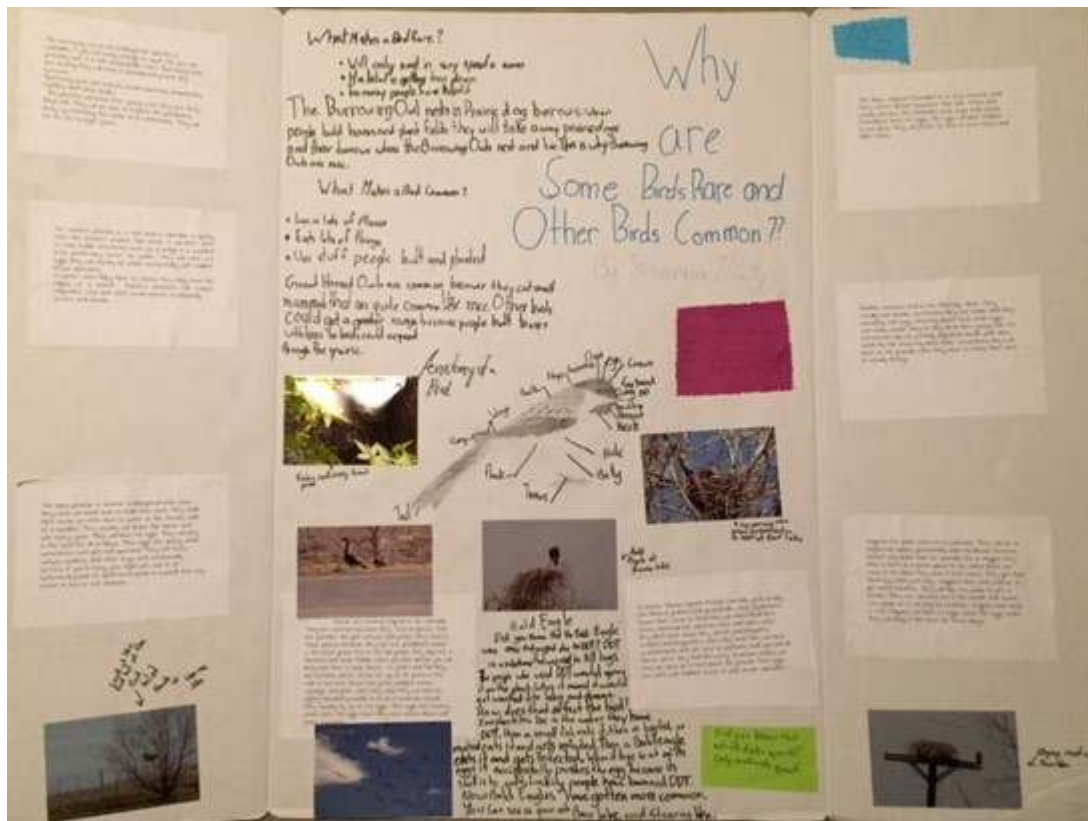


The essay, below, is by Lafayette resident (and entering 5th grader), Johanna Maily. It is based on her 4th grade learning fair project at Ryan Elementary School. She was inspired to choose birds as her subject by attending “Lafayette birds!” sessions and starting to learn about birds around her. Perhaps Johanna’s interest in birds might inspire other Lafayette citizens to take even closer notice of the birds around us and to become part of why we say “Lafayette birds!”

Why Some Birds Common and Other Birds Rare

By Johanna Maily

This was my topic for the science fair project. I chose it because I really like birds and I wanted to find out what makes a bird common and what makes a bird rare. I did some research, went to one of Martin Ogle’s talks, and found out a few reasons why some birds are rare and why others birds are common. I also did some research on birds that are common, rare and migrators for Colorado.



What Makes A Bird Rare

- Will only nest in very specific places
- Habitat is getting torn down
- Too many have been killed by activities of people

The Burrowing Owl nests in Prairie Dog burrows. When people build houses and plant fields they will take away Prairie Dogs and their burrows where the Burrowing Owls nest in. This is one reason why Burrowing owls are endangered.

What makes a Bird Common

- Can live in lots of places
- Can eat lots of things
- Uses Stuff people build

Great Horned owls are common (for owls) because they eat lots of different kinds of animals, including small mammals, like mice, that are quite common. Other birds are adapted to the cities people have built around the prairie. These are some of the reasons why some birds are common.

Geese are common migrators for Colorado. They are common because they nest in places that are plentiful like golf courses and parks. They nest in those places because they can see predators easier in the short grass than in the tall grass. They also live in Marshes and Grain Fields. When you see Geese you will likely see them in large flocks. In Winter and Fall they eat berries. Geese will live for up to 24 years in the wild. In summer Geese eat grass, sedges, skunk Cabbage and grain. They will nest on slightly elevated grounds such as a muskrat mound. They usually lay 2-8 eggs. Their eggs are creamy white. When the eggs hatch the goslings have brown downy feathers with yellow speckles. **Geese photo by Johanna.**



Swainson hawks migrate through Colorado, you'll usually see them in prairies and grasslands. When Swainson hawks have chicks to feed they will often feed their chicks mammals like squirrels, mice and voles. When they don't have chicks they will eat grasshoppers, crickets and dragonflies. When they nest they will nest in shelterbelts that are next to pastures and

agricultural farms where they find their prey. Swainson hawks will nest as close as 3 feet above the ground. Their eggs are white with reddish brown or pale purple speckles.



Photo from Wikipedia

The Eastern Phoebe is a rare bird in Colorado. In spring, when the eastern phoebe has chicks, it will often nest on manmade structures such as a bridge in a wooded area, preferably closer to water. They will have 2-6 eggs, they will usually be white, occasionally with reddish brown speckles.

In winter when they have no chicks, they stay near the edges of a forest. Eastern phoebes eat wasps, millipedes, ticks and other small insects occasionally berries and seeds.

Photo from Wikipedia



The burrowing owl is a threatened species in Colorado. If you are lucky enough to spot one you will probably see it in the grasslands. When Burrowing owls are nesting they will nest in abandoned prairie dog burrows.

Burrowing owls eat insects, small mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and other birds.

The parents will leave their young when they are forty days old. They will be able to frighten the predators away by mimicking the rattle of a rattlesnake. They will live for six to eight years.

Photo from Wikipedia



The **Black Capped Chickadee** is a very common bird. They will live almost anywhere that has trees and woody shrubs. The chickadee eats bugs and seeds. Chickadees have 6-8 eggs with reddish brown dots.

Photo from Wikipedia



Black-billed Magpies are quite common in Colorado. They live in sagebrush plains, grasslands, and meadows. For a magpie a farm is a great place to be. When there are cows in the farm they love it even more. Let's just say magpies are, well, creative! They will flip cow poop to get a beetle. They are omnivores, so if the beetle has some cow poop on it will only be healthier- veggies and meat in one! Magpies lay 1-9 eggs. When the eggs hatch, nestlings will stay in the nest for 24-30 days.

Photo by Wikipedia



Another common bird is the **Mourning Dove**. It usually eats seeds, sometimes they eat snails and they will rarely eat bugs. Mourning Doves have white eggs. One really weird thing is they feed their young *milk*. It's not normal milk, it's partially digested seeds and other stuff the Mourning dove eats. Sometimes they will nest on the ground. When they nest on trees their nest is usually flimsy.

Photo by Wikipedia

