

A SHORT BIRD CLUB HISTORY

The Sanctuary on the Park community had a covenant of sorts with the bird sanctuary concept even before its governance was turned over to the homeowners. It was an integral part of the developer's sales campaign. And, also, why the actual name of *Sanctuary on the Park*, was born. This is due to the plot layout imposed by its central core. This core, referred to geographically by ACWWA as Lagoon No. 7, is the final holding area for the control of the surface water run off through Windmill Creek. It also draws interest (and ultimate responsibility) of not only Arapahoe County but also the Corps of Engineers and other involved state divisions.

As a part of its dedication to the sanctuary concept, the developer donated funds to build the bird sanctuary. Those funds were used to purchase the original hardware and habitats. A volunteer group was formed to do the actual installation and provide ongoing upkeep. In addition, they enlisted the help of a well known and respected bird expert, Dr. Scott Menough, founder and owner of *Wild Birds Unlimited*. Using the Plot Plan, including all plantings, designed and implemented by ACWWA, we worked with Dr. Menough on the best placement of the habitats based on the existing types and sizes of the trees and other flora and special types of birds, the habitat sizes, the necessary specifications such as aperture openings, the proper direction of the openings should face and placement in relation to surrounding natural covering foliage.

The final design, concentrated solely on cavity nesters, has continued for nearly 20 years. It has gone through the usual growing pains and a few "bumps" along the way leaving just Ron Robinson and me as the Stewards. A little over a year ago I also lost Ron, a dear friend to me and a loyal caretaker of the bird sanctuary. Recently, though, there has been some renewed interest, spearheaded by Carol Race, to reform a working group and bring back a staffed Bird Club. Accordingly, we're now adding some new "blood" so we can continue on.

Up til recently, it has, been financed entirely by the volunteers. A few years back the situation was discussed during an open forum session at a homeowners meeting. As a result I received a very welcomed contribution from a few anonymous residents who "chipped in". For that I was very grateful. It allowed me to refurbish and renew some of our more weathered habitats and buy some new ones. More recently, on hearing we were renewing efforts, the Social Committee also donated a portion of their unused 2020 budget, due to the COVID-19 restrictions. With this very kind help we are back on track. Our currently active habitats are: 9 Swallow (Tree & Green-Violet Back) and 5 for Wrens and Chickadees.

Finally, I would be remiss if I neglected to mention that the Bird Club's efforts are only a part of this total Eco System. Some nearby communities are either close to, or even bordering part of the Cherry Creek State Park natural open area. We at *Sanctuary on the Park* actually have this very special natural element *within* our boundary. As such it behooves us to take this opportunity seriously and recognize all that it means. All of us have seen a variety of wild life including, but not limited to, Deer, Coyote, Fox, Rabbit and Raccoons and even the oft maligned snakes (the Bull Snake, Common Garter and even the Prairie Rattler) who keep the Mice, Voles and a host of bugs at bay and out of our homes AND in turn provide food for most all of the Hawk species. Both these and the natural foliage that they require should be protected and monitored for their proper essence to the whole.

Jim Murlin - 2020

