

MURIE AUDUBON'S  
PLAINS & PEAKS

APRIL 2024 | VOL. 58 ISSUE 3

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WILL ROBINSON'S  
*Protecting Thailand's  
Migrating Giant  
Honey Bees*

Join us at  
thezaak Walton  
Clubhouse!

April 11, 2024 at 7 p.m.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**April General Meeting** Apr 11  
"Protecting Thailand's Migrating Giant  
Honey Bees."

**Bird ID Class** Apr 16

**Mindful Birding** May 18

**SPECIAL FEATURES**

**About Murie's Board Members**

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## FIELD NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT



Hello!

Happy Spring, everyone! I've been really enjoying the "dawn chorus" this year. I've been really interested in what forces play into when an organism migrates and how do we support these migrating populations in a changing environment. This is one of the reasons I'm really excited about planting native species at EKW State Park. This area has been recognized as important resting habitat for birds.

As for Murie's work, we're continuing to work through our many spring projects. This is just a reminder that we are offering tons of field trips, a bird count study, bird walks, bird ID classes, and our monthly programs.

We're so excited to promote such a wide range of activities and ways to get involved. I would love to challenge each one of us to try something new and invite a friend.

We're so looking forward to seeing you and your friends at these events!

**Jenny Edwards**

## APRIL BIRD CHALLENGE

These birds are fairly rare, but make their main debut in Natrona County in April (according to the last 10 years of data collected by eBird). This list is challenging. See if you can find them during the month of April.

- Wood Duck
- Sandhill Crane
- Wilson's Snipe
- Swainson's Hawk
- Burrowing Owl
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet
- Marsh Wren
- Chipping Sparrow
- Vesper's Sparrow
- Yellow-headed blackbird

Good luck! Can't wait to see pictures and reports of your birds!

Data compiled from eBird.

## KIDS CORNER



*Another Eclipse*

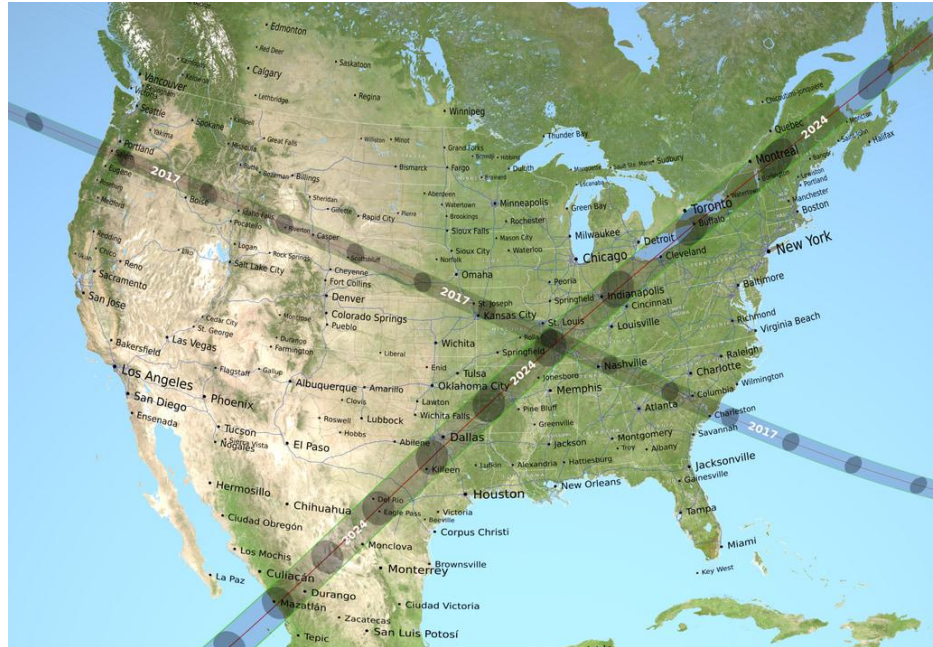
*"The sun is 400 times bigger than the moon, but it is also 400 times farther away from us—a glorious cosmic coincidence that has the moon precisely covering the sun's face when the two align. The result is a total solar eclipse" (Katie Peek, Scientific American, Mar 2024).*

On April 8<sup>th</sup> there will be a solar eclipse crossing North America. And, in certain areas of the United States people will be able to see a *total* solar eclipse where the moon will completely cover the sun, and darkness will appear during the day! Remember the solar eclipse of August 2017? Casper was able to witness a total eclipse because we were in the path of totality, so maybe you've already witnessed this unique event.

## KIDS CORNER Continued

However, scientist have predicted this year's eclipse to be a bit different than the last one. For example, in April this year the moon will be closer to the sun compared to its position relative to the sun in August of 2017, which is expected to create a wider path, and longer period, of totality this time. As a result, even though Casper is not in the path of totality, folks in our area should be able to see at least a partial solar eclipse starting around 11:30 AM and ending around 2 PM. Be sure to wear proper eye protection while observing!

**Kelly Keenan**



<https://science.nasa.gov/solar-system/skywatching/how-is-the-2024-total-solar-eclipse-different-than-the-2017-eclipse/>

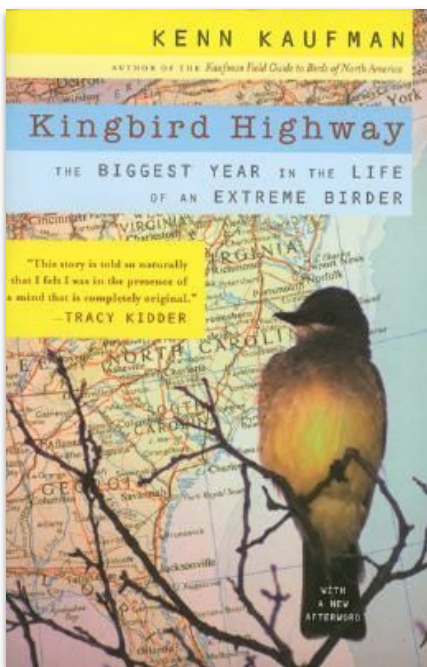
## BOOK CLUB

***Kingbird Highway: The Biggest Year in the Life of an Extreme Birder***

**Kenn Kaufman**

**\*\*\*\*\* 5 Stars Recommended**

This month's Book Club pick is on my to be read shelf. I'm excited about this author (who also writes one of my favorite field guides) telling the story of his big year when he dropped out of high school in the 70s. I'm interested in the story of birding, but also the coming of age, and his ability to seek deeper connections. I can't wait for summer reading with this memoir!





## MURIE AUDUBON PRESENTS

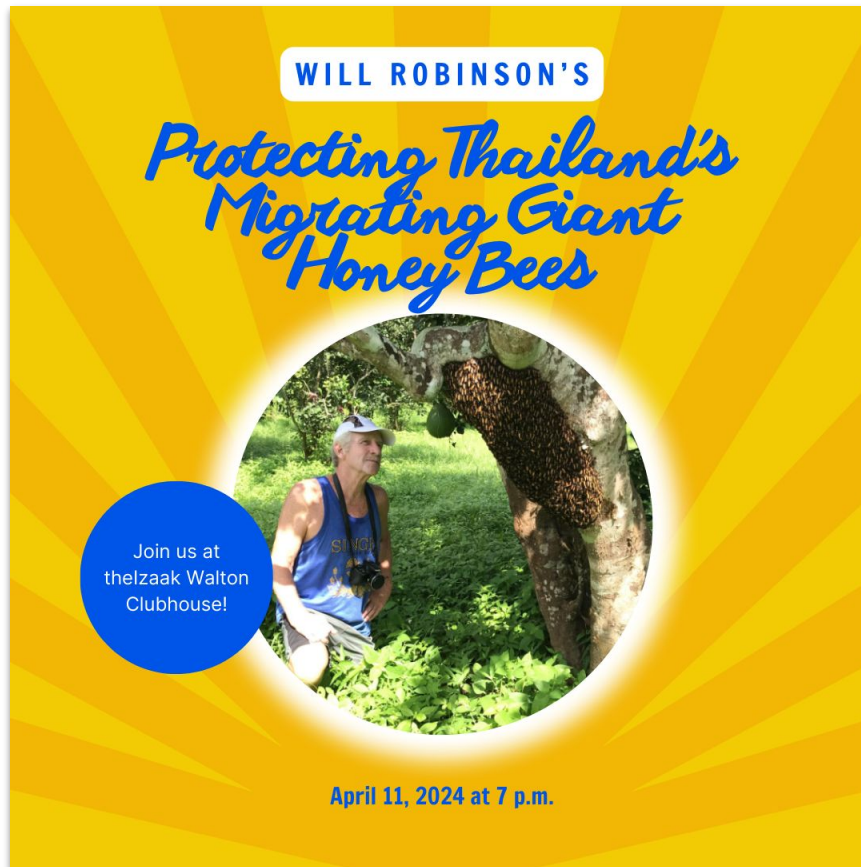


Photo by Maria Katherman

It's fitting that during our spring bird migration, Will Robinson will be our guest speaker to inform us about the migration of the giant honey bees (*Apis dorsata*) in Thailand. And just like the ungulates and birds more familiar to us here, the honey bees travel the same route each year, following the food sources as they become available across the land.

What started as a sabbatical for Robinson, has turned into four trips, in 2009, 2010, 2016, and 2023. On the latest trip that ended in December of 2023, Robinson and his wife, Maria Katherman, were working with the World Wildlife Fund to protect the migratory bee stopover site he identified on their first trip. On his original trip, Robinson soon found that what appeared to be large hives were in fact large clumps of bees hanging from trees as "bivouacs" while they rested during migration. And just as Wyoming has learned the importance of preserving migratory routes for mule deer, he feels the same approach should be applied to bees.

Similar to the experience many of us have had observing the Sandhill Cranes or large flocks of geese, Robinson shared that "It's absolutely incredible to have an entire group of 50,000 bees fly right over your head. The adrenaline rush is like nothing I've ever experienced. It is soul stirring."

Robinson's presentations are always excellent, and we hope that you may join us for this free talk on April 11, 2024 at 7 p.m., at the Izaak Walton Clubhouse, at 4205 Fort Caspar Road.

**Bruce Walgren**

## ABOUT MURIE'S BOARD MEMBERS



Pictured Left to Right  
Luis Alza, Kelly Keenan, Stacey Scott, Kristie Brown, Laurie Rigg, Larry Keffer, Jenny Edwards, Bart Rea, Zach Hutchinson  
Not Pictured: Dylan Hicks, Jacob Mills

### APRIL'S ALL ABOUT...

**Name:** Luis "gato" Alza

**Favorite Bird(s):** Peruvian diving-petrel, torrent duck, Peruvian thick-knee, and English sparrow

**Career:** A passionate biologist with extensive experience in field ecology, currently working at Casper College

**Hobbies/Interests:** Traveling, Brazilian jiu-jitsu, chess, observant naturalist, cooking

**Favorite Murie work:** Christmas Bird Counts, Teaching the MAS Bird ID classes

**Contact:** [luis.alzaleon@caspercollege.edu](mailto:luis.alzaleon@caspercollege.edu)

Come check out **Luis** and **Stacey's bird ID classes starting April 16th**, 6:30 PM at the Werner Wildlife Museum

## UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

If you have questions, please call Stacey Scott at 307-262-0055, I will post field trips and any changes under "Events" on the website, [murieaudubon.org](http://murieaudubon.org). Also, I am looking for more ideas for field trips. Let me know if you have any ideas. Some people have suggested a trip to Texas or Arizona or a trip to Central America. If enough people are interested, I can look into that kind of trip.

**Saturday, April 13** - Meet at 9:00 at the Game and Fish Parking Lot for a trip to Goldeneye and the area around the 33 Mile Rd. There should be early ducks on Goldeneye, and we should be able to find Sandhill Cranes on the hay fields. We should be back by noon.

**April and early May** - I am **monitoring several Sage-grouse leks** to count the strutting birds, and would like company. I cannot plan very many days in advance because I need dry, passable roads. Some of the leks are near Bates Creek Reservoir, and we won't get back from those trips until nearer noon. The ones on the Two-Bar Ranch winter pastures are much closer, and I will get back from those about 8:00 AM. Anyone interested ought to call me at 307-262-0055.

**May** - Every Tuesday in May we will meet at 8:00 AM at the Platte River shelter at EKW for a walk around the park. This should cover the migration and the transition to the nesting birds.

**Saturday, May 11** - Walk around EKW. We will meet near the Platte River Shelter at 8:00 AM. If the birding is good it might take us a couple of hours.

I would love to go birding in Goshen Hole, anyone interested should call me and we will set a time to go see some interesting migrants.

**Saturday, May 18 and Saturday, June 22 - Mindfulness Birding at EKW:** We'll begin with a guided walk, framing birding as a form of nature-focused meditation. Then, we'll integrate mindful exercises designed to enrich our connection with the environment, with birds serving as the conduit for introspection.

Saturday, May 18 - Cheyenne Big Day

Memorial Day, Monday, May 27 - Little Red Creek

June 3 & 4 - Survey birds on Garden Creek then a similar survey on Mathison Creek

Saturday, June 15 - Wild flowers with Joanne Theobald at Rotary Park

Saturday, July 13 - I need suggestions on a good place to go birding

Thursday, Aug 8 - Picnic at EKW

Monday, Labor Day, Sept 2 - Birding at EKW before the crowds.

Saturday, Sept. 14 - Goldeneye

Saturday Oct 12 - Reshaw Park

Saturday, Nov 16 - Casper Mountain

Saturday, Dec 14 - Casper Christmas Bird Count

Wednesday, Jan 1, 2025 - Bates Hole Christmas Bird Count



## MINDFULNESS BIRDING



Mindful birding is an approach to birdwatching that focuses on being fully present and engaged in the activity, with a heightened awareness of the natural world and oneself. It combines the principles of mindfulness with the hobby of birdwatching, creating a deeper and more meaningful connection with nature.

At its core, mindfulness involves paying attention to the present moment without judgment. In the context of birding, this means being fully immersed in the experience of observing birds, noticing their behavior, movements, and the environment around them without getting distracted or lost in thought.

Consider practicing mindful birding with us on Saturday, May 18 and Saturday, June 22 at EKW. Times will be posted.

## BIRD IDENTIFICATION CLASS

Starting April 16, we will meet at the Werner Wildlife Museum every Tuesday at 6:30 PM for 5 weeks, with a field trip every Saturday. This class is for everyone from beginners to much more advanced birders. Come join us!

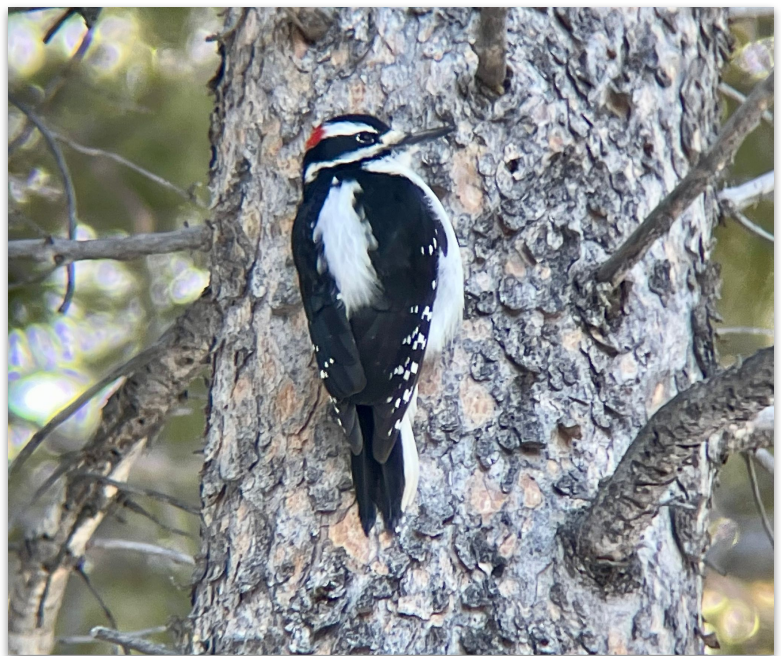


Photo Luis Alza; Downy woodpecker observed during the Christmas bird count at Casper mountain, December 2023.

## MAS VISION STATEMENT

The vision of Murie Audubon Society is to instill a passion for nature in present and future generations through awareness, enjoyment, understanding, appreciation, conservation, and advocacy.

## MAS MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Murie Audubon Society is to promote the conservation of birds and other wildlife through education and enhancement of natural habitats, understanding, appreciation, conservation, and advocacy.

## OPEN POSITIONS

We have a couple of Murie Audubon Society Chapter open volunteer positions for your consideration.

- Membership Chair – This position requires some knowledge of working with spreadsheets and working with other Board Members to update our membership database, recruit new members, and other duties related to membership.
- Webmaster/IT Manager – This position requires knowledge of WordPress and cPanel, updating and managing our website.

Experience desired, but not necessary. We can train you if you are interested and have a computer with Internet access. If interested, please send an email to [murie@murieaudubon.org](mailto:murie@murieaudubon.org)

These are volunteer positions only.

**Harry**

## RENEW OR BECOME A REGULAR MEMBER OF MURIE AUDUBON FOR ONLY \$10



Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\$10 One Year  \$20 Two Years  \$30 Three Years or electronic payment on our website.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ (Not shared with anyone – honest!)

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ (Again, not shared with anyone)

Please check:  I want the Plains & Peaks newsletter delivered to the above address.

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