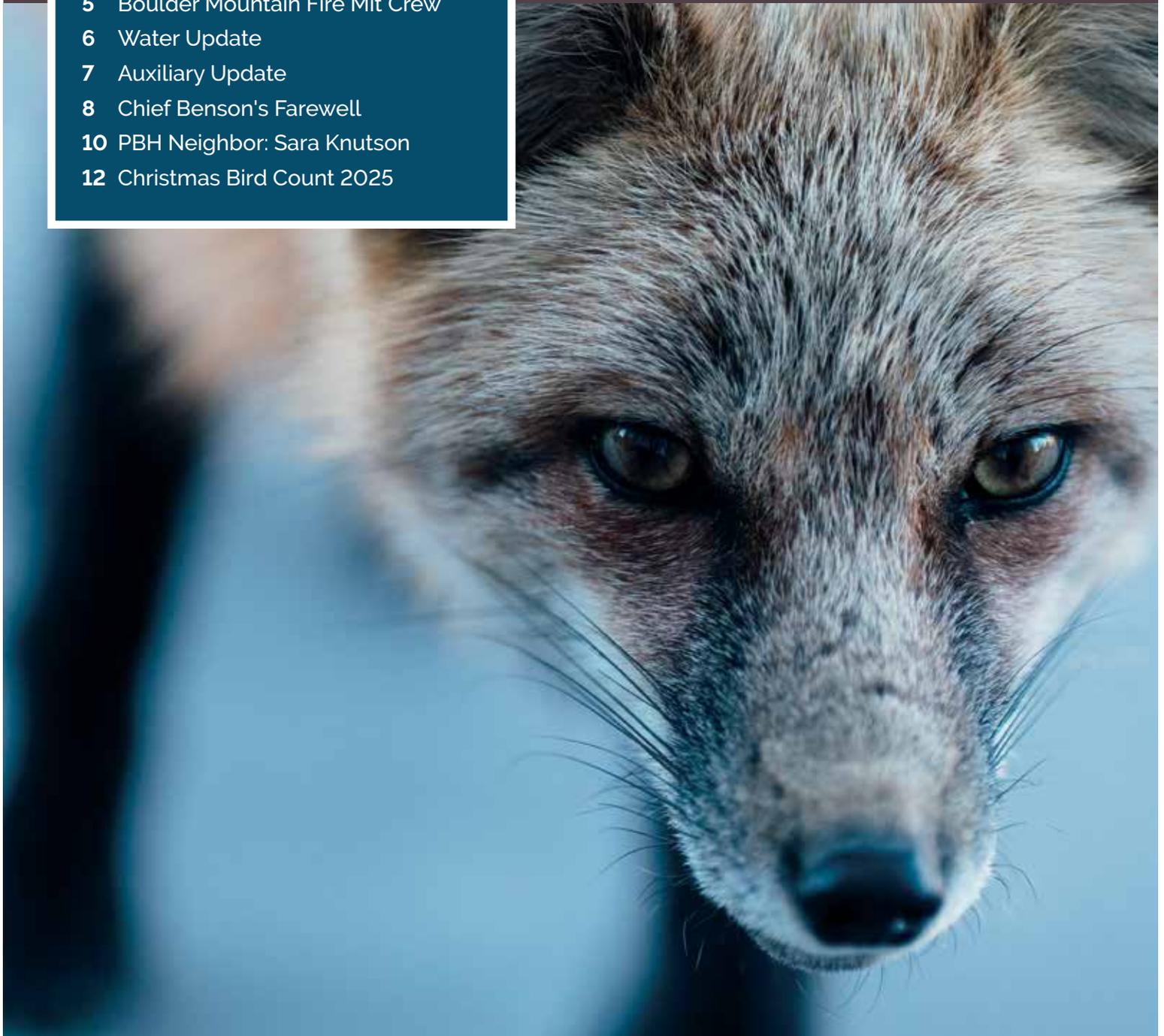


Pine Brook Press

A quarterly journal for, about, and by Pine Brook Hills residents | Winter 2026

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Community Calendar

HOA MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Meetings are held quarterly at the Community Center/Fire Station (1905 Linden Drive) unless otherwise noted. All residents are welcome to attend.

See website: www.pinebrookhills.org

BOULDER MOUNTAIN FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Meets the second Monday of every month at 4:00 PM. Call 303-440-0235 for specifics.

BOULDER MOUNTAIN FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT AUXILIARY

Meets quarterly on Sundays. Please check

www.bouldermountainfireauxiliary.org/calendar-1

for the next meeting or contact aharsh@comcast.net.

PINE BROOK HILLS WATER BOARD

Meets the third Thursday of every month at 12:00 PM.

Call the Water Office at 303-442-5394 for more information.

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

Meets the second Tuesday of every month at 7:00 PM by Zoom.

Contact arc@pinebrookhills.org for the link.



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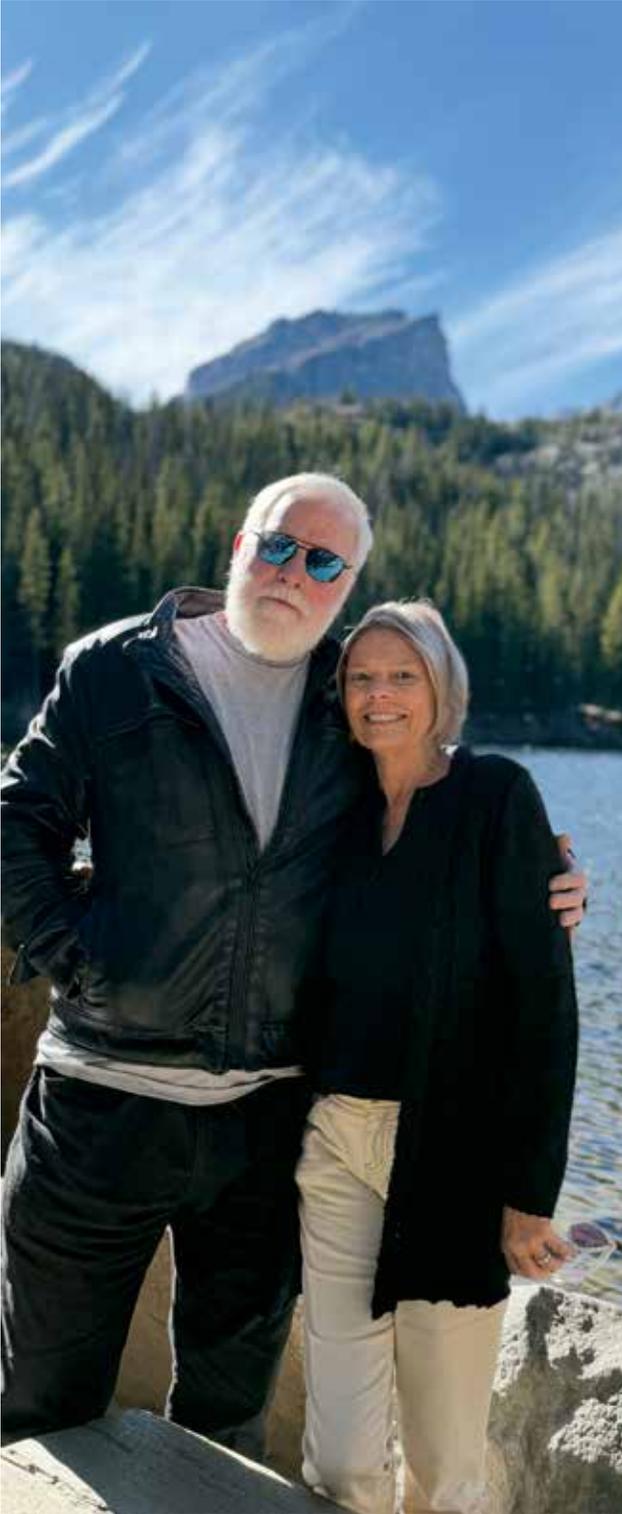
Fox

by Gabrielle Naglieri

*Heil Ranch,
years after fire,
by Dan Pear*

A Word From the (New) President

By David Downing



Thank you to all our Pine Brook Hills neighbors for making my wife and me feel welcome in this community and for inviting me to become your new HOA president.

I am David Downing, and my wife is Crystal. We moved to our present home on Meadowlook in July 2024, and we are thrilled to be a part of this neighborhood. We are retired English professors, though we are still engaged in writing and speaking. (I am a specialist in J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, and Crystal writes about philosophy and film.)

Finding full-time jobs in academia turned the two of us into scholar gypsies, and so we have lived in Santa Barbara (yes, we did see Tom Hanks and John Travolta), Chicagoland (yes, we did see The Bean), and central Pennsylvania, near Lancaster (yes, we did see Amish buggies quite often!). I served as the president of a Homeowners Association in PA for 15 years, so I am familiar with budgets, community projects, and sometimes having to play the “enforcer” for people who were ignoring our HOA Covenants. Some highlights of my term were preventing a neighbor from installing a miniature golf course, complete with floodlights, and convincing a developer to preserve a stand of mature tulip trees. I suppose the low points would be having to visit a home at 2 a.m. to tell a homeowner that her barking dog was keeping several neighbors awake and having a treasurer who accidentally used his personal checks to pay for HOA expenditures.

PBH has been fortunate in its leadership, as so much has already been done in terms of fire mitigation, neighborhood enhancement, and building strong relationships with local officials. Apart from initiatives that are already in progress, I would also like to stress community building. In its original sense, the word “Commonwealth” meant common well-being, and I would like to explore opportunities for enhancing the well-being of the whole community. I have heard suggestions for a possible Easter egg hunt, a “Purge the Spurge” workday, a bike ride for families, and guest speakers at HOA meetings to talk about landscaping ideas, the pro’s and con’s of solar panels, etc.

Since we are relatively new to the neighborhood, please feel free to introduce yourselves to us and to share your ideas about how to make Pine Brook Hills an even more special “commonwealth” than it already is!

Fireside Chat: From the New Chief

By Mike Palamara



I have had the opportunity to come to know many of you over the past years. My name is Mike Palamara. I have been with Boulder Mountain Fire for the past 19 years and have been the Wildland Division Chief since 2015. My time at the department began with me joining the Wildland Fire Crew as a seasonal crew member working on wildland fire mitigation projects within our district.

Throughout my time at the Department, I have gotten a chance to interact with district residents, work collaboratively on projects, and respond to emergency events affecting our community. These experiences have been very rewarding for me, and I have been fortunate enough to meet many wonderful people along the way. The sense of community that I encountered has always struck me: district residents have been willing to help both each other and the fire department.

At the first of this year, I assumed the role of Fire Chief with Boulder Mountain Fire, taking over from Chief Benson. Coming into the Fire Chief position at the fire department is an honor and a privilege, and being fortunate enough to lead this wonderful group of people is truly humbling for me. Boulder Mountain Fire is a professional organization, with many years of experience and success under its belt. The fire department has accomplished an incredible amount and become a leader in emergency response within the county and even beyond.

I look forward to continuing working with district residents and Pine Brook Hills as we coordinate fire department and community activities. I am aware that we, collectively, will continue to face challenges, emergency response incidents, and unknown obstacles in the future. My time spent with the fire department and within our communities has given me the assurance that these groups are resilient, adaptable, and can overcome whatever comes our way.

I am excited and grateful to step into the Fire Chief position at Boulder Mountain Fire. This fire department has a distinguished history, and I am honored to be part of the next chapter. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to continue to work with and collaborate with PBH and district residents. The people I've gotten to meet and know are the highlights as I look back on 19 years. and I look forward to continuing these interactions for years to come.



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Boulder Mountain Fire Mit Crew

By Alexis Aguirre



Photo credit: Bob Olliver

Boulder Mountain Fire Protection District (BMFPD) had a productive year of wildfire mitigation efforts during 2025. This reinforced the District's commitment to reducing wildfire risk and increasing community resilience.

In 2025, BMFPD's mitigation crew

- built fuel breaks on approximately 98 acres within the District;
- completed 26 Wildfire Partners projects;
- provided 1A chipping services for 150 homes in the District and 300+ homes in Boulder County;
- conducted pile burning operations.

These projects were strategically implemented to reduce hazardous fuels, improve defensible space, and lower wildfire risk across all communities served by the District.

Pile burning, safely disposing of fuels generated during treatment projects, remains a critical component of mitigation work by BMFPD. District-wide safety remains the top priority, particularly during the winter months when dry and windy conditions can still create elevated fire danger. Pile burning operations are conducted only when appropriate weather, fuel moisture, and snow cover conditions are present to ensure public and firefighter safety.

These efforts were supported through collaboration with Wildfire Partners and funding from state, county, and federal grant programs. The projects aligned with best practices and long-term wildfire preparedness goals.

The mitigation crew consisted of 28 personnel, including 15 EMTs and 13 structure-qualified personnel, providing a skilled and safety-focused workforce.

Patrick Maynard, Crew Foreman, Boulder Mountain Fire Protection District, explained that “wildfire preparedness is built through planning, mitigation, and deliberate action long before smoke is in the air. The work completed in 2025 directly reduces wildfire risk while supporting safer communities and safer firefighting operations.”

Looking ahead to 2026, BMFPD will continue prioritizing mitigation in high-risk areas. Interested in mitigation? Apply for mitigation services at <https://www.bmfpd.org>.

Water Update

By Andrew Churnside

Pine Brook Water staff work every day to ensure safe, reliable drinking water and to maintain the infrastructure that keeps our water system running.

From routine maintenance and emergency repairs to water quality monitoring, our team is committed to providing this essential resource. In this newsletter, we're pleased to introduce the dedicated people who serve our neighborhood and help ensure clean, dependable water.



ANDREW CHURNSIDE Manager

Andrew grew up in North Boulder, attending Foothill Elementary, Centennial Middle School, and Boulder High School. He became interested in firefighting and joined Boulder Mountain Fire in 2000 while working to obtain his Associate's degree in Fire Science

from Red Rocks Community College. During this time, Andrew worked professionally for a safety training company, where he spent 16 years. In 2016 Andrew was hired by Pine Brook Water with the goal of eventually replacing Bob de Haas as manager upon his retirement. He learned the water industry under the guidance of Bob and Shawn Beauprez and obtained the certifications necessary to run the filter plant and distribution system (pipes, tanks, pumps). He took over as manager of Pine Brook Water in 2023. He lives in Gunbarrel with his two kids and dog Kai. He continues to volunteer with Boulder Mountain Fire and currently serves as the Operations Division Chief. He enjoys spending his free time camping, skiing, or just relaxing at home.



DANIEL BERGMAN Lead Operator

Known as Berg to friends, Daniel grew up in rural Kentucky the 6th of 7 children. He later moved to Missouri to attend the University of Central Missouri. He graduated with a BS in Communication Studies in 2015 and then returned to Kentucky to

begin a career as a securities trader and account manager for a large financial services company. Office life proved too dull for him and after four and a half years he left Kentucky and the financial world to move to Colorado. Eventually he found his way into wildland firefighting and joined the Boulder Mountain Fire

Mitigation Crew. Daniel was hired by Pine Brook Water in 2023 and is currently pursuing advanced certifications in both water treatment and distribution. He remains a volunteer firefighter and EMS responder with Boulder Mountain Fire. Outside of work, he can usually be found in a gym lifting weights or practicing Muay Thai. At home in Longmont he enjoys reading, cooking, and planning trips with his girlfriend.



CHASE JONJAK Water Operator

Chase grew up in the Longmont area, attending Lyons Middle Senior High School before moving to Walla Walla, Washington, to attend Whitman College. At Whitman, he studied Biology, Environmental Studies, and Chemistry, and discovered a love

for rock climbing, which he still enjoys whenever life allows. After college, Chase returned to Colorado to be near his family and took a job performing regulatory environmental monitoring at decommissioned oil facilities. After a year in the oil fields, he pivoted into water works, helping the City and County of Broomfield with pond monitoring, sampling, and chemical analyses in a seasonal role. The following year, he was hired by Pine Brook Water, where he continues to advance his certifications in water treatment and distribution. Outside of work, he enjoys spending time with friends, working on his fitness, and relaxing at home with his cat, Macaroni.

ROBERT (BOB) DE HAAS Finance Manager

Bob has worked for Pine Brook Water since 1987. Bob moved to Pine Brook Hills with his family in 1966 and within a year was helping work on the water system. Bob holds an Associate's degree in Criminal Justice from Mesa College. Bob officially retired in 2023 and now works part-time for the District.

Auxiliary Report

By Ann Blonson



Auxiliary members and guests at the January meeting.

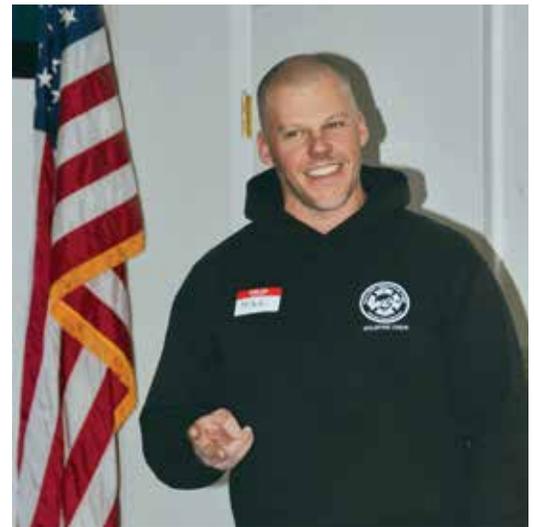
The Auxiliary held its first quarterly meeting of 2026 on January 18 at Station One in Pine Brook Hills.

The main attraction was a visit from the new fire chief, Mike Palamara. Since he's been with the fire district for 19 years, we were able to make short work of the getting-to-know-you part and move quickly to Chief Palamara's goals and expectations for the Department as a whole and for Auxiliary.

Chief Palamara emphasized that, while there are different working groups within the department (from the Board to responders, to Auxiliary and the Major Incident Support Team, and assorted support roles in communications, weather, IT, and mapping), he views the members as one team, who are all working to support the official mission statement of the organization.

Auxiliary's business at the meeting was filling some leadership and team vacancies. There are always opportunities to become involved. If you're considering a new volunteer role for 2026, please follow the link below and let Auxiliary know. A member will contact you, get to know your interests and help you find your spot.

The next Auxiliary meeting will be on Sunday, April 19, time and location TBD. Mark your calendar and watch forum announcements for details.



Chief Palamara addresses Auxiliary's January meeting.

Please consider raising your hand for Auxiliary in 2026!



Go to <https://bmfpdaux.org/interest> and fill out the simple Google form to express your interest, whether specific or general. An Auxiliary representative will be in touch to get to know you and help find your spot.

Thanks for considering volunteering with Auxiliary!

Chief Benson's Open House

By Susan Schiff

On January 10, 2026, the Boulder Mountain Fire Protection District Auxiliary hosted an open house to wish Chief Benson and his wife Becky happy trails during his retirement, after 23 years of service. The District members contributed over \$9,000 that was used to purchase a custom saddle and barn sign for Chief Benson as well as a monetary gift. Station 2 was standing room only for the send-off.





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PBH Neighbor: Sara Knutson

I have lived in seven states and in the UK, but now that I'm in Pine Brook Hills, I'm never leaving!

Much of my formative childhood was spent on a farm outside Blooming Prairie, Minnesota, where I was outdoors whenever possible. My jobs included endless lawn mowing, gardening, and raising chickens. Unsurprisingly, I celebrated my family's move to Mesa, Arizona, when I was in 9th grade. I initially wanted to be an astronaut and began my undergraduate studies at Arizona State University in engineering. A few years in, I discovered economics and finance—and never looked back.

I was especially captivated by a guest speaker in the early 1990s who traded currencies at Citibank in New York. The idea that someone could think about global markets and be paid to travel sealed the deal. I headed to the University of Rochester to earn my Ph.D. in Economics, specializing in international economics and finance.

Never one to take an orthodox route, I took a one-year break from my graduate program to move to Washington, D.C., where I worked with an all-star group of economists on a World Bank project. That first exposure to development economics laid the foundation for much of my 20+ year career in finance. I've been drawn ever since to emerging markets—their vibrant cultures, complexity, and challenges.

Although I lived and worked in London for six years, most of my career was centered in New York City. I managed “other people's money” as a portfolio manager across a variety of hedge funds and ultimately served as Head of Global Debt at Oppenheimer Funds. When my



two kids graduated from high school, I headed west to figure out what I wanted to do when I grew up (still in progress).

I spent a few years as a real estate developer in Los Angeles, and when my daughter launched her own business in the digital media and tech space, I joined her as a co-founder and CFO/COO. What I expected to be a short chapter turned into a full-time role for six years. I've recently transitioned to a fractional role there and am once again spending more time on capital markets through

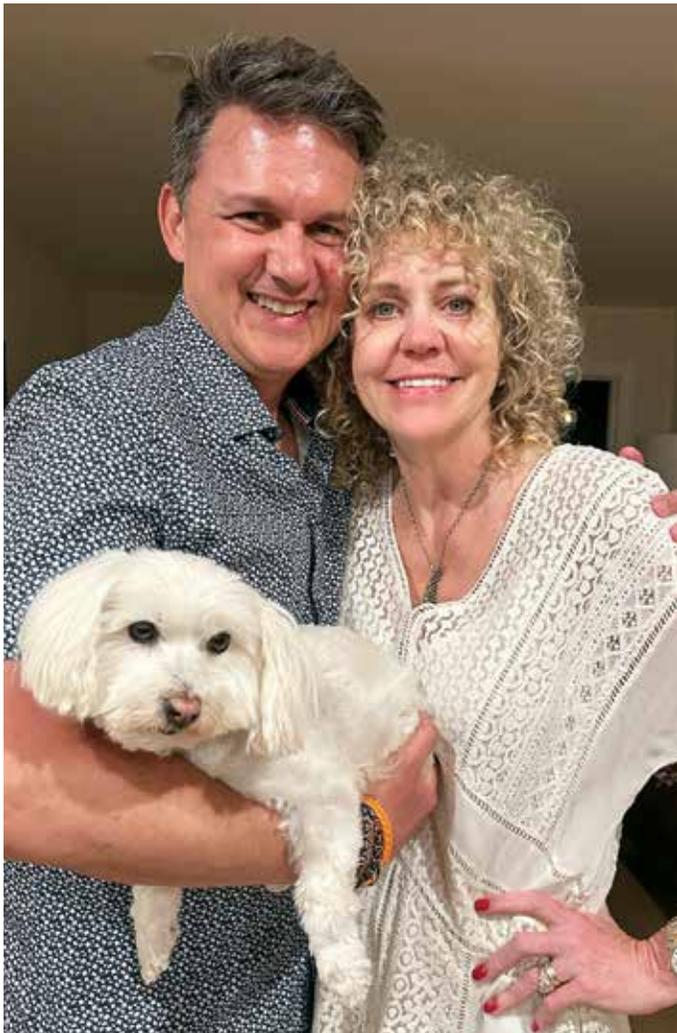
teaching and occasional blog writing. Along the way, I've also developed a deep interest in neuroscience and behavioral economics and am currently working on a book titled *Your Brain Is an A-Hole: What Science and Woo Can Do for You*.

On the personal side, my partner, Jason Harubin, and I finally decided to get married last year—after 14 years together. We celebrated with family and friends in our hillside backyard here in Pine Brook Hills. The party marked the joyful culmination of buying and renovating our

home ourselves. After moving to Wildwood Lane in 2018 and downsizing a few years later, we have found just the right place to call our “forever” home.

We live here on our own—my two adult children still live near NYC—but we’re kept busy by five furry companions (three cats and two dogs.) During the summer, you will most likely find me outside with the pets, working on my flower gardens, digging out pesky myrtle spurge, hauling rocks and soaking up our lovely neighborhood. My favorite free time activities include hiking, cooking and baking, camping in our Sprinter van, and traveling.

We love the PBH community deeply and decided last year that the best way to give back was by volunteering with Boulder Mountain Fire. Jason and I are rookies this year, with training ramping up in February. We’re excited to learn skills in medical, structural, and wildland firefighting. If you see us out and about, please say hi!



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The Christmas Bird Count 2025

Text by Carron Meaney • Photos by Kevin Smith

Up until the early 1900s, it was a tradition to go out and shoot as many birds as could be found on one day. It was called the Christmas Side Hunt and was a massacre. Fortunately, this changed in 1900 when Frank M. Chapman, an early Audubon Society officer and curator at the American Museum of Natural History, initiated the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) – with the idea of counting birds rather than shooting them.



Pygmy Nuthatch

The CBC occurs in the U.S., Canada, Mexico and a growing number of countries throughout Central and South America and the Caribbean. The CBC has provided invaluable long-term data on bird population trends used by Audubon researchers, conservation biologists, wildlife agencies and others. The CBC continues today with participation by professionals and the public alike. All are welcome; no experience is required to join a group.

I participated in the 84th annual Boulder area CBC on December 14, 2025. The total count of 110 species for the 33 Boulder territories was one of the best in the past 10 years. Participation was outstanding as well, with 184 folks contributing their talents in the field and at bird feeders. Birds may also be

listed due to being recognized by their song. I participated in the count on Teller Farms in East Boulder. The group that covered part of Pine Brook Hills (Territory 17) was led by Joel Such. It covers Lower Linden, South Cedar Brook, and North Cedar Brook roads, only a relatively small portion of Pine Brook Hills.

Territory 17 captured 27 different species and a total of 376 birds. The most abundant species, from highest to lowest, were pygmy nuthatches, dark-eyed juncos, black-billed magpies, rock pigeons, house finches, Steller's jays, spotted towhees, and northern flickers.



Dark-eyed Junco

The **DARK-EYED JUNCO** is often recognized by its white outer tail feathers visible in flight. There are 15 sub-species of this wide-ranging bird. Typically seen in groups, they can be observed foraging on seeds on the ground. They also eat insects.

PYGMY NUTHATCHES (*pictured on page 12*) are often recognized by their little chirpy voices as they flit around the trees in groups. They nest together in the winter to keep warm during the night. One year, we had a family group that spent the winter in our bedroom wall. We watched them come in at dusk and leave at daylight, often with a few chirps during the night as they jostled one another.

The handsome **STELLER'S JAY** is related to the blue jay, better known further east. The two species hybridize, i.e. interbreed. Many birds and mammals are named after men who first “discovered” the species. George Wilhelm Steller first observed the bird in 1741 in Alaska. Of course, native Americans knew these animals well before European explorers described them. There is a movement afoot to change these names as they are not useful or descriptive. Ponderosa jay comes to mind as a good name for this one!

...continued on page 14



Steller's Jay

The Christmas Bird Count 2025

...continued from page 13



Spotted Towhee

The **SPOTTED TOWHEE**, named for the white spots on its wings, has bright rufous sides. Towhees feed on the ground as they hop and search for seeds. Males are noticeable in the spring when they sing from a higher perch.

The **CANYON WREN** was the most unusual sighting in Pine Brook Hills this year! This species occurs in dry, rocky habitats in western North America. It has a descending call that echoes off rocky canyon walls.



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Photo by Sara (Zervos) Knutson