



THE LARK BUNTING

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE DENVER FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS

VOLUME 59 | ISSUE 01 | JANUARY 2023

DFOBIRDS.ORG

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Wow! A 12-day trip to SE Arizona next May

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Hooded Merganser

Robert Raker
Mount Olivet Cemetery
Jefferson County



ON THE COVER

Hooded Merganser: When it's here, so is winter

I wouldn't set my watch to it, but when the first Hooded Mergansers (*Lophodytes cucullatus*) arrive in Denver City Park, my mental birding calendar automatically flips over to winter. How about yours? I find it's only a matter of days, a couple of weeks at most, before the rest of the winter waterfowl gang begins to descend. For me, Hoodies are a pre-Christmas gift, delivered and opened about two months early.



Robert Raker, a DFO member since 2014, is a former

environmental scientist, adventurer and filmmaker on many expeditions around the world. Now retired, he still goes rock-climbing and skiing.

What a total delight is this harbinger of the season (and North America's only entirely indigenous merganser): The cinnamon-sided, bubble-headed males in their zebra stripes, the earth-toned females in those delicate, sharply coiffed up-do's. I could spend hours (and I have) just watching them — from goofy packs of showoff males rocking and rolling their hammerheads for the females, to diving Hoodies of both sexes shaking, rattling and finally swallowing crayfish brought up from the bottom of Duck Lake. They're simply *Mesmergizing!*

The frosty Hooded Merganser on the cover of this first winter issue of *The Lark Bunting* was spotted last January by regular photo contributor **Rob Raker** on the Reno Ditch pond inside Mount Olivet Catholic Cemetery in Wheat Ridge. To me, it's the epitome of frozen cool. This one's yellowish eye and all-dark bill suggest it's an immature male rather than the similarly plumaged but brown-eyed, mostly yellow-billed female. But variations can still play identity tricks.

Whatever their color, Cornell's *Birds of the World* tells us Hoodies' eyes have a cool superpower: They can change how they refract light to improve their prey-seeking vision underwater. And like those of the American Dipper, their eyes also have nictating membranes, transparent extra eyelids that act like protective goggles.

With their cute-factor look — stylish plumage, delicate features, pop-up “hoods” and diminutive size (smallest of North America's three mergansers) — you might think of Hoodies as the toy poodles of the waterfowl world. Except lapdogs don't see underwater, dive like whales, and hunt crustaceans and fish like a terrier after a rat.

Because Hooded Mergansers breed far north or east of Colorado, we may forget that they nest in tree cavities like Wood Ducks and Common Mergansers do. The female chooses the site (whether natural cavity or built box) and uses only what nesting material is already in it, plus some of her own down feathers. Once she starts incubating up to thirteen eggs, the male skips town. Like other cavity nesters, within 24 hours of hatching her brood, momma Hoodie is on the ground, calling them to leap down and walk with her to the nearest water.

That is, the ones in her own nest. Like Brown-headed Cowbirds, Hooded Mergansers are brood parasites, often laying some of their eggs in the nests of other cavity nesters, who in turn do the same back. But at this stage, they're all chicks.

Fun fact: *Birds of the World* also tells us Hoodies sit in between goldeneyes and the rest of the mergansers on the taxonomic scale, sharing many vocalizations and courtship moves with them. Perhaps this explains why they occasionally cross-breed with Common Goldeneye. I saw my first such hybrid in City Park in early November, cruising Ferril Lake with a goldeneye female.

Here's wishing you Hoodies aplenty this holiday season!

— *Patrick O'Driscoll*



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and well beyond

CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEWSLETTER

Submit original articles or story ideas to the editor at patodrisk@gmail.com.

Send image-file photos of birds or bird outings to the photo editor at jcesten@gmail.com.

Editors reserve the right to accept and edit suitable articles and photos for publication.

NEWSLETTER ADVERTISING

The Lark Bunting does not accept or contain paid advertising. DFO **AdBIRDtishments** are FREE to club members to seek or sell bird-related equipment, supplies, books and decorative items (artwork, photos, clothing, note cards, etc.).

- Ads must include name, email and/or telephone number, and may include weblink if items offered online
- Ads may be edited for inappropriate content or excessive length (125-word limit); ONE photo or image per ad
- Ads do not carry over each month. To renew, resubmit by next deadline
- Available *only* to DFO members
- Deadline: last day of month except January and June (*The Lark Bunting* does not publish in February and July)

Send AdBIRDtishment materials to editor **Patrick O'Driscoll** at patodrisk@gmail.com.

Next deadline: Saturday, Dec. 31





A community of birders, learning and acting together for avian wildlife

Denver Field Ornithologists is an all-volunteer organization that conducts hundreds of free birdwatching field trips throughout the year and welcomes participation and membership by all. DFO promotes enjoyment of nature, the study of birds, and protection of them and their habitats in greater Denver and beyond.

In addition to field trips, evening programs and birding workshops, DFO conducts community science in the field, including the spring Hawk Watch raptor migration count on Dinosaur Ridge.

DFO awards grants for bird-related research, education and conservation projects in Colorado.

DFO is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and financial contributions to DFO's three giving funds are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hey, DFO: Who's ready to volunteer? Did you know it's good for you? (no joke)

Susan Blansett

Well, maybe the joke's on me. Wanting to start this column on a light-hearted note, I cruised the internet in search of a limerick about volunteers. (“*There once was a volunteer birder . . .*”) But the results kept coming back with the County Limerick Volunteer Centre in Ireland, a “vibrant Irish society where every person feels connected to their community through active participation.” Right – sounds like a great group!

Then I looked up “funny poems about volunteers.” I can now attest that there are none (seriously, they were all really bad and not funny). OK, so evidently there's nothing funny about volunteering. But I can also attest that volunteering CAN be *fun* — and what's more, it really is good for you.

Research shows there are great side effects to volunteering for a good cause. Giving your time to a worthy pursuit like DFO, for instance, can:

- Reduce stress and strengthen your immune system
- Unite people behind a common goal, building camaraderie and teamwork
- Promote personal growth and self-esteem
- Help people build references and gain marketable experience
- Make a difference — to a cause, to a community, or to both
- Save resources — it's one reason DFO membership costs so little. We're all volunteers (even as we mentor others and build friendships)

DFO has been a volunteer outfit since its founding in 1935 as the Colorado Bird Club. It's volunteers who've kept our club innovating through the decades, even increasing membership and influence through the pandemic years. Today, about 60 volunteers enable DFO to do, well, everything we do. They lead amazing field trips, produce monthly programs, find and fund worthy avian research, count raptors in migration, inform, educate and entertain using Facebook and Instagram, engage in conservation activities, publish this newsletter, and conduct the nonprofit business part of DFO to bring more people to

an appreciation of birds and their habitats. That's just 60 DFO volunteers in the service of nearly 700 members and at least another 1,300 non-member participants — not to mention the birds!

Pre-pandemic, it was easy to stand up and recognize volunteers at our monthly in-person meetings. These days, getting any larger group together takes considerably more work. But we're going there in 2023. Two of DFO's officers — vice president **Sharon Tinianow** and secretary **Nate Bond** — are incubating plans for a new kind of DFO social event: A meetup in a warm-weather month specifically to thank our volunteers and celebrate their selfless work — together, in person.

In addition, changes are in the works to make our website's volunteerism page easier for bird enthusiasts to offer their own skills and make a DFO difference in whatever time they have available to share.

With so much going on in our organization, opportunities abound for making a difference in as little as a couple of hours, a couple of pages, a couple of social media posts. Are you nimble on your computer keyboard? The Hawk Watch Committee could use your help uploading some historical data. Are you good at social media marketing? The Communications & Outreach Committee can use your speedy thumbs on Instagram or Facebook. Is your knack planning an event or creating content? Sharon and Nate can use your help. Want to learn how to lead field trips? **David Suddjian** and his field trips training team can get you started.

Volunteering for DFO isn't just joining committees or attending board meetings — although if helping to run the organization fills your tub, we'll hook you up with Nomination chair **Mary Geder**. Or perhaps you know of something DFO needs that we haven't even thought of yet. If so, go to the “[Volunteer Today](#)” page of our website and share your ideas, please! And thank you!

Just one more note before I sign off: Did you hear that **Justin Timberlake** has *volunteered* to serve alongside the defense forces in Ukraine? It's true, and his first assignment is [Crimea River](#).

— Susan Blansett

DFO News Notes

Got blurbs on birds? Share with **DFO News Notes**: Colorado birding newsbits, eBird milestones, tales from the trail, birding life (and life birds!), etc. Send items, photos and any questions to newsletter editor **Patrick O'Driscoll** at patodrisk@gmail.com.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES: HELP US HELP DFO!

At times, running our all-volunteer organization can seem like a circus in which we're the jugglers, keeping all those flaming torches, knives, and bowling pins in the air. But here are three easy (and far less daring) ways YOU can help us. Best of all, each can be done by one person, working from home on your own computer, on your own schedule. Check them out!

PROGRAM VIDEO CURATOR

Like videos? We need someone to review the recordings of past DFO programs and organize them into subject categories to make it easy for people to find bird-related videos that interest them.

DFO's Communications & Outreach Committee will work with you on how to tackle this task and make the information available. If you're interested or have questions, contact **Sharon Tinianow** at sharontinianow@gmail.com

HAWK WATCH DATA ENTRY

DFO's spring raptor migration counters need help entering historical data from past counts on Dinosaur Ridge into the national [HawkCount database](#) online. DFO's Hawk Watch Committee recently found nine years of counts from the 1990s to upload into a pre-designed Excel spreadsheet. If your computer is Excel-capable and you have some free time, we'll train you to input the data. If you're interested or have questions, contact **Carol Cwiklinski** at ccwiklin@gmail.com

PROGRAM PROMOTIONS

DFO promotes and shares its many programs with the public on our website, our Facebook and Instagram pages, and the CoBirds list-serv on Google. The C&O team will train you in posting each month on these platforms. We provide you the raw material; you get to make it look good and sound engaging! If you're interested or have questions, contact **Sharon Tinianow** at sharontinianow@gmail.com

HIT THE ROAD, DFO: 12-DAY SE ARIZONA FIELD TRIP NEXT MAY!

You read that right: Veteran DFO field trip leader and fan of Arizona birding **Joey Kellner** has organized one of the most ambitious DFO trips in years: a TWELVE-day driving field trip to, through and back from Southeastern Arizona, one of the most premier birding destinations of all.

Scheduled for **May 18-29, 2023**, this eight-person trip (Kellner plus seven) promises prime birding habitat with a long list of the region's birds in mind: Chihuahuan desert grasslands, oak and sycamore canyons, pine-topped mountains and upper Sonoran Desert areas of thorn scrub, grassland and cactus, and green riparian ribbons.

Designed for first-timers to the region but open to all, the trip will cover numerous hotspots from desert floor to "sky island" mountains, including the Chiricahuas, Santa Ritas, Huachucas and possibly the Catalinas. "We should see most of the specialty species of the sky islands and other habitats," says Kellner, with a chance for up to eight species of hummingbird (including Violet-crowned, Lucifer and White-eared) and many other species. "This is not specifically a target species trip, but a general southeast Arizona trip that will immerse the participants in wonderful habitats."

All-inclusive cost (both motel and "in-habitat" lodging, gas, food/meals, leader expenses and land/access fees) is \$2,600-per-person if two vehicles are rented for the carpool trip, or \$1,900 if two personal vehicles are used. Selection of Kellner's seven participants will be by random drawing on **Jan. 15, 2023** from all names registered during a one-month window (**Dec. 15 through Jan. 14**) on the DFO field trip webpage. Winners pay \$400 deposits to reserve their spots, which are not refundable after April 15, the due date to pay the balance of the trip cost.

For questions and details, contact Kellner at vireol@comcast.net. A detailed itinerary with day-by-day locations and potential bird species for each is [available on the DFO website](#).



White-eared Hummingbird
Patrick O'Driscoll

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REMEMBERING TWO LONGTIME BIRDING FRIENDS FROM EVERGREEN

The day before our newsletter deadline, we learned of the November passing of two friends of DFO, both from Evergreen: **Marilyn Rhodes**, master birder, Audubon field trip leader, and DFO member, and **William “Bill” Hackos, Jr.**, DFO member.

DFO member and Colorado birding icon **Hugh Kingery** announced Rhodes’ “unexpected passing” in a Nov. 29 CoBirds posting. He noted that she led the Denver Botanic Gardens/Country Club/Wash Park section of the annual Denver Urban Christmas Count. Rhodes was “a caring mentor to new (Audubon) field trip leaders, and very active on our photo contest committee,” Kingery added. Rhodes, active in both Denver and Evergreen Audubon, described herself on her Twitter page as “Wildlife lover/advocate, environmentalist, photographer, gardener, politics/news junkie, Hillary supporter, (and) retired lady of leisure with 4 dogs and 2 cats.”

An online obituary says Hackos, a New Jersey native (1939), met his wife (and fellow birder) **JoAnn** in graduate school (he had a PhD in astrophysics, she a PhD in English lit). He taught physics, astronomy, engineering, and ran a college computing center before the family (sons **Nathan** and **David**) moved in 1977 to Colorado, where Bill and JoAnn ran their own international consulting business. Bill enjoyed finding and learning about new birds, wildflowers and butterflies. He also served on the board of Evergreen Audubon (JoAnn is the club’s director of conservation), led a Christmas Bird Count route for years, and volunteered at the Evergreen Nature Center. The couple also did a North American Big Year in 2011, traveling extensively to tally 436 species while still running their business. Bill is survived by his wife, sons and eight grandchildren. In lieu of flowers, the family welcomes donations in his name to [Evergreen Audubon](#).



CASSIA CROSSBILL: AFTERTHOUGHTS FROM COLORADO’S BIRD LISTENER

The discovery of the rare Cassia Crossbill last summer in Colorado triggered a flurry of birding — and birdcall recording — in Summit County, mostly in and around the DFO-created [Alfred M. Bailey Bird Nesting Area](#). Now, in a guest blogpost on the [Finch Research Network](#), birdsong expert **Nathan Pieplow** poses a provocative question: Is the Cassia Crossbill a species or not? The answer(s) are rather complicated, leading to even more questions. We’ll offer no spoilers here, but Pieplow, author of the *Peterson Field Guide to Bird Sounds*, presents an interesting take on Cassia and its close relation, the “Type 9 Red Crossbill,” and how Cassia apparently didn’t just show up in Colorado last summer or, for that matter, the previous year, either. Read for yourself in his guest blogpost, [Cassia Crossbills in Colorado — The Mystery Deepens](#).

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THANKS FOR YOUR DFO SERVICE, SUE!

DFO member **Sue Summers**, our club's treasurer for six years before becoming Membership chair last year, resigned her post and DFO Board membership at the end of October. Born and raised in the Seattle area, Sue took up birding in Washington state. She joined DFO soon after moving to Colorado nine years ago. In 2016, she became DFO treasurer and served until 2021. Since her departure, DFO has been searching for someone to take her place as Membership chair. This volunteer opportunity is a great way to get to know more of our hundreds of members and contribute your communication and organizational skills to the DFO cause. Want to know more? Contact DFO Nominations chair **Mary Geder** at mfg5000@live.com or 303-981-8823.

LESSER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN NOW “THREATENED” IN COLORADO

This one almost slipped below our radar in November, but after years of study, the US Fish & Wildlife Service has declared the Lesser Prairie-Chicken “threatened” in its southeastern Colorado range (and parts of Kansas, Oklahoma and the Texas Panhandle) and “endangered” farther south in New Mexico and Texas. This is an important and overdue moment in the protection of a seldom-seen Plains species. Learn more at [Fish & Wildlife](#) and Denver's [Colorado Sun online newspaper](#).

MORE “BIRD BOMBS” DROPPING IN DECEMBER, JANUARY

DFO's popular half-hour, mini-workshop sessions via Zoom will carry through the holidays on two more winter evenings. Register for one or both on the [DFO “PROGRAMS”](#) webpage.

Dec. 29, 7 p.m.

“**First State Record!**” will take crystal-ball looks at what could be our next new record species sightings in Colorado

Jan. 12, 2023, 7 p.m.

“**Mountain Finches**” will sort through rosy-finches, grosbeaks, and other high-country seed eaters

GRILLE'D BUT ALIVE: GREAT HORNED OWL SURVIVES COLORADO TRUCK

In mid-November, a passerby noticed the head of a Great Horned Owl sticking out from under the front of a pickup truck in Colorado Springs. Wait, WHAT? Wildlife officer **Travis Sauder** of Colorado Parks & Wildlife responded to “a call for help of an owl stuck in a truck grille” — and that's what he found, “indeed, stuck. And alive!” Sauder wrote on CPW's Twitter page. The thinking is the bird probably flew in front of the moving truck the previous night while pursuing prey and was sucked in — “and the driver didn't even know it.” CPW says it sent the injured owl to the nonprofit Nature and Wildlife Discovery in Pueblo for rehabilitation. You can see [owl photos, narrative and video of the saga](#) on CPW's Twitter page.

SPEAKING OF OWLS . . .

In November, Fort Collins Audubon hosted a talk by Bird Conservancy of the Rockies avian ecologist **Marion Clément**, “A Tiny Menace in the Forest: The Northern Saw-whet Owl.” Clément banded saw-whets in the Fort Collins area in 2022 and BCR hopes to have her continuing the banding effort in 2023. [Clément's talk](#) is available on YouTube. A word of warning: The sound quality is a little iffy, so turn up the volume and listen closely. The photos and other PowerPoint graphics are fine.



Top: **Great Horned Owl caught under moving truck**
Bottom: **Owl with Officer Sauder**
Robin Smith, CPW

DFO: It's ALL of us

In full-page displays this fall, we have introduced you to just three of your more than 675 fellow members of Denver Field Ornithologists

Whether we belong to DFO for its hundreds of **free field trips** (an annual offering unparalleled anywhere) . . .

Or for the opportunity to sharpen birding skills in **workshops** . . .

Or for **monthly programs** by exceptional speakers . . .

Or simply to share in appreciating and conserving birds and their habitats in Colorado . . .

Our strength is in our numbers — in our love for birds and their place among us . . . and ours among them

Help keep DFO strong and your connection to Colorado birds and birding vital

Join DFO or renew your membership now before year's end

And while you're there, consider a tax-free, year-end contribution to one of DFO's three giving funds

[CLICK HERE FOR DFO MEMBERSHIP PAGE](#)

dfo
DENVER FIELD
ORNITHOLOGISTS



CHRISTMAS COUNT

URGENT! More volunteers needed Dec. 17 for Denver Christmas Bird Count

Last month's appeal in *The Lark Bunting* and on the CoBirds list-serv for volunteers to staff the annual suburban Denver Christmas Bird Count was apparently like the tree that falls in the forest with nobody around to hear it. Did YOU not hear?

With very few signups since then and less than a week until the Dec. 17 event, count compiler **Joey Kellner** is urgently appealing for birders of all abilities to join now.

"The three years prior to COVID-19, we had an average of more than 160 people helping out," Kellner said in late November. "So far this year, we are well short of that — or maybe participants are slow to sign up?" He said if lingering COVID-related concerns are a reason — or if lack of motivation because of "pandemic fatigue" is keeping you away — getting out into the field the week before Christmas is a great and invigorating motivator.

"As compiler for the Denver CBC for the past 11 years, I can really use YOUR help now," Kellner added. "ALL experience levels are welcome."

One wrinkle this year that also may have had an effect is that online signing up through the DFO field trip registration system, which was used for the two most recent counts, has been discontinued. But Kellner noted that volunteers need simply to choose one of the 24 count areas in the 15-mile "count circle" (*see map*) and contact the leader for that area on the list of leaders with the map. The circle covers most of the southwestern quadrant of suburban Denver, reaching primarily into Jefferson and Douglas counties.

"Right now, most of the foothills areas need additional observers — many have only the area leader signed up so far," Kellner added. "As you know, the more eyes and ears the better the count."

Kellner said prospective participants should contact the leader of their chosen area directly for details: Meetup time and location, walking-hiking-driving mix, lunch break options, etc. "Even if you can only break away for a few hours, your help is SO appreciated. Thank you in advance."

Traditionally, many DFO members have participated in these annual counts, which are part of National Audubon's national Christmas Bird Count. In fact, there are more than 50 such "circles" for counts across the rest of Colorado including metro Denver.

As noted in last month's newsletter, here are the Christmas Bird Count particulars:

WHO / WHAT

68th Denver Christmas Bird Count, with DFO's Joey Kellner (303-978-1748, SWDenverBirding@gmail.com) as count leader/compiler. (Not to be confused with the separate "Denver Urban" count, led by longtime DFO and Denver Audubon member **Hugh Kingery**, which is on New Year's Day.)

WHEN

Saturday, Dec. 17, all day. Count area hours will vary from half-days to full days and in between.

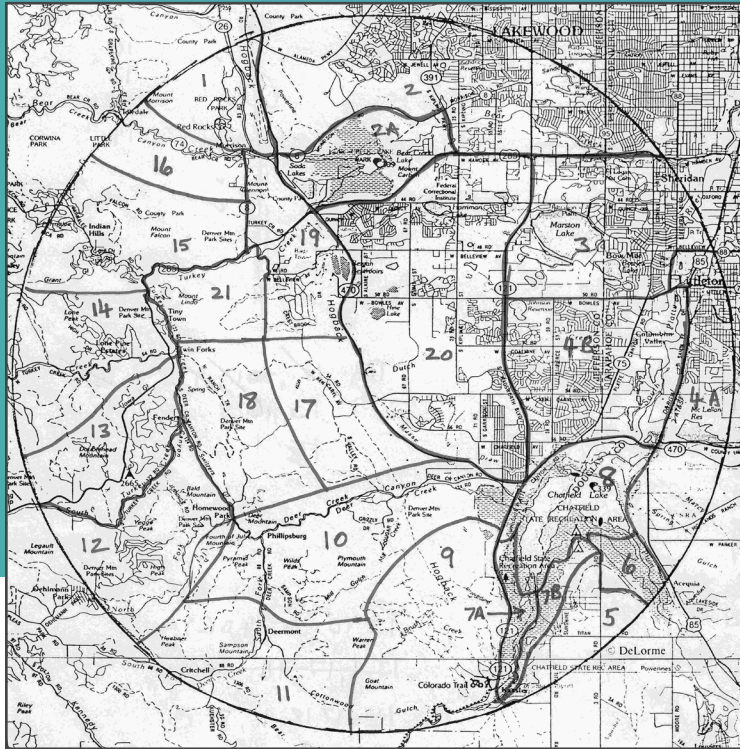
HOW TO JOIN

Consult the map to see which area count you'd like to join, then contact the area leader of that zone (*see leader list and numbered map*). And if you want to offer your help in any area that needs additional observers, contact Kellner himself (*email and phone details above*).

COST

No charge — and therefore, "No excuses!" Kellner added.

Continued on page 11



AREA NUMBER AND LOCATION	AREA LEADER	CONTACT INFO
1. Red Rocks Park	Gregg Goodrich	303-655-9135
2. Lower Bear Creek	Scott Somershoe	615-829-3573
2 A. Bear Creek Lake Park	Cyndy Johnson	303-378-1335
3. Bow Mar/Marston	Mark Amershek	720-243-1521
4A. Lower South Platte - East	Ed Holub	303-979-2194
4B. Lower South Platte - West	Glenn Walbek	720-560-3671
5. Highline Ditch	Nancy Crews	303-842-2833
6. Plum Creek	Norm Erthal	303-917-2596
7A. Middle South Platte - West	Sue Summers	253-678-3721
7B. Middle South Platte - East	Frank Coons	970-640-9902
8. Chatfield State Park	Joey Kellner	303-978-1748
9. Upper South Platte	Jill Holden	720-288-4018
10. Lower Deer Creek (Chatfield Farms)	Barbra Sobhani	303-905-4718
11. Upper Deer Creek	Paul Slingsby	720-347-5169
12. Yegge Peak	Cynthia Madsen	303-770-6534
13. Doublehead Mountain	Amy Davis	303-549-7759
14. North Turkey Creek	Ed Furlong	303-956-8321
15. Indian Hills	Dick Prickett	303-674-0217
16. Upper Bear Creek	Laura Steadman	lauramsteadman@gmail.com
17. Ken Caryl Ranch	David Suddjian	dsuddjian@gmail.com
18. Garrison Gate	++ LEADER NEEDED ++	
19. Morrison/Willowbrook	Chris Gilbert	804-214-1508
20. Willow Creek	Dale Pate	575-706-4584
21. Mount Lindo/Willow Springs	Chris Sherry	303-807-3645

DFO Zooms into 2023 monthly programs with crane, grouse and hawk talks

Three charismatic but entirely different bird species of western steppes, inland flyways and urban forests are subjects of the first three Denver Field Ornithologists' monthly evening programs in winter and spring 2023.

The monthly presentations, now webcast live for all via Zoom and archived for later viewing on the DFO website, resume after our December recess with a Jan. 23 talk by the head of the International Crane Foundation, which works from the US for all 15 crane species worldwide. The February program features an Audubon Rockies' policy and outreach director discussing efforts to conserve the Greater Sage-Grouse amid political wrangling and continuing habitat loss across the West. Scheduled for March is a Denver raptor biologist who is studying how urban redlining in the mid-20th century influenced where and whether Cooper's Hawk, historically a forest species, has pioneered as successfully into Denver as the species has in other urban settings.

As is now customary, the fourth seasonal presentation in April (before the monthly series takes a summer hiatus until August) will feature reports to the DFO membership from some of the scientists, researchers and educators who received grants in 2022 from our Research, Education & Conservation Grant Fund. In accepting DFO grants, the recipients agree to report on their progress and findings to the club membership in any of three ways: Making a presentation at the annual April meeting, writing an account for DFO's newsletter, or leading a DFO field trip centered on their grant research or work.

More details about each speaker and topic, and how to register for these free evening programs, follow. Look for details about the April 24 grant recipients' program in an upcoming issue of *The Lark Bunting*.

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Rich Beilfuss

International Crane Foundation: 50 Years for Whoopers, Sandhills and Many More

Rich Beilfuss
Monday, January 23
7 p.m. MST via Zoom

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

Tall, stately and heart-stoppingly charismatic, arising as one with ancient, resounding voices, cranes are nonetheless among the most endangered families of birds in the world. Eleven of the globe's 15 species are threatened or endangered, and our own North American examples reflect both the plentiful (Sandhill) and the few (Whooping).

Since 1973, the Wisconsin-based [International Crane Foundation](#) has advocated for them and 13 other crane species found across Africa, East Asia, Southeast Asia and Europe. The foundation, whose mission in part is “to conserve cranes and the ecosystems, watersheds and flyways on which they depend,” also works with local partners in more than 50 countries to rear new generations of the rarest cranes.

DFO's first evening program of the new year will feature **Rich Beilfuss**, the foundation's president and CEO. He works from the foundation's headquarters in Baraboo, WI, which serves as a global center for crane conservation leadership and training. (From spring through fall, the center also hosts visitors who can see all the species on the 300-acre headquarters site.)

The foundation employs more than 125 staff and associates and has offices in five other countries and Texas. “We provide knowledge, leadership and inspiration to engage people in resolving threats to cranes and their diverse landscapes,” reads the rest of its mission statement.

Beilfuss, who has headed the foundation since 2010, has helped launch many of the foundation's signature projects and conservation programs across Asia, Africa, and North America. Over a 30-year career, he has written more than 100 scientific papers, technical reports, proceedings and publications for lay audiences as well as for governments, communities and scientific peers worldwide.

A licensed professional hydrologist with a PhD in wetland ecology, Beilfuss has worked on water management and wetlands restoration to benefit cranes in more than 20 countries across Africa and Asia, focusing on Nepal, Vietnam, Mozambique and Zambia. He also has contributed to restoration and management of thousands of acres of prairie and savanna landscapes in the US Midwest.

The foundation's focus on conservation of North America's endangered Whooping Crane population is featured in a 14-minute video, [Cranes: Symbols of Survival](#), narrated by longtime NBC News anchor **Tom Brokaw**.





Daly Edmunds

Greater Sage-Grouse: Largest Conservation Effort in US History

Daly Edmunds
Monday, February 27
7 p.m. MST via Zoom

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

The Greater Sage-Grouse is found in Colorado and across 10 other western states in North America's largest but often overlooked ecosystem. Largely inconspicuous except when males congregate in remote courtship leks to strut and display for mates, this species was once so prevalent that it fed many pioneers during their grueling journeys through the West.

Today, with most of these iconic birds of the sagebrush steppes found on public lands, they have become a political football. In DFO's monthly evening program for February, **Daly Edmunds** of Audubon Rockies will discuss the political intrigue that has plagued sage-grouse management. She will also review the threats to sage-grouse habitat and share the latest science on the species.

Edmunds is director of policy and outreach for [Audubon Rockies](#), National Audubon's Fort Collins-based regional office for Colorado, Wyoming and Utah. In this role, she is responsible for furthering the organization's [Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative](#), which works regionally to conserve the high, dry western habitat on which more than 350 wild species depend. The initiative convenes citizens, industry, government and non-government organizations to find ways to balance the needs of people and birds.

An [alarming new report](#) in September by the U.S. Geological Survey found a staggering 1.3 million acres of sagebrush habitat are being lost annually. Sagebrush was once the most widespread vegetation type across western North America. Now only half of it is left, and new demands continue to be placed on it.

Daly earned her master's degree from the University of Wyoming, studying pronghorn movement patterns. Before joining Audubon in 2009, she worked for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, National Wildlife Federation, and Wyoming Wildlife Federation.



Fighting sage-grouse males (Elizabeth Boehm, Audubon Photography Awards)



Alyssa Davidge
Claire Harris

How Historical Redlining Led Denver's Cooper's Hawks to Live Where They Do

Alyssa Davidge

Monday, March 27

7 p.m. MDT via Zoom

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

Once known as a feared and artful raptor mainly in the deciduous and mixed forests of rural and wildlands America, the Cooper's Hawk has pioneered outward to become a regular resident of urban and suburban landscapes since the 1970s. Cornell's *Birds of the World* calls it "likely the most common backyard breeding raptor across North America."

The species' remarkably successful adaptation to urban environments like Denver's is predicated chiefly on forest conditions in the neighborhoods where we find (and enjoy seeing) it. Designed by nature to maneuver swiftly through robust woodlands in pursuit of its prey, Cooper's is most comfortable where the trees are mature and numerous.

Alyssa Davidge, the Denver raptor biologist who will present March's provocatively titled program, finds it no coincidence that those places are neighborhoods intentionally favored by the historically segregationist housing policies of the 1930s. One of those practices was "redlining," which made mortgage loans unavailable or unaffordable to people of color in the predominantly minority neighborhoods where they were largely confined by segregation.

"How does racism affect wildlife? This talk will explore how Cooper's Hawks use urban Denver," says Davidge, "and suggest that our management of the city as a result of redlining policies . . . may play a role in (the birds') decisions. I will look at the current occupancy rates of Cooper's Hawks in Denver within redlining neighborhood categories as well as different land attributes across Denver to explore the impact of these historic policies on today's urban raptors." Her presentation is subtitled, "Impacts of Historic Redlining Policy on Wildlife Habitat and Cooper's Hawk Occupancy."

Davidge is a second-year master's student in the University of Colorado Denver's Integrative Biology Department. Before returning to graduate school, she was a condor biologist with the Peregrine Fund, managing the California Condor population on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. She also worked several seasons banding terns and plovers for the San Diego Zoo's Conservation Research Institute, conserving spotted owl populations in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and monitoring migratory birds for HawkWatch International and Cape May Raptor Banding Project in Washington, New Mexico, and New Jersey. Her current focus is on smarter policy decisions for the future of conservation and biodiversity. She hopes to become a wildlife biologist with raptor focus for Colorado Parks & Wildlife, the US Fish & Wildlife Service, or the US Geological Survey.



Alyssa Davidge and Cooper's Hawk (Brian Millsap)



Emma Riley and Northern Harrier

DECEMBER PROGRAM REVIEW

Hawk Watch program review next month

The Nov. 28 evening program — “Hawk Watch 2022: Looking Back and Forward” with **Emma Riley** — fell too close to *The Lark Bunting’s* deadline to include a written review in this issue. We will publish our review in next month’s newsletter.

In the meantime, if you were unable to watch the presentation live on Zoom, you can view the program recording on the [DFO “Past Programs” webpage](#).

DFO GRANTS

Call goes out for 2023 DFO grant applications

The DFO Research, education and Conservation Fund is now accepting applications for grants to encourage the study, appreciation and preservation of birds and their habitats. DFO gives priority to projects in the Denver metropolitan area, the Front Range, the rest of Colorado, and the nation, in that order.

Research, educational and conservation projects are funded annually from the generosity of DFO members and other donors. DFO first awarded these modest grants in 1994 when **Mary Hope Robinson** donated \$15,000 to establish the DFO Educational Endowment Fund. DFO changed the name in 2012. In the years since the first grants, DFO has awarded at least \$74,000 to researchers and educators.

On the research side, DFO grants support college undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate research in ornithology and related disciplines. Education grants help nurture new generations of birders and contribute to increase birding opportunities in local Colorado communities.

The grant application form and a history of past grants are available on the [DFO website](#). Applicants should include detailed descriptions of projects, goals, budget need that a grant would help cover, and how the project relates to conserving Colorado birds and their habitat. The application deadline is **Feb. 1, 2023**. Grant awards are typically announced in early spring.

In 2022, DFO awarded a record \$8,640 (the third straight record-breaking year) to six research and education projects that ranged from building birding trails to studying the genome of the House Wren. Other recent past grants have included funding for student scholarships to local birding camps, graduate level ornithological research, and support of community development of birding resources. Individual grant awards typically range from \$500 to \$2,000.

DFO’s Grants Committee reminds members that as you renew your DFO membership for 2023, please consider donating to the fund. You can do so in the membership renewal process, or go separately to the [“DONATE TO DFO”](#) webpage.

DFO PEOPLE

In the Scope: Up close with Peter Ruprecht, rooted in the birding allures of Boulder County



Peter Ruprecht,
birding in Costa Rica
Karl Ruprecht

Editor's note: IN THE SCOPE is a series of Q&As with DFO people — those who lead your field trips and others who volunteer and participate in the life of our club. Your feedback and nominations are welcome — email The Lark Bunting at patodrisk@gmail.com

Name: Peter Ruprecht
Home city: Superior
Age: 52
Occupation: Mostly retired, previously in scientific computing support, CU Boulder

How/when I became a birder?

My family is really outdoorsy, so from an early age I was immersed in the natural world in the open country of southern Idaho. My dad is an enthusiastic birder and I picked up a general interest in birds just from the sparks of excitement flying off of him. He has a terrific knack for finding fun birds anywhere, like an Orchard Oriole at a highway rest area or a Hooded Merganser in a farm pond. I was fairly casual about birding for many years, with occasional bursts of greater zeal when I moved to places that had interesting new birds to learn about (e.g., spring warbler migration in Wisconsin, Appalachian woodland species in West Virginia, a whole new palette in England).

After my wife finished graduate school at CU in the 1990s, we decided to settle down in Colorado. About 10 years ago, I started trying to be more systematic in understanding bird ID and the relationship of birds with their habitats. That led me to volunteer for several surveys and monitoring programs in Boulder County. Through those, I have appreciated how spending significant time in a certain location gives me a sense of its daily and seasonal rhythms.

When/why I joined DFO?

For a long time, I didn't take advantage of local or state birding organizations — too hard to make an unpredictable work and family schedule mesh with groups' fixed calendars. (And any outfits with "Field Ornithologists" in their names seemed like they might be a little too professional and hard core . . .). Fortunately, I have had more spare time in the last few years. More importantly, I started birding with several people who clued me in that DFO's field trips and educational programs would be just right for a birder like me. I officially joined DFO in 2021 in order to qualify as a field trip leader.

First DFO trip I went on?

My first DFO field trip was to Bluff Lake in Denver on a very smoky, mid-summer morning. You wouldn't expect that to be prime birding conditions, but thanks to an expert leader and enthusiastic spotting by the participants we found a nice variety of species and even got to watch a pair of Swainson's Hawks and their fledglings.

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How/why I became a trip leader?

Four or five years ago, one of my birding buddies was a regular trip leader for several local bird groups. He mentioned that he appreciated my insights when we were out together and suggested that others might as well. So I agreed to co-lead a few group outings and really enjoyed the overall energy. Those first few trips were stressful, though; I was nervous that I wouldn't be able to hold the group's interest or would fail to find and identify enough "good" birds. One of the surprising things I learned is that most trip participants aren't there to be impressed by the leader's intricate understanding of, say, the outer tertials of second-cycle gulls. Rather, they appreciate having a safe opportunity to ask questions, be inspired, and explore new places and ways of looking at birds. In 2021 I was recruited as a DFO trip leader and was very grateful for the formal training and mentoring process.

First field trip I led?

My initiation into leading DFO trips was on the [White Rocks Trail](#) east of Boulder. It's a can't-miss spot for a bird walk, with lots of different habitats and charismatic species like Bald Eagles and Wood Ducks. We even found a sapsucker that day!

Favorite place to go birding and why?

The interface between Great Plains and Rockies foothills delights me, especially in spots where a creek is transitioning between rushing and meandering. The Plainview Road area in northern Jefferson County and South Boulder Creek downstream from Eldorado Canyon are particular favorites.

My local patch, the [Mayhoffer-Singletree Trail](#) just west of Superior, is actually looking kind of patchy right now as a result of the Marshall Fire. The prairie areas seem to have bounced right back, but the brush and trees in the Coal Creek riparian corridor will need a longer recovery period. It'll be interesting to see how birds adjust to the habitat as it regrows.

My field trip philosophy/style/approach?

I like to bird in places that are beautiful and have interesting natural history. You will very rarely find me scoping a landfill! Thus, most of my field trips go to spots with nice views, varied habitats, intact native plant communities, etc. Fortunately, those kinds of areas also tend to be popular with birds.

Also, I can get grouchy if I have to sit in the car for more than about 45 minutes, so in the interest of being a good-natured trip leader, I prefer to run outings that are close to home.

A place I'd like to go birding where I never have?

Last fall I experienced my first international birding trip (to Costa Rica) and was pop-eyed the whole time. Now I'm eager for another expedition to the neotropics. Ecuador sounds like it offers an incredible variety of habitats, each with its own diverse set of birds. Kind of like Boulder County times 10.

The next trip I'm leading?

One of my favorite birding spectacles is the winter raptor extravaganza in central Boulder County. The area bounded by Longmont, US 36, Boulder, and US 287 hosts an impressive number and diversity of hawks, eagles, and falcons. One time I had five species in my binoculars at once! So in January, **Donna Stumpp** and I will lead a trip starting at Lagerman Reservoir and cruising back roads through that area, including a stop at the justifiably famous Potato Hill. (What, you say you've *never heard* of Potato Hill?! It *may* appear an insignificant bump along North 49th Street near Rogers Road, but it has all the ingredients to attract birds of prey: big old cottonwoods, prairie dogs, starlings, long sunny ridges, and utility poles . . . plus some kind of invisible but irresistible raptor magic.)



Club Quarterly: DFO business update

Editor's note: The Denver Field Ornithologists Board of Directors meets four times a year. The Lark Bunting is publishing this quarterly synopsis after the board's August, November, February and May meetings. Full minutes, financial reports and committee reports to the board will be available to members on the ["DFO BUSINESS"](#) page.

DFO BOARD NOVEMBER MEETING

The quarterly meeting of the DFO Board took place on Nov. 16 via Zoom. Fifteen of the 16 directors and officers attended, along with two guests. The club budget for 2023 was the main topic of discussion. Minutes of the August meeting were approved. Committee report summaries, alphabetically, follow:

BETTER BIRDING SKILLS

Sharon Tinianow, acting committee chair, pointed out that a line item in the proposed budget — to pay an honorarium of \$75 for each episode of DFO's "Bird Bombs" bird ID mini-workshops — is problematic because presenter **David Suddjian** is also a board member and club leader.

DFO's Policy and Procedures Manual, updated and unanimously approved by the board in 2021, prohibits paying volunteers. Tinianow apologized for not remembering the policy — a foundational principle of our all-volunteer club — when the BBS Committee drafted its budget item earlier November. At that meeting, Suddjian had requested compensation for the time and effort required to develop each 30-minute session. (The suggested amount is one-half the typical honorarium for a monthly program.)

Board discussion touched on numerous points, among them: Stipends/honoraria for work not related to one's official DFO role; pros and cons of compensation in any form for volunteers in a nonprofit organization; potential conflict of interest for elected volunteers and leaders who oversee club activities and funds; payment work-arounds for expenses or to third-parties; and how other nonprofits such as Colorado Field Ornithologists deal with this topic.

With many questions, no board consensus, and a few other line-items in need of clarification, the board agreed that President **Susan Blansett** and Treasurer **Kathy Holland** would collaborate on a revised budget to be sent out after the Thanksgiving holiday for a vote via email.

COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH

C&O chair Tinianow reported that the committee's capacity to support DFO activities has reached its practical limit with no more than two events or programs per month, except in the evening-program-hiatus months of December, May, June and July. Unexpected and late-planned DFO activities tax C&O ability to provide effective promotion, event communications, and social media outreach. She urged committees not to add events that can overload C&O's plate in high-profile months, and also to take care not to cross-schedule events with those already scheduled by CFO.

In a written report, the committee detailed recent work, including: Phase-out of printed-paper version of DFO newsletter (final with December 2022 issue) and related design and content changes; outreach to new archivist at Denver Museum of Nature & Science (where DFO's archives reside); repair of online code error that shut down the DFO website for a few days in September; community outreach (Barr Lake Birding Festival); curation need for past-programs video archive; social media traffic (2,200 followers on Facebook, 651 on Instagram, both up over 2021) and need for new volunteer to handle Instagram posts; and plan to revise draft "rack card" to promote DFO at outreach events and in area birding stores and other venues.

CONSERVATION

Committee chair **Steve Ryder** asked the board to budget \$500 in 2023 to develop literature and other materials for planned "cats indoors" community education and outreach. Still in planning stages, this effort aims to curb bird mortality by countless free-roaming domestic felines. He said three experts on the issue are advising the committee on approaching the issue on policy and educational grounds, and distribution strategies for the materials and partnerships are in the works.

In a written report, Ryder detailed committee work from its Oct. 23 meeting on Zoom, including: Monitoring of bird-

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DFO birders at Bear Creek Lake Park
Anne Craig

CLUB QUARTERLY *cont from page 19*

related topics involving Colorado Parks & Wildlife and the State Land Board (Xcel Energy utility-scale renewable energy projects and delivery infrastructure on Eastern Plains); Lights Out Denver fall migration education efforts; monitoring of “urban habitat improvement” (including possible “BioBlitz”) at defunct Park Hill Golf Course, focus of rezoning and efforts to re-develop site against Denver voter wishes (with another city-wide vote next spring); outreach to native plant/pollinator group working with Denver Parks & Rec at Washington Park; and community support regarding Wheat Ridge Open Space (Tabor Lake Trail) and Bear Creek Lake expansion.

FIELD TRIPS

Committee chair Suddjian previously presented a written report that highlighted the Nov. 12 Trip Leader Forum and a new milestone in 2022: Most DFO trips in a single year, 232 led and planned with a month and a half still remaining. The trip leader roster is now 37 certified leaders, with four new leader candidates to be trained and certified by late November. The program’s budget request for 2023 includes funds for helping defray trip leader expenses of overnight/out-of-state field trips in 2023. Suddjian also shared with the board a compilation of numerous replies and comments from a committee questionnaire sent to 325 recent participants in DFO field trips about their experiences, opinions and suggestions for the program.

FINANCE

Treasurer Holland reported that the DFO balance sheet as of November is at “net profit” for the year, an improvement over 2021. She said this may be due in part to increased funding this year for DFO’s Hawk Watch spring raptor migration program. DFO is ahead in income for 2022, but expenses also are higher. *(See budget details below and in final documents to be posted under meeting minutes online.)*

HAWK WATCH

Guest speaker **Janet Peters** of the Hawk Watch Committee said the program’s 2023 budget request seeks approximately \$10,000 for staffing to supervise the volunteer count. As in 2022, it would employ a full-time counter and provide for a part-time counter to support, especially on busy weekends but also when volunteers are scarce. She said the committee seeks to engage Michigan-based hawk-watching expert **Josh Haas** of [Hawks on the Wing](#) to provide advanced raptor ID training for returning volunteers. It also aims to repeat next year October’s successful live birds of prey program with Nature’s Educators. Other outreach to bring student field trips from minority and less-well-off schools to the ridge (school bus field trip costs are separate expenditures). The committee also secured unanimous approval of the board to reimburse some of Nature’s Educators’ expenses for the October 2022 raptor program.

Continued on page 21

GRANTS

Committee chair **Elaine Wagner** said her committee continues to recommend grant awards that total the amount of contributions during the previous year (2022 donations for 2023 grants, for instance), except if there is carryover money from in previous years. Holland noted there was a generous bump in the 2022 fund balance when an unnamed donor contributed \$3,000 to DFO's Research, Education & Conservation Grants Fund.

MEMBERSHIP

Blansett presented an update on DFO membership (in the absence of Membership chair **Sue Summers**, who resigned this fall). As of Nov. 15, DFO has 660 member households, 181 of whom have prepaid membership dues for 2023 and 43 for 2024. She also said nonmembers with DFO website accounts (required for field trip registration) total 1,268, though some may be inactive. Renewal reminders to all members went out in mid-November, and further reminders are going up on the DFO Facebook Group page and Instagram through December, when unrenewed memberships officially lapse. Some social media posts and emails also will suggest DFO memberships and DFO merchandise as holiday gifts.

DFO is seeking a new Membership chair with help from Nominations chair **Mary Geder**.

PROGRAMS

Programs manager **Bill Turner** said he is firming up the spring 2023 schedule of monthly evening programs, beginning with **Rich Beilfuss**, president and CEO of the International Crane Foundation for the Jan. 23 program. Discussion is still under way with three other potential presenters for the February and March programs, and the April program will be for reports and results from the 2022 Research, Education & Conservation Grants Fund awardees on their work. Tinianow called attention now to a scheduling conflict in September 2023, when the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur falls on DFO's traditional fourth Monday meeting day. Turner said the program will be rescheduled for the third Monday that month.

NEW BUSINESS

2023 DFO Budget

In a document sent to the board before the meeting, Holland outlined a proposed 2023 budget with \$31,650 in income, more than half of it (\$18,650) in donations to DFO's three giving funds, and the rest in membership dues (\$13,000).

Expenses totaling \$23,973 would include Communications & Outreach (\$7,674) for *The Lark Bunting* newsletter production, website maintenance, Zoom and MailerLite online expenses and other printing and copying miscellany. Grant awards out of the Research, Education & Conservation follow (\$7,000), then Hawk Watch (\$6,000) and Miscellaneous categories (\$2,099).

That version of the budget predicted a surplus/carryover of \$7,677 at the end of 2023. Because of additional proposed changes to the budget as mentioned above, the present and treasurer will collaborate on a final draft of the 2023 budget for a DFO Board vote by email before the end of 2022.

NOTE: After further tweaking, the budget was adopted on Dec. 3 by a 12-1 board vote via email. The principal change was to remove the line item for payments for the "Bird Bombs" programs, discussed above.



Welcome to new DFO members

S. Kelly Ambler of Denver; Barb Archer, Denver; Ramesh and Suzanne Bhatt, Boulder; Deborah Bowman, Boulder; Jane Cates, Littleton; James and Linda Cherney, Wheat Ridge; Timothy Condon, Pine; Chase Crowson and Christian Duncan, Denver; Susanna Donato, Denver; Nancy Downs, Denver; Elizabeth Fischer, Denver; Curt Frankenfeld, Larkspur; Virginia Grady, Denver; Al Guarente, Media, PA; Diane Highbaugh, Englewood; Walt and Deb Jenkins, Thornton; Christina Jeske, Denver; Connie Johnson, Federal Heights; Rosanne Juergens, Centennial; Shirley Leow, Aurora; Winston Liu, Lafayette; Sean and Judy McKeon, Golden; Jessica Miller, Fountain; Kip Miller, Colorado Springs; Tom Mottinger, Elizabeth; Jane Olivier, Denver; Debra Palenik, Denver; Brandon Percival, Pueblo West; Fran Rulon-Miller, Salida; Charlie and Mary Saunders, Lakewood; Sheri S and Sheri Shimamoto, Littleton; Kate Shirley, Arvada; Helen Thorpe, Denver; Beverly and Fred Trail, Henderson; and Liz Willcockson, Denver Susanna Donato

Thank you for your contribution

Research, Education and Conservation Grants Fund

Yvonne Berg; Susan Blansett and Mark Peyton; Mary Cay and Tom Burger; Jodi Chambers and Sally Palmer; Jean and Charlie Curlee; Christopher Curwen; David and Mindy Densmore; Pamela Dowd; Gregg Goodrich and Ann Troth; Celia Greenman; David Hill; Sharon Hines; Paula Hoffman; Roy Hohn; Chuck Hundertmark and Marjorie Jannotta; Diane Hutton; Judy Lane; Debra Lentz; Debra Palenik; Linda Purcell and Billy A. Harris Jr.; Bob Righter; Karen Rosica; Danny Roohr and Betsy Shaw; Peter Stoltz; Kenna Sue Trickey; Suzanne and Bill Wuerthele

Friends of DFO

Yvonne Berg; Karen Clark; Christopher Curwen; Pamela Dowd; Jodi Chambers and Sally Palmer; John Drummond; Gregg Goodrich and Ann Troth; Newell Grant; Julia Gwinn; David Hill; Roy Hohn; Chuck Hundertmark and Marjorie Jannotta; Debra Lentz; Sean and Judy McKeon; Pepe Mendez; Debra Palenik; Bob Righter; Charlie and Mary Saunders; Nancy and Bob Stocker; Rob and Michele Worrall; Suzanne and Bill Wuerthele

DFO's Dinosaur Ridge Hawk Watch

Yvonne Berg; Susan Blansett and Mark Peyton; Jodi Chambers and Sally Palmer; Susan Clasen; Pamela Dowd; Gregg Goodrich and Ann Troth; David Hill; Roy Hohn; Chuck Hundertmark and Marjorie Jannotta; Diane Hutton; Debra Lentz; Pepe Mendez; Debra Palenik; Bob Righter; Janet Shin, and Suzanne and Bill Wuerthele



LAST LOOK, LAST WORD

The bird who came for Christmas (maybe), New Year's (possibly), and well beyond

Is it really almost a *year* since that unexpected “desert cardinal” of the Southwest brightened our birding in Denver’s midwinter of 2021-22?

Officially, eBird logs this first Pyrrhuloxia in Denver County as Feb. 11, 2022, just the species’ sixth record in Colorado. Neighborhood hearsay suggests the bird may have been around a month or longer before birders found it.

Its improbable sanctuary for the next five weeks was a weedy back-alley lot in Denver’s West Colfax neighborhood, two-and-a-half blocks from the light rail station and just 10 minutes southwest of downtown.

Yes, you could *commute* to this rare Colorado lifer. Scores of us did. The day after its discovery, DFO member **Rob Raker** trekked over from Lakewood to take the snowy photos. Two weeks later, he returned for more. With thanks to Rob, enjoy this beautiful holiday gift from *The Lark Bunting*.



Top left: Pyrrhuloxia in snow
Bottom: Daily MOB at stakeout
Next page: Pyrrhuloxia in profile
Rob Raker



Until the next Lark Bunting . . .

GOOD HOLIDAY BIRDING!