

CAT PRINTS



Wildcat Audubon Society - Serving the Nebraska Panhandle

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Estes Park ABA Young Birder's Camp Experiences by Luke Hamilton

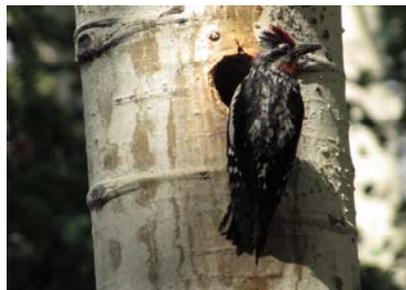
On July 8th, twenty-three campers and leaders from across North America descended upon the YMCA of the Rockies near Estes Park, CO for the American Birding Association's 2012 Camp Colorado for young birders. Thanks to scholarships from the Wildcat Audubon Society and the ABA, I was one of them. The first afternoon was spent getting acquainted with everyone while leisurely birding around the YMCA grounds.

Broad-tailed Hummingbirds and Violet-green Swallows, both gorgeous birds and both lifers for many of us, seemed to be everywhere; we were off to a great start! The first



White-tailed Ptarmigan by Luke Hamilton

full day was spent in the classic "montane" habitat, characterized by ponderosa pine/ aspen forests and elevations of around 9,000 feet. Our list for the day was laden with stellar species such as Williamson's Sapsucker, MacGillivray's Warbler, and Rufous Hummingbird. We also found nesting Red-naped Sapsuckers and Broad-tailed Hummingbirds and all three of the expected flycatchers: Cordilleran, Hammond's and Dusky. The afternoon brought an in-depth class on bird trip leading



Williamson's Sapsucker by Luke Hamilton

from all of the leaders. The evening workshop on photography and digiscoping was given by widely-praised bird photographer and Nikon ProStaff Birder Bill Schmoker and Leica Optics representative Cameron Cox. We arose dark-and-early the next morning for our trip to Pawnee National Grasslands, a very "Nebraskan" habitat. Seeing many of the others go head-over-heals for Ferruginous Hawks, Mountain Plovers, McCown's Longspurs, Rock Wrens, Burrowing Owls, Western Meadowlarks, and even Horned Larks brought an interesting emotion, a kind of pride almost, in showcasing to others our "home birds."

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<http://www.wyoneb.net/-delara/WildcatAudubon.htm>

Kenitz Corner By Alice Kenitz

Hummingbirds seem to be the birds of the summer!!!! There have been 5 species in Scotts Bluff County since early May. We normally have visits from Rufous, Broad-tailed, and Calliope. These three are post-breeding wanderers which usually begin visiting western Nebraska in July and may hang around until September. This year, however, there have been visits from Ruby-throated Hummingbirds which normally are found farther east and do nest in eastern Nebraska.

The biggest surprise was the Black-chinned Hummingbird that visited Jane's Greenhouse just west of Scottsbluff for a few days in early May. What a great place to see a hummer!!!!!! The Black-chinned is normally found south of here. Marie Smith was able to get some beautiful photos of this bird. As far as I know, this is the first time a Black-chinned Hummingbird has ever been photographed in Nebraska.



Black-chinned Hummingbird by Marie Smith

The Ospreys that nested just across the river from Riverview Golf Course hatched at least two chicks. A few days later a bad hail storm went through the area and it appears that the chicks did not survive more than a few days. The situation is a little unclear. There was a young Osprey observed in early August in the Winters' Creek Lake area. It is unknown whether this bird came from one of the nest platforms in that area. It will soon be time for the fall and winter birds to arrive, so keep your eyes open!!!

Luke Hamilton

Continued from the front page:

The next day featured a trip to the "alpine" habitat above the tree line at 10,000+ feet. Unquestionably, the birds of the day were a

pair of White-tailed Ptarmigan that sat less than two hundred yards away from us as we snapped photos and had absolutely dazzling looks at them for over forty-five minutes. They were two of the most "polite" birds I've ever seen!! Other great views, apart from the breathtaking scenery, were Cassin's Finch and Clark's Nutcracker. After lunch back at the YMCA, the leaders came up with a very creative way for us to practice the trip-leading skills that we learned two days before. Campers took turns being "leader," and we were to see how many species we could check off. The catch? Before a species could be counted, all twenty people in the group had to get a good look at it! It was a surprisingly challenging exercise! Later that afternoon, we visited Scott Rashid's banding station. Mr. Rashid is one of the few banders in the nation licensed to band hummingbirds, an incredibly intricate process that was joy to watch. The evening workshop was a fascinating presentation on the monumental advancements that have been made in bird conservation over the past four decades given by Camp Director Bill Stewart. The last full day was a trip to Phantom Canyon, a Nature Conservancy preserve in north-central Colorado. Green-tailed Towhees abounded, along with sightings of Canyon Wren, American Dipper, Golden Eagle, and Virginia's Warbler. Lunch included a round table discussion on careers in ornithology with ABA president Jeff Gordon, ABA adjutant Liz Gordon, *Birding* editor Ted Floyd Ph.d., ABA director Charles Bell, and the camp staff.

The ending "tally rally" that evening yielded an impressive 129 species for the week, of which I saw/heard around 100. However, the final morning held one more surprise. Between farewells, a small group walked over to the banding station feeders. A handsome male Lesser Goldfinch popped up as we were sitting there, the last of the sixteen lifer species I got during the week. What a spectacular way to end! Without a doubt, Camp Colorado 2012 was the greatest birding experience I have had yet! Thanks to all the members of the WAS who made it possible!

From Marie Smith

Thoughts on the Hummingbirds

They dance about like ballerinas to a tune only they hear. They so captivate all who see their explosion of motion, zipping from flower to flower or feeder to feeder. What can they be but the majestic and beautiful hummingbird. This has been the year of countless sightings of the tiny dancers.

The first sighting came unusually early. On the 7Th of May after receiving a call from Kathy De Lara about a sighting of a Black-chinned Hummingbird, I found myself at Jane's Green House, camera in hand ready to capture the little bird the only way I could. The Black-chinned Hummingbird flitted from flower to flower with wild abandon the sole customer in a free gourmet buffet. Although the little bird was a bit nervous, I was still able to take many pictures of it. Beautiful!



Black-chinned Hummingbird by Marie Smith

Since that first sighting of the year, we have had the privilege of having at least two other species at our feeders; the Broad-tailed and the Rufous Hummingbirds. The hummingbirds although minute in size are aggressive and territorial; fighting one another for dominance. We go hours without seeing the hummers, but when one arrives you can almost bet that number two won't be far behind, ready to do battle for the right to the feeders, flowers or both.

It has been eight weeks since our first regular sightings of our tiny dancers (apart from the black-chinned hummingbird). Normally we only see them at the end of August and then only for a week. The drought and the fires have kept them here longer than normal, so we know that it is only a matter of time before they will vanish again for another year.

The beauty of the hummingbird is they know you are watching them, but they aren't flamboyant. They do their thing and if you happen to be lucky enough to see them, you win!



Rufous Hummingbird by Marie Smith

A New Nebraska Bird — Black-chinned Hummingbird

On the morning of May 7th I was checking Facebook and saw a post on Jane's Greenhouse wall about a hummingbird that was in one of their greenhouses. Since it was an unusual time of year to be seeing a hummer in this area I headed right over to confirm the sighting. Fully expecting to see a Broad-tailed Hummingbird I went inside to see if it was still there, not even taking the spare set of binoculars that I had in the car. One of the ladies at Jane's said it was in the first greenhouse. I went in and saw the little hummer flitting around having a breakfast of nectar from the flowers in the hanging baskets that were for sale. There was only a couple of customers in the greenhouse and the little bird didn't seem bothered by us at all. I watched it for a few seconds when I started thinking that it wasn't a Broad-tailed after all. As I watched it fly back and forth, sometimes only a few feet away I was beginning to wonder just what I was looking at. So, out to the car to get the binoculars and wishing that I had my good ones with me. When the bird would sit still long enough for me to look at it, which was only for a second or two, I decided that it was probably a female Ruby-throated Hummingbird, and yet, didn't seem right. I wasn't really sure what to look for to id it since it had been a while since I had seen one, so back out to the car for my trusty Sibley's Guide to Birds. I told the ladies in the front that it might be a Ruby-throated or maybe even a Black-chinned but I had to see what to look for and showed them the book. Tail slightly shorter, head slightly grayer, slightly longer, de-curved bill, wings wider, more rounded at tip and curved, and it pumps it tail. I think the bird in the greenhouse was doing just that. So back into the greenhouse to observe the bird some more. It did flick it's tail off and on, not nearly as often as I imagined a Black-chinned would do, but I really didn't know for sure. Now I'm thinking that it just might be a Black-chinned and I really needed a picture for a positive id. I tell the ladies about my id, which would be quite rare for Nebraska, and that more people might be coming to see it but I wanted to get a picture. They said they had called Rick Meyer to come over but hadn't heard back from him. I get back in my car and get to the end of their driveway and stop. Do I go home and get my camera? ..Really should get back to work... I could get the camera at work, but the picture probably wouldn't be good enough to id it....hummm.. I wonder what Marie Smith is doing right now?... Lucky for me she had called about the Snowy Owls earlier in the year and I had her phone number. I called and asked if she was available and would have time to come over to Jane's and photograph the hummer so we could be positive of the id. She had an errand to finish and said she would go home and get her camera and head over to Jane's. I knew if the bird was still there she would get some good pictures so waited to hear back from her. When I got back to work I posted the possible sighting on NEBirds and waited for the pictures. Marie called and said after looking at the pictures she was sure it was a Black-chinned. After work I stopped by and picked up the photo CD from Marie with dozens of pictures she had taken but didn't get a chance to look at them until later in the evening.

After seeing the pictures I was pretty sure it was a Black-chinned but still emailed a few of the pictures to Ross Silcock and Mark Broggie (head of Nebraska Birds Records Committee) for confirmation and status. I thought that there was at least one other confirmed sighting of a Black-chinned Hummingbird in Nebraska, but no! This is the first and we have great photos too. How exciting! The next day I stopped by to check on the bird again during my lunch break. The little hummer was still there, but more stressed and there were a lot more people in the greenhouses shopping. I figured it would be leaving the greenhouse soon and later in the afternoon I called and they said it had left. Besides Marie and myself I don't believe any other birders saw this bird, but it was enjoyed by Jane's staff and many customers. This bird, along with Marie's pictures, will be featured in the Nebraska Birds Review, so those of you who are NOU members watch for it in the next issue.

We also had an adult male Ruby-throated Hummingbird in our yard on May 29. They are typically eastern birds and hadn't been reported much this far west until a few years ago. A female was here when we returned from vacation on June 10th plus sightings off and on all summer. There has also been an unusually large number of Calliope Hummingbirds seen this year. We have had at least 5 different ones in our yard, the first one showing up early, on July 1st, (previous early date for our yard is July 14) and a beautiful adult male on July 29, first one I have ever seen here. I have had reports of them all over the panhandle in July and August along with numerous sightings of Broad-tailed and Rufous Hummingbirds. On August 11th & 12th we had all four species in our yard and at least 8 different birds. There are still several in our yard today, August 23rd.

We have previously had hummingbird through September and even a couple into October so keep watching for and enjoying them this fall.

By Kathy DeLara

Calendar of Fall/Winter Events 2012

September 8th

Breakfast at Wind Springs Ranch

Meet at RCI, 27th & Ave I, at 8am. We will car-pool to Dave and Helen Hughson's ranch in Sioux County for breakfast and birding.

September 15th

-Wildcat Hills Nature Center Event- Bird Banding Open House

Banding will begin at sunrise (around 7am). Quitting time depends on bird captures but will be no later than noon. There may be other activities so watch the paper or call for more information. Free and open to the public. Park permit is required.

September 15th

General Meeting and Program

September 22nd

Regional West Medical Center South Plaza Meeting Room at 7:30 pm.

Jerry Kaes will have a presentation on "Birds in my Georgia Back Yard"

September 22nd

Scotts Bluff County Fall Bird Count

Meet at Arby's at 8am, we should be back in town around 1pm and may go out after lunch to continue the count.

October 13th

Fall Crane and Waterfowl Field Trip to local lakes and ponds. Meet at Arby's at 8am, we should be back by 1:00

For additional field trip or meeting information contact Kathy DeLara 308-631-2792, renosmom@charter.net or Alice Kenitz, 308-436-2959, akenitz@prairieweb.com

October 20th

General Meeting and Program

Regional West Medical Center South Plaza meeting room at 7:30 pm.

Maggie Vinson will have a program on How birds react to stressful nesting situations: A look at how two endangered bird species react to military training operations on their nesting grounds. She will talk about her work on the Ft. Hood Army Base studying stress hormone responses in Golden-Cheeked Warblers, Black-Capped Vireos, and White-Eyed Vireos.

November 17th

General Meeting and Program

Regional West Medical Center South Plaza meeting room at 7:30 pm.

Luke Hamilton will give a program on his experiences at the ABA Young Birders Camp in Estes Park this past summer. From the myriad of habitats visited to the stellar team of camp staff to the stunning beauty of the Rockies and, of course, the fantastic birds, it was marvelous experience from start to finish. He will retrace his steps throughout the week, and show some of the photos he snapped along the way.

December 15th

Scottsbluff Christmas Bird Count

Meet at Arby's at 6:30am, this will be an all day count. You can help for any length of time you are available. Feeder watchers are also needed within the count circle. We will meet back at Arby's for lunch. For more information call Alice Kenitz, coordinator, at 436-2959

GREEN TIP

CFL Recycling

CFLs, those curled light bulbs, are much more energy efficient than their incandescent counterparts and last up to 12 times longer. However, they contain an average of 4 milligrams of mercury and qualify as a hazardous waste like oil-based paint and motor oil. Our local Home Depot offers to recycle them by furnishing a box at the front of the store where they can be dropped off. Keep mercury out of our environment by recycling your CFLs at Home Depot!

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