

Dear Boulder Reservoir/Coot Lake birds of special concern volunteers,

Thanks for your excellent reports so far. We had a really sublime orientation outing last night at Coot Lake and the west side of Boulder reservoir and got to see a few of the wonders you all have been describing. They include:

Dry Creek

The osprey pair, after failing to produce any young the past three years, has been diligently incubating on their nest atop the power pole. We observed incubation again last night. You may remember that this was our most successful nest site in Boulder County from 2007-11, when it fledged 14 young. We guessed that the nest failures the last three years indicated either the female had become too old to produce viable eggs or had died and been replaced by a young and not yet fully fertile female. Anyway, Gary and other observers report that at least one of the adults has been seen incubating virtually every day for the past two weeks, so that bodes well.

Several of you have reported hearing bitterns calling in the Dry Creek marsh already, and it looks like we have two or possibly three territories established. The herons appear to have abandoned their brushy heronry west of the road, but several new nests contain visible young in the red-tailed hawk tree north of the road.

Little Dry Creek

We heard an American bittern calling in the marsh just east of the road last night, helping to confirm a total of four American bittern territories you all have identified in the valley--also including a territory about 100 m west of the road, another one just below Boulder Valley Ranch pond, and the fourth one west of the pond. Pretty impressive and unprecedented!

Several of you have observed food exchanges between the male and the female harriers over their nest about 100 m west of the road, and over a second harrier nest on Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks property just west of Boulder Valley Ranch pond. The ospreys are still incubating on their platform down by the reservoir shore. Several of you have also reported bald eagle hunting activity in this area.

Coot Lake

We've observed ospreys fishing in the Coot Lake area, but no harriers or bitterns yet. But please listen very carefully for the bitterns, especially in the southeast quadrant of the marsh, over the next several weeks. They usually show up eventually.

We did enjoy watching the recently-arrived neotropical songbirds singing and nest-building in the deciduous trees along the trail yesterday evening. Especially amazing was seeing a first-year male Bullock's oriole singing from inside his partially-constructed pendulous nest just north of the Coot Lake parking area.

We didn't see or hear bobolinks, savannah sparrows, or grasshopper sparrows in the wet meadow north of Coot Lake last night, but please keep a careful eye and ear for them, as some usually show up by the end of May.

Burrowing Owls

No observations so far, but please keep looking. It's really important that we put in at least four visits to each of the adopted prairie dog colonies during the course of the spring and summer. Looks like we have at least three nesting territories established in Boulder County so far this spring--so a few are around.

Thanks again for all the great reports so far. I will send out a more complete summary to everyone in June.

Steve