



The

Valley Harrier

Newsletter of the
Arkansas Valley
Audubon Society
(Colorado)

Volume XXXV Issue 4

May 2009

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by *Bill McGurn*

In case you haven't heard the good news, Leon Bright, one of our very own, has been awarded the Environmental Educator Award presented by the Nature and Raptor Center of Pueblo. For those of us that know Leon's resume, this was no surprise. For those readers that don't know Leon as well, I would like to share some of his accomplishments. Leon is a Professor Emeritus of Foreign Language and taught at CSU-Pueblo from 1963-95. While at CSU, Leon used this experience to teach concern for the environment and the importance of birds in the environment. Leon helped start Osprey Days, which later became Eagle Days, a popular event at Pueblo Reservoir. For years, Leon has been sharing his scope and expertise to further the public's knowledge and respect of these magnificent birds.



In 1979, as a member of Audubon, Leon helped start the River Trails Nature Center, which has grown into the Nature and Raptor Center of Pueblo. Until recently, Leon was the editor of the Harrier for 12 years, keeping 400-500 members across southeastern Colorado up to date on conservation and environmental issues. He served as president of AVAS for two years and served two years as our AVAS representative on Audubon Colorado, the state organization.

As if this wasn't enough, over the years Leon has given numerous birding programs for the public, participated in countless Christmas Bird Counts and Migratory Bird Days, and has contributed data to the Breeding Bird Atlas, past and present.

MAY PROGRAM

"BEGINNING BUTTERFLIES"

AVAS has initiated two summertime butterfly counts in its region, the Lake Dorothee-Sugarite count and one in Pueblo Mountain Park. Mark Yaeger will discuss the rudiments of butterfly identification at the monthly May program. He has been participating in counts and learning about butterflies since he began the Lake Dorothee count in 1995. The program will touch on what to look for in identifying our butterflies, what field guides to use and other tools to aid in identification. Cliff Smith and Pearle Sandstrom-Smith have taken beautiful digital photographs on many of these counts and Mark will use them to illustrate the basics of butterflying.

This presentation is one of our monthly educational programs for the public that feature free admission and refreshments. Don't miss this interesting presentation at the classroom of the **Pueblo Zoo** on **Friday, May 8 at 7:00 p.m.** See you there!

(continued from column 1)

On a more personal note, Leon has provided invaluable mentorship to your current president as I learn the ropes. We are extremely proud of Leon and congratulate him on his most recent accomplishment.

National Arctic Organizer Builds Support for America's

Kit McGurn, National Arctic Organizer for the Sierra Club and former Pueblo resident, is working to

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CONSERVATION NOTES

by *SeEtta Moss*

Scientists are studying what the impacts of Climate Change/Climate Disruption (a more descriptive term) will be on species, water, etc. I recently read about research conducted by Princeton University which is exploring what will likely happen to invasive plant species in western states. Interestingly they have found both threats of increased spread and opportunities for restoration.

The study, "Climate change and plant invasions: restoration opportunities ahead?" looked at the relationship of Climate Disruption and five invasive plant species of serious concern in the western U.S.—cheatgrass; spotted knapweed; yellow starthistle; tamarisk; and leafy spurge. The areas that AVAS represents—south central and southeast Colorado and the Rio Grande Valley—are significantly impacted by all of those except yellow starthistle. Just as other researchers have found that native plant species will (and actually have already begun) shifting their ranges, they expected that invasive plants would do likewise.

Following is a description from a news article from Princeton: "The study authors created "bioclimatic envelope models," wherein the authors identified where the invasive plant species occurred, and identified critical climate variables such as precipitation patterns and temperature patterns that are associated with the presence of the invasive plants under investigation. The authors then determined what combined set of climate variables best described the distribution of these weeds, and mapped all of the places in the U.S. where these climate conditions occur. "They have found that tamarisk, a shrub/tree

found throughout our area, will not be effected by Climate Disruption. The less widely known leafy spurge and spotted knapweed will "retreat" from some parts of Colorado, leading to opportunities for restoration. You can read more about this research in the news article from Princeton online at http://wws.princeton.edu/news/invasiveplants_warming/.

If you will recall from my Conservation Notes last month, it is vital that we not introduce more alien species that may become invasive like those in this study—so please try to stick to native or "near-native" (those species found in the region) plant species for your yard and garden.

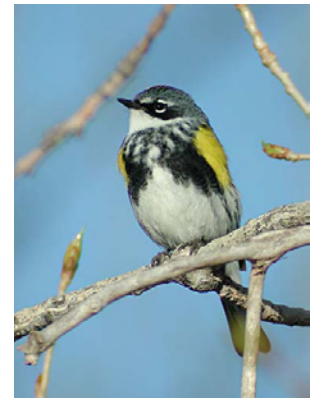
When this newsletter arrives around the first of May, landbird migration will be in full-swing in Colorado. Keep your eye out for warblers that are flying through our area or coming here to breed. Species like Yellow-rumped Warblers can be seen without binoculars as their yellow butts stand out when they fly and they give frequent "chip" calls (sounds just like chip).

Those who live near where agricultural fields are flooded for irrigation can see lots of neat migrants including White-faced Ibis (they have long scythe-like bills) and a variety of shorebirds.

Many, especially those who live in the foothills, will have the opportunity to see some of the common hummingbird species like Broad-tailed Hummingbirds (the males make a noticeable noise when they fly) that come here to have their babies in tiny nests. Both those that are migrating through and those who will stay to nest can use your help in providing good habitat—yup, another plug for native plants.

Recent snows have improved the outlook for water availability in the Arkansas and Rio Grande basins this year. That doesn't mean that it's ok to pour the water on your lawns. Water conservation is important even in years when there is enough water in our rivers. In fact, Denver Water will continue watering restrictions this year even though they will have a good supply—they are working to reduce water use, something that all municipal water providers should be doing. Think that's dumb—not only does water conservation make good sense for sustaining our ecosystems but it saves you money. And reducing water demand by municipal water providers is far less expensive than developing new sources of water. So fix those leaks, and be water-wise.

A good source of information on



Yellow-rumped Warbler
S. Messick



Broad-tailed Hummingbird
Dan True

AVAS WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

In the past couple of months the following people have become paid new members of the National and/or Arkansas Valley Audubon Societies. We extend the red carpet to:

- Alamosa:** Judith Wood
- Cañon City:** Audery Mattison
- Colorado City:** B. A. Smith
- Florence:** B. Medina
- La Veta:** Marilyn Hall
- Nathrop:** Martha Speir
- Penrose:** Peg Rooney
- Pueblo:** Richard Brownrigg, Alene Sharp, Mary Trujillo, D. Parsons, William Gower, Maureen Yeater, Michelle Deslauriers, Gordon Redmond
- Salida:** Fred Freers, Andrew Mackie
- Westcliffe:** James Hood

Also a very special thank you to the 42 people who have paid to renew their Audubon membership!

It takes National Audubon from one to three months to notify AVAS of updates in our membership. **Join or renew directly with us so we will immediately be on the same page!**

Any questions may be directed to Leon Bright, AVAS Membership Chair, 636 Henry Ave., Pueblo, CO 81005 or call (719) 561-1108, or by email, urraca2@comcast.net.

National Arctic Organizer

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engage and educate citizens across the country in Arctic conservation issues. This unique place represents a microcosm of the realities that society at large faces with regard to fossil fuel dependency and climate change. Come learn what is being done to protect this iconic American landscape and what you can do to help. This multimedia presentation will be held at **Pueblo Rawlings Library, fourth floor Info Zone, Thursday May 14, at 7:00P.M.** For more information call 719-547-2245.

AVAS LEADERSHIP

AVAS officers and Board members for 2009. All phone numbers are in area code 719.

- President: **Bill McGurn** 547-2245
- Vice President: **George McKinnon** 564-1868
- Secretary: **Marilyn McBirney** 948-4622
- Treasurer: **Mark Yaeger** 545-8407
- Board Member—at-large: **Jim Good** 564-9522
- Fundraising: **Open**
- Programs: **Lura Zimmerman** 543-9608
- Conservation: **SeEtta Moss** 275-8874
- Education: **Open**
- Field Trips: **Donna Emmons** 676-5666
- Membership: **Leon Bright** 561-1108
- Newsletter: **Harry Rurup** 547-0406
- Publicity: **Donna Emmons** 676-5666
- Representative to Audubon of CO: **SeEtta Moss** 275-8874
- Web site: **Ben D'Andrea** (303) 987-1066

The *Harrier* is published monthly except for June, July, August and December by the Arkansas Valley Audubon Society, P.O. Box 522, Pueblo, CO 81002. Subscription is free to members of AVAS.

Note New P.O. Box and Zip

Colorado Mountain Club Event

SUNDAY, MAY 31, the Colorado Mountain Club is sponsoring a field trip to John Martin Reservoir and invites AVAS members to attend. Duane Nelson will lead the group on a tour of the reservoir and surrounding area. Highlights may include a peek at hard-won nesting sites for Least Tern and Piping Plover. Duane's extensive effort for these two species is legend in birding circles. Contact Duane at 719-456-6098 for a reservation, and the meeting place and time.

JOIN OR RENEW WITH AVAS

Help fund AVAS by paying your Audubon dues *through your Chapter.*

- New member **\$20** National Audubon and AVAS (AVAS receives \$20)
- Renewing member **\$35** National Audubon and AVAS (AVAS receives \$15)
- AVAS membership *only* **\$15**

Total enclosed: \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, ST, Zip: _____

Email: _____

- I prefer to receive the *Harrier* online. Please notify me.

Please make **checks** payable to **Arkansas Valley Audubon Society.**

Mail this form and your check to:
Leon Bright, 636 Henry Ave.,
Pueblo, CO 81005
(Phone: 719-561-1108,
email: urraca2@comcast.net)

Thank you!

the JOHN DEANX art gallery
521 S. Union Ave
Pueblo, CO 81008
(719) 645-8407



Featuring original art with distinction.

UPCOMING AVAS FIELD TRIPS

SATURDAY, MAY 2, CHICO BASIN RANCH, 8 AM - 3 PM: Join our annual spring trek to one of the best migrant traps in our area. Fee is \$10 to \$15.00 each, depending on the size of the group, to bird on this property. Contact Donna Emmons, 369-9704 or emmons7@yahoo.com, for more information and carpool details from Pueblo. Information about Chico Ranch: <http://www.chicobasinranch.com/icws260w3/html/Recreation.html>.

SATURDAY, MAY 9, ANNUAL PUEBLO COUNTY SPRING COUNT to celebrate INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY: Meet Dave Silverman (489-3565) at 8 am at the Lake Beckwith dam parking area in Colorado City. The group will bird there and Rye area most of the day, finishing near Pueblo at day's end. Bring lunch if you plan to bird into the afternoon. No fees are required to participate. For further information about birding on your own, see the AVAS website: <http://www.socobirds.org>.

SATURDAY, MAY 23, NATURE AND RAPTOR CENTER IN PUEBLO: 4th Saturday Birdwalk. Join an Audubon member for a stroll along the Riverwalk from 8 am - 11 am. The only charge is a parking fee (\$3.00) for those who are not Nature Center members. No birding experience necessary and families are most welcome. Contact the Nature Center at 549-2414 for more information.

SATURDAY, JUNE 6, BREEDING BIRD ATLAS ORIENTATION, 8 AM - NOON: Interested in birding a block for the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas II project, but not sure if you are up to it? Regional Coordinator, Mark Yaeger, will walk you through the basics on this trip to a nearby block for some on-the-job training. Meet at the Duck Pond in Pueblo City Park to carpool. Contact Mark at 545-8407/543-2724 or Donna Emmons at 676-5666/369-9704.

SATURDAY, JUNE 27, NATURE AND RAPTOR CENTER IN PUEBLO: 4th Saturday Birdwalk! Join an Audubon member for a stroll along the Riverwalk from 8 am - 11 am. There is no charge for the bird walk, but the parking fee is \$3.00 for non Nature Center members. No birding experience necessary and families are most welcome.

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, JUNE 27 AND 28, LAKE DOROTHEY STATE WILDLIFE AREA/SUGARITE CANYON STATE PARK BUTTERFLY COUNT, 8 AM - 2 PM: This annual count has been expanded to two full days of butterfly hikes and programs with vendors and family fun events. Make camping reservations on the New Mexico State Park website – www.emnrd.state.nm.us/PRD/Sugarite.htm - or call 575-445-5607. Fee for each day's events is the regular park entrance fee of \$5.00 per vehicle. Contact Mark Yaeger, 545-8407/543-2724, or Donna Emmons, 676-5666/369-9704, for carpool information.

SUNDAY, JULY 19, BUTTERFLY COUNT AT PUEBLO MOUNTAIN PARK, BEULAH, 9 AM – NOON: Third annual count to continue compilation of a butterfly list for the Park. No experience required. You spot the butterfly and Mark Yaeger will identify it! We also look at birds and wildflowers, of course. Contact Mark at 545-8407 or 543-2724. Check out the Park's website – www.hikeandlearn.org - for directions.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 22, WET MOUNTAIN VALLEY, LAKE DEWEESE SWA, 8 AM – 4 PM: This is the 25th consecutive year for this wonderful

trip! Many thanks to organizers and leaders, Dave Silverman, Jan Pedersen and Leon Bright for year after year of good birding. To get to the meeting place, Lake DeWeese SWA (don't forget your Habitat Stamp), travel to Westcliffe and head North on State Hwy 69. At the North edge of town, turn right on the Lake road and continue four or five miles. Since the trip attracts a large number of participants, **CARPPOOLING IS ESSENTIAL DURING THE FIELD TRIP.** Contact Dave at 719-489-3565/ silvireo@hotmail.com; Leon at 719-242-7394/ urraca2@comcast.net and Jane at janelcsw@aol.com.

Southeast Colorado Birding and Heritage Event

Las Animas-Bent County, May 15, 16, 17. Enjoy a May birding and Heritage weekend with guided caravan field trips, Heritage dinner with bison cuisine and entertainment. Three day tours and one Friday evening tour features birding, historical and scenic guided trips. The first 20 to pre-register by May 1 will receive a free poster. For brochure, camping/lodging discount info and to register, contact 719-456-2173, 719-980-1320 (cell), pioneerspirit03@yahoo.com, PO Box 387, Las Animas, CO 81054 or www.supporters-of-colorado-preservation-las-animas.org



Nature's World:**HOMEGROWN POWER***by Susan Tweit*

Last fall, Richard and I decided to invest a portion of our savings in a power plant—an array of photovoltaic cells for our roof. We figured we'd get a better return than anything the stock market could produce, and we'd get the less tangible but no less satisfying benefits of producing our own "clean" power.

(Clean in the sense that generating it won't kill any birds or bats, won't destroy any habitat, won't add CO₂ to the atmosphere and contribute to global warming, won't dam rivers. The roof is already in place, catching sunshine almost every day.)

So we checked out local systems, got recommendations, and called a contractor. He came over, looked at our house's long expanse of steeply pitched roof facing just east of south (our house is situated to gather the bulk of its heat from the low-angle winter sun) and made approving noises.

We discussed how much and when we use electricity, he made measurements of the roof, and he took away a year's worth of our electric bills.

He came back with a system configuration. After we talked it over, we opted to enlarge it to generate power not just for the house and its attached guest apartment, but also for Richard's shop with its big woodworking machines and stone-carving tools.

We settled on a system that would generate up to 5.4 kilowatts of electricity.

Then came the bottom line: just over \$39,000 for the system and installation. But we'd get about \$24,000 back as a rebate from our electric utility, leaving us with a total cost of around \$15,000.

That's still a very large chunk of change. Richard did some calculating, we talked it over again, and ended up deciding to go for it. So we signed a contract, and our contractor sent in the rebate program paperwork. And then we waited for rebate approval and for winter to pass.

(Guess which happened first.)

Finally, one warm day last month, our contractor and his installer began attaching the racks that would secure 24 photovoltaic panels and their wiring on our steeply slanting roof. The noise of their power drill piercing the metal roofing overhead was heck-a-cious, but welcome nonetheless.

The next day they hoisted the panels onto the roof, and attached the wires to carry the solar-generated power to the inverter in our garage, where it feeds into the electric grid.

At the end of the day, our contractor turned the system on to test it; within minutes, the read-out on the front of the inverter told us how many pounds of CO₂ we had

saved by generating electricity from solar energy. That's a great feeling.

Our system includes 24 Sun Power 225 black photovoltaic panels, a Sun Power 5000 inverter, a couple of lightning arresters, the channels that secure the array on the roof, a

wireless indoor monitor that shows how much power we're producing at any given time, and the wiring to connect the system to the electric grid.

We're now poorer in terms of cash, but we feel infinitely richer after reducing our energy footprint. A big thank you to Tim and Edric of Peak Solar, to Master Electric, and to Xcel.

Hooray for clean, homegrown, local energy!

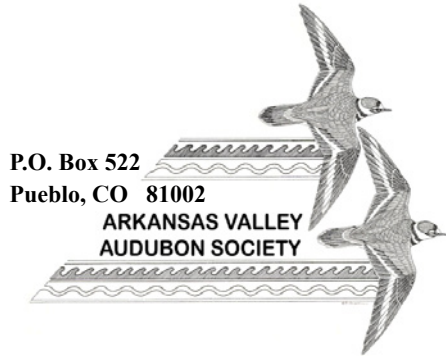
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Susan Tweit's 12th book was released in March, 2009. For further information, see her website and

WEB SITE <http://susanjtweit.com>

BLOG <http://susanjtweit.typepad.com/walkingnaturehome>

The Valley Harrier



OUR MISSION:
AVAS exists to promote the conservation of nature through education, political action and field activities. Our focus is on birds, other wildlife, and their habitat in Southern Colorado.

MAY CALENDAR

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 See p. 4 for further listings of trips.