

# ROCKY MOUNTAIN FIELD SEMINARS

## LEARN ♦ EXPLORE ♦ ADVENTURE

### COLORADO HUMMINGBIRDS: A DAY IN THE FIELD

JULY 13, 2008

**COURSE LEVEL: II**      **COURSE #: 08-027**

**FEE: \$85**

**INSTRUCTOR: STEVE AND DEBBIE BOURICIUS**



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**LOCATION:**      **Rocky Mountain Field Seminar & Conference Center**  
**1895 Fall River Road, Estes Park, Colorado**

**TIME:**            **7:30 AM – 4:00 PM**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Hummingbirds are among the most instantly recognizable of all birds; yet they are one of the least studied of all bird groups. Their small size, fast flight, and soft vocalizations make it especially difficult to track and observe individual birds, and their complex lifestyle poses continuing challenges to researchers. Almost everything we know with certainty about bird distribution, migration, breeding biology, and longevity comes from studies of individually banded and marked birds. But, while bird banding as a research tool has been in existence for more than a century, hummingbird banding is still in its infancy. In this course, we will examine the life cycle of hummingbirds, learn to observe and identify them in the field, then get a close-up look into the art and science of hummingbird banding research.

**COURSE LEVEL: II**  
**Short-distance walks throughout the day on primarily level terrain**

**BRIEF INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHY (additional information available at [www.rmna.org](http://www.rmna.org)):**

Steve and Debbie Bouricius are licensed master hummingbird banders engaged in a broad range of banding studies of breeding and migrant hummingbirds in Colorado. With banding stations on both sides of the Continental Divide, they have banded more than 4,000 hummingbirds of nine species in the state since 1999. Some interesting new discoveries about hummingbirds have resulted from their work.

These husband-and-wife teammates are avid naturalists and have watched hummingbirds since childhood. Steve is a past president of the Colorado Field Ornithologists and has conducted field trips and other programs for thousands of birders in the state. He spends much of his time monitoring nests and making observations of hummingbirds in the course of tending the apple orchards on their farm in Palisade, Colorado. As a computer systems analyst for Mesa County, Debbie has developed the sophisticated database programs which keep track of their banding and nest observations. Debbie is also an avid gardener who enjoys planting for hummingbirds.

**EXPECTATIONS:** Professional conduct will be expected from participants at all times. Individual ideas will be respected. Except during course breaks, cellular phones, pagers, and personal entertainment devices are strictly prohibited in the classroom and during field sessions.

**CAR-POOLING:** Rocky Mountain Field courses utilize car-pooling to limit vehicles traveling into the Park. Car-pooling makes it easier to keep the group together, reduces transit time, and allows courses greater access because fewer parking spaces are required at destinations. In addition, it provides an opportunity for participants to discuss course material in small groups during transit. Typically, a few participants from each course volunteer the use of their vehicles for car-pooling to course locations.

**TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE:**

The courses will begin with a forty-five-minute PowerPoint presentation to cover the subjects of hummingbird species distribution, life cycle, and key features useful for identifying birds in the field. Discussion will include Estes Valley native hummingbirds, as well as, the rarer species that have visited the region in recent years which may signal population changes in the future. Hummingbird banding and the focus of current research will also be explored in the classroom.

The classroom session will be followed by a field trip into Rocky Mountain National Park for a casual hike to hummingbird observation locations. Discussion will include habitat preferences, territorial behavior, sexual segregation, nesting and care of the young, feeding habits, and plants and insects used by hummingbirds.

The field trip will continue at private locations outside the Park where hummingbirds are attracted to flowers and feeders in concentrated numbers. Instructors will review features for identification of the various species by sex and age, and participants will watch the hummingbird's competitive interactions. The remainder of the course will be at a hummingbird banding station to study how birds are captured and handled safely, what measurements are taken, and how information is recorded. The instructors will band, gather data, and release a number of hummingbirds. Participants will not be allowed to handle or band birds because this requires a license; however, participants will have the opportunity to observe these tiny creatures in the hands of the instructors—a rare opportunity to closely examine the features of these remarkable animals.

**WHAT TO BRING:**

- Sack lunch, snacks, energy bars, & **WATER**
- Binoculars
- Birding field guide (optional)
- Wear comfortable, natural-colored clothing; particularly avoid white.
- Notebook
- Pen/pencil
- Camera (optional)
- Light field stool/mat (optional)

**REMEMBER TO BRING THE 10 ESSENTIALS:**

Rocky Mountain National Park recommends that hikers always carry the 10 essentials in their daypacks.

- Raingear
- Map & compass
- Flashlight or headlamp
- Sunglasses & sunscreen
- Candles
- Matches or other fire starter
- Pocketknife
- First-aid kit
- Extra layers of clothing
- Sack lunch, snacks, & water

*Note: Rocky Mountain Field Seminars recommends that participants for all courses dress in layers and wear comfortable, sturdy hiking boots/shoes. Participants should be prepared for sudden changes in temperature and weather conditions.*

**TEACHER RECERTIFICATION CREDIT**

All courses are eligible for teacher recertification credit through the Centennial Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES). The new fee is \$25.00 per seminar (.5 units) or \$25.00 per series of threaded seminars (1.0 - 3.0 units). A list of threaded seminars can be found in the Field Seminar Catalog or online at [www.rmna.org](http://www.rmna.org). Participants must enroll in all seminars of a threaded series in order to qualify for the \$25.00 multi-unit fee. Please be prepared to pay for this credit with a check, made payable to BOCES, on the first day of a seminar or on the final day of a threaded series of seminars.

**THIS COURSE IS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR CSU CREDIT.**

**RECOMMENDED READING:** (No need to buy or bring these to the seminar; they are optional.)

Sheri L. Williamson. 2002. **A Field Guide to Hummingbirds of North America**. Peterson field guide series. Houghton Mifflin Co. New York.

Steve N. G. Howell. 2002. **Hummingbirds of North America, the Photographic Guide**. Princeton University Press, New Jersey.

David A. Sibley. 2000. **The Sibley Guide to Birds**. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. New York.

Paul A. Johnsgard. 1983. **The Hummingbirds of North America**. Smithsonian Institution Press. Washington, D. C.

E. Q. Tyrell and R. A. Tyrell. 1985. **Hummingbirds: Their Life and Behavior, a Photographic Study of North American Species**. Crown Publishers. New York.

Hugh E. Kingery, Ed. 1998. **The Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas**. Colorado Bird Atlas Partnership and the Colorado Division of Wildlife. Denver, Colorado.

Robert Andrews and Robert Righter. 1992. **Colorado Birds**. Denver Museum of Natural History. Denver, Colorado.

Robert Righter, Rich Levad, Coen Dexter and Kim Potter. 2004. **Birds of Western Colorado, Plateau and Mesa Country**. Grand Valley Audubon Society. Grand Junction, Colorado.

Scott Weidensaul. 1999. **Living on the Wind: Across the Hemisphere with Migratory Birds**. North Point Press. New York.

Nancy L. Newfield and Barbara Nielson. 1996. **Hummingbird Gardens, Attracting Nature's Jewels to Your Backyard**. Chapters Publishing Ltd. Vermont.

Audubon Colorado; Susan J. Tweit, Connie Holsinger, et. al. 2005. **Colorado Wildscapes, Bringing Conservation Home**. Westcliffe Publishers. Englewood, Colorado.

**Colorado Birds, the Colorado Field Ornithologists Quarterly**. Subscription and membership, P. O. Box 481, Lyons, Colorado, 80540-0481.

**INTERNET RESOURCES:**

North American Bird Banding Laboratory, <http://www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl/bbl.html>

U.S.G.S. bibliography, <http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl/resources/bibl/humbib.htm>

Stacy Jon Peterson's Hummingbird Research and Records, <http://www.trochilids.com>

Lanny Chamber's Hummingbirds.net, <http://www.hummingbirds.net>

The American Bird Conservancy's Cats Indoors! <http://www.abcbirds.org/cats>