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ESTABLISHED IN : 1999, to support National Audubon Society activities in Colorado
STATE BIRD : Lark Bunting, *Calamospiza melanocorys*
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Energy, Oil and Gas and the Future of Colorado's Wildlife

Across the West, there is a battle against time. Oil and gas companies are trying to gain development access to as much of our public lands as they can before there is a change in the current administration. State wildlife agencies and conservation organizations, on the other hand, are trying hard to conserve vanishing numbers of our western wildlife icons, including Sage-Grouse and Prairie-Chickens.

The National Audubon Society has recently initiated a campaign to frame the discussion about energy development on public lands in the west. We are focusing specifically on protection of the Greater and Gunnison Sage-Grouse populations and the sagebrush steppe ecosystem on which they rely.

Audubon Colorado, Wyoming and Montana have been coordinating a regional campaign along the Rocky Mountain West. The campaign focuses on targeted research, effective advocacy and the development of protective management practices in collaboration with other organizations, government agencies, concerned citizens and industry representatives.

Audubon Colorado Executive Director Gary Graham says: "We're really excited to be launching this campaign with Audubon offices in other states. Our conservation message will be much stronger."

Audubon Colorado has been actively engaged in BLM resource management planning, providing comments and voicing concerns. In the winter of 2007, Gary Graham released an editorial voicing Audubon's concerns about the rapid loss of valuable habitat to unchecked development. In both 2007 and 2008, Audubon Colorado, along with several Colorado chapters, filed an official protest against the sale of oil and gas leases on BLM public lands that will negatively impact critical wildlife habitat.

In addition to engaging with government agencies, Audubon Colorado has been working with energy industry representatives to proactively diminish the impacts of development and forge partnerships that will protect critical habitats and wildlife.

"Colorado is at a critical juncture in the history of the protection of public lands," says Graham, "and Audubon Colorado will remain at the forefront of the movement to ensure the conservation of these lands and the wildlife that lives on them."



BIRD-A-THON!!

This year's Bird-a-thon will take place in TWO countries: Colorado and Brazil! A crew will be hitting all the Front Range and Roaring Fork Valley "hot spots" and another group will be counting in Brazil, in the Boa Nova Important Bird Area (IBA), one of the most critical remaining parcels of Atlantic forest. The Front Range count will likely yield 75 species and will take place on May 31st. The Peruvian count yielded approximately 150 species and took place April 21 -24. What is Bird-a-thon? Sponsors pledge a dollar amount for each (or all) species seen during a certain period. Then, our teams will take to the trails in Colorado and Brazil to count as many species as possible. Once the actual count is complete, Audubon Colorado will send you a list of the birds sighted and the amount of your tax deductible contribution. If you would like to sponsor our teams or even participate, please contact our office at 303-415-0130 or rstromp@audubon.org.

Audubon Colorado's Southwest Regional Office

With a generous contribution from Terese Hershey, Audubon Colorado has become a protective presence for wildlife in Southwestern Colorado. Over the last year, Audubon has established a new chapter and initiated a youth environmental education program for kids in the Pagosa Springs School District and beyond.

The newly founded Weminuche Audubon Society chapter has been hosting regular birding outings, engaging in hands-on projects in the region and sponsoring regular informative talks. Members have also become more involved in local planning processes and political decision-making that impacts birds and their habitat.

Audubon developed and led a "Curious Naturalist" program for youth grades 2 to 4 from the Pagosa Springs area. Youth participants participated in hands-on observation and learning exercises while hiking around Four Mile Ranch, an Audubon Sanctuary owned by Ms. Hershey.

Audubon and Toyota: Together Green



The National Audubon Society and Toyota have launched *TogetherGreen*, a nationwide Audubon program to fund conservation

projects, train environmental leaders, and offer volunteer opportunities that significantly benefit the environment.

A \$20 million Toyota grant—the largest Audubon has received in its 103-year history—will fund *TogetherGreen* for five years, enabling Audubon to expand the scope and reach of its internationally-known conservation programs.

TogetherGreen will include three program components:

- **Innovation Grants** to fund dozens of on-the-ground projects each year that employ creative approaches and engage diverse communities to help achieve measurable land, water and/or energy conservation results. Grant requirements will broaden project participation and promote innovation by uniting Audubon's national network with environmental and community partners.

- **Conservation Fellowships** to train and foster up to 200 promising environmental leaders who can serve as role models, expert guides and organizers for engaging new and diverse audiences in effective conservation action.
- **Volunteer Days** to be offered at Audubon Centers and other locations nationwide, providing hands-on opportunities to address environmental problems and take part in restoration activities.

TogetherGreen will also reach a diverse array of audiences through *TogetherGreen.org*. The site will help visitors discover dozens of individual conservation actions to help them independently "green" their lives. It will provide opportunities to challenge friends to take conservation actions of their own. Visitors will be able to follow the evolving conservation efforts and achievements of *TogetherGreen* projects, and nominate and celebrate the work of environmental heroes and projects across the country.

"The stakes for the future of our environment are tremendous and Toyota and Audubon share a commitment to inspire and empower Americans to make a positive difference," says John Flicker, NAS President. "With our two organizations working together, we plan to see true and measurable results from *TogetherGreen*."

Featured Colorado Bird:

Lark Bunting



Lark Bunting populations have declined by 64% since 1967. Although Colorado's state bird is common on the Great Plains, the Lark Bunting continues to be threatened by intensive agricultural operations that alter or disturb nesting habitat. Suburban sprawl on the front range continues to push the bird eastward leaving only a few nests near urban centers.