

NR6/125.13/1991/SPRING

1991 Spring Compendium of Wildlife Appreciation Opportunities

c.2
**Colorado's
Wildlife
Company**

COLORADO DIVISION OF WILDLIFE



Nongame and Endangered
Wildlife Program



Watchable Wildlife Program



Urban Wildlife

red fox

Based on a photograph by Shattil/Rozinski

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/Urban wildlife

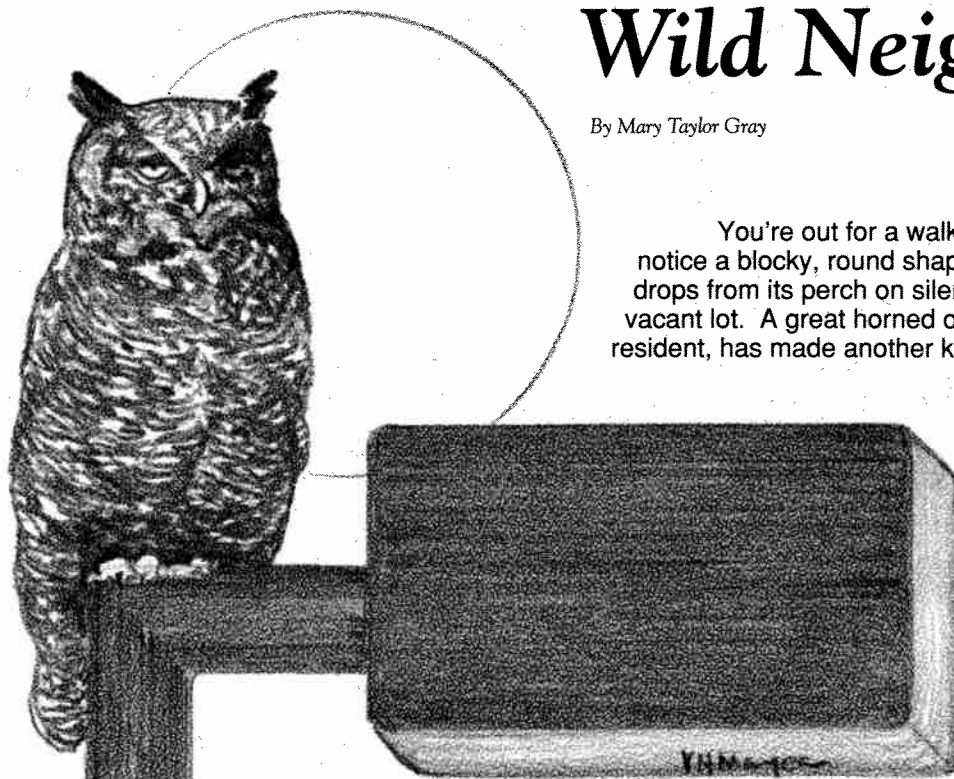


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Wild Neighbors

By Mary Taylor Gray

You're out for a walk in your neighborhood one night when you notice a blocky, round shape atop a lamppost. Suddenly the shape drops from its perch on silent wings, swooping down into a nearby vacant lot. A great horned owl, hunter of the night and common urban resident, has made another kill.



great horned owl

In cemeteries, city parks, airport grounds, drainage canals, undeveloped lots, playgrounds and backyards, many species of wildlife have moved back into the city. Or perhaps they never left, but adapted to life around people. We're often surprised when we meet wildlife in an urban setting, but the number and variety of animals living right under our noses is surprising, and delightful. Early morning and evening are good times to see city-dwelling wildlife, and knowing where to look is essential.

Where to Look

You may be surprised what you'll find living in your own neighborhood if you take the time to see and hear.

Urban wildlife have the same habitat needs of creatures in the wild — food and water, shelter and space — so you're most likely to glimpse your wild neighbors if you visit habitats that meet their needs. A sterile environment won't foster much life. A creek channelized between concrete banks cannot support the vegetation needed to provide food and shelter for a web of life; it becomes

merely a path to carry water. Likewise, a park with carefully tended bluegrass lawns won't attract and support the variety of wildlife seen in a park planted and managed to "go native."

Aquatic areas with untended vegetation are excellent sites to discover wildlife. The large guinea-pig-sized animal, frequently seen creating a V-shaped wake in the water as he swims in urban ponds and streams, is a muskrat—an aquatic rodent that lives along stream-banks and feeds on aquatic vegetation. At night

raccoons frequent city streams and waterways, fishing for invertebrates in the water; check the soft mud at the water's edge for their human-like "hand" and footprints. Go wild and wade. Look for crayfish, turtles, fish, tadpoles and salamanders. You might even see otter tracks where clean rivers flow through undisturbed areas. And teeth-felled willows or aspen are a sure sign that beaver have moved in.

The natural drainage paths found in playgrounds and open spaces around schools, churches and other buildings often foster tiny wetlands — cattail marshes soon inhabited by territorial red-winged blackbirds. The long vegetation may also shelter frogs and snakes, mice and shrews and maybe a hunting red fox.

The solitude and lush landscaping of cemeteries beckon to many species. Rabbits nibble the shrubs and plants; mice and voles find shelter in the grass, in turn attracting foxes, owls, hawks, garter snakes and other hunters.

Sound may be the best way to enjoy amphibians in the city. On spring and summer evenings, visit a local pond or waterway and listen for the croaking of amphibian choruses as male toads and frogs sing to establish their territories and to attract mates.

Winter is one of the best times to discover the wild residents of the city as they leave their signature in the snow. After a fresh snowfall, look for tracks, wing marks and other disturbances, and try to interpret the story they tell — a fox's dog-like paw prints following a trail, perhaps pouncing on a mouse under the snow; a pheasant taking flight, its wing tips and long tail brushing patterns in the snow. These tantalizing clues reveal the secret lives of the wild neighbors we may never see.

Land humans consider worthless — junkyards, abandoned lots, waste dumps, rough areas around industrial sites — is often inhabited by wildlife. Junked cars, broken concrete pipe and abandoned sheds offer holes for mice, nest sites for songbirds, and burrow concealment for skunks. Jackrabbits hide under shrubs on dry, overgrown lots. And show a prairie dog an open field, highway median or untended strip next to a baseball diamond, and he'll

move right in with lots of family in tow. Prairie dog communities attract all kinds of hungry predators. Ferruginous and other hawks, coyotes and owls arrive looking for a meal, while bullsnakes and burrowing owls set up housekeeping in recently abandoned burrows.

Fence and utility poles along roads and streets are great places to watch for raptors, everything from small kestrels to golden eagles. At night you just might see bats hunting above streetlights; they're attracted by the insects that are drawn to the light. At dusk bats stir from their daytime roosts in attics and buildings, under eaves or other dark, secluded spots in the city. Sometimes you can hear the high-pitched squeaking overhead as bats search for food.

So now that you know they're in the neighborhood, take the time to get acquainted with your wild neighbors!

raccoon

Based on a photograph by Shattil/Rozinski



Planting for Wildlife

By Mary Taylor Gray

Tired of mowing the same old lawn, trimming ho hum hedges, and feeling isolated from the natural world? What if you could put a few seeds in the ground, tend them carefully, and come up with a garden full of birds and animals? Sound crazy? By cultivating certain shrubs, flowers and plants and gearing your landscaping for wildlife, you can "wildscape" your home!

The first step is to consider the needs of wild animals. They must have food, water, shelter and space. Also consider the limitations of your location. Your home must be accessible to natural habitat for many species to find you. Mule deer, for example, won't materialize in the middle of the busy city without a corridor of open space linking your property with the foothills. Don't expect animals to show up in non-native habitat; foothills/mountain species like hummingbirds are unlikely on the plains.

Choose your plantings with wildlife in mind, and remember that native plant species use less water and are most appropriate for Colorado wildlife. Shrubs like wild plum, currant, chokecherry and serviceberry offer succulent fruit for birds and some mammals; shrub thickets offer nest sites and year-round shelter. If you're near the foothills, you can attract hummingbirds with a variety of flowering plants like evening primrose, honeysuckle, and penstemon. Juniper, hawthorne, and boxelder provide berries for Colorado's wintering birds from fall through spring, as well as attracting mammals like deer, raccoons and squirrels. Fruit trees—cherry, apple, crabapple, plum—offer sweet fruits for wildlife. A vegetable garden, if you're willing to share it, is a natural magnet for rabbits, deer, frogs and other animals. Pines provide good cover and nesting sites; the shoots and seeds feed squirrels, chipmunks, grosbeaks and other birds.

Backyard ponds and water features provide drinking water for wildlife; water areas with growing plants can attract frogs and toads, salamanders and reptiles. Remember that a sterile cement pond provides little food or shelter for aquatic species.

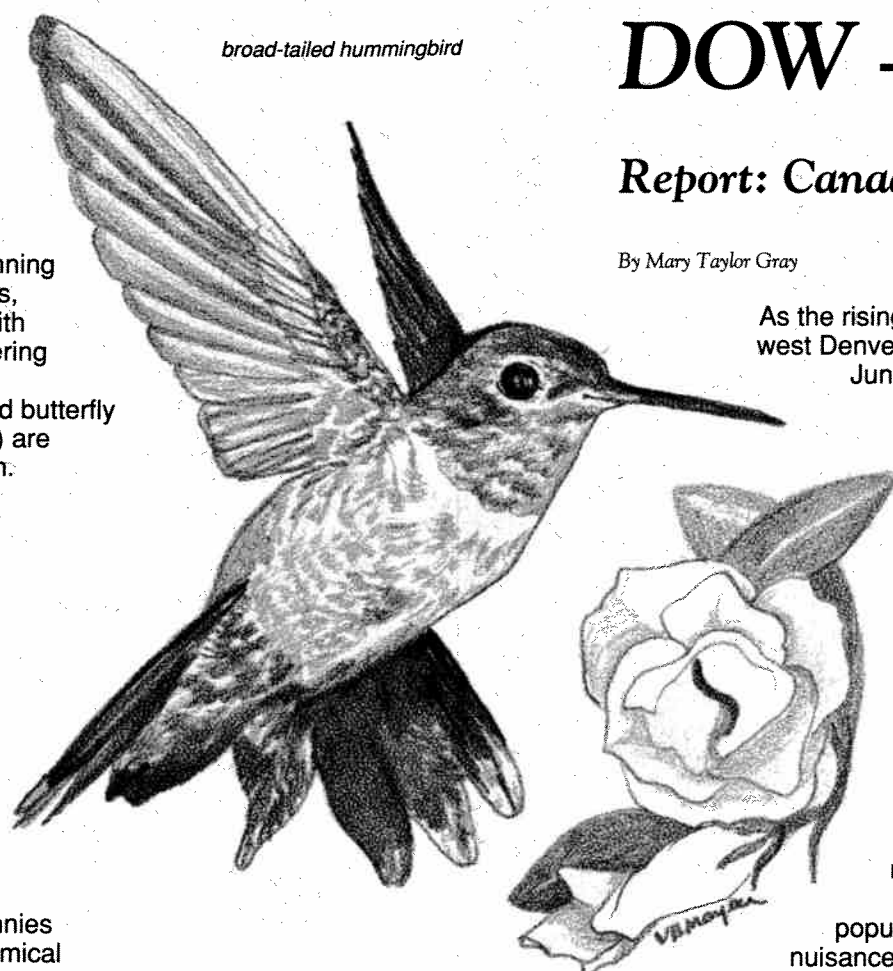
How about a garden filled with colorful, gently fanning wings? With the right flowers, your garden can blossom with butterflies. Most bright flowering plants attract butterflies, but coneflowers, rabbitbrush and butterfly bush (appropriately enough) are especially appealing to them.

Ecosystem Awareness

At the same time, recognize that encouraging wildlife visitors carries responsibility and realistic expectations. If you want butterflies and bunnies in the garden, don't use chemical pesticides. Consider protective fencing or other means of discouraging domestic predators, e.g., dogs and cats. Don't place food sources where birds and small mammals have too great a chance of being nabbed by pets.

Realize that wildlife species are not attracted in isolation, and they may eat more than those plants you intended for them to dine upon. Resourceful raccoons attracted to your home may also disturb your trash. Skunks might not be your ideal neighbor, especially if you have dogs. If you live along the foothills and attract small mammals and deer to your property, recognize that coyotes, snakes and even mountain lions may soon follow their natural prey. Accept that you are part of an entire ecosystem of interacting species. Joining your yard with the natural world can be a wonderful experience, requiring open eyes and clear thinking. 🐾 🐾

broad-tailed hummingbird



DOW — Working for Wildlife

Report: Canada geese

By Mary Taylor Gray

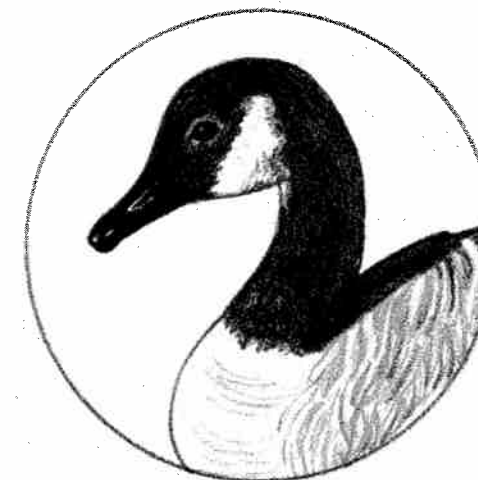
As the rising sun lights up the scene, a flotilla of geese appears on the surface of Sloan Lake in southwest Denver; hundreds of long, black necks and heads bob in silhouette against the dawn sky. It's late June and the geese, having molted their flight feathers, can't fly. Slowly, a handful of boats move away from the shore and herd the birds toward a V-shaped catch-pen. The Division of Wildlife's annual roundup of Canada geese in the city has begun.

Stationed with ten others along the shoreline, my job is to prevent the escape of any geese before they reach the catch-pen (they can't fly, but they sure can run). I watch the bobbing mass of geese draw closer, and as the birds reach our shore, one suddenly bolts up the bank. I'm after him in a flash, like a linebacker after a tailback. My head-off strategy works; the goose slips back into the water and is herded into the catch-pen on shore. The geese we gather in this roundup are destined for new homes in Kansas in exchange for greater and lesser prairie-chickens.

An estimated 5000 geese live year-round in the Denver area. During fall migration, the Denver goose population swells to 25,000, most of which stay for the winter. Although many city residents love the geese, others complain loudly to district wildlife managers and biologists. Some residents say geese damage lawns, parks and golf courses with their droppings and extensive grazing. In 1990, Division professionals and citizen volunteers rounded up 1200 geese from parks, golf courses, and other sites in the Denver area. Even at that, the Division gets more requests for goose removal than it can handle.

Removing some Canada geese from the resident population prevents them from becoming an unwanted nuisance to their human neighbors. The roundup stabilizes the size of the population, and fewer are left to "decoy in" the migrants. By maintaining a balance between human and geese populations, the geese are welcomed in the urban habitat and, at the same time, Canada geese from Colorado can be transplanted to areas in the midwest where resident populations are desired. 🦆

Canada goose



Don't Feed the Ducks

By Kathi Green, Terrestrial Biologist, Central Region

When I was a child, we went to city park every year, toured the zoo and had a picnic by Duck Lake. We always took our bag of stale bread to feed the ducks. It was tremendous fun. Lots of quacking and giggling for all involved. My mother did it when she was a child, too; the tradition had been passed down through the generations as a good thing to do.

My children don't feed the ducks. Their mother, the "wild biologist," won't let them. What caused such a change of heart in the face of solid tradition? I guess you could call it "fowl play."

Feeding encourages waterfowl to flock into tightly packed groups—perfect conditions for the spread of naturally occurring diseases. A die-off may also occur if the food provided by humans harbors

disease-carrying organisms. In either case, feeding waterfowl can result in the death of wildlife. I explained that to my children, and we decided to create new traditions.

So my children and I have found other ways to enjoy waterfowl. There are more than a dozen different species of ducks alone, and each has a different call. They come and go at different seasons. We have learned to recognize them in flight, and by their call in the darkness. We read about what they eat naturally. We respect their wildness. Instead of feeding them, we're taking photographs and painting pictures. We're making new memories and working to preserve our waterfowl heritage for future generations. 🦆

Tax Time — Make it Wild!

Here's your chance to help preserve Colorado's wildlife heritage! You might even have fun filling out this year's tax form . . . it could happen.

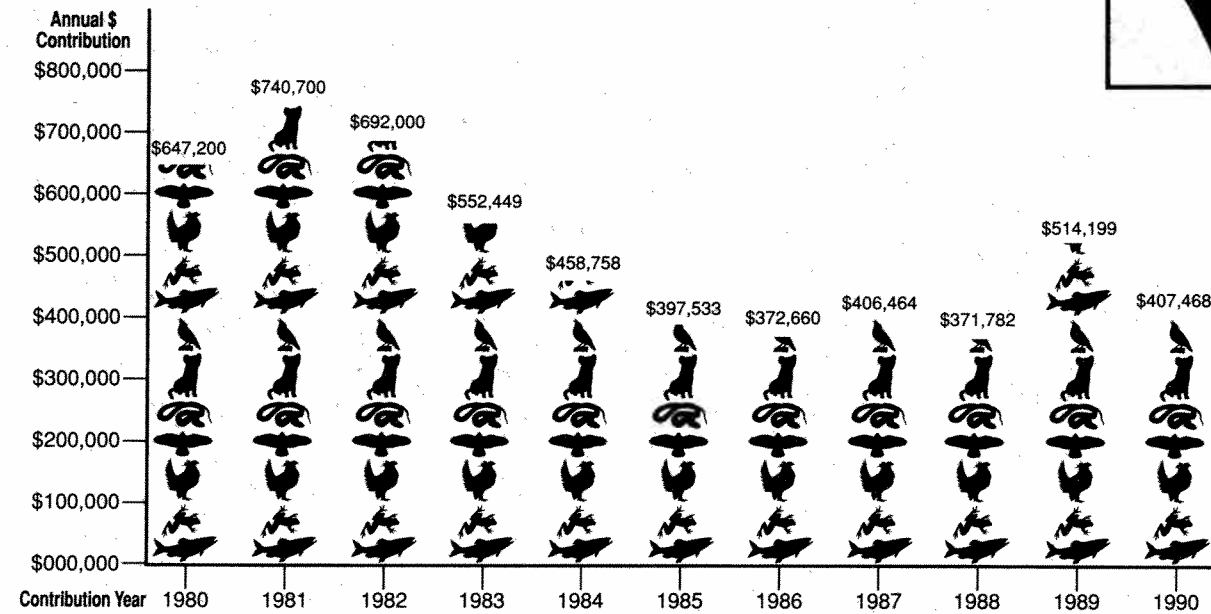
Every year Colorado taxpayers have the opportunity to contribute to the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program through their state income tax returns.

DO

Every year Colorado taxpayers have the opportunity to contribute to the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program through their state income tax returns. The Nongame Income Tax Check-off is the major funding source for the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program. Although it has had its ups and downs over the years (see our super sophisticated, scientific graph below), we hope the readers of *Colorado's Wildlife Company* will make 1991 the biggest year yet.

Ask your tax preparer to add in something for Nongame. If you do your own taxes, look at the end of Form 104 or 104A for the friendly line that says, "Nongame Wildlife Program Contribution." On that line, you can write in the amount you wish to contribute, either taking it from your refund or adding it to your payment. Any way you do it, directing money to the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program will make the sky above your house look bluer and the birds in your back yard sing sweeter. Really. 🐿️

DO SOMETHING WILD!



Graph 1 (and only): Super Sophisticated, Scientific Representation of the Nongame Income Tax Check-off Annual Contributions over the past 10 years.

Keep Your Eyes Peeled

Wildlife Areas Near the City

DENVER METRO AREA - Platte River Greenway, Highline Canal, Cherry Creek and Chatfield State Recreation Areas, Lowell Ponds, and Jefferson County Open Space Parks.

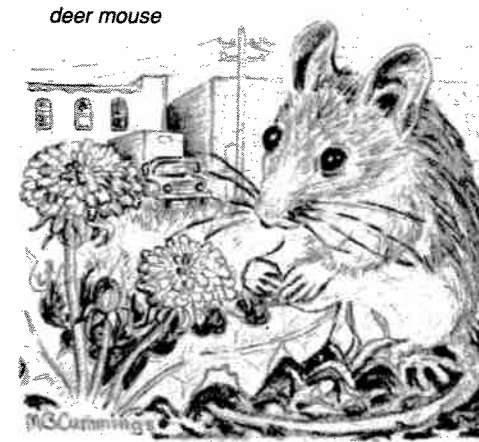
FORT COLLINS - Poudre River Trail, Spring Creek Trail, Northern Colorado Learning Center, Prospect Ponds, and City Park Lake.

COLORADO SPRINGS - Bear Creek Nature Center, Beibleman Nature Center, Garden of the Gods, Palmer Park, Shook's Run Park.

GRAND JUNCTION - Walker State Wildlife Area, Horsethief State Wildlife Area, Colorado National Monument, Highline Lake State Recreation Area, Colorado River greenbelt (under development).

DURANGO - Bodo State Wildlife Area, Animas River bike path, Durango State Fish Hatchery.

MONTROSE - Riverbottom Park Trail, Billy Creek State Wildlife Area, San Juan Skyway Scenic Byway. 🐿️



City Mouse - Country Mouse

By Mary Taylor Gray

"You won't believe what I saw on top of a billboard as I was driving up Broadway to work!" exclaimed the manager of a downtown Denver restaurant. "An owl! A great big owl, just sitting up there!"

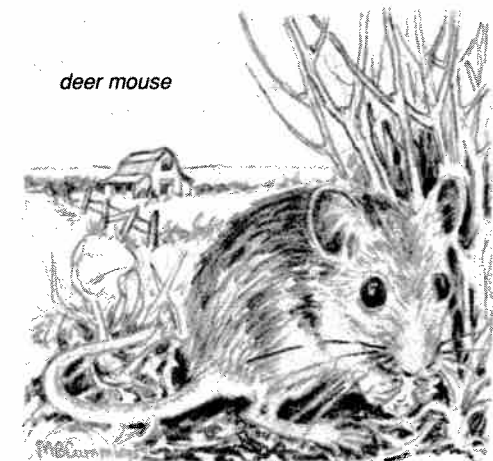
While many city dwellers get excited over a glimpse of a wild animal, it's an every-day occurrence for most country folks. Different levels of exposure can result in differing attitudes toward wildlife, their place in our world, and how wild animals should be treated.

Many people living in frequent contact with wildlife tend to have a somewhat utilitarian attitude toward animals, often exhibiting concern for an animal's practical and material value. Country residents also tend to view wild animals as a group or population rather than as individuals. People with little exposure to animals tend to have a more humanistic attitude, expressing an interest in and personal affection for wild animals as individuals or even as special pets.

Working with domestic animals, ranchers and farmers deal daily with life cycles and the natural role of death in life. Their livelihoods are built on the view that animals are useful to man, sometimes leading city dwellers to think that country people have a callous attitude about wildlife and animals in general. In turn, city folks are sometimes seen by their country cousins as bleeding hearts, with little realistic knowledge and a soft, Disneyland view of animals.

Recent studies of urban/rural attitudes revealed that urban residents were far less willing than rural residents to sacrifice wildlife and environmental values for economic gain. This urban viewpoint, however, stemmed from emotional feelings about animals rather than from environmental concerns or a love for nature and the outdoors. Many farmers and ranchers, on the other hand, consider themselves to be the original "environmentalists" or stewards of the land and its animal life.

As the population of Colorado becomes increasingly urban, the city dwellers point of view will become more influential. Ultimately, understanding both urban and rural attitudes toward wildlife, and finding a way to bridge the two, may be the key to preserving Colorado wildlife in the future for the benefit of everyone. 🐿️



Colorado's Wildlife Company WILDLIFE HERITAGE COUPON

Yes _____. I want to help preserve Colorado's wildlife heritage. Enclosed is my check for \$ _____.
(Please make your check payable to Colorado's Wildlife Company/DOW. This is a tax deductible contribution and will directly support the Watchable Wildlife and Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Programs.)

Yes _____. I want to keep receiving *Colorado's Wildlife Company* free of charge through 1991.

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Mail to: COLORADO'S WILDLIFE COMPANY, Colorado Division of Wildlife, 6060 Broadway, Denver, CO 80216


Calling All Parts

Mountain Lion and Human Interactions Conference. Denver, April 24 - 26. Call Bob Tully, DOW, 291-7345.

Volunteers needed for **bat surveys** statewide. Write the University of Colorado Museum, Boulder, CO 80309-0218.

Volunteers needed for **surveys of least terns, piping plovers and snowy plovers** along the Arkansas and S. Platte River valleys. Call Mike Carter, Colorado Bird Observatory, 659-4348.

Volunteers needed for **Operation Osprey 1991.** Call Beth Dillon or Lisa Evans, DOW, 484-2836 ext 343.

Need participants in **Colorado Frog Watch 1991.** Call Chuck Loeffler, DOW, Colorado Springs (719)473-2945. 



tiger salamander
Based on a photograph by Shattil/Rozinski

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