

noon on Friday, Nov. 17 to discuss *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith. All patrons are welcome to attend this monthly book group.

Tom Pulford, head football coach and PE/Health teacher at Palmer Ridge High School, will speak on positive coaching on Tuesday, Nov. 21 from 6:15 to 8:45.

Palmer Lake Library events

The Palmer Lake Book Group meets at 9 a.m. on the

first Friday of each month. All patrons are welcome to attend. Please call 481-2587 for the current selection.

The Family Fun Cool Science program on Saturday, Nov. 18 at 10:30 is Balloon Science. Watch us play with and even abuse some balloons in the name of science.

Toddler Time in Palmer Lake is on Fridays at 10:30 and Story Time for preschoolers is on Wednes-

days at 10:30.

All Pikes Peak Library facilities will close at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 22 and remained closed on Nov. 23 in observance of Thanksgiving.

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Palmer Lake Historical Society, Oct. 19

Filmmaker focuses on scenery, trains

By Sigi Walker

On Oct. 19, an enthusiastic audience enjoyed a potpourri of short videos by multi-award-winning documentary filmmaker Rich Luckin. All the videos were filled with spectacular scenery and trains. A number were not produced for commercial purposes. This was true of the short film with which he opened the program. It features the Utica (NY) Union Station, a beautifully restored 1914 classically-inspired Beaux Arts structure. Of interest were the massive wooden benches that were once heated with steam from steam pipes and vents. Today, Amtrak and the Adirondack Scenic Railroad as well as intercity and local buses serve the station.

Another video featured Amtrak's "Zephyr in Colorado" as it traveled from Denver to Glenwood Springs. Surprisingly, some videos were taken with his cell phone and then adapted to video format with music and subtitles added. He pointed out that all the principles of good photography apply when using a cell phone.

Scenery is the star in the 2008 GrandLuxe promotional short video filmed in Montana for travel agents, along with the scenes of the first-class dining service aboard that train. GrandLuxe was the successor to the American Orient Express. The name was changed to GrandLuxe following a lawsuit brought by the European Orient Express. Unfortunately, GrandLuxe went out of business shortly after the promo was completed. A place setting of GrandLuxe china was available for the audience to inspect.



Above: From left are Tom Baker, Kathleen Luckin, Rich Luckin, and Mike Walker at the Palmer Lake Historical Society's Oct. 19 program. *Photo by Doris Baker.*

Luckin also showed an early Amtrak promotional as well as clips from the film *Amtrak: The First 40 Years (1971-2011)*, which he produced for the 40th anniversary of Amtrak. He traveled all over the United States for a month to make the film—at Amtrak's expense.

Included in the potpourri was a longer film on the history of Kansas City Union Station, showing the early days, the busy station during World War II, the station's decline, and its restoration.

Two short videos featured the Colorado Railroad Museum in Golden, one of which was made using footage shot with a drone. He explained the necessity of planning where and what to film when using



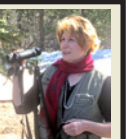
Above: GrandLuxe china, the last complete set sold. *Photo by Doris Baker.*

drones. He also mentioned that you have to take wind into consideration because it will cause the drone to wobble.

Mark your calendars for Thursday, Nov. 16, when the Palmer Lake Historical Society will present the program *The Star on Sundance Mountain* hosted by award-winning documentary filmmaker Jim Sawatzki. The film tells the story of this uniquely Palmer Lake institution that has become an iconic symbol of inspiration. The world's largest illuminated star, it can be seen for over 20 miles. Historical Society events and programs are held in the Palmer Lake Town Hall, 28 Valley Crescent St. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.; program begins at 7 p.m. and is free and open to all. Visit www.palmerdividehistory.org for more information. ■

Bird Watch on the Palmer Divide

Owls



Article and illustrations by Elizabeth Hacker

October is a month when many minds turn to ghoulish fantasy. Think Halloween, and what bird comes to mind? The owl, with its haunting yellow eyes, is a bird steeped in superstition and legend. Today, owls often are referred to as "wise and old." I've not tried the Colorado Springs restaurant, "The Burrowing Owl," but I imagine it to be a cozy restaurant for "book worms."

Legend aside, owls are a predatory bird that silently hunt their prey, mainly at night. Of the 19 species of owls in the United States, 13 are found in Colorado.

Owls vary in size from the great gray owl, 27 inches in length, to the diminutive 5.5-inch elf owl. Female owls are larger than the males. Owls have large rotating heads with facial discs and big, round eyes that are fixed in their sockets so they can't move, causing an owl to turn its neck to look in different directions. The large discs on an owl's face funnel sound to its ears, located not in ear tufts but asymmetrically at the side of its head.

Most owls swallow their prey whole and expel pellets of undigested bone, feathers, and fur. The bigger the owl, the bigger the pellet.

Most bird feathers have sharp edges that emit a flapping sound, but owl feathers are soft and muffle the sound of any air movement, allowing owls to silently grab unsuspecting prey in their sharp talons.

Owls on the Divide

The three owls commonly found here are very different from each other and vary in size, diet preferences, behavior, and habitat selection. Included here are the great horned owl, the burrowing owl, and the barn owl.

Great horned owl

The great horned owl, large with yellow eyes and ear tufts, is commonly found in woodlands of North America. In this region, it nests in a variety of habitats including coniferous forest, grassland, and wetlands. While it often nests in trees, it will also nest on high



shelves in garden centers, like Home Depot, where chicks are protected from predators like the red-tailed hawk. Garden centers provide an easy and abundant source of food, and owls help to control rodent and sparrow populations at these centers. Owl chicks are cute, and people enjoy watching them. People will go to a garden center to watch as the chicks develop, which can be an asset for a seasonal business.

Great horned owls mate for life but if one dies, the survivor will pursue another mate. Females lay up to four eggs in early spring and sit on them for 35 days while the male brings her food. After the chicks hatch, the male and female take turns tending the nest and hunting. Due to competition for food, it is rare to see more than two chicks fledge a nest. Smaller chicks can't compete with their larger siblings. Once a fledgling leaves the nest, it stays near its par-

ents for several months learning survival and hunting skills. In late fall, it will have learned to fend for itself and establish a new territory. The parents separate into territories until the following spring, when they will reunite to mate.

The great horned owls' range on the Palmer Divide is expanding and their numbers are increasing. According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the great horned owl is an opportunistic and adaptable bird that nests in a greater variety of sites than any other bird in North America.

Burrowing owl

Burrowing owls are small migratory birds with long legs found in dry, open grasslands and deserts. They fly en masse to arrive here mid-March to mid-April.

