



Great Blue Herald

Grand Valley Audubon Society

GRAND JUNCTION, COLORADO

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

Southern California Birding Trip! *By Pam Lauman*

OVER 500 MILES, 139 SPECIES, AND 25 LIFERS! I recently completed a birding trip to Southern California with Peter Burke of Rocky Mountain Birding (<https://www.rockymountainbirding.com/>) and two other ladies. There were many highlights including a trip to the Santa Cruz Island of the Channel Islands and seeing an endemic bird, the Island Scrub-Jay.

I met a man on the plane who had property where condors nested and he took us on a tour. Unfortunately, the condors did not appear although I saw several lifers. The California thrasher, towhee, scrub-jay, and quail were added to my life list.

We stayed at a lovely resort in Borrego Springs and had the amazing experience of seeing the desert in bloom.

We had an incredible look at a Ridgeway's Rail as it slowly walked under a bridge we were standing



Southern California Birding Trip in March, 2024.



It was a week of excellent birding, good food, and fun friends! If you have never birded Southern California, I highly recommend it.



Photos:
 > Scrub Jay
 > Ridgeway's Rail
 > Borrego Springs Desert bloom

GVAS UPCOMING EVENTS



APRIL MEETING – Monday, April 15, 2024 Birding the Choco-Andes Region of Ecuador

Social : 6:30-7:00 pm
Poetry Reading: 7:00-7:15 pm
Program: 7:15-8:00 pm
Presented by Shannon Young

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Hummingbirds! Ecuador holds the world record for the highest number of hummingbird species: over 132 species. That's about 40% of all hummingbird species!
- Reserves in Ecuador such as Yanacocha Biological Reserve, Milpe Bird Sanctuary, Alambi Cloud Forest Reserve, Antisana Ecological Reserve, Refugio Paz de las Aves, and others.
- View many Tanagers and the Spectacled (Andean) Bear, and see the sights of the Paramo, which contains the Antisana Volcano, the fourth highest peak in the Andes.

Photos by Shannon Young: Left: Sparkling Violetear / Boat-billed Flycatcher - Right

GVAS Monthly meeting information:

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

River Front Trail Bird Walk

March 27, 2024 with John Higgins

A great location to observe the spring migration.

This will be an easy walk on the River Front Trail from 29 Road East. The trail is concrete with some gravel surfaces. The walk should last about 1 ½ hours in and back.

Meet: 29 Road River Front parking lot at 8:00 am. This lot is south of D Road on the east side of 29 Road. If you get to the river you went too far.

Bring binoculars and water. This is a free bird walk with no participant capacity limit. Donations are accepted at audubongv.app.neoncrm.com/forms/donate

SAVE THESE BIRD WALKS DATES:

April 7, 2024 Brewster Ridge Bird Walk
May 5, 2024 Devils Kitchen Bird Walk
May 18, 2024 Horsethief Canyon State Wildlife Area

IN THE WORKS:

Possible field trips to Browns Park or Ouray Box Canyon in April.

Spring Bird Count set for Wed - Sat, May 15-18, 2024

It's a range of dates this year, which was done last year to allow for people who may only be available on a certain day of the week to count birds. Sometimes some areas of the count can be full of weekend recreationists, which may make it harder to see, hear, and count certain birds. This does not mean that the count can happen twice in the same area; the area leader will make the decision as to which day in the range of days that the count will take place.

This count is for the entire Mesa County, divided into 12 areas, with a leader for each area. More information on how to sign up for an area will be in the next newsletter. Shannon Young is coordinating the count, and can be reached at mtngirl1111@gmail.com, or at 970-260-1118.

CONSERVATION NEWS! By Nic Korte

IT'S ELEMENTARY! Four GVAS members assisted Tope Elementary students in a recent Problem Based Learning (PBL) activity: What can we do about declining raptor populations? Students worked in teams to select a raptor, identify problems, and suggest solutions. Each team developed a power-point presentation to explain their results. The passion of these students gives me hope. One group recognized that Boreal Owls are threatened by logging to produce cheap paper products such as junk mail and toilet paper. Their solution was recycling and using recycled paper products. Does your family order recycled or non-wood-based toilet tissue by the case? It is easy. If you are not doing it, why not? You can pick from several suitable products: The Issue with Tissue (nrdc.org)

WHAT'S NOT TO LEK? L-E-K! If you can put the K on a "triple word score," that is worth fifteen points in Scrabble. When I looked up lek on Google, "a Brazilian expression" came up first. I also learned that it is the name of the Albanian currency and of a couple of commercial firms. To birders, a lek, as described by Merriam-Webster, is an assembly area where animals (such as the Greater Sage and Sharp-tailed Grouse) conduct display and courtship behavior. In North America, lekking is limited to gallinaceous birds such as grouse and Prairie Chickens. Birders from all over the world visit Colorado to view these birds at their leks. Spring is mating season. If you are lucky enough to encounter a lek or any other displaying bird, back away and watch with a scope. Birds are vulnerable while strutting and need their privacy. Lekking is more common in the tropics where it is practiced by birds as diverse as hummingbirds and manikins. Here are two examples:

> <http://youtu.be/Bcdr2qsc8Xw>. **Stripe-throated Hermit**

> **Manakin Mating Song and Dance** (<https://youtu.be/-V4iJOakhGk>) **Long tailed Manakin.**

Grand Junction Needs Its Own Flaco –

Perhaps you heard of the Eurasian Eagle Owl, named Flaco, that vandals released from the Central Park Zoo more than a year ago (Flaco (owl) - Wikipedia). Capture attempts failed and he survived for a year before a collision with a window took his life. Although Flaco came to a sad end, the publicity associated with his life and death yielded opportunities to describe to the non-birding public the hazards encountered by wildlife. Coverage of his death speculated whether



Eurasian Eagle Owl, courtesy of Ardmore Open Farm

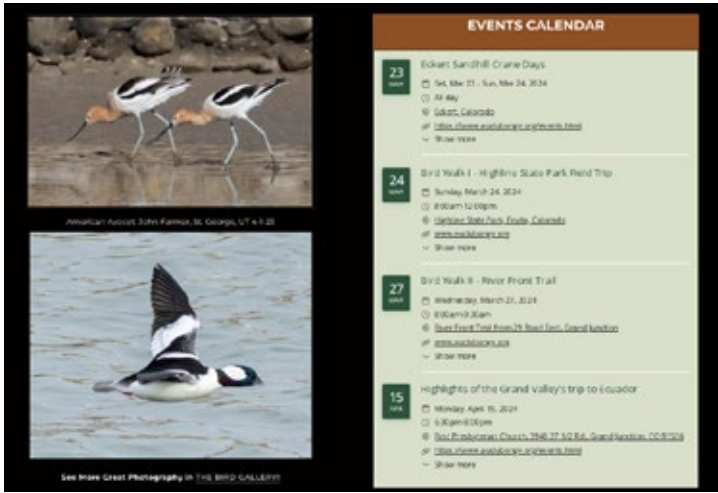
human-caused illness contributed to the collision. Avian flu, rodenticide poisoning, and lead poisoning (from pigeons, which can accumulate lead while feeding on the ground) all cause symptoms that can affect flight and coordination. I do not actually want a dead bird as a publicity hero, but I wish we could make more locals aware how development, increased recreation

pressure and clearing of habitat have caused our local owls to decline.

PALM OIL GOOD NEWS! When I was a youngster interested in birds, I fantasied about developing a selective poison for starlings as year after year they harassed and chased Purple Martins from our yard in Illinois. Perhaps, some researchers have succeeded in doing something much more important, that is, developing an alternative to Palm Oil. Palm-based ingredients can be found in nearly 50% of all packaged products found on our supermarket shelves; often added only to improve texture.

I am a frequent visitor to Costa Rica, and nothing can make my proverbial "blood boil" more than to see another swamp drained for a palm oil plantation. Affected acreage in Central and South America may be dwarfed by the problem in Asia, but the impacts in our hemisphere are massive. A yeast-based alternative to palm oil has been developed in the UK. A food-tech business has acquired the intellectual property and with a nearly two-million-dollar initial investment hopes to bring it to market within five years. In the meantime, read labels. If ingredients include vegetable oil, palm kernel oil, palm fruit oil, palmstearin, palmitate, and sodium lauryl sulfate, see if you find something else. When I asked ChatGP how to avoid palm oil, part of the response was "Remember, small choices can collectively make a big difference in promoting more sustainable practices!"

GVAS BOARD BRIEFS



WEBSITE UPDATES

Check out some new features on the website. On the Home Page there is a new **Events Calendar**, making it easier to find events. Each event links to the Event Page where the full description is displayed. Also on the **Home Page**, the tabs at the top have been consolidated and are more organized and efficient for our users to find information/pages within the site. The **Donate button** looks the same, but GVAS no longer uses Paypal for donations. Donations now go into the CRM (customer relationship management) software with the membership information. www.AudubonGV.org

PRESERVE WORKDAY
APRIL 6, 2024 from 9am - noon
 Bring: Gloves, water & snacks
 Where: The Preserve – 610 Dike Road, Grand Junction, 81507

GVAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Larry Collins, *Treasurer*: lcollins1@bresnan.net
- Janet Gallenstein, *Secretary*: jagbell2@gmail.com
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- Tina Wilson, *Communications*: tinawilson2656@gmail.com
- Meredith Swett Walker, *Wetlands Project Coordinator*: mbswett@gmail.com

TUMACNBAC FIELD TRIPS 2024

Tumacnbac [to Mack and Back] is Grand Valley Audubon’s most popular field trip; the focus is on wintering raptors in the northwestern reaches of the Grand Valley and has been conducted annually since 1987. Six trips went out this year, including 5 leaders and 39 participants, between Jan. 27th and Feb. 4th. All raptors were spotted except for one typical species: Rough-Legged Hawk. None of the group’s day-long efforts were able to locate the bird. One reason for this could be the unseasonably warm temperatures that kept this migratory species north; temperature records were made on Jan. 30 (62 F) and Feb. 1 (61 F). Low numbers of the Northern Shrike were also reported for, perhaps, a similar reason.

All other typical raptor species were accounted for: *American Kestrel, Bald Eagle, Coopers Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Golden Eagle, Great Horned Owl, Loggerhead Shrike, Merlin, Northern Harrier, Northern Shrike, Prairie Falcon, Red-Tailed Hawk, Sharp-Shinned Hawk, and Western Screech Owl.* Thank you to our leaders and participants for sharing the excitement of winter raptors with us!
 ~ Logan Wagner

Treasurer’s Report – Quarter 1, 2024

The checking account balances as of the end of February were \$33,875.72. This past quarter, the Grand Valley Audubon Society paid its monthly recurring expenses which include digital and electronic memberships (\$295.00). Utilities paid (\$268). Other expenses included materials for owl box repairs (\$65), Website design and maintenance, newsletters and CRM (customer relationship management) system (\$2,948 for the quarter). The 2023 Tax preparation for state and federal was (\$1,100.00), Liability Insurance (\$2,738), permit fee (\$25) to Mesa County to install a pipe in The Preserve, and miscellaneous (\$23). A volunteer thank you for bird banding program (\$44). In the long term, GVAS has committed to a \$55,000 expenditure as our share for Phase 2 of the Wetlands Project. That may have to be paid as early as this fall.

~ Larry Collins, Treasurer

Grand Valley Audubon
MISSION STATEMENT

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

WHAT'S A HAIKUBOX? *By Pam Lauman*

Have you heard of Haikubox?

It is a device that automatically identifies your backyard birds using the bird's vocalizations. It was developed through a collaboration with Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Bird NET Sound ID. Haikubox listens 24/7 to bird songs, calls, and chirps and shares this information through spectrograms and bird photos using the Haikubox Connect App. The app works on iPhone and Android devices and also on the website (<https://listen.haikubox.com/#/haikubox>). The device needs to be plugged in to an outdoor outlet and have good wifi access.



Haikuboxes. Either download the app or go to the website. Click on the map symbol and zoom in to find Grand Junction. There are 3 Haikuboxes in our location at this time. Look for GVAS Haikubox and you can see how many birds were identified within the last 2, 12, or 24 hours. You can also see how many birds were identified yesterday or for all time. It

shows a picture of the bird plus how many times it was heard.

Grand Valley Audubon Society was gifted a Haikubox by Becky Williams and family in memory of their brother, Dave Price. Board Members are currently using it at different locations. We plan to have a program about it next year.

As always, a word of caution at taking the identification as absolute without visual confirmation. Some people question whether I actually had a Virginia Rail or Rosy-finches at my home in Fruita, although I believe they could have called as they flew over! It is a fun and unique way to observe birds.

Anyone can access the information on local

