

### Description

The most abundant grebe in the world, the eared grebe is a common bird that breeds in interior freshwater shallow wetlands of western North America. It is a small diving bird about 12 inches long with a wingspan of less than 2 feet.

During mating season this bird is strikingly beautiful, but in the off season it is dull. The name “eared grebe,” is derived from long golden feathers that fan out behind its red eyes during mating season. Male and female look alike. They have long, thin black beaks and dark feathers on their crested head, neck, and back. Their sides are copper and tail feathers are white. Their skin is dark and may show through the white fluffy tail feathers. Their long legs and lobed feet are yellowish green and trail behind their short tail when in flight. The undersides of their wings have white patches.

### Behavior

The eared grebes’ legs are located near the back of its body making walking on land difficult. When it isn’t migrating, it spends most of the time in the water. It swims and dives using its long legs, feet, and lobed toes to propel it forward.

It spends as much as 15 percent of the day under water and has numerous physical adaptations that make it an excellent diver. Its body is covered with small dense feathers. To reduce its buoyancy, it can quickly compress these feathers along with its internal air reserves, causing it to sink and allowing it to efficiently capture prey or escape a predator.

### Diet

Its primary source of food is small fish, but it also consumes invertebrates, crustaceans, insects, and larvae.

### Breeding and nesting

Eared grebes have elaborate courtship displays and are monogamous when nesting. They are colonial nesters and are often found nesting in dense colonies alongside other colonial nesters like the cormorant.

Both parents construct a floating nest made from mud and floating reeds. The nest is located in shallow water and anchored to standing marsh plants. The female lays three to five cream-colored eggs that become stained by minerals in water. Parents alternate between incubating and diving for food.

An amazing communication called “care-soliciting signals” occurs between unhatched chicks and their parents. The embryos’ peeping excites the parents, causing them to add vegetation to the nest, store food, and continually sit on the eggs. The eggs hatch in about 21 days and all eggs hatch the same day.

After the last egg hatches, the chicks leave the nest and ride on their parents’ backs for the first week. The parents feed the chicks digested insects and feathers. After 10 days, each parent takes half the brood and parts ways. Chicks quickly learn to follow their parents and dive for food. In a little more than three weeks, the chicks are on their own.

### Migration

Eared grebes take flight en masse by running over the

water and flapping their wings to lift off the water. While in flight, this little bird constantly flaps its short wings and rarely stops until it arrives at its destination.

During their southern migration, millions of eared grebes descend on Mono Lake and the Great Salt Lake. They stop for a few weeks to gorge on brine shrimp, doubling their weight in preparation for the next leg of their journey. Here they molt and build up a fat reserve to give them the energy necessary for the next leg of their non-stop flight to their winter home in coastal bays along the Gulf and Pacific Coasts.

### Plan to double Chatfield Reservoir capacity could endanger birds

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has a plan to double Chatfield’s water storage capacity, which will flood over 500 acres of the park. The eared grebe along with many other water birds, raptors, and song birds nest in habitats that will be eliminated if this plan is approved. To learn more about the plan and environmental impact go to [www.chatfieldstudy.org](http://www.chatfieldstudy.org) or walk the wetlands with the Denver Audubon Society on Sept. 2. The group will meet at 8 a.m. at the Chatfield Audubon Center located in the park—no reservations are required.

Sept. 6, is the last day to submit comments. Comments on the Corps’ plan may be submitted on its website: [www.chatfieldstudy@usace.army.mil](mailto:www.chatfieldstudy@usace.army.mil).

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## Art Matters

# Front Range artists live and in color—and in the movies



By Janet Sellers

When I moved here years ago from big city living, I had no idea of the rich culture that preceded me here. I was overwhelmed with the common deep snowfalls, endless cattle fields, dirt roads, and driving over 15 miles just to get groceries. My mainstay for social connections, however, soon became alive and bright due to my shared love of art with others in this area.

Perhaps that is how the visitors, pioneers, and artists of the Pikes Peak region felt when they came here in the late 1800s. They were in love with the vast nature and riches to be made, yet confounded by the cultural isolation that they personally felt, and got right to making the area a cultural tourism destination. Looking back to the voluptuous fine art and cultural beginnings, it is high time this story is told to us today as we take hold of each complex part of our local development and the needed economic expansion. We’re out of water here in Colorado, but not out of ideas.

Back then, they brought in a lot of ideas, people and materials to create the lives of their dreams in this wild, wild West. It hasn’t changed much with the land conflicts, water issues, and fortune building, so it’s good to keep in mind now as we build our lives amid similar issues of water conflicts, development, and the modern-day robber barons of fracking and mining.

Finding out how the people before us got along wasn’t as easy or as close at hand as I would have expected for such an opulent and rich legacy. Fortunately, our own Tri-Lakes fine artist, (Emmy Award nominee and Telly Award winning producer/director) Jim Sawatzki, has put the labor and love into researching the history and presenting a beautiful, albeit complex and astonishingly broad group of fine art characters and innovators.

Sawatzki has just completed *Rarefied Air* (a longtime term for the healing air that brought thousands here), a film on the art history of our region, complete with writers, painters, sculptors, architects, photographers, and more.

Starting with the earliest known artifacts, Sawatzki has included the prehistoric Native American art, such as the petroglyphs and artifacts of our area’s earliest inhabitants to the elaborate efforts of the late 1800s and early 1900s. The film offers insights throughout those times and on into the Depression era, finishing with the contemporary kinetic metal sculptures of Starr Kempf.

The film promises to be interesting for all audiences and interest levels in art, history, and community, and Sawatzki also told me, “I’m really hoping I can attract teachers of all disciplines and serious art students.”

### Art events in September

#### Tri-Lakes Center for the Arts (TLCA):

- Ongoing exhibit: (through Sat., **Sept. 22**) *Rock ‘n Art Exhibition*—an art exhibit featuring the art of rock ‘n’ roll as genre. Over 10 artists are exhibiting a wide variety of works, from iconic images of classic rock ‘n’ roll to abstract expressions of rock ‘n’ roll’s energetic colors.
- *Rarefied Air—Historic Artists of the Pikes Peak Region*. Fri., **Sept. 14**, 7 p.m. 90-minute feature film.

Tickets: TLCA members \$5, nonmembers \$6;

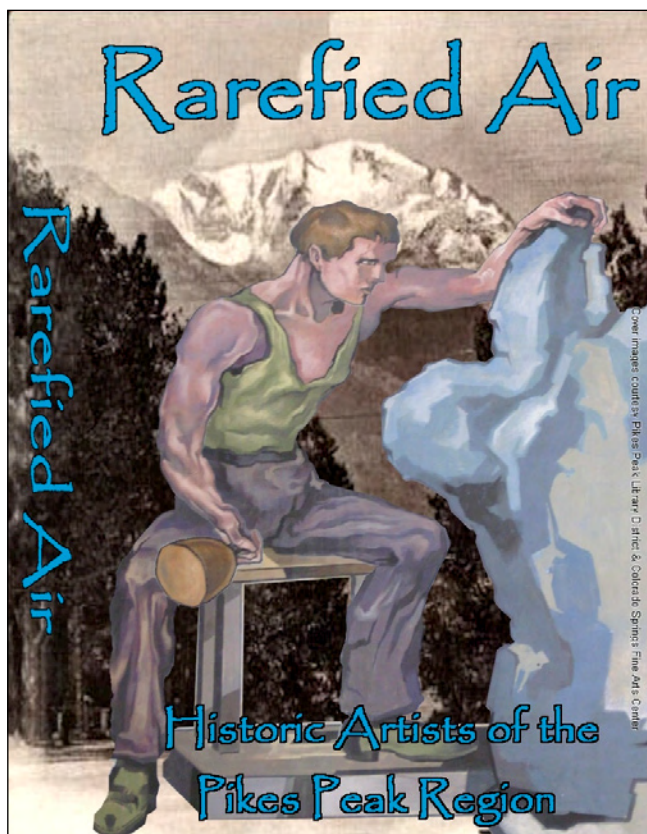
- Calls to artists: TLCA Members Exhibit. Entries due by Wed., **Oct. 31**. Exhibit dates: **Nov. 6** to **Dec. 8**. Call 719-481-0475 for forms and details. More information can be found at [www.trilakesarts.org](http://www.trilakesarts.org)

**Second Fridays Art Night**, Fri., **Sept. 14**, 4:30 to 8 p.m., focuses on our local art scene from the Monument “art quarter” to Palmer Lake and the TLCA. It will eventually offer venues throughout the community. You can check it out and get a map at [www.MonumentArts.net](http://www.MonumentArts.net). Festive outdoor tents and spaces in an outdoorsy art festival style. Second Fridays Art Night is calling for artists. Gear up for the holiday season and talk to your local Monument art venues. They are looking to have more and more artists’ trunk shows for this monthly event. Check out the details at [www.MonumentArts.net](http://www.MonumentArts.net).

**Front Range Open Studios Tour**—Sat.-Sun., **Sept. 15-16**, download a map and plot your art adventures for this artful weekend: [www.fronrangeopenstudios.com/map.php](http://www.fronrangeopenstudios.com/map.php). There is such a wide variety of art and artists (they list 14 on the map) that you could just set aside your weekend to see them all.

**Last 2012 Art Hop**: Thu., **Sept. 20**, 5 to 8 p.m. The last one of the year. Join the Historic Monument Merchants in downtown Monument for the gala event. Monument merchants open their doors and stay open late to celebrate a unique afternoon/evening of art at their stores to let you meet and greet the artists. Some of the art galleries in town also stay open to support the evening of art.

*Janet Lee Sellers is an American painter and sculptor of public art who works in paint, metal and concrete. Sellers lives in Woodmoor, Colo. She can be reached at [JanetSellers@OCN.me](mailto:JanetSellers@OCN.me).*



**Left:** On Sept. 14, 7 p.m., Jim Sawatzki will premiere his new feature length film, *Rarefied Air* at the Tri Lakes Center for the Arts. DVDs of the movie will be available for sale at the premiere. Emmy Nominee Sawatzki (shown below in a photo by Dan Fraley) is a local film maker who specializes in documentaries on local history.

**Right:** Singer songwriter Wendy Woo stands next to a portrait of her by artist Charles Snyder. The work is part of the exhibit *The Art of Rock* at TLCA. The art exhibit celebrates the vibrant energy of rock music and the performers of the music. Woo held a concert at TLCA August 31. She performs frequently at TLCA, and another upcoming show is soon to be announced. *Photo by Janet Sellers.*

