

# WILD



# NEWS

Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge

Nature Program Calendar

April - June 2004

## Public Input

### We Want To Hear From You!

Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR is *your* refuge and the public has an important role in refuge planning. On a recurring basis, the refuge staff prepares plans and other documents to guide our wildlife, habitat and public use programs. This is your refuge, and your programs, and we want to know what you think about how we're doing. Visit the Refuge web-page at: <http://rockymountainarsenal.fws.gov>, and "click" on Public Input. There you will find any draft documents such as management plans, environmental assessments, and compatibility determinations that are available for public review. Some times we won't be seeking comments on any documents and at other times, there may be multiple draft documents available for review and comment. Comment periods will vary, depending on the kind of document we are posting, but, always for at least 14 days. You can respond via e-mail directly to the website, or write to us with your comments or questions.

So, let us know what you think. Check the website a couple times a month, ask questions, make comments and get involved in your refuge.

## the RETURN of the SWAINSON'S

By Jennifer Keyser

Illustration by Liz Biesiot



The Refuge welcomes the annual return of one of its "signature" raptors, Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*). Each Spring the Swainson's returns to nesting areas in central

and western North America after a journey of up to 14,000 miles from its wintering grounds in the pampas lands of Brazil and Argentina, a journey which can take two months.

Swainson's hawk is slightly smaller than its Red-tailed cousin, with a body length of 19 to 22 inches and weight of 1½ to 2½ pounds. Its wingspan is 48 to 56 inches, just longer than that of the Red-tailed. Swainson's hawks can be recognized in flight by their pale wing linings and dark flight feathers. Perhaps their most readily distinguishing feature is their rust colored chest "bib", which is easy to see as they hunt from atop utility poles or bare trees.

Swainson's hawks are mainly insectivorous. Other prey sources include small mammals, songbirds, reptiles and amphibians. These hawks are thought to be monogamous and breeding pairs may return to previous nesting sites. Males build loose stick nests on the ground, on ledges or in trees in which breeding females will lay 2 to 4 whitish-colored,

brown-flecked eggs. Males help with the eggs' incubation, which lasts about 30 days.

In response to declines in the Swainson's numbers, conservation efforts have been designed to help save it. An international joint study in the 1990's involving the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies determined many Swainson's were dying from the effects of a pesticide similar to DDT being used in South America. Biologists there are advising farmers on substitute pesticides which won't harm the hawks. Hopefully, this step and others will help ensure that this long distance migrant will return to the Refuge for years to come.

#### Sources:

- *Bureau of Land Management* - Idaho Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area Website: [www.id.blm.gov/bopnca/swainson.htm](http://www.id.blm.gov/bopnca/swainson.htm)
- *Texas Parks & Wildlife* Website: [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/wild/birds/swainson.htm](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/wild/birds/swainson.htm)
- *University Of Michigan's Museum of Zoology Animal Diversity* Website: [http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/accounts/buteo/b\\_swainsoni\\$ narrative.html](http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/accounts/buteo/b_swainsoni$ narrative.html)
- *The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds* (Western Region); Alfred A. Knopf, New York (1993), p. 538

# REFUGE VIEWS

Dean Rundle, Refuge Manager  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



**NOTE:** A Federal judge has ordered the Department of the Interior to be disconnected from the Internet for an indefinite period of time. Please continue to check our website periodically. The Service regrets the inconvenience.

These are exciting times for Rocky Mountain Arsenal. The planning, vision and hard work of many people – our volunteers, our partners in the U.S. Army and Shell, local officials and citizens, and your refuge staff – are about to become reality. Over one third of Arsenal land has been removed from the Superfund Site, and in March, 2004, nearly 5,000 acres of wonderful wildlife habitat will be transferred from Army control to the Fish and Wildlife Service. Nearly 11 years since the passage of the “Refuge Act”, and eight years since the signing of the Record of Decision – Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge will be a reality. Look for the announcement in this issue of a public celebration to be held April 17. We hope that many of you will join us to mark the birth of this refuge – one that we know will be an asset to Commerce City, Denver and all of Colorado for generations to come.

WildNews brings you our calendar of events for the next three months, and we hope that you will find time to come to your refuge and enjoy wildlife “in your own backyard”. If you are a regular visitor, I encourage you to help us spread the news and invite your friends and neighbors to visit RMANWR. This land belongs to all of you and as the spring bird migration and deer fawning season approaches, the wonders of nature are available to all. We hope to see you soon!

Dean Rundle, Refuge Manager

*Reservations are not required for the following programs.*

### **Wild Treks Drop-in Program**

*Saturdays and Sundays*

*8:00 am - 4:30 pm*

Spring is in the air! Get outdoors and visit your local national wildlife refuge! The bees are buzz'n around the honeybee tree, wildflowers dot the prairie, and newborn wildlife check out their new surroundings. Take advantage of the Refuge's hiking trails to observe and photograph wildlife.

### **Gone Fish'n**

*Saturdays and Sundays*

*8:00 am - sunset*

Refuge lakes are a popular attraction to anglers of all ages. Here's your opportunity to get “hooked.” Each weekend beginning April 18 to October 10, you can enjoy catch-and-release fishing. A recreation fee of \$3.00 per day for anglers 18 years of age and older is required to fish. Check out our web page to learn more about the fishing program.

### **Scout Packs**

*Saturdays and Sundays*

*8:00 am - 4:30 pm*

Calling all scouts! Head out to the Refuge trails for some wildlife fun! Check out our backpacks filled with field study guides, binoculars, and activities and get on your way to earning badge merits.

### **Wild Rides**

*Saturdays 10:00 am - noon*

*Sundays 1:00-3:00 pm*

Springtime brings new beginnings at the Refuge. Join us during this two-hour guided trolley-tram tour as we search for fawns, prairie dog pups, and other young wildlife. Swainson's hawks, lark buntings, northern orioles, and red-winged blackbirds make their annual spring appearance. Don't forget your cameras and binoculars – you never know what you might see!

*Reservations are required for these popular programs. Space is limited. Call (303) 289-0930 to register.*

For all programs please wear sturdy shoes and dress accordingly to the weather. If you have questions about which programs would be appropriate for certain ages, please ask when making your reservation. All children must be accompanied by an adult. All programs and activities are FREE. The driver must show a photo I.D. to enter the Refuge. Please sign-in at the Visitor Center upon arrival. Assistant dogs are welcome.

### **Wildlife Watch**

*Saturday April 3 2-6 pm*

*Sunday April 4 2-6 pm*

Stop, look, and listen...for wildlife that is! Learn new outdoor skills and sharpen your senses to the sights and sounds of nature at this free program offered by the Colorado Division of Wildlife. See flyer insert for more details.

### **Here Comes Peter Cottontail**

*Saturday April 10 1:00-3:00 pm*

Hop on down for a fun-filled day of crafts, a puppet show, and an Easter egg hunt around Lake Mary. Recommended for children ages 4-10. Parent or guardian must be present.

*Register early for these FREE activities by calling (303) 289-0930*

### Easter Guided Hike

*Sunday, April 11 10:00 am-12:00 pm*  
We've got rabbits! Easter wouldn't be the same without seeing some of these soft, furry creatures!

### Conserving the Future, Remembering the Past

*Saturday April 17 1:00-4:00 pm*  
Become a part of history and help us celebrate the establishment of YOUR National Wildlife Refuge! Tours, exhibits, and guided nature walks will be offered. A brief ceremony will be held at 2:30. The Refuge opens to visitors at 1:00 pm for this special day.

### Fishing Clinic

*Sunday April 18 10:00 am-noon*  
Never touched a fishing pole? Tired of being outsmarted by the fish? Learn some hands on fishing techniques and guidelines from our most experienced anglers along the shores of Lake Mary and Lake Ladora!

### Meet the Natives!

*Saturday April 24 1:00-3:00 pm*  
Join us this Earth Day to learn how to use native plants in your home landscape to reduce your weekend yard work, conserve water while maintaining a colorful display. Take a short walk to see native plants and animals on the Refuge.

### Photo Tour

*Sunday, April 25 8:00-10:00 am*  
Shutterbugs rejoice! Catch some morning light and keep your eyes peeled for those unique shots.

### It Makes Scents!

*Saturday May 1 1:00-3:00 pm*  
Have you ever wanted to assist a Biologist with there work? Well, here is your chance! Take part in an exciting scent station survey, which will help determine the abundance and distribution of mammals in the Refuge.

### Intermediate Bike the Refuge

*Sunday May 2 3:00 pm-5:00 pm*  
Ready for some fresh air and exercise? Join a guided bike tour through the Refuge and see wildlife like you have never seen it before! Helmet required. Fat-puncture-proof tires recommended. Experienced riders only.

### Flying My Way!

*Saturday May 8 4:00 pm-6:00 pm*  
Over a hundred species of birds have been known to migrate through or to Colorado. This is your chance to find out who some of these are, where they're heading from, and what their destination is. We also will go out on a guided tour in search of these winged migrants.

### Mother's Day Guided Hike

*Sunday, May 9 10:00 am - noon*  
Bring mom out for a relaxing day and enjoy mother nature at its best!

### Froggy Night Out

*Saturday May 15 6:00-8:00 pm*  
Do you know the difference between frogs and toads? You will after this evening program. Be prepared for an adventure hike around Lake Mary to observe the beginning of nature's night shift and listen to the sounds of an evening frog chorus.



### Friends of a Feather

*Sunday, May 16 8:00-10:00 am*  
Don't miss your chance to see the Refuge's spring and summer winged visitors.

### Living On The Ledge: Nesting Strategies of Colonial Birds

*Saturday, May 22 1:00-3:00 pm*  
Are you a bird enthusiast, aspiring artist, or drawn to remote islands? Join this year's International Migratory Bird Day artist and biologist, Ram Papish, to learn more about his six field sessions with his favorite type of colonial nesters, seabirds. Following the slide presentation, Ram will lead everyone through a bird sketching workshop for those interested.

### Photo Tour

*Sunday, May 23 5:00-7:00 pm*  
Pack your camera and lots of film for this evening opportunity to photograph wildlife!

### Refuge Nightlife

*Saturday May 29 6:00-8:00 pm*  
Join refuge staff for a relaxing evening hayride and discover the sights and sounds of the Refuge at night. Listen for the evening sounds of coyotes, frogs and other wildlife.

### Family Bike the Refuge

*Sunday May 30 3:00 pm-5:00 pm*  
Want to do something with the whole family? How about a leisurely bike ride and a chance to see wildlife. Join us for a slow and easy bike ride through the Refuge. Helmet required. Fat-puncture-proof tires recommended.

### National Trails & Fishing Week

*Saturday June 5 8:00 am-8:00 pm*  
This is it! Bring the whole family for a day of fishing fun. All fishing fees will be waived on this day! Equipment and lessons will be provided to those who need it.

### Guided Refuge Hike

*Sunday, June 6 10:00 am - noon*  
Take some time to enjoy the great outdoors and become acquainted with nearly nine miles of Refuge trails.

### Evening Under the Stars

*Saturday June 12 6:00-9:00 pm*  
Get away from the hustle and bustle of the city to participate in this evening birdwalk and hayride. Watch for owls, bats and other nocturnal creatures. As darkness falls, take a closer look at exotic creatures in the starry sky.

### Friends of a Feather

*Sunday, June 13 8:00-10:00 am*  
Birders take note! Look for a variety of species from songbirds to raptors to waterfowl.

### Burrow Babes

*Saturday June 19 1:00 pm-3:00 pm*  
It's the perfect time of the year to see baby prairie dogs leave their burrows for the first time. Come out and learn all there is to know about this often misunderstood keystone species. A guided tour will be provided.



### Father's Day Bike the Refuge

*Sunday June 20 10:00 am-noon*  
Bring the joy of sighting nature while biking wooded trails full of wild surprises. It's the ideal festive day to bring your dad or kid(s), and your bikes out for a nice and easy guided bike ride. Helmet required. Fat-puncture-proof tires recommended.

Illustrations by Liz Biesiot



## It's Telemetry, My Deer

*Saturday June 26 1:00-3:00 pm*  
Join Biologist Sherry Skipper on a search and find expedition. Sherry will be explaining the current deer study. Then you can try your hand at using the latest in telemetry equipment.

## Photo Tour

*Sunday, June 27 8:00-10:00 am*  
Add some of the Refuge's colorful wildflowers to your photo collection!

## The following special programs are sponsored by the RMA Wildlife Society.

*Light refreshments will be provided following each program. Reservations are required. Space is limited.*

## Photography Workshop & Tour

*Saturday, May 1 7:00-10:00 am*  
Learn all about camera settings and lighting to get the best from your pictures from expert photographers Suzanne O'Neil and Dave Showalter. Then head out to the woodlands and

lakes to practice your new skills! Take home a print ready for framing that was taken on the Refuge. Light refreshments will be provided. *Register for this popular program early!*

## Bird Walk

*Saturday, May 8 8:00-11:00 am*  
Join our Refuge volunteer naturalist Dave Rhoades for this wonderful opportunity to explore the world of birding. Wander through wetland and woodland locations to catch a glimpse of your feathered favorites or some you've never seen to add to your checklist.



## Wildflower Walk

*Saturday, June 12 9:00-11:00 am*  
During the spring, wildflowers create a vivid landscape of color. Range Management Specialist Terry Wright will take you on a walk to see these magnificent native blooms. Learn how to create your own native wildflower garden at home.

# 2004 Grassland BioBlitz

Get ready for the 2004 Grasslands BioBlitz! From noon, Friday, June 25 to noon, Saturday, June 26, see scientists in action and discover the biodiversity of our grasslands! Activities will range from fascinating presentations about bats, spiders, bugs and plants. Guided hikes and informational displays will let you learn more about the biodiversity of our native grasslands. Please visit <http://www.grasslands-bioblitz.org> for more details or attend the Plan Jeffco meeting on April 24th at 9 am at the Jefferson County Open Space offices (700 Jefferson County Parkway, Golden).

*Printed on recycled paper.*



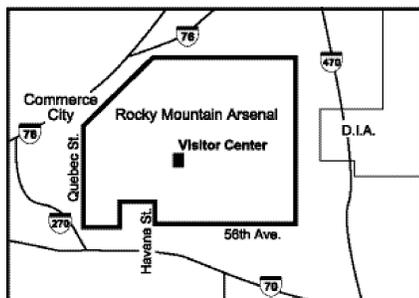
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Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge  
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Commerce City, CO  
80022-1748

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

## Directions to the Refuge:

*Enter the Refuge at 56th Avenue and Havana.  
Parking is available at the Visitor Center.*



Visit our website at <http://rockymountainarsenal.fws.gov>.