



Our mission is to conserve birds and their habitats.

Putting the "citizen" in RMBO's science programs

By Linda Detroy Alexander, communications specialist

Volunteers acting as citizen scientists play key roles at RMBO. They not only collect important data, they actively help conserve birds and their habitats.

When the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (then called the Colorado Bird Observatory) was established in 1988, one of its first projects was the Bald Eagle Watch at Barr Lake. This monitoring project was the first of its kind in Colorado, and focused on a nest at the southern end of Barr Lake. Back then, the site was one of only nine active nests in the state. That year, RMBO staff trained more than 200 volunteers to observe and collect data about nesting activity at the lake.

In 1988, under the watchful eye of Bald Eagle Watch volunteers, the female laid eggs. They were destroyed when the nest blew down in an April storm. The next day a volunteer watcher alerted the Colorado Division of Wildlife, which funded and co-administered Bald Eagle Watch. DOW personnel quickly built a new nest and secured it in a live Cottonwood. The eagles returned to the nest that season but laid no new eggs. In 1989 the pair returned, and two eaglets successfully fledged. Since then, volunteers have observed and recorded data on another 34 fledglings from that nest.

Clearly, when citizens undertake serious



"Citizen scientists" are vital to RMBO's successful conservation efforts.

science projects, good things happen. Many of the benefits are less visible than rebuilding a nest, but just as important.

Collaborations between scientists and citizens mean more data can be collected, more sites can be covered and more curious minds are contributing to a project. In addition, studies conducted over many years allow scientists to identify trends. And studies show that citizen science efforts produce reliable data. All this yields critical information to answer real-world questions.

Just who is a citizen scientist?

Anyone who has an interest can be a citizen scientist. All it takes is getting involved in a project. In return, the doors to scientific inquiry are opened so that citizens can gain a better understanding of the questions scientists ask, why they ask them and how they answer them. RMBO currently conducts four citizen

science projects, including the continuing Bald Eagle Watch. Now, we're monitoring 23 nests around the Denver metro area, but we're doing it with 38 volunteers instead of 200. RMBO also operates a HawkWatch program, monitoring and collecting data about raptors migrating over Dinosaur Ridge, southwest of Denver, and ColonyWatch, a project that monitors and collects data about 15 species of colonial birds

in Colorado. We're also coordinating the second South Dakota Breeding Bird Atlas, a project to document the distribution of every bird species that nests in South Dakota and compare that to data in the first atlas (1988-1992). More information about how volunteers can get involved in these projects accompanies this article on Page 3.

This fall, RMBO staff took a hard look at our projects to make sure we are collecting the kind and quality of data we need and to ensure that our volunteers – our citizen scientists – are getting the benefits they deserve.

For each of these projects, we are formalizing training to offer our volunteers more information about the subjects of the research, explain the questions we're trying to answer, and present the results of each year's efforts. To better engage our volunteers, RMBO will be in touch during the monitoring

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From the director...

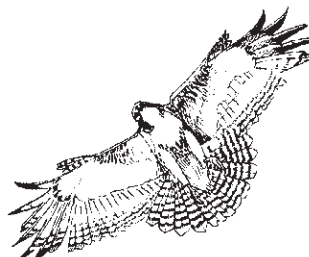
Tammy VerCauteren, executive director

The Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory is advancing its communications into the 21st Century. Staff and friends of RMBO are tweeting and blogging, and our Web site is getting a facelift. Stay tuned to www.rmbo.org and our Facebook page for developments.

We are also revitalizing our citizen science efforts. RMBO staff, including our Americorps VISTA volunteer coordinator, are taking the lead on evaluating and advancing these efforts (see our cover story). We are striving to recruit more volunteers to help with our Bald Eagle Watch, HawkWatch and Colony Watch monitoring projects. To kick off these efforts, we will conduct a raptor field identification course on January 16 and an orientation for Bald Eagle Watch on January 23. Data collected by citizen scientists provides important breeding, migratory and distribution information on special species, including raptors and colonial birds. By volunteering in our citizen science programs, you are helping to fill knowledge gaps and collecting data that informs local and regional planning efforts.

New at RMBO, we are also developing a "friends program." The program is designed to broaden the financial base of RMBO and provide seed money for new program development. Dollars raised will also help support biological surveys, educational programming and stewardship activities. One of RMBO's biggest assets is its staff and their passion and knowledge of birds. Through our friends program, donors will get time in the field with our leading biologists collecting field data, learning about our programs and seeing the amazing bird life and natural places we are working to conserve. We plan to officially launch this new program in 2010.

As you are preparing for the holiday season, watch RMBO's Web site, www.rmbo.org, for new merchandise (water bottles, coffee tumblers) to add to your shopping list for family and friends. These items, bearing the RMBO logo, should be available in early December. We also hope you will consider making a donation when you receive our year-end appeal, even if you've already paid your membership dues and made a contribution earlier this year. Your investment in RMBO helps support a legacy of conservation for birds and their habitats throughout the western United States and Mexico.



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season with real-time information about the data being collected and interesting stories from the field. We'll also send out the final summaries and reports for each project to let our volunteers know how the data are being used.

RMBO is also working to ensure that quality information is being collected, so we're revising data sheets and clearly defining expectations for collection. Our scientists are working with our technology specialist to develop online

reporting forms so volunteers can submit data quickly and efficiently.

Our hope at RMBO is that citizen involvement in our science projects will help our members and friends gain the knowledge, experiences, tools and inspiration to become more involved in conservation in their own communities. And we hope that they, in turn, encourage others to get outside and engage in nature.



A nesting colony of Double-crested Cormorants near Denver.
Photo: William Bell

Make 2010 the year of the citizen scientist

By Amy Rotter, education and outreach volunteer coordinator/AmeriCorps VISTA

When you're thinking about resolutions for 2010, think volunteering for science. Here's what environmental writer Susan Brackney wrote for "Plenty" magazine: "Quit smoking. Lose 10 pounds. Yada, yada, yada. I'd much rather people resolve to become citizen scientists in the coming year. The rise of on-line social networking sites, cuts in funding for scientific research, and an increasing urgency to stem myriad environmental problems have brewed the perfect storm for a burgeoning amateur science movement, and there are plenty of good projects that could really use our help."

Susan was writing about 2009, but any year is a good year to get involved in moving forward our knowledge about birds and their habitats. RMBO relies on a committed group of volunteers to collect data for its citizen projects. Each project requires specific commitments and trainings, but each also offers a unique and meaningful learning experience.

Here's what's involved in our current projects:

As part of **Bald Eagle Watch**, volunteers collect data on nesting behavior, productivity of each nest and potential disturbances to nesting eagles. Volunteers commit to observing one nest from February through July, making two to four visits to the nest each month. Join us at the Old Stone House for a volunteer orientation for Bald Eagle Watch on Saturday, Jan. 23, and a training session on Saturday, Jan. 30, each beginning at 9 a.m.. For more information, contact Amanda Morrison at 303-659-4348, ext. 13, or by e-mail at amanda.bew@rmbo.org

ColonyWatch volunteers devote anywhere from a few hours to several days, monitoring a colony of water birds, gathering information on its size, location, number of active nests and potential threats. Monitoring starts in late March and runs until fall migration starts in early to mid-August. A large colony containing several species may require a number of visits, each of several hours duration. Most of the colonies are small, and many can be surveyed in a single visit. Most ColonyWatchers take responsibility for a single colony, but some have adopted up to a dozen. If you are interested in volunteering for ColonyWatch, please contact Jason Beason at 970-527-4625 or

by e-mail at jason.beason@rmbo.org

HawkWatch monitors migrating raptors at Dinosaur Ridge near Morrison (in Jefferson County) from mid March through May. Volunteers with this program commit to: visiting the viewing site one day a week, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., collecting data, and entering data into an online database. HawkWatch volunteers must possess a knowledge of or willingness to study raptor identification and be able to record and enter precise data. Volunteers must also be able to hike to the viewing site, including during cold or muddy conditions, and be comfortable working independently. Trainings will be held on Sunday, March 7, and Saturday, March 13, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Dinosaur Ridge. Attendance at one of these trainings is mandatory for HawkWatch volunteers.

Anyone interested in the HawkWatch program is invited to attend our "Winter Raptors on the Prairie" hawk-watching trip. RMBO biologist Jeff Birek will lead the trip and give an overview of raptor identification. This trip is scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 16, from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. We will meet at the Old Stone House, RMBO's headquarters at Barr Lake. To cover the cost of rental vans, we are charging \$15 for the trip. The deadline to RSVP is Jan. 9. For anyone interested in HawkWatch or the Winter Raptors on the Prairie trip, please contact Amy Rotter at 303-659-4348, ext. 11, or by e-mail at amy.rotter@rmbo.org

The second **South Dakota Breeding Bird Atlas** aims to map the current distributions of all breeding birds in the state and then compare these distributions to those mapped 20 years ago to see if bird populations have changed. Atlasers adopt one or more survey blocks and make at least three visits to their block before the atlas survey ends in 2012. During each visit, volunteers record all the species they see and attempt to verify that the species is actually breeding within their block. It's fun, it's educational and it helps us understand more about the status of South Dakota's breeding birds. For more information, see www.rmbo.org/SDBBA2 or contact Nancy Drilling at 970-428-1707 ext. 14, or by e-mail at sdAtlascoordinator@rmbo.org.

The beauty of banding

By Kacie Ehbrenberger, education and outreach director

Have you ever been close enough to a warbler to see its rictal bristles? This fall nearly 3,000 students had the opportunity to be just that close. From August through October, RMBO and our partners operated six banding stations in two states. Banders, educators and volunteers worked daily to collect data on migrating birds and educate visitors of all ages about birds.

Why do biologists band birds?

The answer is best explained by hearing stories about our banded birds. In 20 years, RMBO has banded more than 177,000 birds. Few birds are seen again; the average recovery rate – when a bird is banded in one location and is caught or found in another location – is 1-2 percent of banded birds. However, with each bird we capture, we are learning about the timing of migrations and routes, evaluating body condition, studying population demographics (sex ratios, adult to juvenile ratios), and advancing our knowledge of bird longevity records for individual species. For example, RMBO caught a migrating Virginia's Warbler at our Grand Junction banding station in August 2002 and again at the station, which had been moved a few hundred yards away, in September 2008. So, we know that this bird was at least 6 years and 1 month old. The previous longevity record for the Virginia's Warblers was 5 years and 11 months.

RMBO bander Meredith McBurney recently shared the story of a Yellow Warbler she caught on May 31, 2007, at our station in Chatfield State Park in southern Denver. This bird was not banded by RMBO, so Meredith contacted the Bird Banding Lab (BBL) in Maryland (the BBL houses all bird-band data). In March 2009, the BBL told Meredith that the band had been given to a Canadian biologist.

In May 2009 the BBL contacted Meredith again to report the Canadian biologist had actually been banding in Costa Rica when they caught this bird on Nov. 19, 2006. Warblers do breed at Chatfield, and we caught this bird after most Yellow Warblers had initiated breeding at Chatfield. While we can't be 100 percent certain, it is likely the bird was breeding at Chatfield and spending its winters in Costa Rica. Warblers breed in riparian habitats, and Meredith reports it is the most commonly caught species at Chatfield. She usually bands about 100 Yellow Warblers each spring, and about 15 percent of these

are recaptured the following spring. This is a high capture (and return) rate, which emphasizes the importance of Chatfield State Park for Yellow Warbler migration and breeding habitat.

Brian Gibbons, another of RMBO's banders, shared an interesting story from the banding station at Chico Basin Ranch near Colorado Springs: "On May 16, 2009, we recaptured a banded male Wilson's Warbler that was not banded by RMBO.

We waited patiently for months for the other bander's data to be submitted to the BBL. The report finally came in October 2009, and we learned the warbler was banded in El Salvador on Sept. 24, 2008. While these recoveries are rare, they are exciting and reinforce the idea of environmental connectivity and the importance of conserving breeding, stopover and wintering grounds for these birds."

Another RMBO bander, Julie Remp, took the initiative this season to start a blog about her work at our banding station at the Wildcat Hills State Recreation Area in Nebraska; find it at <http://nebirdbander.wordpress.com/>. She wrote, "One of the things I love most about bird banding is the opportunity to see the differences in individual birds."

Biologists are able to see individual birds by using mist nets to capture them. After removing the birds gently from the nets, the biologists look for molt, accumulated fat or signs of breeding. This data helps biologists learn the timing of physiological processes and gather information about the general health of birds.

While bird banding provides a wealth of biological information about bird populations, there is another reason RMBO runs banding stations. We are part of a nationwide effort to fight "nature deficit disorder," the trend of kids spending less time in the outdoors. This has significant effects on their physical, mental and emotional development.

Banding stations provide opportunities to engage youth in the outdoors through experiential learning. We use live birds as the hook to get kids outdoors and then show them ways they can go outside on their own. Through interactions with natural resources professionals, students collect and analyze data and watch the banding process firsthand. Most classes also go on nature hikes, learn to use binoculars and participate in related activities. At the end of each program, I ask my students how they feel after a few hours outdoors. What I hear in response is: "Awesome!" "Great!" And even, "Relaxed."

We also visit students in their classrooms after they've made

Did you know? Bird species that capture flying insects (e.g., warblers and flycatchers) have hair-like feathers near their mouths. These **rictal bristles** may funnel food into the mouth, protect the bird's eyes while capturing prey, or have a tactile function similar to the whiskers of some mammals.



Rictal Bristles on a Willow Flycatcher at the Barr Lake banding station.
Photo: Bill Schmoker

field trips to the banding stations. During these in-class programs, the students graph data collected at banding stations and map the migration routes of birds they saw. Through this “Young Biologist” program, students further develop their understating of migration and learn that birds are a shared resource that serve as indicators of environmental health throughout our hemisphere. I observed one of these programs for fourth-graders last February, five months after the class visited the Barr Lake banding station. I was thrilled to hear the students tell me about the species they saw and what kind of data was collected. They were still able to point to where a bird stores fat to fuel its long-distance flights.

Perhaps one of our fondest memories from the 2009 banding season involves a first-grader who demonstrated that the outdoors is a perfect place to overcome one’s own challenges. This student clearly had a speech impediment that made it difficult for him to express all he wanted to say. Since this student’s group was so young, the educator spoke of the “bird bander,” rather than using more complicated words, such as “ornithologist.” However, as the program was ending, the boy was full of excitement, and asked, “When are we going to see the ornithologist?” His mother just shook her head and said, “He can’t say shoe, but ‘ornithologist’ is apparently no problem!”

We extend a sincere thank you to our partners and funders that make the stations happen. Their support allows us to conduct this critical research and education program. Thanks to: Air Academy High School KICS, Barr Lake State Park, Black

Canyon Audubon Society, Chadron State Park, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Grand Valley Audubon Society, Nebraska Environmental Trust, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, North Platte Natural Resource District (NRD), Pine Ridge Ranger District (US Forest Service), Ranchlands Learning and Research Center (Chico Basin Ranch), Ridgway State Park, citizens of the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District, Scotts Bluff National Monument, Upper Niobrara-White NRD, Wildcat Hills Audubon, Wildcat Hills State Recreation Area and Williams Energy. Special thanks go to Steve Brown, Arlene Crawford, Cheryl Day, Lee Derr, Anne James and Karen Levad for their determination and support.



By visiting our banding station, this Downy Woodpecker is playing an important role in science and science education.
Photo: Kitty LeDonne

Station	Dates	Species	Individual birds	Notes
Barr Lake State Park (CO)	8/25 - 10/17	43	677	12 returning birds, of which nine were from 2008, one from 2007 and two (White-crowned Sparrow and Yellow Warbler) from 2003; we banded five Barn Owl chicks in a nest box right by the station
Chadron State Park (NE)	8/30 - 10/2	35	398	Four returning birds from 2008; Orange-crowned and Wilson’s Warblers most commonly caught species
Chico Basin Ranch (CO)	8/31 - 10/3	63	1190	637 of the individuals were Wilson’s Warblers
Grand Junction (CO)	9/21 - 10/15	25	292	59 Orange-crowned Warblers; five returning birds, all from 2008 except for a Black-capped Chickadee from 2006
Ridgway State Park (CO)	9/9 - 9/18	26	158	Black-capped Chickadee caught for the third year
Wildcat Hills Recreation Area (NE)	8/19 - 10/2	36	318	Five returning birds from 2008 and one from 2007; House Finch most commonly caught species

We want to turn you into a naturalist

By Amy Rotter, education and outreach volunteer coordinator/Americorps VISTA

Our volunteers have told us they want two things: more opportunities to learn about birds and the world around them, and more ways to get involved in RMBO's programs.

Our new RMBO Naturalist program is designed to give you both. Beginning this spring, volunteers can participate in extensive RMBO Naturalist training, about 40 hours' worth over six weeks, to expand their knowledge of birds, different habitats and conservation needs. In exchange, we'll ask our new naturalists to commit to volunteering for at least 40 hours within a year's time in our school and family education programs.



The training for RMBO Naturalists will cover a variety of ecological concepts to provide participants with a broad knowledge of the local environment. Training includes classroom presentations by RMBO staff and field trips to education program locations. Topics range from basic ornithology and common birds by community to an array of ecological concepts. Sessions will also cover techniques and

tips for public speaking and teaching different age groups. We'll also take the groups on field trips, including visits to Barr Lake State Park and Dinosaur Ridge – two of our primary locations for education programs – where we'll run through a typical education program and learn how to implement the classroom training to provide a positive nature experience for visitors.

The first RMBO Naturalist training sessions are scheduled for 9 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from Feb. 16 through March 30 at the Stone House, our headquarters at the northern tip of Barr Lake State Park. Prior to leading a program on their own, RMBO Naturalists will shadow and be shadowed by RMBO education staff. Naturalists will receive an RMBO nametag identifying them as part of this important program.

To take part in the RMBO Naturalist program, participants must commit to spending 40 volunteer hours per year to lead or help deliver RMBO education programs. RMBO Naturalists will assist the education staff with in-class programs, field trips and educational outreach events to teach all audiences about the importance of bird conservation. Participants do not need previous experience in environmental education, but must demonstrate a willingness and ability to recognize and embrace teachable moments; to use interactive techniques and open-ended questions to lead students, and to enjoy working with all ages.

For more information or to apply for the RMBO Naturalist program, please contact Amy Rotter, education and outreach volunteer coordinator, at 303-659-4348, ext. 11, or by e-mail at amy.rotter@rmbo.org



Upcoming events

Festival of Lights, Brighton

Dec. 12: RMBO will be on hand for this full day of activities to celebrate the holiday season. Stop by our booth to enjoy a cup of hot cocoa and to put your name in the hat for drawings of some special items. Brighton's winter festival events will take place from 2-6 p.m., capped by the Festival of Lights Parade, with more than 75 fully lighted entries highlighting the theme of "A Hometown Holiday Tradition," at 5 p.m. Bundle up and join us! For more information, got to www.brighton.gov

Winter Raptors on the Prairie, Barr Lake

Jan. 16: Jeff Birek, RMBO biologist, will lead a hawk-watching trip and present the basics of raptor identification around Barr Lake. We hope people interested in volunteering for the Hawk Watch program this spring will attend. Participants will meet at the Stone House and travel by van. A fee of \$15 will be charged to cover the cost of the vans. Space is limited, so RSVP now to Amy Rotter, 303-659-4348, ext. 11, or by e-mail at amy.rotter@rmbo.org

RMBO Volunteer Open House, Stone House

Jan. 21: Come to RMBO's headquarters at Barr Lake to learn about who we are at RMBO and what we do, as well as the many ways in which you can get involved in the organization. The open house is scheduled from 4-6 p.m., with a presentation at 4:30 p.m. Join us for light refreshments and lots of information. Please RSVP by Jan. 19 to Amy Rotter at 303-659-4348, ext. 11, or by e-mail at amy.rotter@rmbo.org

Bald Eagle Watch orientation, Stone House

Jan. 23: 9 a.m. to noon, followed by lunch. Orientation will provide an overview of the project for new and returning volunteers, including a review of the previous year's monitoring results and what to expect in the coming field season

Bald Eagle Watch training, Stone House

Jan. 30: Training will begin at 9 a.m. and end some time after noon, depending on attendance and questions volunteers have. The training will cover protocols for observations, who to contact to report possible nest disturbances, how to fill out data sheets and complete online data entry. **Training is required before volunteers can participate.** For more information or to sign up, contact Amanda Morrison at 303-659-4348, ext. 13, or by e-mail at amanda.bew@rmbo.org

Great Backyard Bird Count, Barr Lake

Feb. 13: Across the country, bird watchers will be counting birds in this citizen science extravaganza. Join us at the Stone House to count birds, sit in on our Birding 101 presentation, take a bird hike and learn more about why citizen science matters and RMBO's citizen science projects.

HawkWatch training, Dinosaur Ridge Visitors Center

March 7, 13: HawkWatch volunteers will learn the protocols for this important monitoring program, including specifics on how to count the migrating raptors, record information on data sheets and enter data online. Volunteers must attend one of these sessions, scheduled from 9 a.m. to noon. Sign up by calling Amy Rotter at 303-659-4348, ext. 11, or by e-mail at amy.rotter@rmbo.org

Searching for Mexican marvels

It's not often that tourists – even birding tourists – get the chance to go where most people aren't allowed. RMBO's second West Mexico Conservation Birding Tour offers just that opportunity. Our second tour will take us to some of Mexico's most pristine ecosystems – habitats that are not found in the United States.

On this trip, scheduled for Feb. 20-27, 2010, we'll travel from Guadalajara to the Las Joyas and Chamela biological stations, where we'll have many chances to see rare and hard-to-find species. Las Joyas Biological Station is in the Sierra de Manantlan Biosphere reserve in the highlands between Jalisco and Colima. It is home to 33 percent of Mexico's bird species. Chamela-Cuitzmala Biological Station is on the Pacific coast of Jalisco and shelters some 270 bird species.

Many of these are birds you can't see anywhere else, for in southern Jalisco and adjacent Colima are found an astonishing 91 endemic and near-endemic species. Among the unique birds we hope to view are the Long-tailed Wood-Partridge; Banded Quail; Singing Quail; Crested Guan; Lilac-crowned and Yellow-headed parrots; Mexican Parrotlet; Colima Pygmy-Owl; Eared Poorwill; Mexican Woodnymph; Bumblebee and Amethyst-throated hummingbirds; Mountain Trogon; Flammulated Flycatcher; Slaty, Dwarf and Golden vireos; Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo; Aztec Thrush; Red-breasted Chat; Red Warbler; Orange-breasted and Blue buntings. Making this an even more extraordinary birding tour, more than 520 bird species are known in the region, including the majority of western North American migrants.

In addition to packing lots of birding in at all the major life zones of the region – from mangroves and lagoons at sea level to pine-oak and cloud forests in the mountains – tour participants will learn about the ecology of the region, and what is being done to manage and conserve migrant and endemic

birds and their habitats there. And we'll enjoy some snorkeling and have many opportunities to sample local Mexican cuisine.

More information on the locations we'll visit, our accommodations and other trip details can be found at RMBO's website, www.rmbo.org

The trip is limited to eight participants, and the cost for the seven-night, eight-day tour is \$2,000 per person, which includes an estimated \$600 tax-deductible charitable contribution. Even better, 100 percent of the proceeds will go to support bird conservation in West Mexico.

At least two bilingual guides will accompany the group at all times. A \$500 deposit is required to reserve a spot. For more information, or to secure your spot on the tour, contact RMBO International Division Director Arvind Panjabi, who will be one of the trip leaders, at 970-482-1707, ext. 20, or by e-mail at Arvind.panjabi@rmbo.org



Aztec Thrush, one of the Mexican specialties we hope to see.
Photo: Ken Rosenberg

Got stuff or Time? We've got a wish list

If you're cleaning house and have any of the items below, or, in the case of the bird bags, have extra fabric from a sewing project, we hope you'll consider filling a need on our list. Thanks!

- Bags for banding birds (cotton works well; 5x8 inches is a good size; needs a nylon drawstring at the top. Loose loops of fabric on the inside can be dangerous as little legs and heads could get caught up in them.) / Kacie Ehrenberger
- Field vehicles - a mature vehicle is okay, but reliability is important; four-wheel drive preferred / Greg Levandoski
- Four-drawer vertical file cabinet / Larry Snyder
- Hats and gloves for students (K-12 sizes, but mostly kids in grades 8-12 come to field trips unprepared for the cold!) / Cassy Bohnet
- High-volume office printer / Chandman Sambuu
- Office space in Fort Collins (rent is not cheap!) / Tammy VerCauteren
- Reams of paper / Greg Levandoski
- Scopes and binoculars for bird walks and environmental education; used equipment would be great if it is good quality / Cassy Bohnet
- Slide scanner
- Volunteers!

Staff profile: Conservation planning in action

Plants have always been Patty Knupp's passion, so it's a bonus that her work to preserve habitat for birds and other wildlife means she's ensuring that plants get attention, too.

Patty holds one of four positions in the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory's Private Lands Wildlife Biologists program. She works in Area 3, putting wildlife conservation on the ground in 15 counties in the southeastern corner of Colorado (see map). Patty is an RMBO staff member who wears multiple hats, including representing the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), which fund her.

RMBO's Stewardship Division received a grant from the CDOW and NRCS in 2008 to place four biologists in the state to provide technical resources to landowners who want to incorporate wildlife conservation efforts into their private operations. Patty is housed in the NRCS office in Pueblo, but she's rarely in the office because she spends so much time in the field, working with partners and landowners.

Patty says her job is to improve habitat, focusing on rare and unique types, including playas, shortgrass prairie and sand-sage habitat. While her targets are at-risk species, Colorado species of concern and rare species, she also works on improving conditions for more common species within habitats. She says her favorite part of the job is getting out on the land with the landowners to work on conservation plans.

"I enjoy opening up a whole new way for landowners to look at their land," she says. "They see it from a ranching or agricultural-production standpoint. My job is to make sure that wildlife is included in the picture."

Typically, landowners come into the NRCS field office to get help on some aspect of their operation. Patty uses the

opportunity to engage all her partners – including local, state and national wildlife agencies, conservation districts and others – to inform the landowner and get him or her the most bang for the conservation buck. She and other partners also help landowners find funding to accomplish a conservation plan. Funding from the Farm Bill helps her put plans into action.

Action is what suits Patty best. She says she loves doing anything outdoors, but especially loves going hunting and fishing with her two yellow Labrador Retrievers, Holly and Lutra. She's in the market to add another lab to the menagerie, which also includes two horses, on her 25-acre property near Rye, Co., a tiny town southwest of Pueblo.



Patty grew up in Eagle River, Wis., and received her bachelor of science degree in wildlife management, biology and natural resources from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. She says an internship at Lostwood National Wildlife Refuge in North Dakota confirmed for her that she wanted a job outdoors, involving hands-on work with critters. After receiving her master's degree in wildlife management from South Dakota State University,

she headed to Virginia and a job as a farm wildlife biologist with the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

In 2003 Patty came to Colorado, working for three seasons as a seasonal employee, spending summers with the U.S. Forest Service and winters with the CDOW.

Now that she's so involved with Colorado's grasslands, Patty says she'd like to work on a second master's degree, focusing on rangeland plants. "Cattle grazing is such an important part of agricultural operations here," she says. "Doing good grass management is key to having all the wildlife species that belong here."

Grants and Awards

Grant funding is critical to the work of RMBO biologists and field staff, and our educators. The following grants and awards have been received since September:

- Adams County Parks and Community Resources: \$25,000 for salary support for RMBO's education assistant and for field-trip busing costs for Adams County students.
- Binky Foundation: \$2,250 to support one year of environmental education programming for all students in two grades in the Brighton School District. The program will include two field trips, two in-class programs and one teacher-training presentation.
- Enterprise Holdings Foundation: \$1,000 to cover field-trip busing costs for the HawkWatch program.
- National Park Service: \$44,144 to implement a full-scale avian survivorship study in the Chihuahuan grasslands of Mexico in January and February 2010; project partners are the University of Nuevo Leon and The Nature Conservancy-Chihuahua.

A call for help

As RMBO works to expand its research and education programs and works to make membership more tangible, we're finding that staff members don't have enough hours in their days to get everything done. So, we're turning to our volunteers for some special needs. Below is a table listing activities with which staff have said they'd like some help. If you've got time and, for some of the activities, matching skills, please contact either the person listed in the table or our administrative office at 303-659-4348. Thanks in advance for your willingness to help.

Volunteer Opportunity	Contact Person	Location	Time	Requirements
Pre-field season prep	Jora Lorber, Jeff Birek, Chris White	Monitoring Division, Fort Collins	Apr	Good organizational skills.
Data entry	Jora Lorber, Jeff Birek, Chris White	Monitoring Division, Fort Collins	Aug & Sep	Basic understanding of MS-Office software and use of the Internet.
Filing/organizing	Jim Pauley	Brighton office	few hours	This is a one-time project that will take only a few days.
RMBO Naturalists	Amy Rotter	Brighton, Barr Lake, Dinosaur Ridge	spring through fall	Must attend training sessions and commit to 40 volunteer hours per year assisting with RMBO education programs. Primarily works with K-12 students.
HawkWatch	Amy Rotter	Dinosaur Ridge	Mar - May	Volunteers commit to counting migrating hawks one day a week during the season, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Attendance at one training required.
Bald Eagle Watch	Amanda Morrison	various	Feb - Jul	Volunteers commit to 2-4 visits per month to collect data on nesting Bald Eagles.
ColonyWatch	Jason Beason	various	Mar - Aug	Volunteers commit from a few hours to several days to monitor a colony, depending on its size.
Membership coordinator	Tammy VerCauteren		long term	Plan and carry out membership recruitment efforts; acknowledge new members, renewals, and changes in membership levels; maintain and update membership database; and invite members to special events and track attendance.
Volunteer coordinator	Amy Rotter		long term	Plan and carry out volunteer recruitment efforts; maintain and update volunteer database; direct volunteers to the project that best fits their interests and skill set; track volunteer appreciation efforts.
Spanish translator with strong writing skills	Loni Beyer	International Division	Dec / long term	December: translate survey protocols into Spanish. Long term: translate at least the international section of the Web site into Spanish.
English-Spanish translator	Kacie Ehrenberger	Brighton	Sep - May	Translate letters between penpals from Colorado and Mexico. Ability to translate from Spanish to English and English to Spanish preferred. Basic skills needed to translate mostly form letters filled in by elementary students.
Owl Surveys	Nancy Drilling	SW South Dakota, Black Hills	Feb - Jul	In teams of two, conduct night surveys, which can last until 2 a.m., from roads. Temperatures can be in the single digits. Volunteers outside South Dakota must be available for at least a 5-day period; local volunteers can survey just one night.
South Dakota Breeding Bird Atlas	Nancy Drilling	South Dakota - statewide	May - Jul	Survey for birds 10-20 or more hours on a 9-square-mile block. Surveys can be spread out through the summers of 2010-2012. See www.rmbo.org/SDBBA2 for details.
Scanning slides onto computer	Kacie Ehrenberger	Brighton	few hours	Must have a slide scanner or access to one, scanning old slides onto computer for use.
Special Events Volunteers	Linda Alexander	various	few hours	Assist at special events, typically for 4-6 hours (help at the RMBO information booth, set up/take down, etc.)
Library organizing	Linda Alexander	Brighton	several hours	Assist with cataloging and organizing the library in our Brighton office. Library sciences knowledge/cataloging skills preferred.

Board of Directors changes

Welcome...

D. Jean Tate, PhD, is an ecologist with more than 33 years of applied experience in the consulting world. Her academic work focused on birds, and her publications include “Morphometric age and sex variation in the Whistling Swan,” and “Habitat usage by the Chipping Sparrow in northern Lower Michigan.”



Her consulting career has focused on diverse studies in response to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act/Superfund Amendment and Reauthorization Act/Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (CERCLA/SARA/RCRA) for numerous land management, military, transportation and other agencies.

Jean’s knowledge of conservation policy and practices will help inform RMBO decisions as the organization seeks to expand its programs and engage more people in its mission of conserving birds and their habitats. Jean will serve on the board’s development committee.

Jean got her start birding when she was in third grade and her mother became fascinated with the bird life around the country cottage where they lived in west-central Wisconsin. Indigo Buntings were plentiful, and Jean remembers the Whip-poor-will that called from their doorstep on their first night in the cottage. Jean says her grandfather, a physicist, was also a Renaissance man who kept a natural history journal. His love for nature also helped spark Jean’s interest.

She moved to Colorado from upstate New York in 1975, and now enjoys hikes with Riley, her German Shorthaired Pointer, who Jean says is a great birder and regularly points meadowlarks. In addition to her new position on the RMBO board, Jean serves on the board of Friends of the Front Range Wildlife Refuges. Her passions are preserving habitat, ecological health, and species diversity for avian and other wildlife populations; and promoting appreciation of the natural world for its intrinsic worth and its value to the human mind, body and spirit.

Tiffany Watts is an audit senior manager in the Denver office of Grant Thornton and a Certified Public Accountant in Colorado. Tiffany manages financial audits of public and private companies, ranging in size from start-ups to those that have hundreds of millions of dollars in sales. She has served several industries, including the non-profit sector, and has been with Grant Thornton for seven years.

As a member of the RMBO Board of Directors, Tiffany will help the organization continue to improve its financial practices. And she, as other board members, brings a passion for conservation that will enhance RMBO. Tiffany will serve on the board’s finance committee.



Tiffany is a native of Cleveland, Ohio, and moved to Colorado a dozen years after graduating from college to have better access to outdoor activities and nice weather. She and her husband, Chris, enjoy hiking and birding. Tiffany caught birding fever from her uncle, an avid birder who took Tiffany on birding hikes when she was a child. She also has a personal interest in conservation and restoration of native habitat and species.

Thank you...

Chuck Bell is retiring from the RMBO Board of Directors after six years of service. He joined the board at a time when RMBO was undergoing financial and administrative challenges and helped steer the organization to become the solid research and education institution that it is today.



“I was pleased to serve during this difficult period,” Chuck said, “as I enjoy working with either start-up organizations or those in need of strong support. With RMBO on such a sound footing now, I feel I can retire from the board with confidence that RMBO will continue to grow from strength to strength in the future.”

Chuck plans to continue adding to his substantial world bird list along with his wife, Nancy, who is an accomplished bird photographer. They are looking forward to visiting Costa Rica, East and Southern Africa, Ohio, Great Britain, Brazil and Peru in the coming year.

Chuck is a retired U.S. Foreign Service Officer, spending nearly 30 years as a public diplomacy specialist in U.S. embassies in Africa, northern Europe and Australasia. He ran his own international birding tour company in the 1990s and then rebuilt the tour program of the American Birding Association. Chuck is currently a board member of the American Birding Association and is the founder and an advisory board member of Poudre Wilderness Volunteers, which provides major support to the U.S. Forest Service in northern Colorado.

Changing demands in her job have made it necessary for **Linda Luther** to step down from the RMBO Board of Directors.

Linda, who is a CPA and works for a major health insurance corporation, has served on the board for three years. She was recruited when the board sought a new member with additional financial experience, which was greatly appreciated as the board worked to improve RMBO's financial management practices. In part, the board position appealed to her because, even though she's not an active birder, she loves nature and does feed birds in her yard.



In addition to strengthening the board with her professional knowledge, Linda has done yeoman's duty each year to organize, supervise and deliver the buffet meal at our annual picnic. She says that job was a service she could give to RMBO as someone without lots of birding experience.

Linda's service is already missed as RMBO staff are planning next year's picnic. We hope to see Linda and her husband, Doug, who live in Greenwood Village, at RMBO events in the future.

Board Leadership...

At its most recent meeting, the Board of Directors elected a new chairman, Larry Modesitt, and a new vice chairman, Carol Cochran. We look forward to their increased involvement in our organization. And we want to extend a hearty and heartfelt "Thank you" to both Charles Hundertmark, who served as Chairman for four years, and to Charles Bell, who served as vice chairman for three years, for their yeoman's service. Both also gave considerable time and their expertise to leading committees and helping with special events.

The board would like to add two more members, and is particularly looking for people with marketing or fund-raising experience. If you've got the interest and time, contact Board Chairman Larry Modesitt at 303-740-7575 or by e-mail at LM1crow@aol.com. You can also find information and an application on RMBO's Web site, www.rmbo.org

Staff migrations

Out...

Travis Runia, who joined RMBO in January as the farm bill biologist in our Nebraska office, has already packed his gear and headed to a new job with the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks. At his new office in Huron, SD, Travis will be the upland bird biologist.

Travis, who grew up in Sibley, Iowa, and graduated from the University of South Dakota, will be closer to home and family. Travis did a tremendous job in the short year he worked for RMBO, and the projects he delivered in that time will provide habitat to numerous species for many years to come.

Corey Kanuckel is leaving his post as one of RMBO's private lands biologists to take a similar post with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. He will be working as a private lands biologist in the Colorado Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. Corey will be stationed in the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge,



which comprises 14,804 acres and artificially created wetlands in the heart of the San Luis Valley that provide habitat for a wide variety of waterfowl and other water birds. Corey's primary responsibilities will be to deliver on-

the-ground habitat restoration and enhancement projects on private lands in the San Luis Valley.

Corey joined RMBO a year ago. He has done an outstanding job paving the way for the Private Lands Wildlife Biologist program in southwestern Colorado, and will be missed. However, RMBO Stewardship Division Director Seth Gallagher is delighted that he will have many opportunities to work with Corey on projects through our partnership with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. We'll work to recruit him as a volunteer for RMBO's ColonyWatch citizen-science effort.

Hatchings...

Everyone at RMBO was pleased to welcome **Grant Christopher Berven** into the world. Grant, son of RBMO's Northern Goshawk Coordinator Jenny Berven, was born on Aug. 29, weighing in at 6 pounds and 4 oz. Jenny and her husband, Chris, are looking forward to sharing their knowledge of the natural world with Grant and encouraging him to appreciate all the wonderful things nature can provide to its observers.





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