

Palmer Lake Historical Society, Jan. 18

Officers elected at annual meeting

By Sigi Walker

The Palmer Lake Historical Society held its Annual Potluck and Membership Meeting on Jan. 18. The Society furnished the ham, rolls, coffee and tea. Attendees brought a wide array of delicious side dishes, salads, and fruit. Jim Sawatski's film, *The Village on the Divide*, a history of Palmer Lake, capped off the evening.

The Membership Meeting began with the election of 2018 officers. The 2018 Board of Directors consists of Tom Baker, Arlene Fisher-Olson, Su Ketchmark, Michele Lawrie-Munro, Pat McCarthy, Barbara Morehead, Melissa Robohn, and Rodger Voelker.

PLHS President Tom Baker presented a slide presentation of the Society's 2017 activities and accomplishments. Programs informed us about Colorado coal baron John Osgood, Bob Easterly's grandfather and the GAR, the Alexander Film Co., Charles Goodnight in Colorado, hummingbirds and how to attract them, Pete Seeger's life and songs, historic homes in our area, a potpourri of Rich Luckin videos, and Sawatski's film, *Star on Sundance*. We hosted two events: the Annual Fathers' Day Ice Cream Social and the Annual Return of the Rocky Mountain Chautauqua. All were free and open to all.

Education and outreach activities

The Society published three issues of the PLHS news-



Above: The 2018 Palmer Lake Historical Society board is composed of, first row, from left, Arlene Fisher Olson, Su Ketchmark, and Barbara Morehead. Second row, from left, are Michele Lawrie-Munro, Tom Baker, Melissa Robohn, and Rodger Voelker. Photo by Mike Walker.

letter; awarded two \$500 scholarships to Palmer Lake high school students; completed furnishing the interior of the Palmer Lake jail; maintained the PLHS website and two social media sites, Facebook and Nextdoor; supported the renovation and rededica-

tion of Palmer Lake's Crawford Memorial; supported the Coalition of Pikes Peak Historical Museums; and had PLHS information tables in support of the One Nation Walking Together Powwow and the Western Museum of Mining & Industry's "Restoration Day" and summer programs.

The 2018 Tri-Lakes Historical Calendar, featuring a cover painting by Joe Bohler and supported by our advertisers, was available at the meeting, as was the 2018 Programs and Events Schedule.

Mark your calendars for Thursday, Feb. 15, when John Eng will tell the story of the ongoing restoration of 129-year-old Pullman tourist sleeper car 470 to its original condition. Tourist sleepers brought workers to Colorado mines, ranches, and railroads and homesteaders to settle the West. On Saturday, Feb. 17 at 10:30 a.m., there will be a tour of the restoration site at the Pikes Peak Trolley Museum, 2333 Steel Drive. Eng has been a "Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic RR" volunteer for 20 years and site leader of the Car 470 restoration group since 2007.

This program is free and open to all. Feb. 15's venue is the Palmer Lake Town Hall, 28 Valley Crescent. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and the program begins at 7. Light refreshments are served after the presentation.

■

Bird Watch on the Palmer Divide

Sharp-shinned hawk (*Accipiter striatus*)

By Elizabeth Hacker

In January, I wrote about the largest of the three accipiters, the northern goshawk. Thanks to the beautiful photos submitted by Beth Courrau, I learned more about this remarkable bird.

As luck would have it, Sunday morning while filling my feeders, I caught a glimpse of what I suspected was a sharp-shinned hawk, the smallest of the three accipiter hawks. Unlike Beth, I am not a skilled photographer, so I draw what I see.

Much later that afternoon, a male sharp-shinned sat at the birdbath near my back door. Could it have been the one I saw earlier that day? I tried to stay hidden, but he must have known I was watching him because he kept one eye on the house and the other on the yard, possibly watching for a larger hawk or another little bird. Just before sunset, he flew off into a conifer tree.

After observing him for more than an hour, my guess is that he'd had his fill of dark-eyed juncos and was resting in a relatively safe spot while cleaning his feet and feathers at my birdbath before flying off to secure a safe perch for the night.

Description

Sharp-shinned hawks are small raptors with short, rounded wings, and a long rudder-like, squared-off tail. The male sharpie weighs about 11 ounces, a little larger than a blue jay, but the female is a third again as large, approaching the size of a crow.

The juvenile is brown on top and light underneath with dark brown streaks on its breast feathers. Adults have grayish feathers on top, and the underside is white with rufous (reddish-brown) barring. Juvenile eyes are yellow while adult eyes are red. Sharpies are speedy, acrobatic fliers.

Accipiter legs and feet are longer and skinny, which may explain why I never see them perched on a wire. As the sharpie at my birdbath stepped in and out of the water, I was able to get a close-up view of his long thin legs, nimble feet, and needle-like talons. They appeared almost delicate, but if I were a sparrow I might not describe them that way.

Habitat

Accipiters are forest dwellers. They can be found across most of North America. Unlike the other two accipiter species (goshawk and Cooper's hawk) that fly in or very near to a forest, sharp-shinned hawks are often seen in open fields, towns, and city parks.

Diet

The larger female will hunt birds as large as pigeons, but sparrow-size birds make up the bulk of a sharpie's diet. Less frequently, it will eat rodents and large insects.

Unlike owls, sharp-shinned hawks do not con-



Above: A juvenile sharp-shinned hawk: It isn't easy to judge the size of a bird in flight. Illustration by Elizabeth Hacker.



Above: An adult sharp-shinned hawk: a small bird with a big attitude. Illustration by Elizabeth Hacker.

sume feathers. A sharpie is so fast that it surprises its prey, impaling it with one of its long sharp talons. It carries its prey to a perch where it first eats the head, then removes the feathers before consuming the rest of the bird. On Sunday, I noticed a lot of feathers in my yard. Could it be that the sharpie perched on my birdbath had feasted on birds in my yard?

Nesting

Nesting occurs when migratory birds begin to arrive on the Divide, usually early in May. The male and female work together to build a nest of sticks and bark. Often they place it on top of an abandoned squirrels' nest. The female lays up to five eggs over a period of two weeks. She broods them for about a month while the male brings food to the nest. Within three to four weeks, the nestlings begin to venture out, walking along nearby branches. In another two weeks, the parents begin to fly by the nest with prey to entice the young to fly after them to get the food. In a few more weeks, the juveniles will have reached the size of their parents and will leave to establish their own territories.

Migration

As a species, sharp-shinned hawks migrate annually from Canada to the southern United States. However, many Colorado sharpies are year-round residents that move up and down in elevation, known as regional migration.

Conservation status

At one time, the numbers of sharp-shinned hawks, like bald eagles, were threatened due to the use of DDT. Since DDT was banned, like the eagles, their numbers are increasing.

2018 is the Year of the Bird

National Geographic, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and the Audubon Society have declared 2018 the Year of the Bird. This year marks the centennial for the ratification of the North American Migratory Bird Treaty (1918) between Canada and the United States that today protects 1,025 non-game birds worldwide.

Prior to the ratification of this treaty, non-game birds were hunted indiscriminately for sport and the fashion industry. Herons, favored for their long, elegant plumbs popular on lady's hats, were hunted to near extinction. The great blue heron became the symbol of the Audubon Society in its effort to save this and many other non-game birds.

To celebrate their Year of the Bird, National Geographic is featuring a series of essays by Jonathan Franzen on "Why Birds Matter." Biologist and conservationist Thomas Lovejoy, who introduced the term "biological diversity," believes, "If you take care of the birds, you take care of most of the big problems in the world."

In this very special year, it is indeed a privilege to write this column and share my observation about the birds that live in and migrate to the Palmer Divide. I always enjoy hearing from readers, so please contact me with your photos and stories!

Elizabeth Hacker can be reached at elizabethhacker@ocn.me.

