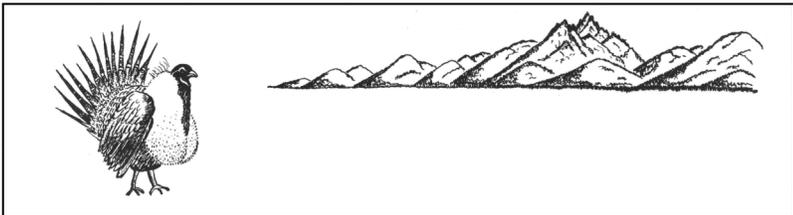


PLAINS & PEAKS



VOL. 41 - Iss. 5

SEPTEMBER 2007

Murie Audubon Society

Casper Wyoming - Monthly Publication

<http://www.murieaudubon.org>

Calendar

- General Meeting - 9-14
- Oct. PNP article deadline - 9-22
- Brown Bag lunch with the birds - Every Thursday at 12 noon at ACGC
- Oct. Gen. Mtg. 10-12

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HONEY BEE AND POLLINATOR DECLINE: WHAT'S THE BUZZ?

As if a miniature, blood-red arachnid called the varroa mite wasn't causing enough havoc with beekeepers in North America, a new even deadlier malady known as "Colony Collapse Disorder" (CCD) is sweeping through apiaries, leaving many hives almost completely devoid of adult bees. The bees appear to abandon their hives and just disappear.

Honey bees are in effect six-legged livestock that both manufacture agricultural commodities – honey and wax- and more importantly, contribute a major agricultural service – pollination. Close to 100 crop species in the



U.S. rely to some degree on pollination services provided by this one specie. Collectively these crops make up approximately 1/3 of the U.S. diet. While not all plants rely upon animal pollinators, most fruit, vegetable, and nut crops may be dramatically affected by the continued loss of bees and other animal pollinators. Bee colonies are moved from season to season depending upon what crops are in bloom. A hive may start the year in California pollinating almond trees, move up the west

coast to fruit orchards, and end up the summer in the Dakotas near clover or alfalfa fields.

Dr. Will Robinson, who teaches biology and animal behavior at Casper College, will be our guest speaker and will tell us about the importance of bees and other animal pollinators as well as the latest news about the status of CCD.

Please join us on Friday, September 14, 2007 at 7 pm at the Oil & Gas Conservation Commission Building at 2211 King Blvd.; the program is free and open to the public!

BRUCE WALGREN

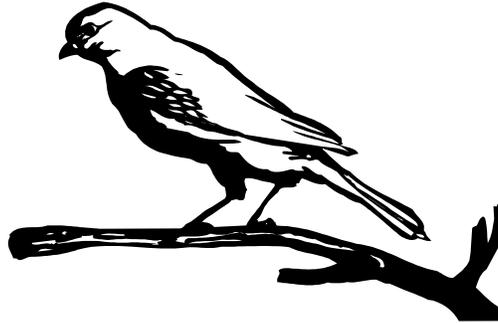
SEPTEMBER IS MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME

Friends of Murie - please remember to send in your membership renewal. You will find the membership renewal form on the last page of this newsletter.

Anyone reading this newsletter can opt to read the newsletter on Murie's website saving Murie printing and postage costs. Let Rose-Mary know at 577-0568 or rking7453@bresnan.net.

BRUCE'S BRANCH

Welcome to the 2007-08 season of Murie Audubon Society! Once again we have several interesting monthly programs lined up for your enjoyment. The Christmas Bird Count in December is always a popular event. The annual banquet is scheduled for February 9, 2008. We hope that you can find something in our schedule that is of interest. If you have any suggestions about activities that you would



like to see the Chapter involved in, please let us know. Elsewhere in this issue is an article about the results of the Finance Committee recommendations that were approved in a special board meeting in May; please take time to read it.

Until next time...

BRUCE WALGREN - PRESIDENT

BIRD NOTES

Many migrating birds have started to make their way south, and this has been reflected in the yard birds being reported. A couple weeks ago, Jim and Gloria Lawrence looked out their window and saw 5 different species of warblers!! July is usually marked by numerous reports of hummingbirds (especially Rufous Hummers) and Black-headed Grosbeaks - and July's Yard Bird Project report again noted that. Also of note, Bruce Bennett in Whitehorse reported a huge influx of White-winged Crossbills throughout southern Yukon in July. This has been attributed to a bumper white spruce cone crop; he also

noted that lakes are flooding, mainly from glacier melt and a lot of rainfall.

July Birds - For the month of July, Wayne and I received 169 yard bird selections from 18 states plus the Yukon, Manitoba, and Mexico with 83 different species reported. The top species reported was Rufous Hummingbird, followed by Black-headed Grosbeak in second place; Common Nighthawk was third.

Casper: Jim Herold - Black-headed Grosbeak, Chris Michelson - Eurasian Collared Dove, Bob Yonts - Common Nighthawk, Sandy/Miguel Leotta - Spotted Towhee, Casper College Greenhouse - Killdeer, Jim Lawrence - Rufous Humming-

bird, Gloria Lawrence - Red-breasted Nuthatch, Bruce Walgren - Black-capped Chickadee, Donna Walgren - Common Nighthawk; **Dubois:** Anna Moscicki - Rufous Hummingbird; **Lance Creek:** JP Cavigelli - Upland Sandpiper; **Lovell:** Glen Olsen - Rufous Hummingbird.

Thanks to all who helped with the Yard Bird Project in July!! Fall migration is underway!!! We never know what species are going to show up where!! When it comes to birds, we all love surprises! Send your yard bird selection to Donna Walgren (ph. 234-7455), 4311 S. Center St., Casper, WY 82601, or email to Pi-ranga@bresnan.net.

DONNA WALGREN

LONG RANGE FINANCIAL PLAN FINALIZED

As many of you already know, Murie Audubon Society went through a Strategic Planning exercise a couple of years ago. During this process it became obvious that a major component to any Strategic Plan is how the ongoing operations of the chapter should be financed. At the September 12, 2006 Board of Directors meeting, a financial planning committee was created. The objective of the committee was to review past board meeting documents (minutes and treasurer's reports) to determine if restricted money existed within Murie Audubon's treasury and in what amount. In particular, it was necessary to find out how much money exists in the frequently (and loosely referenced) Sanctuary Fund. The committee was also asked to review other accounting practices of the Chapter.

The Committee found that the Steve Lund Fund was held and spent as directed – it was used to make a \$6,000 pay-

ment as start-up money for Audubon Wyoming and the Audubon Center at Garden Creek. A later expenditure of \$24,152 was made to supplement the fund-raising and donations made to Murie to build the Layton Flight Barn. The Committee could find no other restrictions for money that now exists in the checking, savings, or CD's held by Murie.

The Committee then reviewed the possible alternatives for handling Murie's funds and recommended that the Murie Audubon Society establish an endowment fund in the initial amount of \$50,000. The Wyoming Community Foundation was selected to hold the endowment (the Committee had met with the Foundation on May 4, 2007). Murie could withdraw a portion of the income each year, beginning 18 months after the endowment is established. Additional money can be added to the account at any time. It was noted that Murie Audubon will have no control over the investments

made by the Foundation. Money in the endowment account could revert to Audubon Wyoming if the Murie Audubon Society ceases to exist. The Committee also recommended that Murie maintain a cash reserve equal to one year's operating expenses. All future unrestricted bequests and memorials will be placed in the endowment.

I would like to thank all of the Murie Audubon Society members and friends for their past financial support. Without your continued support, we would not have been able to set up this endowment that will help ensure the financial health of Murie Audubon. I would specifically like to thank the following board members for their work on the Finance Committee: Bob Yonts (chair), Jim Brown, Laurie Longtine, Chris Michelson, and Bart Rea.

BRUCE WALGREN, PRESIDENT-MURIE AUDUBON SOCIETY

BLACKBIRD BAITING

Tuesday, August 14, 2007

Federal wildlife officials have a new plan to deal with blackbirds that feast on farmers' sunflower fields -- and it may involve poisoned bait.

The federal Wildlife Services agency says the blackbird baiting project will start this month (August) in areas near Jamestown and Devils Lake.

Wildlife biologist George Linz says it will use cages filled with captured blackbirds to lure other birds. Trays of brown rice will be placed on top of the cages. They'll be positioned away from sunflower fields. Linz says the bait will be surrounded by a wire mesh designed to keep out "nontarget" birds such as pheasants and doves.

The bait won't be poisoned at first. But he says if the plan works -- the bait will be treated with a poison. Linz says some 70 million blackbirds come through the Northern Plains each year, including about 6 million that stop in North Dakota -- which leads the nation in sunflower production. The National Audubon Society doesn't like the idea of poisoning blackbirds. State director Genevieve Thompson says the group worries

(Continued on page 4)

(Blackbird Baiting Continued from page 3)

about other birds being killed. She says some bird species in the state are already in decline and the poisoning could reduce their numbers even more.

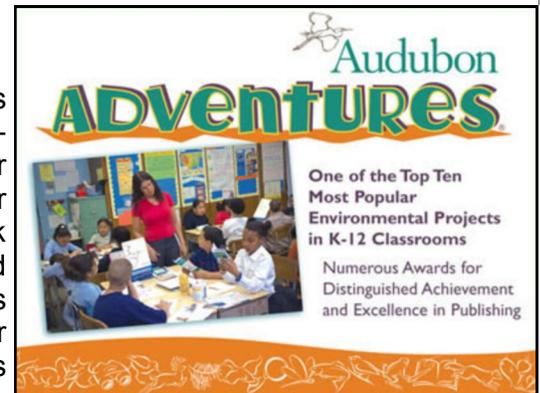
September's general meeting's "good eatin'" provided by Carolyn Logan and Dinah Utah. If you would like to bring baked items to the meetings, Betty Krause will have a sign up sheet at the meeting or you can call her at 237-2392.

NEWSLETTER FOLDERS - If you would like to help fold Murie's newsletters, give me a call - Rose-Mary (577-0568). It usually takes about an hour, we catch each other up on what birds we are seeing, and as my mother would say, "Many hands, makes light work!"

PRINTER INK CARTRIDGES - REMEMBER to bring your used printer ink cartridges to the September meeting for recycling.

AUDUBON ADVENTURES

Here we go once again!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! It's Audubon Adventures time. We have thirty-three classrooms enrolled. I will begin calling the teachers who did not respond last spring in the very near future. Two people have sponsored a class for this year (Whitney Bradley and June Calmes). Chris Michelson and I work together. If you will send your donations to me, I will record those for my records and pass them on to Chris. This saves us double postage. As far as I know, the cost remains at \$45.65 per classroom. My address is 1600 Linda Vista Dr. 82609. Thanks for your continued support. **ANN HINES**



ANNUAL SUMMER PICNIC

Our third annual picnic, held on August 1st at the Centennial Shelter at Edness Kimball Wilkins State Park, was well attended. Approximately 50 people gathered to enjoy the food, conversation and camaraderie. Thanks go to Superintendent Rick Anderson and the park for allowing us to use the shelter at no cost. Thanks, also, to Ann Hines and Gloria Lawrence for once again organizing the event. Jim and Gloria Lawrence provided all the fried chicken we could eat and Ann and Wil Hines topped off the meal with homemade peach pie. Thank you all for coming and we're already looking forward to next year's picnic during the first week of August. Hope to see you there.

GLORIA LAWRENCE AND ANN HINES, CHAIRS



Audubon WYOMING

It was quite a successful summer at the Audubon Center at Garden Creek, and I thank all of you who made us a part of your busy summer schedules.

One highlight of the summer at ACGC was Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) Bird Banding. This year 30 species of birds were processed at the site including highlights such as American Redstart, Lazuli Bunting, and Indigo Bunting. The most abundant species handled appeared to be Black-headed Grosbeaks, Gray Catbirds, House Wrens, and Yellow Warblers. MAPS is a huge commitment of time and money, and like all of the activities at ACGC, it is partners like you that help make things happen.

Audubon offered two exciting camp opportunities for the youth of Casper this summer. In June, ACGC teamed up

with the Science Zone, the NIC, and the Izaak Walton League to offer Museum Adventure Quest Camp. Two dozen students were able to combine learning with fun in this week long adventure. In addition, thanks to a generous grant from Wild Birds Unlimited, ACGC hosted a Junior Bird Academy in Casper in August. Over two days youth were able to connect with nature, partake in craft projects, and make enough memories to last a lifetime.

Thanks to one very dedicated Lisa Fujita, the ACGC grounds received a facelift this summer. Lisa obtained donations from Galles Greenhouse, Johnny Appleseed Inc., and the City of Casper and has nearly single-handedly transformed the Audubon Center landscape. Marisue Marsh has also been a valuable asset to this project.

If you haven't been out to

ACGC in a while, stop by for a visit. Migration seems to be happening, so come on out and join us from Brownbag Birding Thursdays throughout the fall. For information on events or ways to get more involved, please contact Audubon Wyoming's Community Naturalist Ken Keffer at 307-473-1987 or kkeffer@audubon.org.

About Audubon Wyoming

Audubon Wyoming was opened in 1998 as a state office of the National Audubon Society. Our mission is to be a strong unified voice for an ethic of conservation in Wyoming focusing on birds, other wildlife and their habitats, for the benefit of present and future generations. We carry out this mission through education and conservation programs across the state.

KEN KEFFER

UP-COMING GENERAL MEETING SPEAKERS

Oct 19, 2007 From Black Gold to the Black Oystercatcher: Challenges and Opportunities in Alaska presented by Taldi Walter, Alaska Field Coordinator, National Audubon Society (this is the 3rd Friday in October - Ms Walter is presenting to Cheyenne and Scottsbluff this same week)

Nov 9, 2007 Hat Six Sage Grouse presented by Justin Binfit, Wyoming Game and Fish Department Biologist

(Garden Make-over Continued from page 6)

come a focal point for the center. A greeting to visitors coming to walk the trails, see the birds or learn about the conservation efforts of Audubon

Wyoming. Hopefully, it will help increase people's participation and offer a place to hang out and watch the birds - and the deer.

The garden has already increased Keffer's apprecia-

tion of the area.

"See," Keffer said, pointing out a white spot on the mountain ash Fujita planted as the center of her garden. "This is bird poo. You've got nature right there."

GARDEN MAKE-OVER

(By KRISTY GRAY Star-Tribune staff writer)

(Ed.'s note - This article was in the CST, Tuesday August 7, 2007. Murie Audubon salutes Lisa Fujita and the labor of love she has performed at Audubon Center at Garden Creek. She needs help, though, to finish the project. Please call Ken - 473-1987 - to volunteer your time!)

She's a solitary creature. But lately, at the Audubon Center at Garden Creek, she's easier to spot than the broad-tailed hummingbird or even the black-headed grosbeak.

Look for her digging in the dirt at the center's entrance. Listen to her call -- Pearl Jam or Mary J. Blige blasting through the speakers of her XM Radio. Watch for her victory dance, performed after the last of the landscaping sheets have been laid, ready for the mulch.

Lisa Fujita -- mother, volunteer and novice landscaper -- works alone in the wilderness here, reviving a long neglected garden at the entrance of the Audubon Center.

But she'd like a little help.

"I need some strong backs or someone with a Bobcat to bring some nice big boulders," she said. Fujita adopted this garden on, well, a lark.

Her family was looking for something to do outside. They attended a bird banding at the Audubon Center and fell in love with the wildness of the place, just a mile from the Sunrise Shopping Center. The Fujita children -- Sam, 6, and Julien, 8 -- talked up the center after visiting it on school field trips.

On her first visit, Fujita noticed a wooden fence that seemed to corral nothing at all. The patch of ground was overgrown with tall grass, weeds, unidentifiable bushes and sage brush.

Ken Keffer, community naturalist, told her the area used to be the garden, but it hadn't been maintained in several years.

Fujita volunteered to landscape the area.

Keffer took her up on the offer.

"I think this is phenomenal," Keffer said. "Lisa came along and turned it into a nice little habitat."

Over the last month, Fujita has spent many of her days there -- cutting walking paths through the weeds, piling great mounds of dirt, laying dozens of rocks and shoveling heaps of mulch. She, Keffer and part time Audubon assistant Larry Keffer planted 13 trees and shrubs in one day. Fujita collected dozens of rustic logs to place throughout the center grounds.

"I think it's incredible that a person would volunteer to commit so much energy, and time, to create a beautiful space that others will enjoy," said Marisue Marsh, a neighbor to the Audubon Center. She can often hear Fujita's music when Fujita is outside working.

"She has probably spent hundreds of hours at this, in the heat," Marsh said.

Many of the materials have been donated: The City of

Casper donated the mulch and the dirt, Galles Greenhouse donated the trees and shrubs and Johnny Appleseed, Inc., donated the perennial flowers. Besides her own plants, Marsh has donated advice on dissuading the deer from treating the garden as their personal salad bar.

Fujita welcomes the tips.

"My nemeses are the deer. They are killing me," she said during a recent walk through the garden, still a work in progress. She pulled at a few twigs jutting from the ground. It used to be a lilac. Sometime during that very night, the deer ate her ruby bells.

Keffer, always the naturalist, offered this comfort: "You've created a good habitat for them."

He wandered to a bench placed in the garden over a year ago. But before Fujita's efforts, it was covered by shaggy weeds and brush. He's noticed only two other people who have sat there.

"Have you actually sat here and admired your work?" he asked.

"I've just sat here for two minutes and thought, 'Yeah. This is really coming together.'"

The garden will be an on-going project -- just like Fujita's own yard. She's a stay-at-home mom and digging in the dirt is a hobby. Her gardening philosophy: "Just stick it in the ground. If it grows, I put more of that in. If it dies, I dig it out."

So the plants that don't make it through this season will be replaced in the spring by others. (Maybe some the deer don't find quite so delicious.)

Eventually, the garden will be-

(Continued on page 5)