



## Wild Bird Center of Boulder

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# Boulder Backyards

Your Backyard Bird Feeding and Bird Watching Experts

June 2008

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## Wild Bird Center Saturday Walks:

Every Saturday year-round. From 7:30 am (promptly) to 9:45 am (approximately) Every last Saturday of the month we travel further afield than normal and return a little later.



## Xcel Energy Bird Cams

Spring is in the air and our raptors have already started nest selection, construction, and even egg laying. One fun way to participate in the lives of these raptors is viewing Xcel Energy's Web Cams <http://birdcam.xcelenergy.com>.

One of the cameras is in the great horned owl nest box located on the smoke stack of the Valmont Power Plant. Another camera shows the bald eagle nest at the Platteville Plant. Bookmark these cameras and check in on birds this spring.

## \$10 Off Any Massarelli Cement Bath

As summer heats up don't forget the birds. Give them a place to cool off and get a drink -- their very own bird bath. The Wild Bird Center just received a shipment of beautiful cement baths.

Mention CODE WBC0619. Call (303) 442-1322 or bring in to redeem. Some restrictions may apply. Not valid in combination with other promotions. Expiration date: 7/18/08.



## Flutes of the Field By Scott Severs



The West is blessed with a wealth of natural treasures: the high snow-capped Rockies contrasting with the golden prairies, clear starry skies, and an abundance of marvelous wildlife. The West is also the home of one of the best songsters in the world, yet we often take this prairie crooner for granted. Of course, I'm referring to the Western Meadowlark, the master singer of a worthy pasture, Open Space parcel, or grassland along the Front Range.

The Western Meadowlark was so overlooked by early ornithologists that John James Audubon gave it the scientific name *Sturnella neglecta*, which means "neglected little starling". But, the meadowlark is not a starling, and it really is larger than the starlings it superficially resembles. The marvelous songs of the males have made the bird so popular it is the state bird in six states, only one fewer than the cardinal!

Western Meadowlarks have been singing on their nesting grounds in Colorado since mid-March, some males getting an early jump on their rivals by

remaining in the area in small wintering flocks. Others have returned from Texas and New Mexico, where flocks can number in the hundreds. As the days grow warmer and longer, increasing numbers return and begin to spread out across the landscape, staking claim to parts of meadows with their incredible flutelike songs. Fence posts and the tops of yucca plants provide the perfect podiums from which to shout back at the other tenors across the fields.

Meadowlarks remind me of funny little quail-their bodies are shaped somewhat like bobwhites, and their backs are perfectly camouflaged with a somewhat grizzled pattern of tans, browns, and white, perfect for hiding in the grass from a hunting prairie falcon. A Western Meadowlark's front shows a bright yellow breast with an emblematic black V. Their showy colors allow male meadowlarks to challenge rivals from the air with superhero-like arrogance, as both try to impress the gals.

Mr. Meadowlark will also use his jump-flight display to attract females-he'll stand on the ground with his bill pointed skyward, his chest fluffed, and his wings aquiver. Then he'll jump skyward, showing off his best stuff. If he's lucky, a couple of females will nest in his 10 acre territory.

Nesting on the ground can be precarious, and female mead-

owlarks work to conceal their eggs by building a nest of woven grasses with a domed top that is intertwined with grass stems. A small entrance on the side leads to a cup, where the female will lay five to seven pinkish white eggs speckled with brown. It takes about two weeks for the eggs to hatch and another week and a half for the young to leave the nest. The male will help feed the young. Females often raise two complete broods per person.

According to the Colorado Breeding Birds Atlas, Western Meadowlarks are particularly vulnerable to disturbance from recreational trails and from dogs and cats from adjacent neighborhoods.

If you're watching Western Meadowlarks this summer, make sure to remain on the trail while observing them. Please keep your dogs on leash, as female meadowlarks may abandon their nests if they are continually flushed. Pay particular attention to the males and see if you can define their territories. They'll often define the boundaries by singing from several posts throughout the grassland. A spotting scope used to observe these birds will really bring out their marvelous patterns and beautiful lemon-yellow colors. Soon, you will learn more about these master flute players of the prairie.

## We Love to Hear From You!

Stop on in, send an email, or, give us a call. We love to hear about your latest birding experiences and look forward to sharing ours. Thanks for your support! Happy Birding! -- Steve, Scott, Marlene, and Bill

# Boulder Backyards

## Water Garden Tour

Rocky Mountain WaterScape will be holding its first annual Water Garden Tour this August. Water features from the all over the north metro area will be included in this self-guided tour. The tour will range from Arvada to the south, Brighton to the east, Longmont to the north and Boulder to the west. Over 20 homeowners have graciously opened their yards for nature lovers to view and enjoy both ponds and pondless water features. Come and join the fun!

The dates of the tour are August 9 from 9-5 and August 10 from 10-5. Tickets will go on sale July 1st at many area locations including The Wild Bird

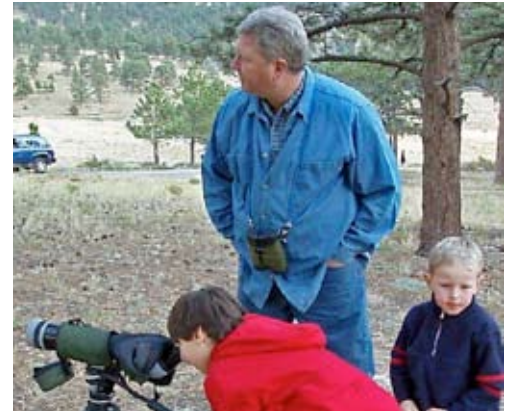
Center in Boulder, Louisville Shoe Repair and the Birds of Prey Thrift Shop in Louisville and Tan Express and The Flower bin in Longmont. Tickets will be \$15.00 per person and children under 12 are free. The tickets will provide maps with directions to each site on the tour.

All proceeds of this event will go to the Birds of Prey Foundation in Broomfield. Birds of Prey treats injured and orphaned wildlife, primarily raptors, such as eagles, hawks, falcons, and owls. Then they return the healthy members of the breeding population to their natural habitat.



For any questions or for more information, please call Lannie Hagan at Rocky Mountain WaterScape: (303) 666-5430. Come and visit our award winning water features inspired by nature! [www.rmwaterscape.com](http://www.rmwaterscape.com)

## Ask Steve



**Q: We live in the mountains west of Boulder and are awfully worried about the pine beetle infestation in Colorado spreading into Boulder County. Are there any birds that will eat pine beetles?**

A: Yes, there are many birds that will eat the beetles, most notably nuthatches and woodpeckers. The nuthatches would be a predator of the beetles only when the beetles have emerged from the tree where they developed and before they burrow into another tree. This happens throughout the time period from mid-July to early September. Woodpeckers, on the other hand, would be a year-round predator of pine beetles because they can drill into the tree and extract the beetles.

We would encourage people to attract nuthatches and woodpeckers to help them battle the beetles, but that alone will not save your trees. The trees in Summit County were not saved by the birds or anything else. It seems to me that an integrated approach to your property would have the best results in face of the beetle onslaught. Anything you can do to thin out your forest to increase its overall health, increase the diversity of your tree and pine species, and increase the age diversity of your trees, would all help to lessen the impact the beetles will have on your property. Attracting a lot of different birds, especially the nuthatches and woodpeckers, will also have a positive effect as you battle the beetles. I'm afraid that our forests in Boulder County will be severely impacted by the pine beetles, but I know in the end, all will be okay. The beetles will subside and we will be left with a different landscape. We will have more meadows and aspen groves to enjoy while the pine species recover. beetle kill

**Q: How do you increase the birds on your property?**

A: You can always feed them, give them water, and give them houses to nest in. Also, if you make some efforts to diversify your property's landscape, that will in turn increase the diversity of birds that frequent your property. If you have any big dead trees on your property now consider leaving them standing. If they do not present a safety hazard, these "snags" are like bird hotels.

One resource that we are adding to our website is plans for a bird house that can be made for chickadees, nuthatches, bluebirds, or downy woodpeckers. I designed this house so it can be made from one inexpensive fence picket. Another great resource can be found at [www.frontrangepinebeetle.org](http://www.frontrangepinebeetle.org).

## Send Us Your Pictures



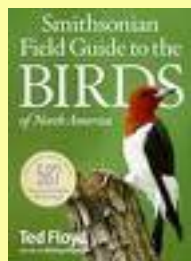
A fun new feature at the store is a digital photo frame to show camera lens customer pictures. Please send us photos of your backyard wildlife and we will add them to our slide show. Along with your pictures please give us your name, date of the photo, and your general location. (We especially love to get pictures of birds on feeders.) E-mails can be sent to [WBCBoulderCO@aol.com](mailto:WBCBoulderCO@aol.com).

## Bird's Picket Nest Box

Check out The Wild Bird Center's instructions for a simple nesting box to accommodate birds that use either a chickadee or bluebird sized box. **Available on our website: [www.wildbird.com/stores/bld/home](http://www.wildbird.com/stores/bld/home)**



## New at the Wild Bird Center: New Field Guide by Ted Floyd



Boulder County bird expert and editor of Birding Magazine, Ted Floyd, has just released a new North American field guide published by Smithsonian. This photographic guide covers all North American birds with numerous images and detailed text. A great addition to this book is a bird sounds CD covering 138 species. This selection obviously does not cover all species, but many of the species included have multiple tracks demonstrating the richness and diversity of songs and calls from one species. These tracks are designed for easy downloading onto an ipod with associated bird images. Come by the Wild Bird Center and check out the latest field guide with a Colorado connection.

Note: We are trying to set up a book signing and possible bird walk with Ted. If it works out we will send you all an email announcing the event.

## VISIT OUR ONLINE STORE! <http://shop.wbcboulder.com>

- Bird Seeds
- Hummingbird & Oriole Feeders
- Birdhouses
- Bird Feeders
- Baffles
- Accessoires
- Video
- Gift Cards



## Nature Photography by Wendy Marie Stuart

Visit our store to view a gallery of Wendy's matted and framed prints and greeting cards for all occasions.

