

NR6/125.13/1989/winter

1989 Winter Compendium of Wildlife Appreciation Opportunities

# Colorado's Wildlife Company

COLORADO DIVISION OF WILDLIFE



Nongame and Endangered  
Wildlife Program



Watchable Wildlife Program

## Tales of Winter



snowshoe hare in winter coat

VH Meyer

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# Is There a Future for Wildlife in Colorado?

**The management of Colorado's wildlife, and the funding for that management, must change dramatically if healthy, diverse populations of wildlife are to survive into the 21st century.** The Executive Task Force on the Future of Wildlife, predicted in their 1987 report, WILDLIFE 21<sup>1</sup>, that changing lifestyles and expanding urban development will continue to have serious effects upon wildlife and Colorado Division of Wildlife funding sources:

- Wildlife habitat will continue to disappear as Colorado's human population grows and development spreads.
- Revenue from purchase of hunting licenses will decline as the population becomes increasingly urban.
- Recreational demands for fishing will increase.
- Expenses required to meet proposed wildlife management goals will far exceed present funding sources.
- Funding for wildlife must come from *all* people who enjoy wildlife.

Over the past three years, the Division has experienced varying success in the accomplishment of the goals set forth in WILDLIFE 21:

- A state foundation for wildlife has been established through the Colorado Wildlife Heritage Foundation.
- A proposal enabling the Wildlife Commission, rather than the legislature, to adjust license fees to keep up with inflation has been defeated thus far in the legislature.
- An excise tax on outdoor recreational equipment was proposed, but was not approved by the Legislature.
- Future funding for the Watchable Wildlife and Nongame and Endangered Wildlife programs is being discussed within the Colorado Department of Natural Resources as part of a broader effort to seek long-term, permanent funding for wildlife, trails, and open space.
- As a pilot project testing potential revenue, two videos on hunting were produced by the Division and generated over \$15,000.
- The Nongame Income Tax Check-off was reauthorized in 1987, but is slated to sunset again in 1990. The Division is working for survival of this important revenue source (see "Threatened and Endangered: Nongame Check-off" in this issue).

*snowshoe hare slow hopping*

## So What is DOW Doing?

The most pressing goal set forth in WILDLIFE 21 was to find alternative funding sources that would enable the Division to fulfill its mission. Perry Olson, Director of the Colorado Division of Wildlife, recently discussed what has been accomplished since the 1987 Task Force report.

"Wildlife management in Colorado is almost entirely user-funded," explained Olson. "WILDLIFE 21 showed that we must broaden our constituency. Public needs are changing. We're seeing a shift from hunting and fishing to wildlife watching activities. We must seek other funding sources that give people who don't hunt or fish the opportunity to help protect our wildlife. Otherwise, wildlife, and the very quality of life in this state, are threatened."

3 inches

If you have any innovative ideas to substantially increase funding for Nongame and Endangered Wildlife and Watchable Wildlife programs, please write or contact Patsy Goodman, State Wildlife Manager, 291-7346.

<sup>1</sup> WILDLIFE 21, A Report to the Governor, the Legislature, and the People of Colorado on the Future of Wildlife into the 21st Century, January 1987.

# Winter Adaptations

Short days, cold temperatures, and reduced food supplies make winter a harsh time for Colorado's wildlife. Survival is a balance between expending energy for warmth and metabolic functions and finding sufficient food to support those functions. Animals utilize different biological strategies to enable them to survive the cold months.

**Hibernation** is perhaps the most familiar of these winter strategies, typified by the **marmot**, who disappears below ground in September or October, not to emerge again until April or May. Nestled into burrows where the ambient temperature remains above freezing, the marmot shuts its metabolism down to conserve energy. It enters a state of torpor typified by greatly reduced body temperature, heart rate and respiration, and subsists on stored body fat.

Contrary to popular belief, **black bears** are not true hibernators. Instead, they enter a state of **winter lethargy or deep sleep**, during which their heart rate, respiration, and body temperature lower somewhat, but not to a torpid state. They can be roused fairly readily from this lethargy and become immediately active.

Active year-round, **pocket gophers** survive winter in a tunnel and subterranean **burrow system**. Insulated by the snow pack, they forage above ground in tunnels burrowed through the snow or soil surface.



pocket gopher

In the fall, the **short-tailed weasel or ermine** molts its brown coat for one of winter white. Thus **camouflaged**, this small predator is better adapted to the winter world and remains active all year in its coniferous forest habitat.



ermine



4 inches

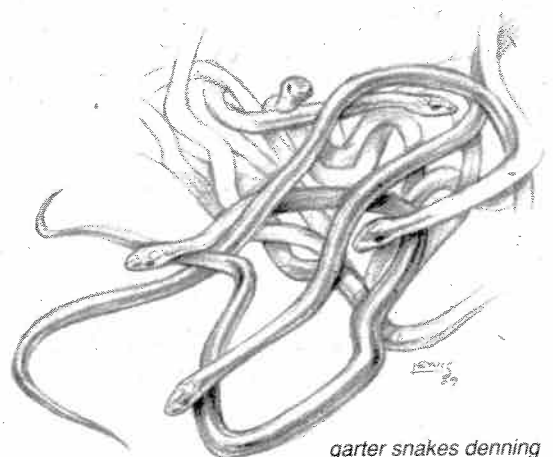
The **garter snake** seeks out crevices or abandoned dens in which to **hibernate** during the cold months, often in large, intertwined groups.

Aquatic herptiles, like the **salamander and leopard frog**, spend the winter in unfrozen pond substrates.

**Body functions are slowed**, temperatures are moderated by the water above.

Found in flowing waterways with adequate oxygen and some available food, **rainbow trout** are **moderately active** throughout the winter. **Bass** inhabit ice-bound, stagnant lakes and **become sluggish**.

(Thanks to Dr. Bruce Wunder, Chairman, Dept. of Zoology, C.S.U., re: mammalian energetics)



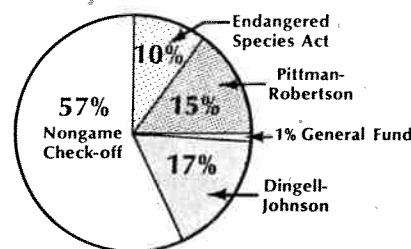
garter snakes denning

# Threatened and Endangered: Nongame Income Tax Check-off

Some species of fish and wildlife are endangered, and now the very program that protects these species is endangered. Every three years, the Nongame Income Tax Check-off Program must be reviewed by the Legislature for reauthorization. This funding program, crucial to the management of nongame, threatened, and endangered wildlife in Colorado, sunsets on January 1, 1991. **That means the program must be reauthorized in 1990.**

Funding for the Division's nongame budget—nearly \$1 million annually—comes from a variety of sources, but the check-off program contributes more than one-half of the total revenue. Other major sources of money include the Dingell-Johnson Act (which provides an excise tax on fishing-related equipment), the Pittman-Robertson Act (an excise tax on hunting-related equipment), and federal matching monies provided for endangered species recovery programs.

## Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program 10-year average of revenue sources



As of 1989, some of the hunting and fishing license revenue can be used for nongame management.

Expenditures of the annual budget are used for the management of nongame fish, birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, mollusks, crustaceans, and animal/plant community studies. The major emphasis of the Division's nongame effort has been—and will continue to be—the recovery and protection of threatened and endangered species.

The Division of Wildlife and other friends of wildlife are working hard to protect this crucial funding source for Colorado's wildlife. **Please write to your legislators today and ask them to reauthorize the Nongame Income Tax Check-off Program!**

# Calling All Parts of Colorado

**Southwest Region:** If you want to see bald eagles, visit the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge this winter. You'll also see bald eagles along the Rio Grande. Look for big-horn sheep, elk, deer, and antelope as you travel the highways throughout this part of the state.

wood rat

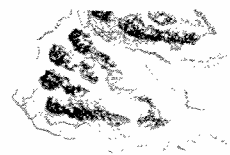
owl wing marks

2 inches

## Reading Winter Tracks

Last night a light snow fell. This morning a bobcat trailed a rabbit through that draw, but the rabbit reached its burrow safely. Not so lucky was a pocket gopher that ventured out on top of the snow to be met by a hungry ermine. And where those wood rat tracks disappear between wing marks . . .

We're unlikely to witness these events, but we may be able to decipher who has passed and what has happened by reading clues left in the snow. Examine tracks for the number of toes; claws; size, shape, spacing and placement of prints. Then consider the habitat and terrain in which the tracks appear. Armed with a detective's eye and a good tracking guide, you can read stories written in the snow about secretive wildlife you may never actually see.



## Colorado's Wildlife Company: Status Report

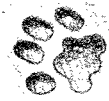
With this winter issue, we have created four compendiums, one for each season of 1989. Each issue was mailed to approximately 5000 people in the state of Colorado, including all Colorado Division of Wildlife personnel, all Colorado schools, all people on Division mailing lists likely to be interested in wildlife appreciation opportunities, and all people added to our mailing list by the readers of *Colorado's Wildlife Company*.

Response to our compendium of opportunities has been enthusiastic. The Spring 1989 issue received 252 response coupons adding 264 names. An additional 245 response coupons added 272 names following the Summer 1989 issue. That means 10% of our readers contacted us after the first two issues! It's good to know that Colorado citizens care about watching wildlife and protecting nongame, threatened and endangered species.

We intend to continue our quarterly compendium throughout the seasons of 1990. Let us hear from you regarding articles and subjects you'd like to know more about. (Write Editor Janet Sheppard Duvall, P.O. Box 228, LaPorte, CO 80535) Thank you for your continued support and enthusiasm!

## Winter Wildlife Specials

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| December 30        | Urban Denver Christmas Bird Count<br>751-1032, Walt Bull                        |
| December 31        | Douglas County Christmas Bird Count<br>989-0269, Ben Moore                      |
| December 31        | Pikes Peak Christmas Bird Count<br>(719) 634-7736, Cindy Lippincott             |
| December 31        | Pueblo Christmas Bird Count<br>546-4227 days, Mike Ketchen                      |
| December 31        | Lake Isabell Christmas Bird Count<br>489-3565, Dave Silverman                   |
| January 6          | Wildlife Bus Tour   |
| January 20         | Rocky Mountain Arsenal  |
| February 3<br>etc. | Ongoing, every other Saturday<br>289-0132 after 6 p.m.                          |
| February           | "Life at the Top, Wildlife above Timberline"<br>Division of Wildlife Production |



# To Feed, or Not to Feed

Many of us enjoy feeding songbirds, especially during the cold, winter months. But is winter feeding really good for the birds?

## The Case Against Feeding

Feeding can keep birds in Colorado when they should be migrating to warmer climates. Hummingbird feeders should be taken down by September 1st to be certain these tiny birds migrate early enough.

Some birds may be expanding their ranges farther north because of bird feeders.

Bird feeders concentrate populations above natural levels and can increase impacts of disease and predation.



Poor quality or improperly maintained foods can be harmful to birds.

Feeding birds may cause them to abandon normal food caching behaviors and make them highly dependent upon the feeders.

Birds, like other wildlife, take the path of least resistance in foraging for food. Winter feeding prevents them from discovering natural food sources and changes the natural balance in the ecosystem.

Birds can be injured when their feet or skin freeze to metal parts on feeders.

Birds need more than birdseed to successfully survive the winter.

## The Case in Favor of Feeding

Migration is triggered by photoperiod (length of day) and complex interactions of hormone levels and environmental factors. There is little evidence to indicate that feeding by itself can override the migratory process in any bird that must migrate to survive the winter.

Although scientific evidence is lacking, it does appear that some songbird ranges are expanding. This is likely due to a combination of warmer urban areas, landscaping improvements and bird feeding.

Yes. Concentrating birds around feeders can increase the risk and spread of contagious diseases unless feeders are kept clean, and food is kept fresh and free of mold. Feeders, seed trays, perches, and the ground beneath should be cleaned regularly. Enclosed feeders keep food dry and reduce the risk of mold in winter. (NOTE: Avian pox is a current problem along the Front Range. Call 291-7227 for information.)

To prevent excessive predation, feeders should be placed in an area that has a wide view of the surroundings and no further than 5 feet from cover.

Yes. Store food in dry, waterproof containers. Only set out enough food to be eaten within a few days.

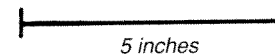
A study conducted in Rocky Mountain National Park discovered that birds took tourist handouts, and still continued to cache food.

No scientific evidence has shown that feeding affects the species or the ecosystem. Once started, however, winter feeding must be continued because, although you may not affect the species, individual birds do become dependent on that food source, especially during winter storms or stressful conditions.

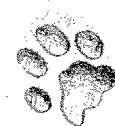
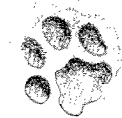
Birds' feet do not have sweat glands, so they will not freeze to metal. Coating metal parts with suet grease will assure that birds will not stick to them.

Yes. A backyard source of fresh water can make a difference if natural sources are frozen over. Food and water should be protected from bad weather so they are available when birds need it most. Cover is also critical in winter. Natural landscaping can provide cover.

snowshoe hare running



bobcat



In summary, we feed songbirds primarily for our enjoyment and education. Feeding can affect individual birds, but small scale feeding probably does not cause major species or population impact. Feeding is a serious responsibility and an ongoing commitment. We should be willing to put a level of effort into it that is at least equal to the pleasure and entertainment we attain. As long as we are willing to make that commitment, we can relax, feed the birds, and enjoy it. If we find that our actions are harming birds, we should take the necessary steps to eliminate the problems.

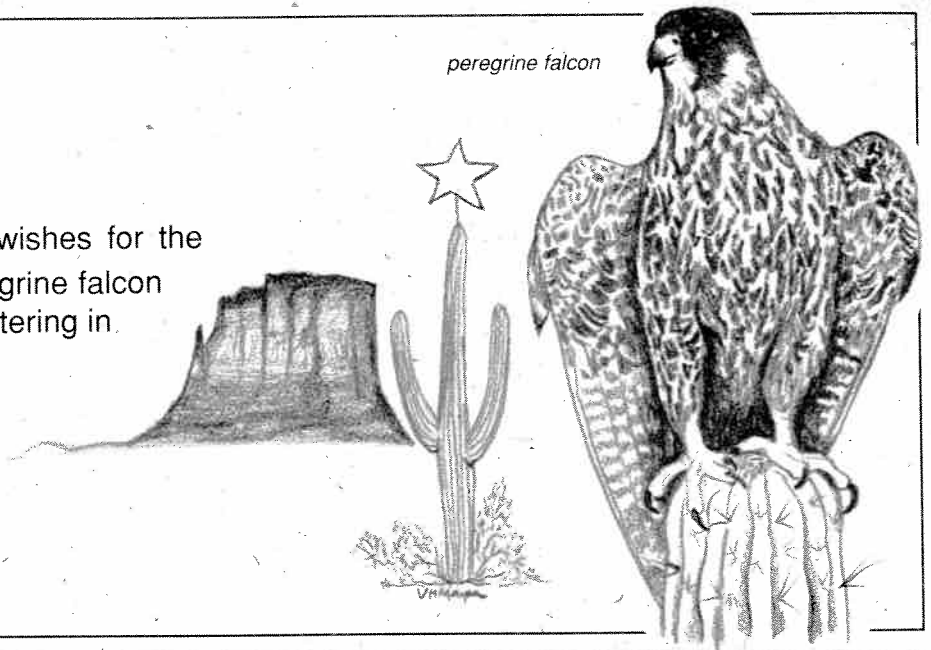
NOTE: Division of Wildlife biologists do not recommend feeding waterfowl due to problems with disease and high concentrations of geese in urban areas. This will be the subject of a future article in *Colorado's Wildlife Company*.

(Thank you to Kathi Demarest, Wildlife Biologist, Central Region; Jim Dennis, Wildlife Biologist, NE Region; and Dr. Alex Cringan, Professor of Wildlife Management, C.S.U.)



peregrine falcon

*iFeliz Navidad!* and best wishes for the holiday season from all of your peregrine falcon friends and other Colorado birds wintering in sunny Mexico.



## Colorado's Wildlife Company

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