate change! Warmer than average weather, heavy rainfall, and strong winds caused the fungus to spread. Previously not viable above 5200 ft, coffee rust is now found as high as 6550 ft.

According to a recent book (Where the Wild Coffee Grows), 70% of Guatemala's coffee has been affected, 74% in El Salvador and 25% in Honduras. One result is that "Jobless farmworkers poured into the cities looking for employment. Gang membership increased. Violence surged." These factors coincided with the enormous increase in unaccompanied children sent by desperate parents to enter the US illegally. A few news outlets picked up the climate/coffee-rust angle to the immigration story, but it was largely drowned out by the immigration rancor that characterized the recent election.

Black-winged Sparrows/Back to the Good Old Days:

An evolutionary biologist at the University of Chicago was performing unrelated work looking at museum bird collections when he noticed that sparrow specimens collected decades ago were dirtier.



He was able to measure the amount of particulate pollution collected on the feathers and estimate past pollution levels. Despite the obvious improvement, the World Health Organization estimates that 95% of the world's population still lives in areas where airborne particulate levels exceed recommended concentrations.

Particulate pollution is now deemed the sixth largest contributor to death worldwide, implicated in more than 4 million deaths per year. Meanwhile, several studies in the last decade have shown that relatively minor reductions in particulate pollution, by improving respiratory and cardiac function, result in measurable improvements in worker productivity—even for inside work such as in a call center.

Unfortunately, Trump Administration policies, such as increased reliance on coal generation, and the on-going attempt to eliminate the Clean Power Plan, will increase particulate pollution. Not only that, the a recent "data access proposal" from the US EPA, released under the guise of "data transparency" will prohibit any regulations derived from research which used confidential health records--a necessary aspect of population-level research.

Science & Conservation News cont.

Whither Science? Did you know that the vast Department of Energy (DOE) has a large research program in environmental science—performed mostly through the National Laboratories? I know because that’s how I spent much of my career. I knew several of the leading climate change researchers that were funded by DOE. You are probably not surprised to learn that the Trump Administration budget proposed huge funding cuts to these programs. Another major target of cuts has been any monitoring of environmental trends including risks from climate change. These proposals, fortunately moderated to some extent by

Congress, were put forward despite the non-partisan General Accounting Office having estimated that annual losses to the economy due to climate change will be several trillion dollars per decade by mid-century. Drastic cuts to public health could be found throughout the proposed budget. Besides the cuts, another change was that the proposals were simply released from the White House, whereas in the past, the Presidential Science Advisor had a public event highlighting the federal government’s investments in research. Not this time—the Trump Administration does not have a science advisor.

“We are at a crossroads. We can continue on the path we have been on, in this nation that privileges profit over people and land; or we can unite as citizens with a common cause—the health and wealth of the Earth that sustains us. If we cannot commit to this kind of fundamental shift in our relationship to people and place, then democracy becomes another myth perpetuated by those in power who care only about themselves”

Terry Tempest Williams from her book: [This Hour of Land](#)

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.

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. Use chapter code D04.

Grand Valley Audubon
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**Check your expiration date!
Renew today!**



The Great Blue Herald

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