

GRAND VALLEY



AUDUBON

Great Blue Herald

Grand Valley Audubon Society

GRAND JUNCTION, COLORADO

GRAND VALLEY SPRING MIGRATORY COUNT

SHANNON YOUNG

The Grand Valley Audubon Spring Bird Count will commence on Saturday, May 14.

This count is for the entire Mesa County, divided into 12 areas, with a trip leader for each area. It is a huge undertaking for participating birders, and trip leaders always appreciate several enthusiastic helpers to go with them on their count.

For information on how to sign up to help with the count, go to <https://www.audubongv.org> where you will be directed to 12 links, reflecting the 12 count areas. Read the short summaries for trip leader names and descriptions of the areas to help you decide where to volunteer. The link will provide a sign-up form for you.

We are predicting that this year all areas will be accessible to participants, barring any huge dump of the white stuff in higher elevation areas.

Shannon Young is coordinating the count, and can be reached at mtngirl1111@gmail.com, or at 970-260-1118. Harriet Stephens will be sending out the necessary forms and will compile the count data.

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED FOR 12 AREAS:

(Area 1) Mack Area: Utah State line to 13 Rd, north to County line, Rabbit Valley, Brewster Ridge, Highline St Park

(Area 2) Fruita-Loma: Fruita from 13 Rd to 23 Rd, Big Salt Wash, Fruita St Park, Skipper's Island, N. Fruita Desert to County line

(Area 3) Grand Junction: E. of 23 Rd/Redlands Pkwy to 30 Rd, Grand Junction & Walter Walker State Wildlife Areas and Connected Lakes St Park

(Area 4) Clifton: 30 Rd to 42 Rd, Corn Lake St Park; West Lake Wildlife Area, Clifton Sewage Ponds, Clifton Marsh, Palisade.



Collbran including Vega State Park to County Line.

(Area 7) Grand Mesa: Town of Mesa east to 52.5 Rd (Doug), Powderhorn, and top of Grand Mesa to Delta County Line (Cecilia).

(Area 8) South of Colorado River: Horsethief & Leatha Jean Stassen SWA's, Colorado NM. E to Redlands Pkwy, Tiara Rado.

(Area 9) Glade Park Area: Glade Park, Mud Springs, Fruita Reservoirs and Pinion Mesa to Utah State line.

(Area 10) Uncompahgre: Divide Rd to Delta County Line, Whitewater to East Creek.

(Area 11) Gateway: Unaweep Divide down West Creek to Gateway, Dolores River Canyon & John Brown Canyon.

(Area 12) Kannah Ck-Lands End Road, Reeder Mesa, Cheney & Juniata Reservoirs, Dominquez Canyon, Hunting Grounds.

Above: *Black-capped chickadee*, staff photo.

Grand Valley Audubon MISSION STATEMENT

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

BIRDS AND WORDS

A warm thanks is due to those of you who attended our very first post-COVID in person meeting on March 21 at the First Presbyterian Church. We had a nice gathering of faces familiar and new, and I appreciate all who chose to come. Larry Collins, GVAS Treasurer and owner of Wild Birds Unlimited shared strategies for feeding birds, as well as fielding lots of questions about what works and what doesn't in the dietary preferences of birds. In addition, folks shared recent Spring sightings (Turkey Vultures, Osprey, reappearance of the Little Park Roadrunner) and there were announcements about upcoming bird walks and talks, as well as a bit of cake and ice cream. Until further notice, we will hold monthly meetings back at the church, masks optional. We hope you can join us in April and May.



Great Blue Heron

the Colorado River, this piece of property which includes the riverbank, three islands in the river, as well as the river channel itself has had an unfortunate recent history of illegal camping, littering and RV abandonments.

Dale came to a recent GVAS Board meeting to outline some history and appeal for our cooperation to collaborate on clean up, signage and access to keep the spirit and letter of the conservation designation stronger. Even though Audubon has no obligation for upkeep, (that falls to the owner), we realize this is still an important piece of property and we wish to be good stewards and good neighbors.

Conservation Easements and the Berkley Reece Sanctuary – What's Next..

Perhaps you've heard the term "conservation easement"? It refers to land that is either sold or donated by a landowner to a qualified conservation organization, with a voluntary legal agreement that limits certain uses of the land in perpetuity. As a result, property owners enjoy a significant tax break with this designation. In 2004, Dale Reece, owner of acreage along Dike Road, created a conservation easement, known as the Berkley-Reece Sanctuary and placed it into the care of Grand Valley Audubon. Over time, with open access to parking along

Aside from the placement of one "No overnight camping" sign placed on part of the property, our first stewardship efforts will be a serious clean up during our **Earth Day event on Saturday, April 23rd**. The next project will be planning and placing barriers of some kind to keep overnight campers out yet allow people access to birdwatch and enjoy this section of the riverfront. If you haven't seen the new rookery being constructed by a large group of Great Blue Herons, there are very good looks at it from the Berkley-Reece property.

~ Cary Atwood, President GVAS



Thank you Rusty Simmons!!

I also want to make a special acknowledgment to Rusty Simmons. Dave Price made me aware of her longtime commitment to habitat restoration. For the past four years, she has worked tirelessly as a volunteer for Highline State Park. In the past two years, she has devoted long work days and many months of effort to restore and re-vegetate disturbed areas of Highline with hundreds of plants at a very high survival rate. Due to her background in habitat restoration, and her passion for Highline, she is a singular individual who continues to make a real difference in a beloved state park. In the past year, she helped create a new volunteer non-profit: Friends of Highline State Park which anyone can join. Like Grand Valley Audubon, volunteers are always appreciated. THANK YOU, RUSTY!!

SCIENCE & CONSERVATION NEWS By Nic Korte

LAKE FOUL – On the day I wrote this column (mid-March), the water level of Lake Powell was less than one-half of a foot from a trigger that would cause additional contingencies to ensure hydro-power production can continue. The reservoir's circumstances would be worse without last summer's unprecedented draining of other reservoirs to keep water in Powell. As one scientist recently noted, "...the climate is changing, but our management of water is not." You can be involved. Check out the Hutchins Water Center at Colorado Mesa University: www.ColoradoMesa.Edu/Water-Center. There is an initiative regarding what should be done with the river corridor through the Grand Valley.

SCIENCE CAN BE INCONVENIENT – I was a student when the Lake Powell controversy was a raw wound. I was surprised that the foremost hydrologists and geomorphologists of the time said there was not enough water, and that the lake would fill with sediment. What surprised me was these scientists were ignored. The dam had been built anyway. What are scientists saying now: "At the rate of drawdown on Powell reservoir, and the continued inflow of sediments, the call to drain Lake Powell will be a moot point and the efforts can switch from draining a dead pool to just simply removing the concrete barrier."

SCIENCE WORKS – Science can be messy. It proceeds in fits and starts. Long-term prognostications include caveats and levels of uncertainty which are used by project boosters and some politicians to avoid inconvenience. In the long run, expert scientists, particularly in the physical sciences, are usually right. (*I could not think of a long-term predictive failure once consensus among most of the experts was achieved, but maybe someone else can.*)

WHAT ABOUT THE TREES? – Take a drive and pay attention to the trees. Going over Vail Pass is enough, but more instructive is to drive to Glade Park and on past Mud Spring. The former Colorado state entomologist told me that when he was in graduate school in the 1960s, he was taught the "bark beetle can't survive over about 8000 feet." All the dead conifers show that is no longer true. What about aspens? Sudden Aspen Decline (SAD) is all around. A biologist friend said to me the other day, "I wonder if there will be a live Pinyon Pine in Mesa County in 20 years." Each of these declines has been linked to drought and temperature. The foremost climate scientists predicted this decades ago. When I moved here some 40 years ago, those areas described above were all green.

UNLEASHING BIG MUDDY – Scientists long



Lake Powell water level. Courtesy of Water Education Foundation.

warned of the increasing problems in coastal Louisiana as marshlands sank because of development. Those problems exacerbated the damage from Hurricane Katrina. Mitigating and preventing further damage will cost the taxpayers possibly 50 billion. Locals oppose the project because of short-term effects on fisheries that provide some employment.

I COULD GO ON – Who worries about the sudden 10% loss in the Florida Manatee population just after its conservation status was officially said to have improved from "endangered" to "threatened?" How about the invasive caterpillar/moth in Maine? Allergic reactions are causing many to cancel vacations? How about river closures on the Yampa and Colorado last summer because of high temperatures? Or this from a recent National Geographic: Scientists doubt that corals can survive two- to three-degree warming. The urgent need is to deal with the root causes. "What's happening to reefs is a crisis of governance – of water quality, of fisheries, and especially of greenhouse gases."

Whither Bird Populations? – Research has documented a loss of three billion birds in the US. Scientists state that stopping further decline requires drastic measures such as mostly eliminating fossil fuel use in the next decade. The prominent scientists in the field say it can be done – with sufficient political will.

WHAT NOW? – Do we have the will to protest and fight for our planet as if our lives and those of our children and grandchildren depend on it?

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE PRESERVE?



Top - Traylor Pond looking towards the southwest.
 Left - Dirt fill donated by the City of Grand Junction.
 Right - Culvert in position to be lowered between Osprey and Traylor

TRAYLOR POND PROJECT

*Mike Campbell, Chuck Hunt, Larry Collins
 Preserve Committee Members*

Last summer, only one short year after fill dirt was moved and water levels lowered in the Osprey Pond, abundant life returned including a number of bird species rarely, if ever, seen in this part of the Preserve. They included black-crowned night herons, killdeer, snowy egrets, belted kingfisher, wood ducks and several species of teal.

Looking to duplicate this success, we are planning to fill the Traylor Pond which is directly east of the Osprey Pond. Recently the City of Grand Junction donated a significant amount of fill dirt which has been placed at the Preserve Property. Additional funds are needed and currently being raised in order to complete this next phase of the improvement plan.

In addition, a culvert is being installed between the two ponds in order to control water levels. Migrating birds, in particular, benefit when water levels are higher in the spring and fall. Lowering the water levels in the winter and summer lessen the chance of a monoculture of cattails and instead, encourage a more diverse plant population.

EARTH DAY – APRIL 23

IT'S FINALLY SPRING!

JOIN US! Saturday, April 23

Arrive 9:00 am / Work starts at 9:30 am - 1:00 pm

Come help clean-up the grounds, plant trees, etc.

Bring work gloves and a smile.

Sign-up at codysmokeybear@yahoo.com for a head count – Chuck Hunt

WANTED: VOLUNTEERS TO OPERATE A BLUEBIRD TRAIL

GVAS has recently received a generous gift from CPW through Dan Neubaum in the form of a large number of beautifully made cedar Bluebird nest boxes. So, we are looking for anyone who might be interested in establishing and operating a Bluebird trail. This would include setting up a route, obtaining permission to borrow a few fenceposts, and monitoring, and maintaining the boxes. Once the boxes are up, all they really require is to be cleaned out in the fall or early spring. Operating a trail is a rewarding experience, helping these beautiful, but declining populations of birds find a convenient place to nest, learning about



Male Mountain Bluebird, female on right. courtesy of Cornell Lab of Ornithology.



and recognizing the other species of birds who may use the nest boxes,

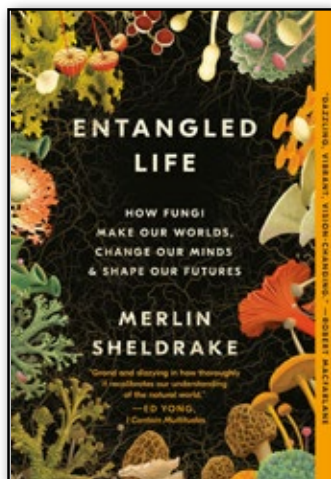
and offering landowners a free source of insect control.

For further information, contact GVAS, or Mark and Denise Vollmar at laters@bresnan.net.

BOOK REVIEW

ENTANGLED LIFE

by Merlin Sheldrake



ENTANGLED LIFE by Merlin Sheldrake. All I can say after reading it is, "I had no idea!" I had no idea that fungi had so penetrated our economy by providing everything from packaging to building materials.

I had no idea how rapidly one part of an enormous system of brainless fungus can communicate with another part. I thought I knew a lot about plants and roots. Well, there was a lot more to learn because 90% of plants rely on fungi for their growth. If any of that sounds dry, the book also describes "zombie fungi" which take over the brains of insects. You can also learn about hallucinations from psilocybin-containing mushrooms. Fungi are an overlooked facet of the natural world. This book provides an educational and entertaining correction to that oversight.

~ Nic Korte

I kept asking myself, "do I really want to read a book about fungus?" Yet, I kept seeing reviews recommending

International Birding/Nature Trip set for 2023

"Do you have a burning desire to head for parts unknown, or increase your bird life list?"

Shannon Young is gathering requests for places to go next year with Holbrook Travel. Our Audubon members have gone as a group in the past, to Colombia and Costa Rica.

These trips have been educational,

insightful and fun! She is looking for ideas for 2023! Go to HolbrookTravel.com to see location ideas. She has already had requests for a trip to Panama or Ecuador.

"Where would you like to go?"

Email your trip ideas to: mtngirl1111@gmail.com.



Brown Booby and Chick, near Cano Island, Costa Rica

EVENTS

BIRD WALKS

APRIL 28 at 8:00 am

Leader: Doug Diekman
Place: Horsethief Canyon State Wildlife Area
Meet: Dinosaur Journey, Fruita at 7:50 am in the parking lot.

MAY 21 at 6:00 - 9:00 pm

Leaders: Whit Blair & Logan Wagner
Place: Devil's Kitchen, CNM
Meet: Devil's Kitchen Picnic Area at 5:50 pm in the parking lot. Or carpool from Chow Down Pet Supplies at 5:40 pm.

GVAS MEETINGS

Place: First Presbyterian Church, 3940 27 1/2 Rd., Grand Junction

6:30-7:00 Social
 7:00 Program
 8:00 Refreshments

APRIL 18 at 6:30 pm

Program: Meredith Walker, of The Institute for Bird Populations (IBP), will discuss how scientists are using Autonomous Recording Units (ARUs) to study birds.

MAY 16 at 6:30 pm

Program: Brett Walker: Solving the mystery of Colorado's Alpine Brewer's Sparrows.

EARTH DAY

APRIL 23 at 9:00 am

Leader: Chuck Hunt
Place: GRAND VALLEY AUDUBON PRESERVE
Meet: Preserve main gate 9:00 am
What: Plant trees and cleanup
More: www.AudubonGV.org

SPRING BIRD COUNT

MAY 14th at 12 locations

Coordinator: Shannon Young
Registration: www.AudubonGV.org



Grand Valley Audubon Society
P.O. Box 1211, Grand Junction,
CO 81502

SPRING 2022

Great Blue Herald

BIRD GALLERY BY LOCALS



Common Waxbill-Bill Kelley-Honolulu-1.16.22

And if you haven't seen the online Bird Gallery that changes monthly, check it out! Organized by Bob Clarke of Grand Junction. <https://www.audubongv.org/bird-photo-gallery.html>

GVAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Cary Atwood, President catwood814@gmail.com

Larry Collins, Treasurer lcollins1@bresnan.net

Janet Gellenstein, Interim Secretary jagbell2@gmail.com

Mike Campbell – mcampbell641@gmail.com

Pam Lauman – pamggl@gmail.com

Stephanie Matlock – smatlock@coloradomesa.edu

Hunter Harmon, CMU – hunterharmon72@gmail.com

Nic Korte, Conservation – nkorte1@hotmail.com

Chuck Hunt, Preserve Manager – codysmokeybear@yahoo.com

Tina Wilson, Website & Newsletter – tinawilson2656@gmail.com

Meredith Swett Walker, Wetlands Project Coordinator –
mbswett@gmail.com

**APRIL 23 - EARTH DAY /
CLEANUP AT THE PRESERVE
Meet 9-9:30 am at the main gate.**