



# Great Blue Herald

**Grand Valley Audubon Society**

GRAND JUNCTION, COLORADO

P.O. Box 1211, Grand Junction, CO 81502

## FUNDRAISER FOR GVAS

*By staff writers*

### A South Texan's Wild, Life-affirming Quest to Break a National Birding Record

When she began her year-long bird-spotting adventure, Tiffany Kersten was lost and lonely. She ended up achieving a major milestone – and finding her way.

Two months earlier, Kersten was unemployed, stressed about paying her mortgage, and still reeling from the emotional distress she had suffered since being sexually assaulted in 2018. The then 34-year-old had recently lost her job at the McAllen Nature Center and felt adrift personally and professionally.

With no real plans other than trying to make some money, Kersten started guiding small birdwatching tours in South Texas. She'd led sporadic birding trips over the past ten years, and this freelance work seemed like a good way to help pay the bills.

As luck would have it, one of her first clients was an avid birder named Charlie Bostwick, who was visiting Texas while working on a Big Year. As they traveled across the Rio Grande Valley looking for green jays and great kiskadees, Kersten confided in him about the transition she was going through. Bostwick suggested that she go for a Big Year too.

She immediately rejected the idea. "I have a house. I need to get a job. I need to get my life in order," Kersten thought. "I can't just run around the country looking at birds."

*Click to read the full article about Tiffany Kersten:*  
<https://www.texasmonthly.com/being-texan/south-texan-wild-quest-birding-record/>

**Register Online at [www. AudubonGV.org](http://www.AudubonGV.org) for both the Bird Walk and the Program.**



*Tiffany Kersten, super birder!*

### **June 14, 2023: Bird Walk & Program**

#### **BIRD WALK with Tiffany Kersten**

**from 7:30-10:30am \$15 (max 20 people)**

**SOCIAL & PROGRAM: \$30 per person**

**SOCIAL: 6:00-7:00pm Appetizers & Soft Drinks**

**FUNDRAISER Program with Tiffany Kersten**

**from 7:00-8:00pm, 1st Presbyterian Church**

[www.AudubonGV.org](http://www.AudubonGV.org)

## UPCOMING PROGRAMS



**APRIL MEETING –  
JOIN A SAFARI TO  
MADAGASCAR**  
Monday, April 17, 2023  
Social : 6:30-7:00 pm  
Program: 7:00-7:30 pm  
Presented by Renée Herring

Just the name evokes exotic images of nature – leaping lemurs, bulbous Baobab trees, crawling chameleons, rare reptiles and brightly-colored birds. Join us for a photo “safari” by Renée Herring, a retired CPW Watchable Wildlife Coordinator, to explore some wildlife riches found on the island that time forgot.

The varied landscapes of rainforests, spiny deserts, lakes, and dry forests contain 90% of Madagascar’s plant and animal species that are found nowhere else on earth. Lemurs, lemurs, lemurs!



**MAY MEETING –  
IMPORTANT THINGS AHEAD FOR COLORADO  
WATER POLICY IN 2023**  
Monday, May 15, 2023,  
6:30-7:00 pm Social / 7:00-7:30 pm Program  
Presented by Abby Burk from Audubon Rockies

Audubon supports proactive water resilience strategies for 2023 Colorado legislation.

Clearly, water is a legislative priority. Big water ideas are in the wind, but proponents need to share concepts broadly. Our decisions about water influence all areas of life for people and nature. We’re doing a better job of including and valuing a diversity of input in water decisions, but we need to do more. A diversity of water stakeholders must support legislative proposals that support multiple beneficial uses.

Audubon Rockies is busy working with lawmakers, agencies, and partners to prioritize healthy, functioning, and resilient watersheds and river systems for people and birds – the natural systems that we all depend upon. There are already seven bills on our water watch list, plus several draft bills. Here are three water priority areas for Audubon in the 2023 Colorado legislative session: Stream Health, Climate Resiliency, Water Funding & Projects. Join us to hear about opportunities to engage with them. For more information: <https://rockies.audubon.org/rivers/>



**JUNE MEETING –  
FUNDRAISER FOR GVAS  
TIFFANY KERSTEN - A  
South Texan’s Wild Life-  
affirming Quest to Break a  
National Birding Record**  
Wednesday, June 14, 2023,  
Birdwalk with Tiffany: \$15  
Fundraiser: \$30 to attend  
Social : 6:00-7:00 pm  
Program: 7:00-8:00 pm  
by Tiffany Kersten

When she began her year-long bird-spotting adventure, Tiffany Kersten was lost and lonely. She ended up achieving a major milestone—and finding her way.

Kersten confided in a client visiting Texas to fulfill a Big Bird Year. She told him about the transition she was going through, he suggested that she go for a Big Year too.

**Look for Online Sign-up  
[WWW.AUDUBONGV.ORG](http://WWW.AUDUBONGV.ORG)**

**Monthly meeting information:** Grand Valley Audubon Society meets on the 3rd Monday of the month at 6:30 pm at the First Presbyterian Church, located at 3940 27 1/2 Rd, Grand Junction, CO 81506.



## CELEBRATE EARTH DAY WITH US! JOIN OUR WORK DAY AT THE PRESERVE!

**Saturday, April 29th from 8:00 am - 12:00 pm**

Come help clean-up the grounds, plant trees, etc.  
Bring work gloves, water and a smile.

Info & Sign-up: [gvas.executivecoordinator@gmail.com](mailto:gvas.executivecoordinator@gmail.com)



## AUDUBON PRESERVE

# EARTH DAY IS A WORK DAY AT THE PRESERVE!

## Join Us Saturday, April 29th from 8am - 12pm



### Saturday, April 29th, from 8am-12 noon:

we will be hosting a work day at the Audubon Nature Preserve on 610 Dike Road where the community is welcomed to help steward the land.

The Grand Valley Audubon Nature Preserve is made up of 58 acres of wetlands that is a part of the mosaic natural corridor of the Colorado River. Our Preserve as well as James M.

Robb State Parks, Orchard Mesa and Grand Junction Wildlife Areas, Horsethief and Walter Walker State Wildlife Areas, and many others all contribute towards a larger picture of critical habitat.

The preserve was a grouping of gravel pits in a past life, and our recent wetlands restoration project has been working on reengineering the unnaturally deep ponds into bird-useful habitat. As we break between Phase 1 and Phase 2, we have a handful of trees that have popped up where future work is taking place, and now need to be moved where they can grow old. Some other restoration work on the north pond will impact the future of a broken bird blind which now needs to be broken down further, and carried out. ...And then there is always protecting our cottonwoods from wildlife—we have several tasks from painting beaver deterrent paint onto bark to raising existing cages to block browsing deer. Bring gloves, water, and a green thumb!

### Colorado Field Ornithologists Colorado Birding Challenge *By Logan Wagner*

The third annual Colorado Birding Challenge and fundraiser, hosted by Colorado Field Ornithologists will take place on May 20, 2023 in a county near you! Competitors must form a team of 2-4 birders and select one Colorado county to list birds between midnight and midnight. The 64 counties have each been assigned a par number of bird species that levels the playing field. The team who sights the greatest percent of bird species of the county par wins! The competition has 4-competitive categories.

1. Automobile: No restrictions of vehicular travel, a regular big day.
2. Green: No motors allowed. Human powered travel only: foot, bike, paddling, horseback.
3. Youth: Students High School age and younger only, and no identification help from adult drivers!

The fundraising is collected from pledges towards teams in the form of a dollar amount per species or flat donation. This year, 90% of the proceeds go towards a Pinyon Jay Breeding Habitats project and the remaining amount supports the Colorado Field Ornithologists.

Last year, Mesa County had two teams compete in the green and automobile categories.

For more information, registration, and donations go to:

[cobirds.org/cobc](http://cobirds.org/cobc)

## UPCOMING BIRDWALKS

### Saturday, April 22: **Leon Thurmon**

Pear Park section of the Riverfront Trail - park at 29 Rd parking lot. Time: 8:00 am - 11:00 am. Max 16 people.

### Sunday, May 7: **Logan Wagner and Whit Blair**

Devil's Kitchen parking lot - Time: 6:00 - 9:00 pm

### Sunday, May 21: **Brett Walker & Dave Price -**

"Sunrise Birding" trip at Horsethief SWA in Fruita on Time: 6:30 am. Meet at Pollock Bench Trailhead.

### Wednesday, June 14: **Super Birder - Tiffany Kersten**

Audubon Nature Preserve from 7:30 - 10:30 am

*Check the website [www.AudubonGV.org](http://www.AudubonGV.org) and watch for more information in upcoming enews.*

## GVAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*Treasurer:* **Larry Collins**, [lcollins1@bresnan.net](mailto:lcollins1@bresnan.net)

*Secretary:* **Janet Gellenstein**, [jagbell2@gmail.com](mailto:jagbell2@gmail.com)

*Past President:* **Cary Atwood**, [catwood814@gmail.com](mailto:catwood814@gmail.com)

*Preserve Mgr:* **Chuck Hunt**, [codysmokeybear@yahoo.com](mailto:codysmokeybear@yahoo.com)

*Conservation:* **Nic Korte**, [nkorte1@hotmail.com](mailto:nkorte1@hotmail.com)

*Coordinator:* **Pam Lauman**, [pamggl@gmail.com](mailto:pamggl@gmail.com)

*Social Media:* **Logan Wagner**, [loganwagnerdesign@gmail.com](mailto:loganwagnerdesign@gmail.com)

*Wetlands Project Coordinator:* **Meredith Swett Walker**, [mbswett@gmail.com](mailto:mbswett@gmail.com)

*Website & Newsletter:* **Tina Wilson**, [tinawilson2656@gmail.com](mailto:tinawilson2656@gmail.com)

## CONSERVATION NEWS! By Nic Korte

### Shocking Decision:

Showing my age again—probably twenty years ago, a young staffer with National Audubon gave us a presentation imploring everyone to write letters to save the Arctic Teshepuk Lake area from development. I was impressed with her passion and willingness to travel across the country for little remuneration. She handed out refrigerator magnets in the area's shape, and her efforts helped win that battle. Unfortunately, the Biden Administration's recent approval of the Willow Project, a huge Alaskan Oil Development, demonstrates once more, no environmental victory is ever permanent. Estimates are that The Willow project, which will include the first industrial incursion into the Teshepuk Lake area, will produce 286.6 million tons of carbon emissions over the next 30 years, equal to putting another two million cars on the roads annually. The Teshepuk Lake Area is a globally important wetland. Millions of migratory birds travel to the region each year to nest, stage, and molt before dispersing throughout the world. This decision, a shocking contrast to President Biden's recent characterization of climate change as an "existential threat," is being challenged in court. There will be ample opportunity for additional public comment. Please join in! [Evergreen Action Blog](#)

**How much do you weigh?** Maybe that question is impertinent, but whatever it is, it is your contribution to the 390 million tons of human biomass. If we add livestock and other human-related creatures, we are responsible for 630 million tons. *So what?* Take a guess at the total biomass of all wild land animals now alive! That total is 22 million tons. That's less than 5% of the total. The scientists who produced these numbers "hope it will be a wake-up call to humanity that we should do all we can do to conserve wild mammals." Considering that the Willow Project, described above, threatens two of the remaining large Caribou herds, no one has yet taken heed.

### Gold Again!

I understand the importance of jewelry symbols such as engagement and wedding rings. What I cannot understand is the continued need to do any of this with gold. Nearly 80% of gold production is used in jewelry. Recent data show that gold mining, most of it illegal, has impacted 173 large rivers in 49 countries. Levels of suspended sediment, so detrimental to aquatic life, have doubled in 80% of these rivers. Miners use especially destructive techniques such as those used in the 1800s in the US to dredge and blast sediments from the banks. Then, mercury is added to the sludge to bind to the gold so it will settle out and can be



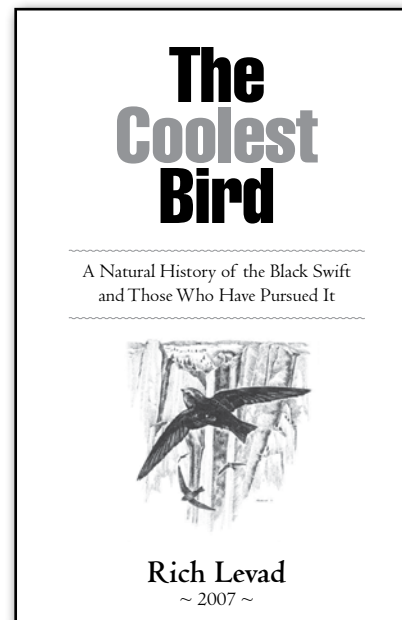
removed. The remaining toxic mess is returned to the river. Many workers die because of these conditions. Indigenous people lose the clean water and healthy fishery they need to survive. The overall destruction to wildlife habitat is enormous. Perhaps I feel so strongly because I have seen this with my own eyes in the Madre de Dios Region in Amazonia Peru. The next time you are in a store and consider a piece of gold jewelry, tell yourself, "Buying this is unconscionable!" There are alternatives. (Note, certifications that gold was not illegally mined were developed by the sellers and brokers and are controversial. And, even if you feel certain the gold was not illegally obtained, your purchase still adds to the global demand which drives the illegal mining.)



### More Black Swift Discoveries:

It has been twelve years since GVAS legend Rich Levad published **The Coolest Bird—A Natural History of the Black Swift and Those Who Pursued It** ([aba.org](#))

Last December, the book was highlighted in *Birding* magazine because Rich's original work has led to more discoveries. Rich and co-workers (including Western Screech-Owl stalwart, Rifle's Kim Potter) learned where Black Swifts went in the winter—to the Amazon. In the summer, Black Swifts feed only during daylight. The new research shows that while in the Amazon, Black Swifts leisurely sail about all day (they do not perch all winter), but feed at night with the time spent correlating to the phase of the moon.



Follow Nic Korte on his blog: [Birding and Conservation in Western Colorado!](#)

<https://birdsandmore.blog/>



# SPRING BIRD MIGRATION COUNT –

Wednesday-Saturday, May 17-20, 2023

By Shannon Young

## It's time again for the Spring Bird Count!

The count is for the entire Mesa County, divided into 12 areas, with a leader for each area.

GVAS will allow for a range of days for the Spring Bird Count this year, which is different from previous counts occurring only on one day. Bird count leaders get the choice of the day on when their area will be counted. The count needs to happen on one day, so that all birds in your area will be counted. There will be much less of a chance that the birds seen will be double-counted. The area leaders cannot break count areas into sections to be done on different days as that may lead to over counting the same birds. An email will soon be forthcoming to area leaders with more information.

We are looking for volunteers to join us on the count! If you have participated before, please contact the area leader that you went with and join the ranks! If you have not participated in the count before and would like to help, contact Shannon Young, who is coordinating the count. She can be reached at [mtngirl1111@gmail.com](mailto:mtngirl1111@gmail.com), or at 970-260-1118.



**Join the Spring Bird Count: contact Shannon Young to sign-up. [mtngirl1111@gmail.com](mailto:mtngirl1111@gmail.com), or at 970-260-1118**

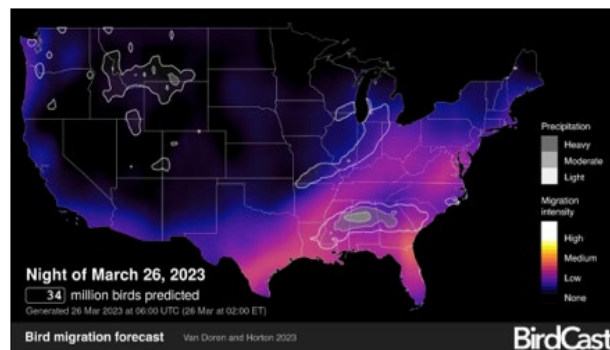
There will likely be questions concerning this change, so get on the phone and give Shannon a call! Harriet Stephens will be sending out the necessary forms and compile the count data from the leaders.

## SPRING MIGRATION DIGITAL TOOLS *By Logan Wagner*

It's time for all birders to use the internet to maximize their spring migration experience. I hope by now that the average bird watcher is privy to [eBird.com](http://eBird.com), the bird list entry website and app by Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Since it launched in 2002, eBird has collected more than 77 million bird lists to date across the globe. Each list of birds has contributed a piece of living data that have produced useful tools that are nothing short of magical.

Today, it doesn't take an ornithological expert to answer the question: "when will Bullock's Orioles return to the Grand Valley?" Navigating to the Mesa County, Colorado bar chart on eBird will show that the first week of May is a good marker to start looking. From the bar chart, you can also locate where the Bullock's Orioles have been. The numerous lists from birders like you have built a datum that can help you accurately predict where and when certain species will show up.

Spring migration is a time when so many different species are moving through that it is difficult to see all of them every year, especially in a place like Mesa County where all of our habitat types are so disjunct between the many mesas. I recommend that you turn your eBird "needs list alert" on if you haven't done so already. Every day, I will receive an email from eBird that details every recent sighting of bird species that I haven't listed in my account. It will list each species that you haven't seen yet with where it was seen, who reported it, and notes and photos if available. Chasing a new species is a good excuse to get out and go



birding, but when the alert emails run dry, remember to find your own birds, too!

However, you may already be an eBird expert. So what about BirdCast? BirdCast is an extension of eBird that combines the listing data and weather instruments to perform bird forecasting predictions. Running between March 1st and June 15th the website will provide quantity predictions, heat map models, and likely species for the following three days. Simply type in Mesa County to the Migration Dashboard to view projections and even a live data feed after the sun goes down!

## AUDUBON PRESERVE UPDATE! *by Meredith Swett Walker*

**There is a lot going on** behind the scenes at the Preserve. **Phase 2** of our Wetlands Improvement Project is nearly ready to go. Our partners, *Ducks Unlimited*, have completed the construction plans which will recontour the north end of Traylor pond and add irrigation infrastructure to bring water from the Redlands Tailrace Canal to Osprey, Traylor, Avocet and North Pond. We are in the process of securing the final funding for this Phase. In February, we applied for a Wetlands for Wildlife grant from CPW and we should get a decision on that in April.

**At the moment** we are in the (rather complicated) process of creating a financial agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation to receive funding through the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program. This funding will consist of about \$150,000 for portions of Phase 2 plus complete (and quite considerable) funding of Phase 3 which will add a water control structure and improve conditions in the North Pond so that it can be used a nursery habitat for endangered native fish.

### Want to help us out? Bird the Preserve!

One of the requirements of our grants for this project is monitoring and you can help us monitor by using [eBird](#). When you bird the Preserve, please use [eBird](#) and submit your checklist. Be on the lookout for waterfowl, shorebirds and other waterbirds and if you can make note of which pond or wetland you see them on in the eBird comments that will be especially helpful. Bird



*Help us to Bird The Preserve! Be on the lookout for waterfowl, shorebirds and other waterbirds and if you can make note of which pond or wetland you see them on in the [eBird](#) comments that will be especially helpful. Bird the preserve before, during, and after Phase 2 and 3 construction – all of those timepoints are important.*

the preserve before, during, and after Phase 2 and 3 construction – all of those timepoints are important. Also no birds, few birds, or boring birds (sorry Mallards) are still important data – we need those checklists too!



### *Thank you to The Hot Tomato Pizza in Fruita*

for sponsoring Grand Valley Audubon Society as their March 1% Donation Partner. Every month Hot Tomato donates 1% of their sales to a non-profit from the Grand Valley.

Owner, Aaron Knapp, and his staff were wonderful, even wearing bird shirts during the month. We enjoyed incredible pizza, stromboli, and salads. Thanks to Tina Wilson for organizing this event and to local members, Lee and Patty Gelatt, for attending our event night. Grand Valley Audubon Society appreciates all who supported Hot Tomato during this month. We hope to participate again next year and plan a bigger event.

Order online or stop in for delicious pizza! [www.hottomatopizza.com](http://www.hottomatopizza.com)



# GVAS BIRDING TRIP: ECUADOR & GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS

**BIRDING TRIP DATES:**  
**ECUADOR: Nov. 30 - Dec. 9, 2023**  
**GALÁPAGOS: Dec. 10 - Dec. 13, 2023**

**ECUADOR AND THE GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS:**

*Birding the Choco-Andes Region with an optional 3-night Galápagos Islands Cruise*

This trip is brought to you by **HOLBROOK TRAVEL**. Holbrook Travel has been our partner in developing trips to Central and South America in the past 5 years. Holbrook Travel believes that sustainable travel is a key to understanding and preserving the natural and cultural diversity of our planet.

**ECUADOR PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:**

- > Explore the Chocó ecoregion across a variety of protected areas, including Yanacocha Biological Reserve, Alambi Cloud Forest Reserve, Milpe Bird Sanctuary, Antisana Ecological Reserve, and others.
- > Meet a representative from a community project dedicated to restoring the habitat of the Black-breasted Puffleg, the official emblematic bird of Quito.
- > Bird the Mashpi-Amagusa Reserve for target species like the Rose-faced Parrot, Orange-breasted Fruiteater, Chocó Vireo, Moss-backed Tanager, and Indigo Flowerpiercer.
- > Visit the famed Refugio Paz de las Aves, known as a haven for antpittas and Andean Cocks-of-the-rock. **Link:** [More Info](#)

**GALÁPAGOS TRIP EXTENSION:**

- > Experience 3-night cruise aboard a yacht to see the incredible diversity on the Galapagos Islands.
- > Explore historical Quito, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and straddle both hemispheres at once at the Middle of the

World Monument.

- > Encounter the iconic wildlife of the Galápagos, including Blue-footed Boobies, Galápagos Hawks, Darwin’s Finches, Galápagos snakes, rice rats, and sea lions.
- > Marvel at striking landscapes and hardy vegetation endemic to the Galápagos and its volcanic terrain, like the red Sesuvium.
- > See giant tortoises up close and learn about the important conservation and education efforts taking place at the Charles Darwin Research Center.



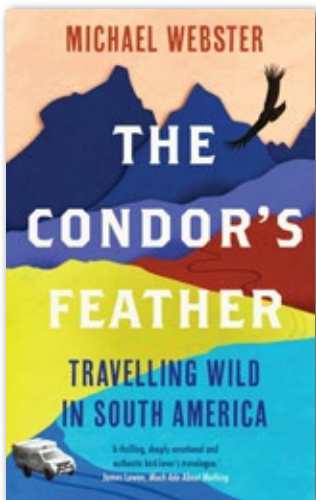
*Golden-rumped Euphonia*



Hike and snorkel to see the islands unique species, such as the Galápagos Giant Tortoise (left). **Link:** [More Info](#)

*Travelers may register for one or both trips. Keep in mind that this trip is open to anyone, but if the majority of the participants are to be from the Grand Valley, it would be prudent to get your deposit in and reserve your spot soon – for the trip of a lifetime!*

**Contact Shannon at [mtngirl1111@gmail.com](mailto:mtngirl1111@gmail.com)**



**BOOK REVIEW** By Nic Korte

**THE CONDOR’S FEATHER:** *written by Michael Webster*

I will enthusiastically read any book described generally as “an account of someone traveling somewhere in the Americas looking for birds.” Consequently, I bought this one as soon as I heard of it. My biggest problem was that the author and his wife returned to England after nearly five years and had no more adventures to describe. I wanted more! Fortunately, the book does have “more,”

in the form of videos. The author and his wife dedicated their trip to aiding local environmental activists by documenting habitat loss, rare bird behavior, and environmental projects. Their most popular was the documentation of the courtship of the critically-endangered Hooded Grebe ([Hooded Grebe courtship dance, rare footage from “Tango in the Wind” - YouTube](#))

If you like this video, you will love the book.