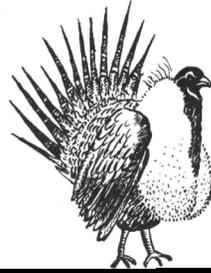


PLAINS & PEAKS



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MURIE AUDUBON

Casper Wyoming - Monthly Publication
<http://www.murieaudubon.org>

THE STORY OF DEE, THE MAMMOTH

Jean-Pierre (JP) Cavigelli will be the guest speaker for the first of our programs this season. JP is prep lab manager, collections manager and field trip organizer at that Tate Museum. JP has lived in Wyoming for 20 years, 14 of those in Laramie and 6 in Casper. Part of his job at the museum was to co-lead the Dee excavation with Kent Sundell as well as co-ordinate the preparation of the bones.

In early 2006, a bulldozer operator in northwestern Converse County scraped up a few large chunks of bone while building an oil well drilling location pad. These bones were



CALENDAR

- Sept. 10—Membership Mtg.—7PM—OGCC Bldg., 2211 King Blvd.
- Oct. 5—Banquet Committee Mtg.—ACGC—6PM—Contact Karen Anfang to be on the committee
- Oct. 5—Board Mtg.—7PM—ACGC
- Oct. 8—Membership Mtg.—7PM—OGCC Bldg., 2211 King Blvd.

SAVE PAPER, MONEY & FOLDING TIME—READ YOUR NEWSLETTER AT MURIE'S WEBSITE—CONTACT ROSE-MARY KING—
rking7453@bresnan.net

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the initial discovery of what turned out to be the largest and most complete mammoth skeleton found in Wyoming. After four years of field and prep work, the skeleton of Dee (named after the bulldozer operator) was mounted in the Tate Geological Museum at Casper College. This presentation will be the story of Dee—his discovery, his life, his death and his resurrection. There will even be a few pictures of birds.

Please join us on Friday, September 10, 2010 at 7 pm at the Oil & Gas Conservation Commission Building at 2211 King Blvd. for this “big” show. As always, the program is free and open to the public!

JP Cavigelli and Bruce Walgren (Program Chair)



SIGHING WIND

I'm happy to be your new president and I'm looking forward to helping spread the word about birding to Casper and beyond. I'm a firm believer that educating the young is our best hedge to encourage more birding and protecting our dwindling bird habitat. I know that my two sons look forward to outings that include birding and

related nature activities.

We recently finished up a six hour kayaking trip down the North Platte River, just over 20 miles of paddling adventure which included a tip over dunking of both of my sons into the swirling river.

Along the way, we saw much wildlife. What we saw is typically what you cannot see from the river bank as most of the view is blocked by many trees. We were fortunate enough to see countless Red-Wings, two pairs of Osprey, two Great Blue Heron, deer, bull snakes, fish, beaver, and glimpses of birds I could not identify. The biggest thrill was to watch the Osprey swoop down and pluck a trout out of the river putting the best fly fishermen to shame. Something about drifting down the river seems so natural, it allows you to sneak up on birds

for very close encounters. If you haven't already had a chance to do so, I highly recommend a good float just doing nothing. Not only does it recharge the brain, it's quite stimulating to get good and wet and watch

the wildlife drift by.

In case you were wondering about me, prior to moving to Casper, I used to spend many good years flying hang gliders in competition up and down the California coast (as a daring, stupid, single young man). There is nothing like being able to sneak up on Red-tail Hawks, crows, and share thermals with Swifts five thousand feet above ground level. I have been very fortunate over the

years to see so much and do so much, that I can now share some of it with my young family. I would like to encourage all of you to invite your families to as many birding activities as possible. Nature is something best shared, preserved, and enjoyed by all.

I need to move along now, but I promise to share more stories and meet you in future birding activities.

**Good birding to all,
Harry Martin - President**



BIRD NOTES

As we move into fall migration “season”, species sightings start to change – hummers begin movement southward, flocks of black-birds are evident, and shore-birds start their journey to wintering grounds. The calls of migrating waterfowl will also be heard before long.

Reports of the Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush in Spearfish Canyon, South Dakota have been few and far between now; perhaps the bird will make its way to its “native” habitat. Much effort

was made to determine the circumstances surrounding this bird – why and how it came to be this far north of its normal range (Mexico and environs further south), all with little results.

July yard birds – For the month of July, Wayne and I received 195 yard bird selections from 16 states plus Yukon Territory with 94 different species reported. Grosbeaks and goldfinches are frequent sightings in July, along with nighthawks and various hummingbirds; this was again true this month. American Goldfinch was number one in July. Osprey and Black-chinned Hummingbird tied for 2nd place. Third place was a three-way tie between Black-headed Grosbeak, Northern Flicker, and Common Nighthawk, followed by Western Kingbird in 4th place.

Wyoming Yard Birds

Casper: Pat Classen – Western Kingbird, Cecil Foote – Loggerhead Shrike, Chris Michelson – Blue Jay, Rose-Mary King – Hairy Woodpecker, Annette Hein – Western Tanager, Casper College Greenhouse – Common Nighthawk, Jim Herold – Black-headed Grosbeak, Bridgid Herold – Turkey Vulture, Ann Hines – Black-headed Grosbeak; **Dubois:** Anna Moscicki – Rufous Hummingbird; **Evanston:** Patti Gorman – Lesser Goldfinch, Tim Gorman – American Goldfinch; **Lost Cabin:** Bruce Walgren – Savannah Sparrow; **Lovell:** Glen Olsen – Double-Crested Cormorant; **Riverton:** Suz-

anne Hargis – Calliope Hummingbird, Bob Hargis – Lark Sparrow; **Van Tassell:** Great-Tailed Grackle; **Yellowstone NP:** Anna Moscicki – Osprey.

Thanks to all who helped with the Yard Bird Project in July!! We will be very interested in what you see as “fall migration season” progresses. Send your bird notes and yard bird reports to Donna Walgren, 4311 S. Center St., Casper, WY 82601, or email to Piranga@bresnan.net, or phone 234-7455. Good Birding!!!

Donna Walgren

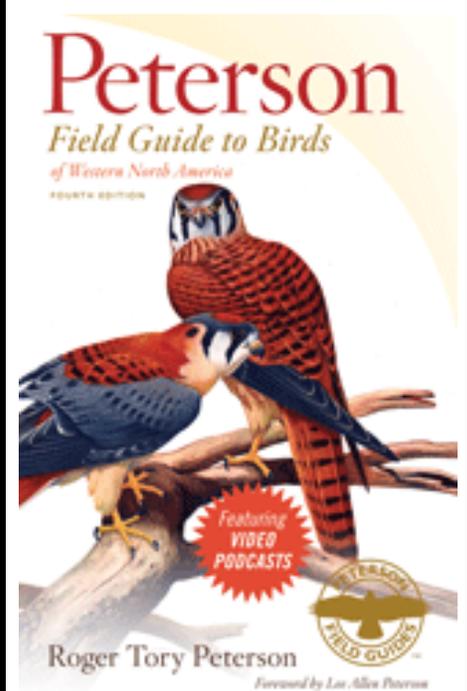
SUMMER READING LIST FOR BIRDWATCHERS INCLUDES FIELD GUIDE, FEATHER SCIENCE AND TRAVELOGUE FOR FAMOUS BIRDING HOT-SPOT

By Barb Gorges

PETERSON FIELD GUIDE TO BIRDS OF WESTERN NORTH AMERICA

4th edition, by Roger Tory Peterson, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010.

Two years ago the “Peterson Field Guide to Birds of North America” updated and combined



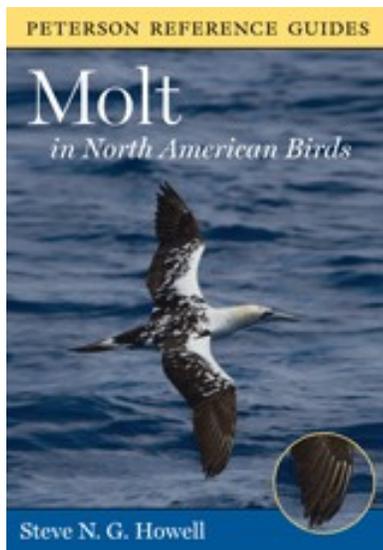
Roger Tory Peterson’s eastern and western guides into one volume for the first time. This spring the information was published in separate guides again.

The publishers must have decided it was easy enough to cater to both birders who like the entire continent in one book and birders who like the regional field guides which are divided by the 100th Meridian, vertically bisecting the Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas and Texas, and cutting off the Oklahoma panhandle.

Unfortunately, in the western edition the individual species range maps cut off half the continent so you can’t get a feel for continent-wide distribution when a species has one. Cheyenne is frequently visited by eastern warblers during spring migration and while the western guide has their pictures and descriptions, no range maps are provided to

give you an idea how far away their normal range is.

If you live out here in the middle of the continent and you want a Peterson guide to birds, famous for its trademarked field identification system and Roger Tory Peterson's classic illustrations, go for the big one, "Peterson Field Guide to Birds of North America," only \$6 more than this new \$20 western guide. You'll get a more complete view of our birds and be able to use it wherever you travel in North America-- and get more muscles carrying it.



MOLT IN NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS

by Steve N. G. Howell, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010.

Part of the Peterson Reference Guide Series, this book addresses molt, the process of birds growing new feathers. It's a confusing topic, but necessary for identifying birds beyond their characteris-

tic breeding plumage.

When do birds grow new feathers, pushing out the old worn ones? Do all birds have different winter and summer plumages? Can they fly when they are molting wing feathers? What causes a molt cycle to begin? When is the best time to molt?

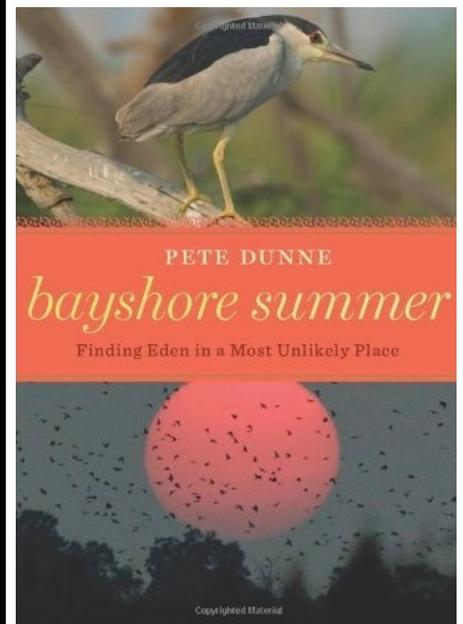
All birds molt, but not the same way or as often, which is why there is now a 267-page book to explain it. What's even more confusing is that there are different systems used to talk about molt. Howell has written 67 pages explaining the different classification systems as well as bird molt strategies. Once you've digested those pages with the help of Howell's clear writing style, move on to the bird families such as the gulls, champion molt artists.

Even if you aren't particularly interested in molt, this book is jam-packed with bird photos, almost all taken by Howell himself in the last five years. He leads birdwatching tours for WINGS, Inc., is affiliated with the Point Reyes Bird Observatory and lives in California.

BAYSHORE SUMMER, FINDING EDEN IN A MOST UNLIKELY PLACE

by Pete Dunne, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010.

Following his book, "Prairie Spring," a three-month tour of the Great Plains, Pete Dunne, director of the famous Cape May Bird Observatory in New Jersey, has decided to stay home for this installment in his seasonal series. The Bayshore is southern New Jersey, where summers are



marshy, hot, humid and swarming with insects.

Dunne provides a fascinating trip through an area mostly unfamiliar even to folks going to the Jersey Shore. He explores the intricate relationship between the 400-year-old human adaptations to nature, and nature's adaptation to man when he tries his hand at harvesting salt hay or goes out with the watermen to pull crab pots.

The heart of the red knot problem (knots are shorebirds) gets Dunne and his photographer wife, Linda, immersed in tidal flat mud. Later, he catalogs the many kinds of insect and arachnid agony locally available. He is a wall flower on a party boat searching for weakfish. He expounds on the Jersey tomato and why the state's nickname is "the Garden State." And he spends a night with a state game warden on a stakeout for a habitual deer poacher.

Dunne makes you feel all

the summer sweat and all the itches, so maybe you'll want to save this small book for next winter or your vacation in cool mountains. Despite the discomforts of his climate descriptions, it makes me want to visit the Bayshore myself, but maybe before Memorial Day or after Labor Day.

(These bird book reviews were published July 26, 2010, in the *Wyoming Tribune-Eagle*. Reprinted here by permission of the author.)

BIRD IDS CAN BE TRICKY, SO A PHOTO IS ALWAYS WELCOME

By Barb Gorges

(published August 15, 2010 in the *Wyoming Tribune-Eagle*. Reprinted here by permission of the author.)

Spring and early summer are when I get the most bird calls, questions about woodpecker damage, inconvenient robins' nests, but mostly bird identification.

Unless they can email me a defining photo, I usually give callers a few possibilities to look up and let them decide for themselves.

For instance, in spring Cheyenne regularly gets six species with dark or black heads, backs and wings and orange breasts, the most obvious being American robin, what we compare everything to.

The others are orchard ori-

ole, Bullock's oriole, black-headed grosbeak, spotted towhee and the American redstart.

In early May a friend mentioned having a flock of painted redstarts at her house. Was she misnaming American redstarts? She insisted on painted redstart.

At home I looked both up. They are both small (American is 5.25 inches and the painted is 5.75 inches) black-headed birds with red markings. The American has a white belly and red patches on its black wings and tail. The painted has a red belly and white patches on its black wings and tail. I saw it once in 1996 in southeastern Arizona.

There are no documented records for painted redstarts in Wyoming as of 2008. Sibley's shows them in Arizona and New Mexico, in oak and pine canyons, with records of sightings in north-central Colorado.

There are two possible scenarios here. One is familiarity breeds complacency on my friend's part. She may have spent some time in the Southwest where she identified painted redstarts. When a similar bird showed up in her yard in Cheyenne, she assumed it was a species she knew and loved seeing previously. Who needs to look closely and look it up in the field guide again?

Me. I've been known to look through binoculars to enjoy common birds 15 feet outside my window, but I wouldn't expect everyone does that, so a general impression of small bird flashing black, white and red could remain misidentified, causing no harm until the observer talks about it to someone with too many field

guides, like me.

The second scenario is familiarity breeding complacency on my part. Although I see maybe one American redstart every other spring, I page past the entry every time I look up other warblers in my field guide. The Cheyenne bird checklist (compiled by more knowledgeable people than me) says they are uncommon migrants. They normally hang out around riparian (stream) areas.

There is of course, a third scenario. The bird in question is not a redstart at all.

The future scenario I'd like is my friend gets a close look at and takes a photo of her visiting birds, double-checks her field guide, and based on her previous familiarity, is quite convinced she sees painted redstarts—and based on the species range map in her field guide, she realizes it is a rare species for Wyoming.

Next, she convinces the Wyoming Bird Records Committee she had painted redstarts. It's a challenge. Observer credibility is as essential as good digital photos.

How does she get credibility? She becomes an active part of the birding community. By joining other birders on field trips, they will get a feel for her birding ability, and her ability to say, "Gosh, I guess that cerulean warbler was something else," which is what one of Wyoming's best birders said last spring after some additional study.

There are advantages to birding with others. If everyone

can see the same rare bird at the same time, they can confirm the identification. The records committee likes those kinds of reports, especially if a detailed description of the bird's look and behavior is submitted, along with justification for not identifying it as a similar species.

The field guide is sort of a birder's Bible, but with one main difference: the birds don't read it. They have wings and travel intentionally, looking for new habitat, or unintentionally, caught by wind. The range maps are just a measure of likelihood.

Birdwatching as a hobby shares something with gambling and fishing. We go out hoping for the next big thing, the next rare bird, even while we enjoy all the other birds we see.

So, next time painted redstarts show up, take a photo and then give me a call and I'll be right out.

AUDUBON TAPS NOTED CON- SERVATION AND COMMUNI- CATIONS LEADER AS NEW PRESI- DENT

The National Audubon Society today announced that David Yarnold has been named its new President and Chief Executive Officer, giving

new momentum to efforts to connect people with nature and their power to protect it. A passionate conservationist, Yarnold currently serves as Executive Director of Environmental Defense Fund and President of Environmental Defense Action Fund. Prior to that, he was a Pulitzer Prize-winning editor at the San Jose Mercury News. "David brings proven leadership in the for-profit and non-profit sectors to Audubon at a time when efforts to protect birds, habitats and the resources that sustain us are needed more than ever;" said Holt Thrasher, Audubon's Board Chair. "His leadership ability, his passion for conservation and grassroots action, his communications skills and his organizational expertise all make him the perfect fit for the Audubon of 2010 and beyond."

"David is a boundary-crosser, the kind of flexible thinker and values-based executive that a complex conservation and fundraising landscape demands right now," Thrasher said. "He shares Audubon's traditional passion for birds and its visionary understanding that helping people to protect them will safeguard our own future as well. I have no doubt that David will lead Audubon in expanding its reach to new audiences and elevating its conservation successes to new heights."

Yarnold has been at EDF since April 2005, where he is responsible for all operations, from programs, to development and marketing/communications. He helped expand EDF's innovative corporate partnerships work, focused on EDF's international programs, particularly in China, and

helped the organization grow from \$52M to \$117M in revenue. He is also President of the organization's Action Fund, its political action arm.

"Audubon's mission has never been more relevant. From the grassroots to state houses to national and regional policy, its wingspan is unparalleled," Yarnold said. "I'm excited by the opportunity to work with a nationwide network of Audubon Chapters and Audubon Centers that combine local concern, knowledge and action to equal conservation that makes a difference on a grand scale. It will be an honor to lead an organization whose name has meant 'trust' and 'conservation achievement' for more than a hundred years."

Yarnold's San Jose Mercury News was consistently ranked as one of America's 10 Best Newspapers. His paper was called, "America's Boldest Newspaper" by a panel of international judges. During his time in San Jose, the Mercury News was widely recognized for its commitment to diversity and for its in-depth coverage of technology. He was also one of three Pulitzer Prize finalists for editorial writing in 2005.

"For me, going to Audubon is like going home. Community-based education and action that breeds broader changes has always been engaging and rewarding for me and those are the things Audubon does best," Yarnold said.

He will assume the Presidency of Audubon on Sept 1.

BOOTS ON THE GROUND

“Look, up there, on that peak,” our guide said. And through a borrowed spotting scope, I saw the pair of Gyrfalcons. Erect, watchful, the personification of “raptor.” We’d just come from the Latrabjarg Bird Cliffs on the western-most point of Iceland – and Europe. The cliffs, as many of you know, are home to hundreds of thousands of Atlantic Puffins, Razorbills and Murres. I’d never seen an avian blanket on such a massive piece of landscape.

That’s my highlight reel – the best I can offer as a novice birder. I have a lot to learn about birds and I’d like to ask your help: Set me on a birding path worthy of Audubon. After an initial week in New York in September, I want to go birding with you. I’m going to spend most of that month – my first real month on the job, learning in the field. I can’t think of a better way to tap into your passion and to get to know your issues and your thinking.

While I’m a budding birder, I’ve run an environmental NGO for almost 5 ½ years and I’m a life-long outdoorsman. I know that, like the people at EDF, Audubon’s staff and its volunteers are there to help the planet thrive.

As I’ve talked to friends about Audubon in recent weeks, I’ve told them this: “In journalism, we learned to



‘follow the money.’ In conservation, it’s ‘follow the birds.’ I’m thrilled to represent an organization that believes that by focusing on birds and IBAs, we get a clear view of the health of nature’s ecosystems – the systems that benefit humankind and birds alike.

I’ve learned a couple of things in the process of becoming your new President and CEO. First, I’ve come to understand that Audubon doesn’t belong to the New York home office. And while the state offices do tremendous work, they represent something larger. The chapters and their volunteer leaders do Audubon’s grassroots work. But the fact is – and I will keep this thought at the center of my work as your new President – we are all Audubon.

Here’s the other thing I’ve learned. While I’ve always associated birds with special moments (I’ll tell you about the Blue Herons at the Merwin Lake – in search of the legendary D.B. Cooper sometime), I’m just beginning to see and appreciate them. I was going on last week with a friend about

“heroic migratory songbirds that shed ¾ of their body mass during their migration,” and he said, “wow, they really do have you, don’t they?” From the canopied running trail where I put in five miles each morning to a peak overlooking Hong Kong to the Brown Pelicans in Louisiana’s Barataria Bay, birds have moved to the front of my awareness in the past three months – and are no longer part of nature’s background imagery. I’m guessing that’s an early stage of a

birder’s evolution, so rather than being shy about admitting it, I’m proud to be on the road to discovery.

I’ve always enjoyed nature. I put myself through college working at a backpacking store. I’ve hiked most of the John Muir trail, backpacked in the Cascades and up Mt. Whitney and kayaked from Alaska to Quebec to the Colorado River – and on the Hudson River I see from my home.

But something’s different now – it’s all about the birds.

I told my 14-year-old daughter, Nicole, I was considering this opportunity and asked her advice. “Take it,” she said, without hesitation. “You already have the app on your I-phone.”

You’ll be hearing more about how we’ll organize the logistics of my boots-on-the-ground month in the field. I’d appreciate your help and I’m looking forward to getting to know you.

David Yarnold