



oice of the Meadowlark

Newsletter of the
Meadowlark Audubon Society
of the Big Horn Basin and Northwest Wyoming

Volume 12, Number 3

March 2012

President's Letter

We are the Meadowlark Audubon Society! We exchange information about what kind of winter we are having. We talk about our most recent bear encounter. Mostly, though, we share stories about our birding experiences.

Just about everyone, it seems, has a favorite bird story. Some are gripping; some are memorable; some are truly remarkable, such as stories about sighting a Snowy Owl or spotting a rare Pacific Loon migrant. Stories like these are like meeting visitors from outside our area, who are so fun to greet as they freely roam where they choose.

Why do we love birds so much?

It's not just that they fly.

Is it the freedom they represent?

Their special tools brought by adaptation, like talons and bills?

Surely it is in part their beauty: a byproduct of camouflage and courtship.

And all these qualities are not so obvious; they require long observation.

Little gems in the sky.

An ancient wisdom, a calm cool collect.

Inquisitive, they have checked on me when I was alone.

They come to say hello.

Which bird on the windowsill inspired your dreams?

One thing is for certain: This class of animal is most adored.

It is a good thing as many people can relate.

Stories about birds help educate people and pique their interest. Sometimes they're inspired enough that they decide the world is worth conserving.

And so, I say, share your bird stories! Telling them is a great way to carry on and further our Society's objectives.

Happy birding!

— Destin Harrell

Meadowlark Board Members

Editor's Note: The election of officers and other directors of Meadowlark Audubon Society will occur at the annual meeting on April 12, 2012.

Except for the President, whose term is two years, all directors serve a one-year term. Biographies of the current officers and other board members, all of whom are slated for re-election, appear below.



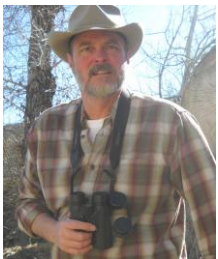
Eric C. Atkinson (Director) teaches in the Biology Department at Northwest College in Powell, Wyoming. He is a lifelong birder and conservation biologist who is deeply concerned about the loss of wild places.

Recognized as an authority on the ecology and behavior of shrikes, which he has studied for many years, he admits to frequently suffering a severe case of the “shrike-bug,” leading him to seek out his favorite quarry.



Ann Belleman (Director) earned her MS in wildlife biology from the University of Minnesota, where her graduate work focused on Red-shouldered Hawks. Over the past 25 years, she has worked on a wide range of field study projects, from Marbled Murrelets

in Alaska to wolves, lynx, and amphibians in Minnesota. But she’s always been drawn to birds and their behaviors—any and all species—and regards Sandhill Cranes as a personal favorite. She currently engages in consultation work under the Endangered Species Act for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



David Buckles (Director) has lived a life close to nature, both personally and as a craftsman. He developed wildlife observation skills working at a nature center and later in the wildlife biology department of the Cook County Forest Preserve in Illinois. As a

teenager, he also took a strong interest in wood carving and photography. These passions go hand in hand, each contributing to the development of the other. Dave has lived in central and northwestern Wyoming since 1993, where he has taken time to refine and expand his skills.



Donna Haman (Director, Membership Chair) moved to Wyoming from her native South Dakota in 1965. She worked in the lab of West Park Hospital in Cody for more than 35 years. She and her husband, Kirk, used to spend their free time fishing,

camping and hiking, but birding and gardening now

occupy much of their time and attention; she is a certified Master Gardener. Active in Meadowlark Audubon for many years, she coordinates its annual fall and spring bird counts at Beck and Alkali lakes.



Destin Harrell (President) was born in Colorado, where he learned to love nature from backpacking through much of the state. As a student at Western State College in Gunnison, he took an ornithology class and has been

hooked ever since. A resident of Cody for 11 years, he is a staff biologist for the Bureau of Land Management. Along with birding, he enjoys skiing, backpacking and kayaking. He numbers goshawks and sage thrashers among his favorite birds.



Rosemarie Hughes (Secretary) planned to stay only a year and then return to California when she came to Cody in 2003. Instead, she met and married her

husband Mike, and says, “I am here to stay.” A volunteer with Absaroka Assisted Living, she also is a volunteer “mobile perch” for the Draper Museum of Natural History’s Greater Yellowstone Raptor Experience. She has always appreciated the beauty of birds, but handling the magnificent raptors has given her a deeper appreciation and understanding. She has been Meadowlark’s Secretary since 2010.



Lisa Marks (Treasurer) grew up exploring the Minnesota River bottom with her sisters in New Ulm, Minnesota, where she also learned about the outdoors, hunting, and conservation from her dad. She attended Northland College in Ashland, Wisconsin, where she earned

degrees in Fish and Wildlife Management and Geology. She moved to the Bighorn Basin in 2003 to take a position with the Bureau of Land Management, where she has since done just about every job possible. She has been a board member of Meadowlark Audubon since 2007 and edited its newsletter for several years.



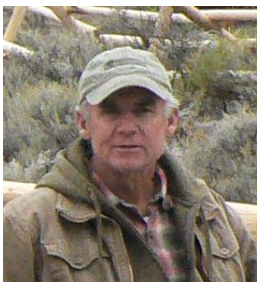
Philip McClinton (Director) hails from rural north Texas, where he came to know the creatures native to that area. He courted his future wife, Susie, by taking her road-hunting for rattlesnakes. While

attending Sul Ross State University in Alpine, Texas, he and Susie studied American Black Bears and other large predators, and later worked on forensic studies for Texas Parks and Wildlife. He taught environmental and ecological courses at Historic Prude Ranch in Fort Davis, Texas, before coming to the Draper Museum of Natural History, where he is an assistant curator.



John C. Rumm (Vice-president, Newsletter Editor) became interested in birds half a century ago while living in New Mexico, an interest that has remained a lifelong passion. A historian by training, he earned his Master's degree and doctorate from the University of Delaware. He returned to the

West four years ago, becoming curator of Western American history at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center. He has edited *Voice of the Meadowlark* since 2009.



Sean Sheehan (Director) identified his first bird—a mockingbird—at the tender age of four. After graduating from Humboldt State University, where he studied wildlife biology and ethology, Sean held a year-long student

assistantship at Dr. Jane Goodall's Gombe Stream Research Center in Tanzania, where he observed chimpanzee behavior and helped develop observation areas to promote tourism. He founded Wyoming Nature Tours, was Northern Wyoming Field Director for the Western Watersheds Project and a past director of the Wyoming Wilderness Association, and has been a Meadowlark Audubon board member since 2002.

Results of 2011 Cody and Kane Christmas Bird Counts

Three count circles participated in the 111th Christmas Bird Count in Meadowlark Audubon's four-county region in December 2011—Cody, Kane and Clark. (Results of the Clark count were unavailable at press time.)

Eleven birders took part in Kane's Christmas Bird Count, held on December 17, 2011. The day was calm, clear and crisp, with temperatures ranging from 13 to 30 degrees Fahrenheit, and snow depths from 1 to 3 inches. A week later, on Christmas Eve, 37 people encountered similar weather conditions, with slightly higher temperatures and somewhat deeper snow depths, as they participated in Cody's Christmas Bird Count. Kane's counters tallied 6,549 birds, representing 45 species; Cody's counters recorded virtually the same number of birds—6,537—but found eight more species. On both counts, tallies yielded lower results, both in aggregate numbers and avian diversity, than in 2010, when Kane recorded 47 species and 10,268 birds, and Cody found 62 species and 8,390 birds.

Both counts showed significant decreases in certain species. The Cody count, for example, recorded only 355 Canada Geese, compared with 2,604 in 2010, the highest tally in its history; Kane tallied 688 geese, 1,385 fewer than were found the previous year. In 2010, Cody counters found 52 Northern Pintails, but in 2011, only eight were spotted, while Kane counters found only 30 Mallards, compared with the 490 tallied in the 2010 count. In 2010, Kane recorded 740 Cedar and 100 Bohemian waxwings, while Cody tallied 159 Cedar and 75 Bohemian; in 2010, however, 117 Cedar and only 8 Bohemian waxwings were found in Cody, while no waxwings of either species were spotted on the Kane count. Indeed, apart from higher numbers of crows, ravens, starlings and magpies, count tallies were lower across the board from 2010's results. These tallies echo preliminary data from Christmas Bird Count circles elsewhere in the Northern Rockies and Great Plains, which also yielded reductions in aggregate birds and in the numbers of species recorded.

It is important to bear in mind that a single year's reduced numbers, while offering some cause for concern, are not necessarily indicative of a trend

either in the short- or longer terms. On the other hand, as evidence accumulates to indicate that global temperatures are on the rise and climatic conditions are changing, the Christmas Bird Count results may suggest that the distribution, diversity and population density of overwintering avifauna is also changing; only time, and further data, will tell.

— John C. Rumm, with information from Joyce Cicco (Cody) and Neil and Jennifer Miller (Kane)

SPECIES	CODY	KANE
Great Blue Heron	2	0
Canada Goose	355	688
Mallard	557	30
Northern Pintail	8	0
Green-winged Teal	33	0
Lesser Scaup	29	0
Bufflehead	68	0
Common Goldeneye	73	13
Barrow's Goldeneye	56	0
Common Merganser	2	0
Duck sp.	2	0
Bald Eagle	17	5
Golden Eagle	20	8
Northern Harrier	7	10
Sharp-shinned Hawk	4	1
Cooper's Hawk	0	3
Northern Goshawk	0	3
Red-tailed Hawk	7	15
Rough-legged Hawk	41	24
American Kestrel	5	3
Merlin	3	2
Prairie Falcon	2	1
Peregrine Falcon	0	1
Chukar	57	0
Ring-necked Pheasant	6	10
Wild Turkey	0	18
Killdeer	4	0
Rock Dove	354	106
Eurasian Collared-Dove	20	4
Great Horned Owl	9	1
Downy Woodpecker	3	5
Hairy Woodpecker	0	4
Northern Flicker	76	69
Northern Shrike	1	3
Clark's Nutcracker	1	1
Black-billed Magpie	183	57
American Crow	163	1031

Common Raven	567	58
Horned Lark	112	432
Black-capped Chickadee	45	10
Mountain Chickadee	7	0
American Dipper	6	0
Townsend's Solitaire	11	6
American Robin	356	236
European Starling	1667	2513
Cedar Waxwing	117	0
Bohemian Waxwing	8	0
American Tree Sparrow	63	57
Field Sparrow	0	6
Song Sparrow	36	39
Harris' Sparrow	1	0
White-crowned Sparrow	0	36
Dark-eyed Junco	54	14
Western Meadowlark	0	5
Red-winged Blackbird	0	622
Brewer's Blackbird	80	103
Yellow-headed Blackbird	0	2
Grey-crowned Rosy-Finch	65	0
House Finch	151	98
Common Redpoll	40	0
Pine Siskin	15	0
American Goldfinch	33	92
European House Sparrow	925	104
TOTAL SPECIES	53	45
TOTAL BIRDS	6537	6549

Snowy Owl Seen near YU Bench

Snowy Owls made a rare irruption into the continental United States during the winter of 2011-12, with hundreds being reported as far south as Texas and Arizona. Reports were largely clustered in the Upper Midwest, Great Lakes, and Northern Great Plains regions. Unlike most of its neighboring states, however, Wyoming reported fewer than a dozen verified sightings, perhaps due to declines in the populations of jackrabbits, cottontails and small rodents upon which Snowy Owls typically prey.

Here in Meadowlark's four-county region, only a handful of Snowy Owl sightings were recorded. One

occurred on December 31. Longtime Meadowlark member Richard Jones was driving out toward the YU Bench Road in mid-afternoon to do some skiing and observe whatever raptors or other birds he could spot. The day was calm and clear, with temperatures in the mid-30s. As Richard recounts, he was just east of YU Bench Road, before it drops down into the south fork of Dry Creek, when

I saw something roundish and whitish [sitting] on a sandstone boulder to the east of the road. I stopped and got my binoculars out, couldn't quite figure what it could be. Then it was obvious—a Snowy Owl. I got out my old spotting scope and tried to take several pictures with my digital camera through the scope. . . . I know these birds can be stressed coming so far south, probably because prey is scarce up north, so I didn't try to get any closer. There wasn't much in the way of prey out there this winter—almost no rabbit tracks or small rodent activity.



“There are times I wish I had better optics and cameras,” Richard admits. Yet fuzzy though his pictures are, they unmistakably show an adult Snowy Owl—making his sighting one of the very few from Wyoming to have been photographically documented. We congratulate Richard on his sighting—a terrific way to end 2011 on a high note!

— John C. Rumm

96 Hills

Editor's Note: We're pleased to offer this first installment of occasional essays by Meadowlark members on their favorite birding experiences. We welcome your own submissions!

Even to this day, the quick whiff of lighting propane in the early morning dark takes me to that little pink house in the 96 Hills. It was on a ranch where a cowboy named Cecil fondly remembered junior high

school with Tanya Tucker and the nearest telephone was in a ramshackle saloon 25 miles west.

I would awaken well before dawn in the Arizona darkness: a time when even poorwills, nighthawks, and owls were silent; that darkest hour of the night. A Catahoula (leopard dog) might bark as I switched on the cot-side lamp and worked my way to the old propane cook stove. Fried tortillas, refried beans, and strong bitter coffee were our sustenance for the day, the cast iron skillet always giving off a homey smell as they rose to temperature.

Karla Bonoff's "The Water is Wide" or Lyle Lovett might accompany Jim and me as we silently ate the very hot breakfast. Sonoran nights in early spring can be surprisingly chilly so I usually mixed local hot sauce into the beans to keep me warm on the drive down the draw and up over the second ridge in the 96 Hills. The Jeep CJ5 had no heater, and as I'd removed the top, the "Mighty 660-Voice of the Navajo Nation" would keep the sleeping desert company on my way. 0400 Mountain Standard Time (Daylight Time on the Navajo Reservation) would sing away with Diné dawn chants as I navigated without headlights in the darkness.

Parking the Jeep under the overhanging branches of a mesquite, I'd grab a backpack, binoculars, and scope to begin the steep ascent to my home for the day: a blind, or "hide," as the Britons say—a plywood box about 3 feet deep, 5 feet side to side, and about 4 feet high. Canvas-draped holes were located on each side with one more overhead for vertical viewing or through which to send an antenna. High but hidden in plain view on a rocky ridge hosting ocotillo, mesquite, cholla, leopard lizards, wild honeybees, and hummingbirds, I'd settle in and await the coming sun. By noon, the sun had scorched the rocks. By early afternoon, all sounds of the desert were silenced with old Sol's light, glare, and heat, except for the ever-monotonous buzz of the cicada and the "chugga chugga" of the Cactus Wren.

They say "love is blind" and I can agree with a semblance of that statement for I fell in love in that blind. Her name was Beta. She was a Harris's Hawk, *Parabuteo unicinctus*, inhabiting a perfect little valley in the crook of the 96 Hills. One opening to the broad saguaro and creosote flats to the west, this little enclave gave home, food, shelter, and life to

Beta and to the family group to which she belonged. For what never seems like a month of Sundays, but what is more aptly enumerated as approaching two straight months, I daily and all-day observed these raptors as they cooperatively hunted, argued, provided food for the incubating female, sparred, took siestas, and traveled to visit neighboring families and scattered water holes.

I, like Mowgli raised by wolves, came to know the nuances of each of the bird-clan's members, and not unlike that Kipling child, I, too, became accepted by these plumaged lupines. For, on more than a few occasions, when a stretch was in order, I emerged from the dry husk of my blind just like those familial cicadas, finding one of the six Harris's Hawks sitting nearby on a saguaro eyeing me knowingly. Ha! All the shenanigans in the world, and I, astute human, expected to creep into the home of this raptor family and forgo discovery. Who was observing whom?

The family was a marvel of behavior and personality. The Alpha male with his jealous dominance only once let the Gamma male within 200 meters of the nest, but he occasionally allowed the third-in-line male closer approach. Even once, he allowed that male to provision the Alpha female at a saguaro adjacent to the nest.



One of the Harris's Hawks that Eric Atkinson banded in the 96 Hills region of Arizona. (Photograph by Eric Atkinson)

The Gamma male led a life almost tangential to the rest of the pack. His circles of hunting, perching, and life really orbited the smaller world of the family, excepting that of Beta. Gamma and Beta occasionally would hunt the periphery together and tail-chase along toe ridges in the coolness of the evening. He was an efficient hunter, catching lizards and woodrats in the rocks with deft assurance.

Almost ghostlike, he would materialize in a palo verde along the wash below where just moments before I'm certain no hawk existed. Moreover, there was also a Gamma female in this family but certainly, a retiring and shy individual was she. Only on intense group hunts would she make a notable presence, for she often kept low in the brush during the day-to-day activities.

The Alpha female, when not attending the three eggs or, later, the three youngsters, was a force to be reckoned with. Tolerating no advance to the nest by Beta, she would launch from her throne giving chase to the younger bird until Beta would cross over my ridge or drop low into the catclaw acacia lining the wash. Alpha was an efficient hunter of woodpeckers, too. Quickly she would thrust her leg into the hole of a saguaro and, while hanging on with the other, rapaciously draw out her prey. Then ever so daintily, she fed her nestlings.

But it was Beta to whom I became most attached. She was in her second year, likely resulting from the group's previous productivity. A strong flyer and a keen observer, in addition to being somewhat of a clown, she was first to jump to the ground running after jackrabbits who had taken shelter in dense vegetation. Beta was the bird dog of the group, and hence, integral to their survival.

Beta, however, was also restless. She could feel the draw of exploration. What was right over the hill? More so, what was over the hill and down the draw, the draw with its smooth plunge pools still holding water from the monsoons of last summer? She traveled down the canyon and into that other little valley, where the gouges on the sandstone still read "Viva Poncho Villa." That little valley where I could find potsherds beneath a capstone overhang and the remnants of an ancient spring.

I would follow her on those days when the restlessness got the best of her. And, like a wedding band, the radio transmitter she wore tied me to her, a transmitter we had attached and that ran run by solar power, its batteries getting weaker over time. Hence, I could discern the direction she was sitting with respect to the sun by the strength of the tone. I could tell where she was roosting at dawn by watching the sun travel across the valley floor and listening for her strengthened beeps. Mostly, though, I could track her wanderings as she visited all those

aforementioned places and stretched her wings for the day that she would select a mate of her own and become a nesting female, herself. An Alpha.

Some days, I would catch up with her at a watering hole, a “stock tank” in Arizona cowboy parlance. Surrounded by Brangus cattle and maybe a javelina sow and offspring, I stayed back and watched Beta’s actions. She waded belly deep into the water and began preening her feathers as she splashed and jumped. Wings held wide, she stirred the mud with her talons and dunked her head before running to dry ground to shake. And, lo and behold, sometimes Gamma the male would join her at these desert oases. They would dry in the sun side by side, only to then go their separate ways homeward.

Once, Beta was hosted as a guest by another Harris’s Hawk group of three individuals. Spending all day, staying the night, it was not until the afternoon of the second day that she returned to her natal home. After a sortie out onto the creosote flats, where even in a well-broken-in-Jeep I could not keep up with her, she rocketed directly homeward. Immediately, she was welcomed by the three males and even allowed to perch near the nest-cactus by the Alpha female. What I figured at the time, going against all school-taught-science, was that she was catching the family up on the goings-ons of the neighbors.

The time approached for our parting and to that end, we had the necessary but ever difficult endeavor of re-trapping a trap-wise raptor. We must catch Beta again, and remove the transmitter and harness, releasing her to the truly wild. Our plans were simple and not at all elegant. We would employ Bal-Chatri traps, Hindi for “horse-hair umbrella,” baited with gerbils, house mice, or pigeons, all certain to go through the project unscathed. For more than a week, we placed these noose-traps around the territory near her favorite roost sites, and noose carpets, also, on her favorite day-time-perches. Jim and I would walk in the midnight darkness to the singing of Whiskered Screech-Owls and Elf Owls with our paths illumined by moonshine glinting off teddy bear chollas. Ever alert to the buzz of a Mojave rattlesnake, we would walk into catclaw as it ripped our shirts, bump into javelinas as they snorted and scampered off in the darkness, and worst of all, come face to face with a black Brangus bull pawing dirt up over his shoulders.

Finally, one mid-morning, Beta could resist that caged gerbil no more and found herself ensconced by the nooses of the trap. Quickly we ran to the hawk as she looked at me with those chestnut eyes. Cocking her head, she whirled to grab my arm with her talons as I put my hand on her noosed leg. Jim was up with me in a second as we had her hooded to calm her down. As we hummed nothings to quiet her, snipped the cotton string holding the Teflon ribbon to which the radio was attached. Off it slipped. I preened in her feathers, removing all sign of her former harness. She was the picture of calm perfection as we removed the hood. Almost, *or more*, knowingly Beta looked at me, not even attempting to foot my arm or hands any longer. I placed her on the dry desert sand and we backed away into the palo verdes. With one single glance in our direction, Beta leapt skyward heading for her favorite afternoon perch.

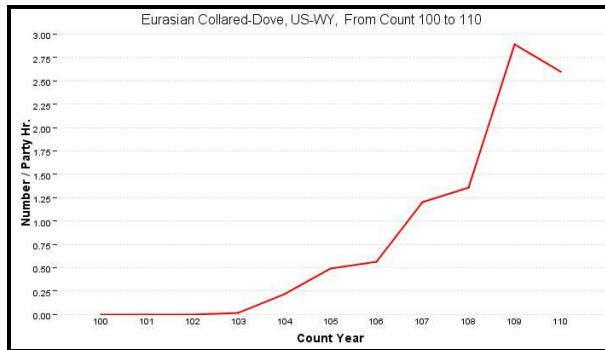
As we left that perfect little Sonoran valley, I think I left a little piece of my heart there, too. It sounds absurd but as we wander through this life, we come to places and times when we become our place. Our places become us, too. We, like mycorrhizal fungi, can innervate the places we know. We should hope that, like those fungi, we nurture and sustain the wild things we know. I’m not sure that I did nurture or give any sustenance whatsoever to those Harris’s Hawks, to Beta, or even to the Sonoran Desert itself in the mid-1980s. However, what I do know is that they, the hawks and the desert, the lizards and the owls, gave life and sustenance to me. I carry that life in my more complete heart to this day.

— Eric Atkinson

Eurasian Collared-Doves: A New Addition to Wyoming’s Avifauna

A large number of non-native birds occur within Meadowlark Audubon’s four-county region (Park, Hot Springs, Washakie and Bighorn counties), including the Cattle Egret, originally from Africa; introduced game birds (Ring-necked Pheasant, Chukar, Hungarian Partridge); introduced songbirds (European Starling, English House Sparrow) and one member of the pigeon family, the Rock Dove. Now, another non-endemic pigeon is overspreading this region: the Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*). The first report from Wyoming, near Laramie, occurred in 1998; they were first recorded on the Wyoming Christmas Bird Count (CBC) in

2003, when seven were tallied. Seven years later, 2,103 were observed on CBC's statewide, and this number has roughly doubled every year since. They were first recorded on Cody's CBC in 2007, when a dozen were spotted; similar numbers have been reported in subsequent tallies.



Graph tracking the spread of Eurasian Collared-Doves in Wyoming, as tallied on Christmas Bird Counts, 2000-2010. Courtesy National Audubon Society.

Native to the Indian sub-continent and adjacent parts of southern Asia, the Eurasian Collared-Dove adapts rapidly to human-altered landscapes. They are adept colonizers, using a method described as “leap-frogging” or “jumping and back-filling,” in which “founder” populations appear well outside of their known range and then colonize the spaces in-between. During the 20th century, Eurasian Collared-Doves began rapidly expanding their range, spreading across much of Asia, North Africa and Europe. Released or escaped captive doves are believed to have introduced the species to the Bahamas and Lesser Antilles in the mid-1970s. It reached Florida by the early 1980s and quickly began spreading across North America.

The Eurasian Collared-Dove's common name is derived from the black “collar” on the back of its neck, which also gave rise to the first word of its scientific name, a compound of the Latin words *streptos* (collar) and *peleia* (dove). The second part of its scientific name derives from Greek mythology. Decaecto, an overworked and underpaid servant girl, prayed to the gods for help. Taking pity on her, they changed her into a dove so she could escape. The dove's call is said to echo Decaecto's mournful pleas.

Somewhat larger and chunkier than a Mourning Dove but slimmer than a Rock Dove, the Eurasian Collared-Dove grows to 17 inches in length and has a wingspan that may reach 22 inches. Its color is

mainly pale to sandy gray or brown, with darker wingtips, a black bill, and reddish feet. The underside of the tail is white; its end is squared off, unlike the Mourning Dove's pointy tail. Males and females look alike; juveniles resemble them but have a pale red wash on their back, wings and chest; immature birds have no collar. Its call, a repetitive “hoo hooooo hoo,” with the emphasis on the middle note, is slightly lower in pitch than the Mourning Dove's call; it also utters a harsh nasal “kreew” during display flights. Like Mourning Doves, the wings of Eurasian Collared-Doves make a sharp whistling noise when the birds take flight.

Male Eurasian Collared-Doves display with a ritual flight during courtship, making a long vertical climb and then gliding downward in a circle, holding their wings below their bodies in an inverted “V” shape. At all other times, the doves fly rapidly and directly, with fast, clipped wing beats and no gliding.

Highly territorial, Eurasian Collared-Doves watch for intruders from treetops or other high vantage points and will aggressively challenge intruders, especially during nesting season, delivering sharp blows with their beak and wings. They are monogamous and may nest multiple times, producing up to six broods per year. They have even been known to begin a new nest while still feeding fledglings in an older one. Males and females collaborate in gathering nesting materials; the female builds the nest and lays two white eggs. Females incubate the eggs at night, and males incubate them during the day. Incubation lasts from two weeks to 18 days; young doves fledge in 15 to 19 days.

Outside of breeding season, Eurasian Collared-Doves fly in flocks of 10 to 20 birds or more, foraging in open fields for grains, seeds, fruit, and sometimes insects, and roosting communally in trees or barns. During winter months, they will occasionally visit bird feeders. Their crops can hold large amounts of food, while they use a special siphoning technique when drinking, immersing their bills and sucking up large volumes of water. These strategies enable them to minimize time spent in dangerous, open areas. They generally shy away from heavily wooded terrain or highly urbanized areas.

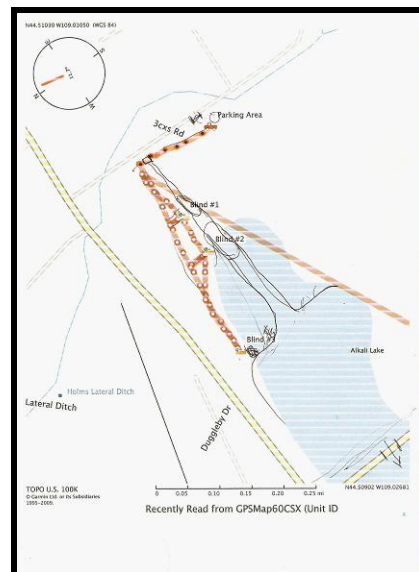
As successful as Eurasian Collared-Doves have become as colonizers and breeders, do they pose a threat to native bird populations? We don't know

yet. They display behavioral dominance over native birds, and, when present in large numbers, certainly may discourage other species from using nesting sites and bird feeders. Their impact on native North American dove species is unclear. Data derived from Christmas Bird Counts suggest that Mourning Dove populations have decreased since Collared-Doves arrived, but other research indicates that native dove species are more abundant in areas where they co-exist with Collared-Doves. One concern is that Eurasian Collared-Doves may carry *Trichomonas*, a disease-triggering protozoan known to be fatal to Mourning Doves and raptors that prey on them.

Since Eurasian Collared-Doves are not native, they are not protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act or other conservation laws. Many states have encouraged their hunting. In Wyoming, they are not listed as a game bird; there is no closed season and no bag limit, and no license is required to hunt them.

Writing on Eurasian Collared-Doves in *North American Birds* in 1999, wildlife biologists Christina M. Romagosa and Terry McEneaney noted how “[t]here is still much to learn about the status of the Eurasian Collared-Dove in North America. More observation and research on breeding habits, movements and life history of this species is sorely needed before we can begin to understand what effects it may have on indigenous North American birdlife.” They noted that, in contrast to introduced birds such as the European Starling and English House Sparrow, which became well-established without their expansion having been studied or documented, the Eurasian Collared-Dove offers “an excellent and rare opportunity to identify and monitor a species newly introduced into our habitats during [the] initial phase [of its expansion]. This phenomenon seems particularly intriguing since the species seems to be spreading so rapidly over such a wide region, forming so many localized breeding populations, and potentially affecting other related genera.” Romagosa and McEneaney encouraged ongoing efforts to document “both indigenous and nonindigenous dove demographics,” since the data generated “could provide valuable information . . . in the years to come” (pp. 348-353; quote on p. 352). Meadowlark members’ own observations thus can help document the distribution, life history and behavior of this new addition to our avifauna.

— Dennis Kaleta and Ann Belleman



Buchanan Nature Sanctuary site plan, showing the planned L-shaped trail route and blinds (courtesy of Sean Sheehan).

Meadowlark to Erect Blinds and Mark Trail Route at Buchanan Nature Sanctuary Trail

With approval from the board of Thomas the Apostle Center and the Rev. Darcy Grimes, Meadowlark Audubon is planning to construct observation blinds, mark a trail route, and install interpretive signage at Buchanan Nature Sanctuary. Located east of the junction of highways 14/16/20 and Route 120, the sanctuary encompasses several acres of wetlands, an extension of Alkali Lake, and is an important nesting and feeding site for waterfowl; sparrows, wrens and numerous other birds nest and feed in adjacent fields and grasslands. The trail route will link a parking area with three observation blinds that will offer direct views of the marshy wetlands and surrounding fields. Funding for the project comes from Meadowlark’s conservation fund.

Work on constructing the blinds and marking the trail route is planned to take place on Saturday, April 28 (rain date May 5). We encourage anyone interested in volunteering on this project to join us! Please bring a lunch and wear appropriate work gear. For more details, check the Meadowlark website or contact Sean Sheehan, ssheehan@tritel.net.



Meadowlark Audubon Society of the
Big Horn Basin and Northwest Wyoming
P.O. Box 2126, Cody, Wyoming 82414

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Unless otherwise noted, all events take place in the basement community room of Big Horn Federal Savings, 1701 Stampede Avenue, in Cody. Please make sure to check our website (<http://www.meadowlarkwyo.org>) for program details, announcements and updates!

March 19, 2012: Annual Spring bird count at Beck and Alkali Lakes begins and runs each Monday for seven weeks, weather permitting. Meet at the Cody McDonalds by 7:45 am to carpool. For more information, please contact Donna Haman, 587-4190.

April 2, 2012: Deadline for submission of applications for Meadowlark Audubon's Deb Woodbridge Memorial Scholarship, open to high school seniors in our four-county region who are considering careers pertinent to the mission of the National Audubon Society. See the Meadowlark website for more information and application forms.

April 12, 2012: Board meeting, 6-6:45 p.m. General meeting, 7-8:15. Location: Fagerberg Building, Room FAB-70, Northwest College, Powell. Program: Melissa Hill (Draper Museum of Natural History), "The Greater Yellowstone Raptor Experience." *Annual election of Meadowlark Audubon Society Officers and Board Members.*

April 15-June 15, 2012: Wyoming Birding Bonanza. Go birding, submit your observations, and compete for prizes and bragging rights! For more details, visit <http://www.uwyo.edu/berrycenter/vertebrate-museum/birding-bonanza/index.html>

May 10, 2012: Board meeting, 6-6:45 p.m. General meeting, 7-8:15. Program: Philip McClinton (Draper Museum of Natural History), "Rattlesnakes and Rattlesnake Awareness" and "White-winged Dove Field Studies."

May 25, 2012: *3rd Annual Warbler Walk:* MAS vice-president John Rumm will lead an hour-long walk along the Shoshone River Trail to look for warblers and spring migrants. Meet in the parking lot below the 12th Street (Belfry) Bridge at 7:30 am.

June 7-July 12, 2012: NWC instructor and MAS director Eric Atkinson offers BIOL2490, Field Ornithology, a combined lecture/fieldwork course. Registration is open to non-students by calling NWC Enrollment Services at 307-754-6149 to enter the system. Phone number, address, email are required. Fees are not covered and the total cost for the class will be about \$120. Potential students who are Park County resident, 65 years or older and enrolling for credit, can qualify for a Golden Age Waiver (as long as the person is a resident of Park County and enrolling for credit).

June 14, 2012: Meadowlark Audubon end-of-year picnic, 6 pm, Beck Lake Pavilion. Please bring a dish to share. Come join us for good times and a special surprise!