

# Bristlecone Audubon



Newsletter 013

14 August 2011

## ***Black-chinned Beauty***

How fortunate we were this summer to discover a Black-chinned Hummingbird (*Archilochus alexandri*) nest in our good friends' pine tree. Due to an obvious low number of hummingbirds this year, most feeder activity around our house was from the orioles. After four shooting sessions over a couple of weeks, I was able to capture various stages of the nesting.

The pine tree nest required a rooftop camera position for a very limited view angle. Only the early morning sun threaded through the needles enough to light the subjects without obstruction. Any wind was disruptive. Shooting distance was at 20 feet which did not bother the birds. However, they were acutely aware of my presence.

*Mark Hayward HaywardWildlife.com*



Black-chinned Hummingbird nest, July 2011, Elko County, Nevada (Photo Courtesy of Mr. Mark Hayward).

(Editor's Note: Made of plant down and spiders' webs, BCHU nests expand elastically as young grow!

As wild desert blooms began to wane in August 2011, hummingbird feeder counts were on the rise in Elko County. Coincidence? Perhaps not.)

## ***American Pika and Wildflower Hike***

Lois Ports and Ann Haglund led a spectacular wildflower walk in Lamoille Canyon last Saturday. These girls are good. They helped us identify no less than 63 flowering plants and shrubs (Table 1). Alpine and subalpine habitats were bursting at the seams with primrose and pussytoe, paintbrush and penstamon. One could barely walk off trail without causing serious bodily harm to some Bog Rein Orchid, Alpine Shooting Star or Elephant's Head (Figures 2-7). Weather was lovely, mosquitoes were nominal and the company was without equal. Ten members of Bristlecone Audubon braved the high elevation four-mile loop. They photographed tiny 'belly flowers' by, you guessed it, lying on the ground face first. They enjoyed a brief lunch in shade provided by ancient limber pines, strolled among talus pika warrens and even crossed raging snow melt creeks, all for the fun and adventure and terror of it.



Figure 2. Parry's Primrose (*Primula parryi*), Lamoille Canyon, 13 August 2011 (Photo Courtesy of Ms. Lois Ports).

Ethno-botanical discussions woven into descriptions of native plant life were particularly fascinating. Poison-tipped arrows, food stuffs and hallucinogens were all part of our deliberations. Are far as we know though, on the hike at least, no attempts were made to mimic these ancient arts.



Figure 3. Naked Broomrape (*Orobanche sp.*) and Dwarf Pink Monkeyflower (*Mimulus nanus*), Lamoille Canyon, 13 August 2011 (Photo Courtesy of Ms. Lois Ports).



Figure 4. Alpine Laurel (*Kalmia polifolia*), Lamoille Canyon, 13 August 2011 (Photo Courtesy of Ms. Lois Ports).



Figure 5. Rosy Pussytoes (*Antennaria rosea*), Lamoille Canyon, 13 August 2011  
(Photo Courtesy of Ms. Lois Ports).



Figure 5. Pika discussion near a historical warren, Lamoille Canyon, 13 August 2011  
(Photo Courtesy of Ms. Ann Haglund).



Figure 7. Parry's Primrose and Pika Habitat, Lamoille Canyon, 13 August 2011  
(Photo Courtesy of Ms. Lois Ports).



Figure 8. Lamoille Creek crossing with Liberty Pass in background, 13 August 2011  
(Photo Courtesy of Ms. Lois Ports).



Figure 8. American Pika (*Ochotona princeps*) barking orders in Lamoille Canyon talus (Photo Courtesy of Mr. Gary Clark).

While one vertebrate with star billing decided to sit this one out, recent evidence of pika droppings were detected at one of three warrens visited. The smallest member of the rabbit family in North America, the American Pika, resident of the Ruby Mountains and other nearby sky islands, is one of two pika species on the Continent. The Collared Pika, resident of Alaska and northwest Canada is its closest cousin. Our high elevation ‘rock rabbits’ in turn share the world with some 29 pika species, most of them ‘pukas’ from the mountains of the Asian Continent; the Hindu Kush, the Himalaya and others. Most are high elevation dependent species. Most spend winters wide awake feasting on stored hay piles deep under several meters of snow. All 29 species show signs of a coming and desperate struggle with the consequences of a warming globe.

Table 1. List of wild life seen during the Wildflower American Pika Hike in upper Lamoille Canyon, 13 August 2011, Elko County, Nevada, (List Courtesy of Lois Ports and Ann Haglund).

**Wildflowers Identified and Discussed:**

Alpine Shooting Star  
Alpine Avens  
American Bistort  
Maiden Blue-eyed Mary  
Mountain Bluebells (both blue and white forms)  
Naked Broomrape  
Buckwheat spp.  
Sub-alpine Buttercup  
Mountain Death Camas  
Chickweed  
Cinquefoil (shrubby and herbaceous)  
Red Columbine  
Daisies (*Erigeron* spp.)  
Dwarf Waterleaf  
Elephant's Head  
False Dandelion  
Fireweed  
Forget-me-not  
Sticky Geranium  
Goldenrod

Grouse Whortleberry  
Nettleleaf Horsemint  
Indian Paintbrush  
King's Crown Sedum  
Alpine Knotweed  
Larkspur  
Alpine Laurel  
Corn Lilly - False Hellebore  
Sego Lily  
Silver Lupine  
Marsh Marigold  
Meadowrue  
Dwarf Pink Monkeyflower  
Mountain Yellow Monkeyflower  
Monkshood  
Wild Onion spp.  
Bog Rein Orchid  
Pale Agoseris  
Penstamon spp.  
Pussytoes ( Mountain and Rosy)  
Rock Cress  
Sagewort  
Saxifrage spp.  
Silverleaf Phacelia  
Veronica Speedwell

**Spring Beauty (*Claytonia*)**

**St. John's Wort**

**Sunflower spp.**

**Western Valerian**

**Mountain Blue Violet**

**Western Wallflower**

**Willowweed**

**Woodland Star**

**Yampa**

**Yarrow**

**Shrub List:**

**Chokecherry**

**Western Serviceberry**

**Labrador Tea**

**Ceanothus spp.**

**Snowberry**

**Willow spp.**

**Alpine Prickly Currant**

**Twinberry**

**Dwarf Juniper**

**Bird list:**

**Red-tailed Hawk**

**Dusky Grouse (sign)**

**Clark's Nutcracker**

**Northern Flicker**

**Cordilleran Flycatcher**

**Western Wood-Pewee**

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet**

**Mountain Bluebird**

**White-crowned Sparrow**

**Dark-eyed Junco (Oregon)**

**Mountain Chickadee**

**Rock Wren**

**Violet-green Swallow**

**Pine Siskin**

**Cassin's Finch**

**Mammal list:**

**Yellow-bellied Marmot**

**Uinta Chipmunk**

**North American Porcupine(sign)**

**Northern Pocket Gopher (sign)**

**American Pika (sign)**

**Mule Deer (sign)**

**Rocky Mountain Goat (sign)**

**Mountain Lion (sign)**

**Bobcat (sign)**

**Coyote (sign)**



Tentative Bristlecone Audubon Calendar for remainder of 2011 and early 2012:

<b><i>September 28</i></b>	<b><i>Birding Morocco</i></b>	<b><i>Team Clark</i></b>
	<i>Presentation follows business meeting, 6:30 pm, NDOW, 60 Youth Center Road.</i>	
<b><i>October</i></b>	<b><i>Break</i></b>	
<b><i>November 16</i></b>	<b><i>Black-Rosy Finch Ecology in the Great Basin</i></b>	<b><i>NDOW Staff</i></b>
	<i>Presentation follows business meeting, 6:30 pm, NDOW, 60 Youth Center Road.</i>	
<b><i>December</i></b>	<b><i>Elko, Ruby Valley, Snake Valley, Battle Mountain and Jarbidge CBC Bird Counts</i></b>	
<b><i>January 2012</i></b>	<b><i>Wintering Raptor Survey</i></b>	
<b><i>February 17-20</i></b>	<b><i>Great Backyard Bird Count</i></b>	
<b><i>March</i></b>	<b><i>Southern Desert Mine Claim Marker Post Pull</i></b>	

*Natural History: A family of striped skunks; what look like a mother, one older sibling and three youngsters have taken up residence near the Regional Raptor Rehabilitation Facility in Spring Creek. Both skunks and winged occupants of the raptor facility appear to be giving each other a wide berth.*



Bristlecone Audubon Officer Roster

President.....Melody Asher (775-753-6199)

Vice President.....Vacant (775-000-0000)

Secretary / Webmaster.....Lois Ports (775-738-4270)

Treasurer.....Don Muckel (775-738-6999)

Newsletter.....Pete Bradley (775-777-2307)

Website: [www.bristleconeaudubon.webnode.com](http://www.bristleconeaudubon.webnode.com)

*Deadline for submissions for the next Newsletter is 3 September 2011. Please send submissions to:*

*[pbradley@ndow.org](mailto:pbradley@ndow.org), P.V. Bradley, Newsletter Editor, Bristlecone Audubon*