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1989 Spring Compendium of Wildlife Appreciation Opportunities

# Colorado's Wildlife Company

COLORADO DIVISION OF WILDLIFE



Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program



Watchable Wildlife Program

## Peregrine Falcons in Canyons of Downtown Denver



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/Peregrine falcons in canyons of downtown



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# People of Colorado Rescue Peregrines

by Mary Taylor Gray

The five peregrine falcons that soared among the canyons of downtown Denver last fall captured the hearts of the public and brought invaluable media attention to the plight of endangered species in Colorado. But these birds weren't the first peregrines released in the state. In fact, they represent the high point of a nearly 15-year-old peregrine reintroduction program conducted by the Colorado Division of Wildlife in cooperation with the United States Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and Fish and Wildlife Service. This reintroduction program has released more than 500 falcons in Colorado since 1976. The majority of these recovery efforts have been supported by the people of Colorado through contributions to the Nongame Check-Off on their state income tax returns.

The peregrine falcon, threatened and endangered in Colorado and nationally, prefers to nest on high, precipitous cliffs and river gorges such as those found in the Rocky Mountains. The Denver release was a conscious shift in peregrine recovery efforts to the Front Range, one of the first areas to lose falcons when the peregrine population began to decline 30 years ago. However, the choice of Denver as the optimal Front Range reintroduction site was not a foregone conclusion. Release of an endangered species must be carefully controlled, and Denver's suitability as peregrine habitat was closely scrutinized by Division of Wildlife biologists before any plans were made. Was the urban canyon a safe place for falcons? Was there sufficient and appropriate prey for them to feed upon? Would an urban release threaten support for the ongoing wild release program?

"Once the biological questions were answered, we became excited about the outstanding educational opportunities," explained the Division's terrestrial nongame specialist, Judy Sheppard. The metropolitan setting offered a forum for public awareness and education not found in the wild release. "We realized we couldn't pass up the chance to make people aware of so many things – peregrines, endangered species, recovery of endangered species, urban wildlife, and wildlife in general."

As a result, five peregrine falcon chicks were raised by biologists in a hackbox (an artificial nesting structure) atop a 23-story office building in downtown Denver. When strong enough to fly and hunt on their own, the young falcons were released to the wild canyons of urban Denver.

Ultimately, the entire peregrine recovery program, both wild and urban, owes its success to support from the people of Colorado. As a project under the Nongame Program, it is funded solely through the state income tax check-off, federal aid, and private donations. Says Sheppard, "Thanks to the Nongame Check-Off and contributions from the public, we're within three years of accomplishing our recovery objective: 31 breeding pairs of peregrine falcons in Colorado."

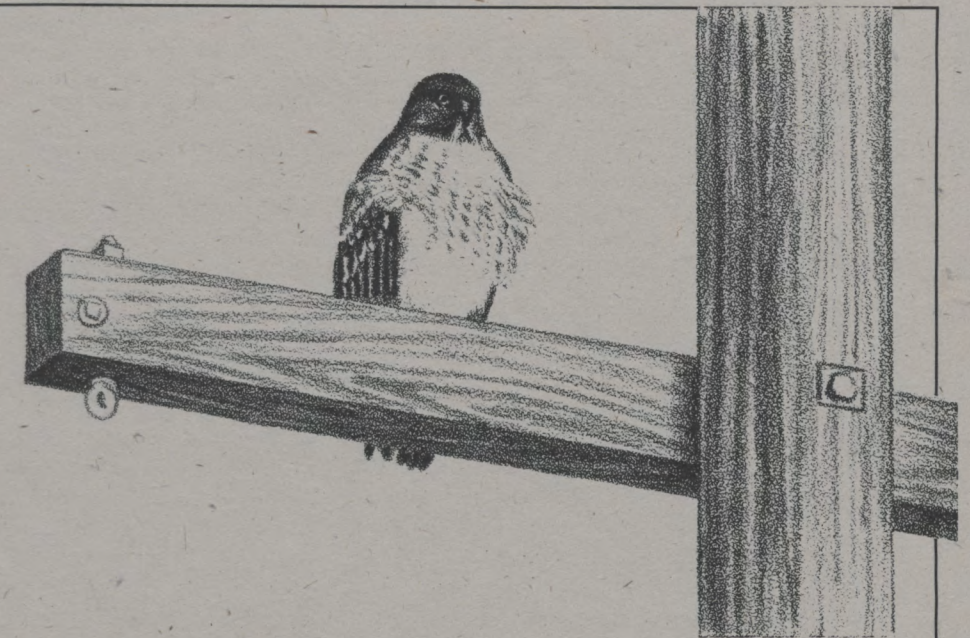
## Where Have All the Young Birds Gone?

Many people are asking why, after all the media attention in the fall, we have heard no more about Denver's peregrines. The answer is simple: they migrated. Peregrine falcons winter in Mexico and South America, returning to North America in the spring. Of

course, there are no guarantees any of Denver's peregrines will return. They may take up residence elsewhere along the Front Range or they may not survive the long migratory flight. Because of the uncertainty, the Division has plans for two more releases downtown in 1989 and 1990.



Peregrine illustrations based on photos by Wendy Shattil and Bob Rozinski



## Urban Wildlife Partnership

by Mary Taylor Gray

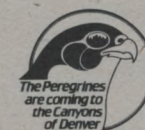
Trout, elk, and bighorn sheep are the images most often associated with Colorado wildlife. But what about the deer nibbling shrubbery in Boulder yards, the beavers that feast on trees in Denver parks, the red tailed hawks watching for Cherry Creek mice from power poles in Aurora, and the coyotes who hunt rabbits along Stapleton's runways? These urban dwellers are wildlife too, and the focus of a new coalition, the Urban Wildlife Partnership. The purpose of the Partnership is to promote public awareness, appreciation and involvement with urban wildlife – those animals that coexist, often unseen, with man in an urban setting.

The success of the Peregrine Partnership spawned this new *ad hoc* association, which includes the Division of Wildlife, the Colorado Wildlife Federation, the Denver Audubon Society, and the Denver Museum of Natural History. The Urban Wildlife Partnership also includes two "consulting" partners: wildlife photographer Wendy Shattil and book publisher Rick Rinehart of Roberts Rinehart, Inc. of Boulder.

Shattil was the original catalyst for the concept of an urban wildlife project. Attending a wildlife photography awards function in London, she realized that most wildlife awareness efforts seemed to reach only people who were already aware and involved with wildlife issues. Her exposure to London's innovative urban wildlife program showed her that urban wildlife could be a vehicle to bring the message of conservation and wildlife appreciation to large numbers of people in the community.

The Partnership has several specific projects: an urban wildlife book; a wildlife photography club that will be the source of photos for the book, thereby offering the general public a chance to get involved; and a permanent urban wildlife exhibit at the Denver Museum of Natural History, scheduled to open March 1990.

The exhibit opening will coincide with the 1990 National Wildlife Federation annual meeting, which will center around the theme of urban wildlife. The 55th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference will also be held in Denver during March of 1990. Denver has been selected as the site for this convention because it is somewhat unique in the United States for its wide diversity in species and habitat within a metropolitan area. Ultimately, the Partnership would like to see Denver emerge as a nationwide center for the appreciation and study of urban wildlife. People interested in becoming active in the Partnership should call Rich Larson, Colorado Division of Wildlife, 291-7328; Betsy Webb, Denver Museum of Natural History, 370-6354; or the Colorado Wildlife Federation, 830-2557.



more inside



# TAX CHECK-OFF ACCOMPLISHMENTS 1987-1988

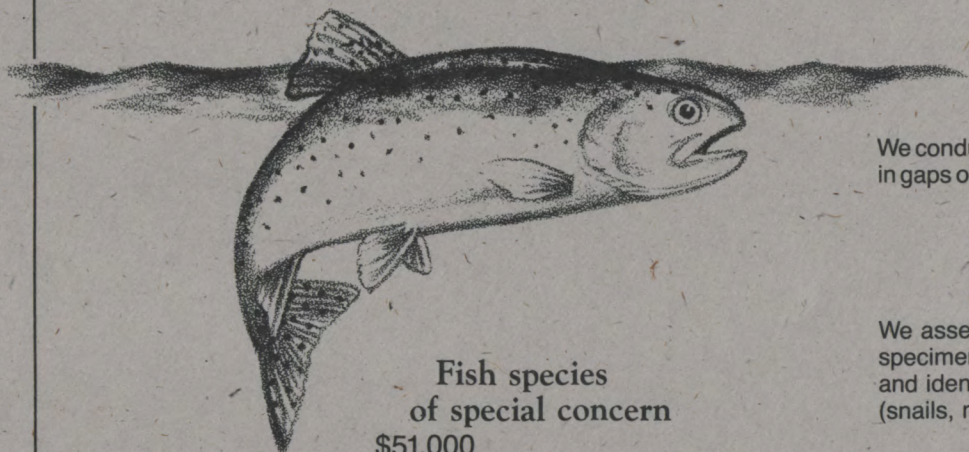
By Judy Sheppard and Jim Bennett, Nongame Wildlife Specialists, Colorado Division of Wildlife



The following projects were supported totally or in part by donations to the Nongame Income Tax Check-Off. The people of Colorado gave \$372,000 to the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program from their 1987 tax returns. This money was matched with federal dollars. THANKS, COLORADOANS! This is what we did with your money:

## Greenback cutthroat trout \$28,000

We monitored historic and reintroduced populations; stocked suitable sites with 25,000 hatchery-reared fry to establish or maintain populations; studied responses of four populations to catch-release fishing; and searched for suitable reintroduction sites – all in South Platte and Arkansas drainages.



## Fish species of special concern \$51,000

As part of resource inventories, we surveyed streams statewide and at specific locations, i.e., 40-50 sites associated with the super colliery environmental assessment report, the Pawnee National Grasslands, and potential reintroduction sites within state wildlife areas.

## Colorado River cutthroat trout \$21,000

We monitored and protected existing populations; surveyed for suitable West Slope reintroduction sites.

## McPhee Reservoir and the Dolores River \$1,500

We studied the effects that stocking McPhee Reservoir with warmwater sportfishes would have on Dolores River native fishes; surveyed the potential foodbase for reintroduced river otters.

## Nongame Program evaluation \$11,000

Contract with the Wildlife Management Institute (a national, nonprofit organization) to evaluate the staffing, biological and public services aspects of the Division of Wildlife's Nongame Program, to assess the basis for internal and external perception of the program and to suggest alternative funding mechanisms.

## Rio Grande cutthroat trout \$40,000

We surveyed for potential reintroduction sites; established brood lakes to allow captive spawning and rearing of fry; and monitored and protected established populations.

## Amphibians and reptiles \$750

We conducted a spring survey for amphibians and reptiles to fill in gaps on the distribution and abundance of several rare species.

## Colorado freshwater molluscs \$2,000

We assembled the available distributional information and specimens; assessed the biological status; and prepared maps and identification keys for all Colorado freshwater molluscs (snails, mussels, and clams).

## Charophytes – water quality indicators \$2,400

We assembled a substantial database focused on the distribution of Colorado's charophytes (algae) to encourage the use of charophytes as habitat quality indicators.



## Endangered Wildlife Program roundtable \$2,000

An invitational forum hosted by the Division's Nongame Program and the Colorado Wildlife Advisory Council designed to solicit input on program objectives, emphasis and support.

## Bald eagle \$17,300

Banding and monitoring of nestlings statewide; statewide midwinter count; volunteer watch at Barr Lake State Park near Denver.

## Colorado squawfish – humpback chub \$92,000

We standardized spring and fall monitoring; and studied the predation and competition between our endangered big-river fishes and non-native sportfishes.

## Greater prairie chicken \$61,900

We managed habitat; attempted to transplant; monitored historic sites and transplant areas; conducted a lek (courtship arena) census on occupied range in Yuma County; and researched breeding season movement and habitat use in NE Colorado.

## Lesser prairie chicken \$55,000

We conducted lek surveys; and transplanted to Pueblo County; researched population trends and habitat use in SE Colorado.

## Whooping crane \$14,200

We studied habitat selection and behavior on stopover sites in Colorado.

## Upland sandpiper \$2,000

We worked cooperatively with a graduate study on breeding biology and habitat use in NE Colorado.

## Plains sharp-tailed grouse \$27,800

We researched population status, distribution, and seasonal habitat use in Douglas County; and transplanted and monitored populations in Las Animas County.

## Cottonwood regeneration \$14,500

We studied the status, condition, trends and major problems concerning riparian habitats along major drainages within Colorado.

## Greater sandhill crane \$9,700

Banding of nestlings, staging ground count, nesting pair survey in northwest Colorado.

## White pelican \$650

Monitoring and banding of nestlings in northeast Colorado.

## Response of selected wildlife species to aspen silvicultural practices \$14,100

We studied nest site selection and foraging behavior of accipiters (short-winged hawks) in mature aspen habitats.



## Sandsage-Bluestem prairie restoration \$18,700

We studied habitat restoration on the South Tamarack, South Platte Wildlife Area in NE Colorado.

## Osprey \$200

We monitored nesting and productivity in SW Colorado.

## Black-footed ferret \$2,000

We reported on follow-up and preliminary evaluation of potential reintroduction sites statewide.

## River otter \$68,600

We conducted statewide monitoring and research on establishing a self-sustaining population of river otters in SW Colorado.

## Peregrine falcon \$145,000

Conducted statewide survey of historical and potential nesting sites; monitoring of occupancy, productivity and eggshell thickness. Fostering, hacking and manipulating nest sites, including downtown Denver. Evaluation of U.S. Forest Service land for potential nest sites.

## Keep Your Eyes Peeled

Bud Smith, Colorado Division of Wildlife, NE Region

Chances are good for seeing wildlife in northern Colorado over the next several months.

**Peregrine Falcons** Several pairs should be returning to the Poudre Canyon and Rocky Mountain National Park from May through early July.

**Sage Grouse** These large birds will be on selected booming grounds in North Park. Best time to see them is May and early June. Contact the DOW's N.E. Regional Office for information on self-guided tours.

**Bighorn Sheep** May and early June is the lambing period for sheep, so watch for ewes and lambs throughout the Big Thompson and Poudre canyons during this period.

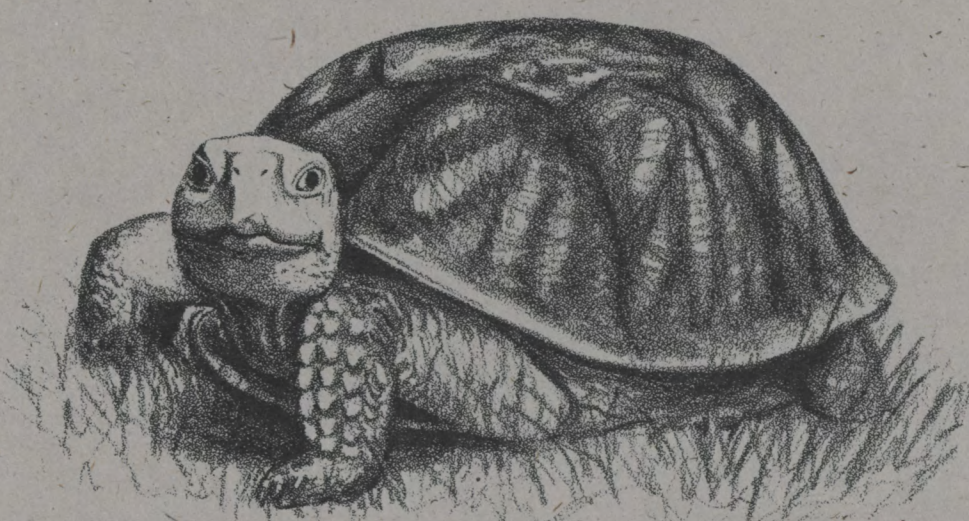
**River Otters** Apparently some of these animals have migrated from transplants in the mountains and have taken up residence in the Fort Collins area. Watch for them along the Poudre River corridor from the mouth of the Poudre Canyon through Fort Collins.

**Waterfowl** Watch for nesting ducks and geese along ponds, lakes and streams throughout the Northeast Region during April, May and June.

**Wood Ducks** From April through June look for nesting wood ducks along wooded areas on the Poudre and S. Platte River drainages. Numerous nesting boxes have been placed along these drainages over the last few years to attract these flashy migrants.

**Sandhill Cranes, Snow Geese** During March and April you'll sometimes find these migrants stopping for a few days on lakes and ponds in Eastern Colorado. The Red Lion State Wildlife area, east of Crook, is a good place to start looking.

**Upland Sandpipers** Fields and pastures north of the South Platte River, from Sterling to Ovid, are good places to watch for these birds from April through July.



## Calling All Parts of Colorado

- NE Region:** A computerized bird list including over 1,900 species from the Caribbean, Central America and North America is now available for purchase (\$5.00). This database/spreadsheet program (MS or PC DOS) developed by Colorado Division of Wildlife biologists helps birders keep track of life lists, trip lists, etc. and is easily adapted for personal use. (303) 484-2836, Jim Dennis.
- NW Region:** We'd like volunteers to help us build trails and wildlife watching sites at Walker and West Lake State Wildlife areas near Grand Junction, Colorado. (303) 248-7175, Bill Haggerty.
- Central Region:** We would like to invite birders to help with the Colorado Bird Atlas (303) 333-0161, Hugh Kingery.
- SW Region:** Come on down to the Monte Vista Crane Festival! Bus tours to crane viewing areas, educational programs, wildlife fine art and photography exhibits, crafts and displays. March 18-19 – call for reservations. (719) 852-4773, 852-3568.
- SE Region:** Tentative plans show need for volunteers to help run our walleye spawning operations during March and April at Bonny, John Martin, and Pueblo reservoirs. We also may need volunteers to help with creel surveys on the upper South Platte reservoirs and streams in the South Platte area. Is anybody out there interested? (719) 473-2945, Doug Krieger.

## Ripping Off the Check-Off

Did you know that the contribution to the Nongame Income Tax Check-Off in Colorado has decreased an average of 13 percent after each additional check-off appeared on the tax form? Evidently the size of the contribution pie remains fairly constant, but in order to cut more slices, every slice becomes smaller.

The idea for a nongame income tax check-off was initiated by the State of Colorado in 1977. More than 30 other states followed suit by enacting their own legislation to provide an income tax check-off fund for wildlife programs. Pennsylvania protected its nongame check-off from competition by prohibiting additional check-offs. But in Colorado, the 1989 tax payer will have four check-off opportunities: Nongame Wildlife Program, Domestic Abuse Program, U.S. Olympic Committee contribution, and the Colorado Veterans Memorial Tribute contribution.



## Spring Wildlife Specials

- March 18-19 Monte Vista Crane Festival  
Ski Hi Park, Sherman Avenue  
Monte Vista, Colorado  
(719) 852-4773, 852-3568 for reservations
- April 1 Wildlife Photo Contest poster available  
Colorado Division of Wildlife, Nongame  
(303) 291-7272, Judy Sheppard
- April 8 Wildlife Watching Field Trip  
Wildlife of the Poudre Canyon  
Colorado Division of Wildlife, NE Region  
Register by April 1  
(303) 484-2836, Bud Smith
- April 8-29 Intermediate Birding Class and Field Trips  
Denver Audubon Society  
(303) 860-1471, Jean Maguire
- April 17 INCOME TAX DUE. REMEMBER THE NONGAME CHECK-OFF!
- May 5-7 Rites of Spring: Blue Grouse and White-Tailed Ptarmigan  
Field Discovery Seminar  
Cloud Ridge Naturalists  
(303) 459-3248, Audrey Benedict
- May 13 Wildlife Watching Field Trip  
Wildlife of the South Platte River bottom  
Colorado Division of Wildlife  
Register by May 6  
(303) 484-2836, Bud Smith
- May 26-29 Mammals of the Foothills Field Discovery Seminar  
Cloud Ridge Naturalists  
(303) 459-3248, Audrey Benedict
- June WATCH FOR THE COLORADO WILDLIFE COMPANY'S SUMMER COMPENDIUM
- June 11-17 Outdoor Adventure Workshop for Teachers  
Ponderosa Lodge west of Salida  
Colorado Division of Wildlife and others  
Register by April 14  
(303) 291-7262, Carol Bylsma Jones
- All Spring Barr Lake Nature Center  
Viewing aquatic life, birds, and other wildlife  
(303) 659-1160 for complete program schedule
- Ongoing Urban Wildlife Photo Club  
1st Tuesday of each month  
(303) 721-1991, Wendy Shattil, Bob Rozinski
- Ongoing Volunteer Bald Eagle Watch  
Barr Lake State Park  
(303) 659-1160, Mike Carter
- Ongoing Peregrine Falcon Volunteer  
Colorado Wildlife Federation  
(303) 830-2557

## Where Do We Go From Here?

Much has been accomplished. Much more remains to be done. Colorado's list of threatened or endangered wildlife includes 23 species with an additional 10 listed as "species of special concern."

The problem is that all the work thus far has, quite naturally, focused on species that are already threatened and endangered. Due to funding limitations, very little, if any, attention has been directed toward species of special concern (those known or thought to be declining) and indicator species (those most sensitive to environmental changes). Meanwhile, those factors which cause wildlife to become threatened or endangered – habitat loss, air and water pollution – are continuing at an ever-increasing rate. Thus, the gap between what needs to be done and what can be done is growing wider.

Is there hope? Yes.

The Colorado Division of Wildlife's long-range plans call for increasing emphasis and spending on nongame and endangered wildlife management. But the key to the Division's ability to carry out that plan is funding. Several different avenues are being explored to generate additional funds for this purpose. In the meantime, the Nongame Income Tax Check-Off remains the primary source of funding for this important work.

(Thank you to Jim Hekkers, Information and Education Manager, Central Region, Colorado DOW)

## What's the Difference Between a Duck?

The Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program and the Watchable Wildlife Program are not the same. Yes, there are definite similarities: both programs are part of the Colorado Division of Wildlife; both work with some of the same animals; both offer wildlife appreciation opportunities other than fishing, hunting, and trapping; and both serve the same public. But the function of each program is completely different.

The Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program (informally referred to as the Nongame Program) performs a management function. It carries on traditional wildlife management activities, including population inventory, habitat improvement and protection and research. The Nongame Program manages only wildlife species that are not fished for, hunted, or trapped. Many of these animals are considered threatened or endangered, species of special concern, or species indicative of habitat quality.

The Watchable Wildlife program, on the other hand, provides educational and recreational wildlife opportunities. It is not involved in any wildlife management activities, and it includes all Colorado wildlife – fish, game animals, and nongame alike.

In reality, the brand new Watchable Wildlife Program is an offshoot of the 17-year old Nongame Program. Encouragement of nonconsumptive enjoyment of wildlife was one of the original goals of the Nongame Program. As participation in nonconsumptive activities grew, the Division of Wildlife decided this goal merited program status. Because the funds generated by the Income Tax Check-Off can be used only for the "protection and preservation of nongame wildlife and its habitat," the Watchable Wildlife Program must generate funds from other sources, including private donations, foundation grants, and various fund raising efforts. So now you know. (Thanks to Cliff Hamilton, Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife.)



**Colorado's Wildlife Company** is brought to you by the Colorado Division of Wildlife's Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program and Watchable Wildlife Program. This Spring 1989 Compendium of Wildlife Appreciation Opportunities has been mailed to you because it has come to our attention that you might very well enjoy knowing about and participating in these opportunities.

The Compendium will be published quarterly – Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter – and will focus on wildlife and activities associated with the Nongame and Watchable Wildlife programs. It is mailed free of charge to anyone interested in Colorado's living wildlife heritage.

If we were correct about your interest and you want to remain on our mailing list, or if you want to add a friend's name to our list, please complete and return Colorado's Wildlife Company shareholder certificate below.



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