

design each month. Open to adults and teens of all skill levels. All materials are provided. Registration is preferred but not required.

Celebrate *Pi Day* on Wednesday, March 20 by learning to make some simple, no-bake pies. Food waiver required. Please advise the library staff of any allergies in advance. Registration is required. The program is open to ages 12 to 18.

The *Teen Arts and Crafts* program on Wednesday, March 27 from 4 to 5:30 is piggy banks. All supplies are provided. Get ready to save money with a personalized piggy bank that you paint, decorate, and assemble. Snacks will be provided. This program is open to ages 9 to 15 and registration is required.

The *Monument Library Anime Club* will meet from 5 to 6:30 on Thursday, March 28. Share anime with other people who love it too. We will watch videos (nothing rated above TV-14) and enjoy snacks. Help shape the anime club for future months.

#### Adult programs

Regularly occurring adult programs include *Socrates Café* on Tuesdays from 1 to 3 and *Senior Chats* on Wednesdays from 10 to noon. No registration is required for these groups. Free beginner yoga classes

are offered on Thursdays from noon to 1.

See above for descriptions of *Coloring for Everyone*, *All Ages Knitting*, *Paper Tiger Origami* and *Palmer Lake Art Group* drawing classes.

The *Life Circles* writing group meets on the first and third Monday of the month (March 4 and 18) to write about memories of life experiences. This supportive group provides discipline, inspiration, and structure to help you meet your writing goals. No registration required.

The *Monumental Bookworms* book group will meet from 7 to 8:30 on Tuesday, March 12 to discuss *The Great Alone* by Kristin Hannah. This monthly group is open to all.

The *Monumental Readers* will meet from 10 to noon on Friday, March 15 to discuss *How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents* by Julia Alvarez. All are welcome and no registration is required.

Do you think you know your literature? Test your knowledge at our *Literary Trivia* event! Come to the library from 1 to 2:30 on Friday, March 15. We'll provide the trivia and you bring the competition. This program is part of our *Winter Adult Reading Program*.

Becky Elder will present a class on edible garden-

ing on Saturday, March 16 from 12:30 to 1:30.

Come to the library on Monday, March 25 from 3:30 to 5 to create a no-sew St. Patrick's Day pillow of canvas and felt. Registration required.

The *History Buffs* will meet from 1:30 to 3:30 on Wednesday, March 27. This year's topic of discussion is the *Age of Exploration*. No registration is required. The *Monument Library Spinning Group* will meet from 1:30 to 3:45 on Thursday, March 28.

#### Palmer Lake Library events

The *Palmer Lake Book Group* meets at 9 a.m. on the first Friday of each month.

*Family Story Time* at Palmer Lake is on Wednesdays at 10:30. *Toddler Time* is on Fridays at 10:30.

Come to the library at 10:30 on Saturday, March 16 to enjoy a special puppet show: *Fractured Fairy Tale* starring Piggy Rae.

The spring break program at Palmer Lake is *Meet a Colorado State Patrol Officer* on Wednesday, March 27 at 10:30. The State Patrol officer will answer questions and introduce your child to our vital community helpers. A patrol car will be on location if available.

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### Palmer Lake Historical Society, Feb. 21

## "Poker Alice" was dealt good cards and bad

By Sigi Walker

On Feb. 21, the Palmer Lake Historical Society heard the unusual story of "Poker Alice"—the adventurous, religious, cigar-smoking woman gambler who never played cards on Sunday.

Dressed in a costume reflecting the Victorian era in which Poker Alice made her living, Liz Duckworth made the story come alive. Telling the tale by having an audience member pick one of four aces representing four aspects of Poker Alice's life, Liz took the audience back to the mining boomtowns of Colorado, New Mexico, and South Dakota during the 1880s and 1890s.

After the death of her young mining engineer husband, Frank Duffield, in Lake City, Colo., Alice was faced with difficult circumstances, especially how to pay rent and food without her husband's income. But Alice was educated, had a good head for figures and was able to "count cards." Employment opportunities for young women in the West in the 1870s were limited. There weren't even enough families with children

in Lake City for there to be a school. And so, Alice began to make her living as a professional gambler—a woman in a man's world.

Alice Ivers Duffield Tubbs Huckert married twice more during her lifetime, outliving both of these husbands. During this time, she changed her attire from the latest fashion to military-type clothes and a World War I campaign hat.

Over her lifetime, Poker Alice enjoyed financial success, with fine clothes and trips by train or stagecoach to distant places. She also endured very lean times, especially when living on her ranch outside of Sturgis, S.D. Her final gamble was having surgery for gallstones, from which she did not recover. She died at the age of 79 in 1930 and is buried in Sturgis.



Above: Liz Duckworth as Poker Alice later in life. Photo by Su Ketchmark.

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Mark your calendars for Thursday, March 21, when the Historical Society will present *Oh, the Rock Island Line!* by Mike and Sigi Walker, PLHS volunteers and railroad history enthusiasts. Hear the story of the Rock Island Railroad in the Pikes Peak area, including its "ups and downs," some surprising "firsts," and the unique AB6 locomotive that brought the Rocky Mountain Rocket from Limon to Colorado Springs. The venue is the Palmer Lake Town Hall, 28 Valley Crescent. The event begins at 6:30 p.m. Palmer Lake Historical Society events and programs are free and open to all. ■

### Bird Watch on the Palmer Divide

## Sandhill crane (*Antigone canadensis*)

By Elizabeth Hacker

Nothing signals spring for a birder than the calls of sandhill cranes flying overhead. While it may not feel like spring, sandhill cranes have begun their long migration to their nesting grounds.

Sandhill cranes are believed to be the oldest living bird, having existed for more than 9 million years in their present form. Every year, like clockwork, nearly 20,000 sandhill cranes descend on Colorado's scenic San Luis Valley for a six-week stopover to rest and refuel before continuing their northward spring migration. The town of Monte Vista and the Friends of the San Luis Valley Refuge host an annual festival to celebrate the crane's return. This year marks the 36th year for this festival, which takes place March 8-10.

During spring and fall migration, occasionally one or two cranes may be reported here. Generally, when individual cranes are seen, they have fallen out of a flock due to bad weather or injury. The advantage of viewing cranes in their natural habitat, such as the Monte Vista Wildlife Refuge, provides an opportunity to observe flocks of birds and possibly see their elegant courting displays.

#### Characteristics

The sandhill crane is a large bird, measuring up to 5 feet tall with wings spanning an impressive 6 to 7 feet. It has a long neck and long legs. Its body feathers are brownish-gray, its neck is white, and both the adult male and female have a distinctive red crown patch. Often cranes are confused with the great-blue heron, but they are separate species and not related.

The best way to differentiate a crane from a heron is to compare their necks. A crane's neck is a little shorter than the heron's and a crane holds its neck straight, whereas the heron neck will typically have a curve. In flight, a crane's neck will stick straight out while a heron's will always be tucked into an "S"



Above: Sandhill crane. Photo by Elizabeth Hacker

curve. Cranes also have shorter beaks. If not in flight, a crane will always be found standing or walking on the ground. A heron is often seen roosting in a tree. Because of its foot structure, a crane cannot grasp a branch, so roosting in a tree would be an impossibility.

The sandhill crane has a distinctive and loud bugling call that can be heard from a quite a distance. While flying, the cranes continually vocalize to keep the flock together. I often I hear them flying over but rarely see them.

#### Diet

Sandhill cranes are omnivores and feed in open grasslands and shallow marshes. Their diet consists primarily of seeds and cultivated grains but also include berries, tubers, and small vertebrates and invertebrates including grasshoppers, mice, snakes, and frogs.

#### Mating and nesting

Cranes may begin mating as early as 2, but often wait until 5 years of age. They choose a mate based on elaborate courtship displays. Courting cranes stretch their wings, pump their heads, bow, and leap into the air in a graceful and energetic dance. If they like what they see and are compatible, they choose a mate for life. If one mate dies, the surviving mate will try to attract another mate, and if successful, may return to the same nest.

As flocks of cranes arrive to their nesting region, pairs will separate from the flock to select a site to build their nest. Prime nesting sites are located in bogs with vegetation for cover, but nests also are found in less desirable open grasslands. Available materials such as cattails are used to construct a mound nest about 6 inches in height and 3 feet in width.

The female lays up to three eggs, and once all the eggs have been laid, the pair takes turns incubating them for about a month. Eggs hatch within hours of each other. The chicks are precocial, meaning that once hatched, the chicks can walk, feed themselves, and leave the nest.

In about a month after hatching, the chicks will have grown to the size of an adult but will stay with their parents for about 10 months learning to fly and forage for food. Nesting season is short in the Arctic, and sandhill cranes endure harsh conditions where predators such as foxes, raccoons, gulls, and hawks prey on chicks and injured adults. Crane families will soon rejoin the safety of the flock to prepare for fall migration, which begins in end of July.

#### Conservation

According to the North American Breeding Bird Survey, the sandhill crane population increased by about 4.5 percent per year from 1966 to 2014. Because many states have worked to preserve habitat, the popula-

