



# Wild Connections

FROM THE MOUNTAINS TO THE PRAIRIES

Protecting and restoring wildlands in the Arkansas and South Platte watersheds...

## Wild Connections News

February 2019

Hi {FIRST\_NAME|to all our friends},

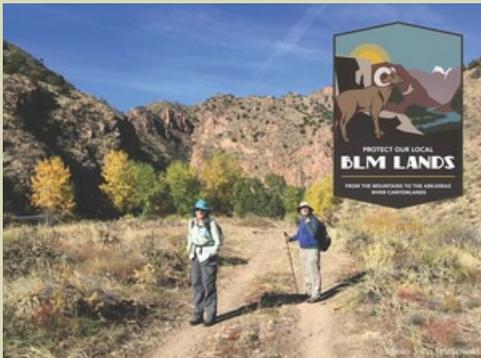
Hope you are enjoying this Colorado winter! It has been great to see all of this snow and moisture so far this season. Stay warm, but don't hibernate too long as there is some great conservation news and public opportunities to catch up on!

### Upcoming Events...

#### Ecology Park Hike, A BLM Wildlands Outing

Saturday, February 9, 2019

10:00 AM to 2:00 PM (Trailhead to Trailhead times)



Ecology Park, an area near Canon City and south of Royal Gorge, which is jointly managed by the Bureau of Land Management and Canon City, offers hiking trails and access to Grape Creek and Temple Canyon.

As a follow-up to our December 2018 hike, this hike of approximately 5 miles with 500 feet elevation gain will explore trails on the western end of the area.

This area is threatened by proposed BLM oil and gas leasing, as well as mining, which we will discuss on this outing. We also will learn about the BLM's resource management plan, and how it could affect the area.

This hike is sponsored by Wild Connections, Pikes Peak Group Sierra Club, and Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition. Bring lunch, snacks, water, clothing and

footwear suitable for the weather conditions. An optional carpool from Colorado Springs will be arranged.

For more information or to register for the hike, contact Jim Lockhart at 719-385-0045 or [jlock@datawest.net](mailto:jlock@datawest.net).

### USFS Seeking Public Input for Southern Shooting Partnership

The US Forest Service is a partner in the Southern Shooting Partnership (SSP), and is asking for public participation in an online survey and in a series of public meetings. The Partnership is asking for public input on the topic of target shooting (not hunting) on public lands.

If you are a recreational shooter or live adjacent to or recreate on public lands where recreation shooting occurs, consider completing the below survey or attending a meeting.

The survey is open through March 15, 2019.

Find the **Southern Shooting Partnership online survey** and more info here: <https://www.douglas.co.us/dc/outdoors/southern-shooting-partnership-ssp/>

#### Meeting Dates and Locations:

**Friday, February 8, 2019**

5:00 PM to 7:00 PM

Colorado Parks and Wildlife Regional Office,  
Hunter Ed Classroom

4225 Sinton Road, Colorado Springs, CO 80907

#### YOUR INPUT ON RECREATIONAL SPORT SHOOTING ON PUBLIC LANDS IS REQUESTED

Take our survey - scan the QR code below or visit <https://iarcp.is/1nu0k>

FRIDAY, FEB. 8  
5-7 P.M.  
CO PARKS & WILDLIFE  
REGIONAL OFFICE  
HUNTER ED CLASSROOM  
4225 SINTON RD  
COLORADO SPRINGS

**Thursday, February 21, 2019**  
**5:00 PM to 7:00 PM**  
**Park County Building**  
**586 Costello Avenue, Fairplay, CO 80440**



## Support the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE) Act!

Colorado US Senator Michael Bennet and Congressman Joe Neguse recently introduced the Colorado Recreation & Economy (CORE) Act! The CORE Act unites 4 previously introduced bills and will protect nearly 400,000 acres of Colorado public lands, including establishing 73,000 acres of new wilderness areas!

This Act unites and improves 4 previously introduced bills: *The Continental Divide Recreation, Wilderness and Camp Hale Legacy Act*, the *San Juan Mountains Wilderness Act*, the *Thompson Divide Withdrawal and Protection Act*, and the *Curecanti National Recreation Area Boundary Establishment Act*.

Details of the bill, maps, and more information are available at: <https://www.bennet.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=COREAct>

### Show Your Support & Thank...

#### US Senator Michael Bennet

- D.C. Phone: 202-224-5852
- <https://www.bennet.senate.gov/public/?p=contact>

#### US Representative Joe Neguse

- D.C. Phone: 202-225-2161; Boulder, Fort Collins: N/A
- <https://neguse.house.gov/contact>

### And please urge Senator Gardner and your local representative to co-sponsor the CORE Act!

#### US Senator Cory Gardner

- D.C. Phone: 202-224-5941
- <https://www.gardner.senate.gov/contact-cory/email-cory>

## Colorado's Most Overlooked Bird? Brown-Capped Rosy-Finch Banding Update

Guest article by Greg Levandoski, Biologist and Owner, Regalis Environmental LLC

When you think of Colorado icons, what comes to mind? Perhaps Rocky Mountain wilderness, world class skiing, a heritage of ranching and agricultural, or maybe a booming craft beer industry. And if we ask ourselves what bird comes to mind when speaking about Colorado people may mention our state bird the Lark Bunting, Mountain Plovers, our six species of Grouse, White-tailed Ptarmigan, or even Sandhill Cranes. Surprisingly, you will almost certainly *not* hear about a species that we Coloradans have the greatest responsibility for conserving. As one of only two bird species that breed almost entirely within our state boundaries, this bird is the Brown-capped Rosy-Finch.



Brown-capped Rosy-Finches are small songbirds that inhabit the cliffs of our high peaks and tundra-clad cirques, even in winter. They descend to lower elevations only when storms force them down, preferring to eek out an existence foraging on the seeds of last summer's alpine wildflowers despite the unceasing cold of winter's windswept tundra.

Last summer Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) conducted the most thorough breeding survey of Brown-capped Rosy-Finches to date and estimated the current breeding population to be around 150,000. The CPW survey represents our first good baseline estimate of the population and while 150,000 birds may sound like a lot, it may very well represent a fraction of the population that existed just a few decades ago. We just don't know. Fortunately, CPW plans to continue these surveys at least for a couple more years.

Despite this new information on population size, scientists still do not have a solid grasp on how climate change will affect the species or if there is sufficient mixing of the sub-populations to help stave off extinctions of local populations. Warmer summers and milder winters are a threat to a

species that specializes on catching insects at the edge of snowbanks to feed its young. To address this, CPW, University of California Santa Cruz, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, Regalis Environmental LLC, and local volunteers (including Wild Connections volunteers!) are all working together to color-band rosy-finches where they congregate at bird feeders in the winter. The state has been divided into regions, each with its own band color. Reporting sightings of banded birds will help us understand movements between breeding and wintering areas, as well as any dispersal between breeding areas.

**Here's where we need your help!**

If you see color-banded rosy-finches at your feeder, or while out hiking alpine basins this summer, please take careful note of the following and submit a report to [rosyfinchreports@gmail.com](mailto:rosyfinchreports@gmail.com):

- Date of sighting
- Location (street address or latitude/longitude)
- Number of total rosy-finches in the flock (estimate)
- Species of banded rosy-finches (Brown-capped, Black, or Gray-crowned)
- Number of banded rosy-finches
- Color of RIGHT leg band (Red, Silver, Black, Blue, Green, Purple, Gold)
- Color of LEFT leg band (Red, Silver, Black, Blue, Green, Purple, Gold)

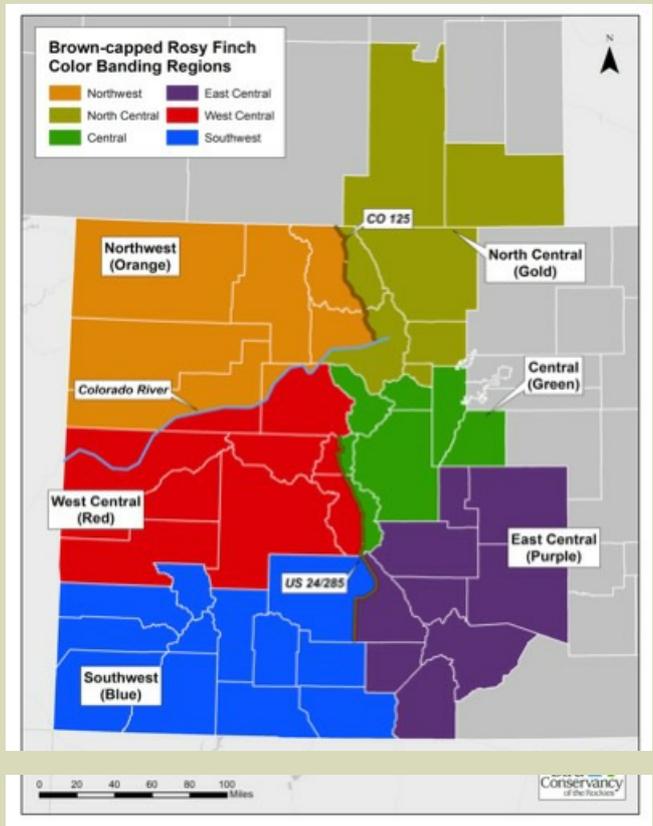
Black and Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches also visit our state in the winter and are being banded as well, however only Brown-capped Rosy-Finches stay in Colorado to breed so most all summer sightings will likely be of this species. Many of the color-bands deployed last year have unfortunately since faded to silver. Any photos you can take and submit can really help determine if any residual color remains on the band.

The responsibility for ensuring the continued existence of this species in the face of climate change rests upon us Coloradans and the land management agencies where this species breeds. You can do your part by supporting the organizations conducting this research and by reporting your rosy-finch sightings! And maybe it's time for a new state bird, one that stays within our borders year-round and depends on us and the iconic tundra that it calls home...

**Partners:**

- Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- University of California at Santa Cruz
- Bird Conservancy of the Rockies
- Denver Museum of Nature and Science
- Regalis Environmental LLC
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Forest Service
- And the many generous homeowners hosting banding operations!

**Map Info:** Rosy-finches banding regions. Colors correspond to the color of bands used in each area. All rosy-finches receive a silver numbered band as well as a colored band. Colored bands are put on the left leg in the winter, on the right leg in the summer. Black bands were also used on Hastings Mesa northwest of Telluride. [Map courtesy of Bird Conservancy of the Rockies.](#)



**2019 State of the Rockies Conservation in the West Poll is now available!**

Colorado College's 9th annual State of the Rockies Conservation in the West poll was just released!

The survey polled registered voters from the 8 Rocky Mountain States. Voters responded to questions concerning climate, energy, outdoor recreation, water, wildlife, the role of government, trade-offs with economies, and citizen priorities.

You can find all of their outstanding 2019 findings and reports at: <https://www.coloradocollege.edu/other/stateoftherockies/conservationinthewest/>

Colorado College's 2019 State of the Rockies Conservation in the West Poll

# COLORADO

**A CONSERVATION MINDSET**

- 69% consider themselves conservationist
- 73% consider themselves an outdoor recreation enthusiast

**WOULD YOU PREFER THE NEW CONGRESS PLACE MORE EMPHASIS ON...**

- 65% protecting sources of clean water, our air quality and wildlife habitat while providing opportunities to eat and recreate on our national public lands
- 24% producing more domestic energy by maximizing the amount of national public lands available for responsible oil and gas drilling and mining

**THE OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMY**

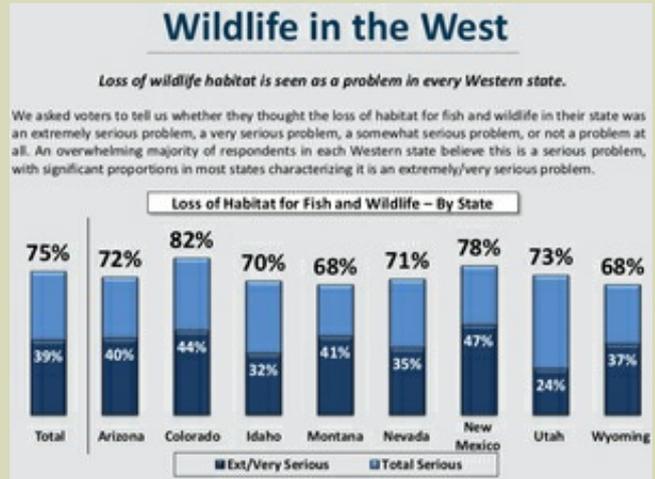
- 73% say the ability to live near, recreate on, and enjoy public lands like national forests, parks, or trails was a significant reason they live in the West
- 90% believe the outdoor recreation economy is important for the future of their state and the Western U.S.

**PROTECTING LAND, WATER, AND WILDLIFE**

- 83% believe it is important for states to use funds to protect and restore the health of rivers, lakes, and streams
- 68% believe it is important for states to use funds to conserve wildlife habitats used by wildlife for migration

**PUBLIC INPUT INTO PUBLIC LAND DECISIONS**

- 14% think it was a good decision to reduce the amount of time the public can comment on changes to public lands, such as oil and gas leasing
- 59% think it was a bad decision



Jim, Misi, John, Kristin, Alison, Claude, Deb, Karl and John

- All of us at Wild Connections

Share with your friends and family

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Thanks for the photos! Credit from top to bottom:  
 Kate Spinelli (header), John Sztukowski,  
 SSP flyer, CORE Act Media, Misi Ballard,  
 Bird Conservancy of the Rockies Map, 2019 SOTR Findings

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