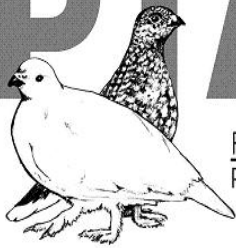


# PTARMIGAN



FORT COLLINS AUDUBON SOCIETY  
P.O. Box 271968 • Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968 • [www.fortnet.org/Audubon](http://www.fortnet.org/Audubon)

Promoting the appreciation, conservation, and restoration of ecosystems,  
focusing on birds and other wildlife, through education, participation, stewardship, and advocacy.

**March 2011**

**Volume 42, Issue 3**

## **Prairie Summer**

**Presented by Stephen Jones, Boulder County Audubon**

**Thursday Evening Program – March 10, 2011**

**Fort Collins Senior Center, Multi-Use Room, 1200 Raintree Drive, Fort Collins**

**Social Gathering: 7 p.m.; Program: 7:30 p.m.**

Stephen Jones, of Boulder County Audubon, will take us on a virtual field trip of the 2010 extraordinary growing seasons. During 2010, the western plains experienced abundant moisture from February through July, and mild temperatures into November. Highlighted with photos, we'll experience some of the wonders this unusual weather produced, from wildflowers and butterflies to thunderstorms and tornadoes.

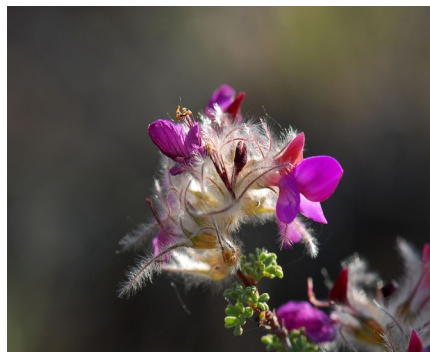
Steve Jones is author of *The Last Prairie, a Sandhills Journal* and *Owls of Boulder County*, and co-author of *The Shortgrass Prairie*, the *Peterson Field Guide to the North American Prairie*, *Colorado Nature Almanac*, and *Wild Boulder County*. Steve organized the

first comprehensive small owl and wintering raptor surveys in Boulder County and helped plan

and carry out the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas. His consulting work includes more than two-dozen breeding bird and resource inventories for city, county, and state open space programs. He has led field trips and taught nature classes for 29 years, and taught in the Boulder Valley Public Schools for 33 years.

Before the evening presentation, Douglas Kibbe, Region 15 Coordinator for the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas II, will give a brief update on the 2010 progress of the Atlas Project.

Join us on Thursday, March 10 at the Fort Collins Senior Center at 7 p.m.



**Dalea by Stephen Jones.**

## **Changes in Chapter Membership Policy**

Because of our limited resources and to simplify things, FCAS is switching to an annual basis for our membership. This means that renewals will now be due at the beginning of the year. This change will reduce the time and expense of mailing out renewal notifications on a monthly basis. If you took out a chapter membership or renewed in the months of September through December of 2010, your renewal date will be January 2012. All other chapter memberships are due for renewal in January 2011. If you have any questions about your status please send an email to [fortcollins-saudubonmembership@gmail.com](mailto:fortcollins-saudubonmembership@gmail.com) or phone 484-4371.

## President's Corner

by Bill Miller

"All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident."

— Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860)

At the Jan. 30 FCAS Board's Strategic Planning session, we addressed a wide range of subjects. At the top of the list was how to structure our scholarship program for this year and the future.

**Scholarships:** Traditionally we have allocated a percentage of our Birdathon income as well as a sizeable annual corporate donation toward scholarships. However, due to changes with the donating company, we don't know if we can count on those monies this year. The Board decided to scale back our scholarship program, especially since we are predicting a deficit of about \$2200, even with that corporate donation.

This year we will contribute \$500 to CSU's Environmental Learning Center (ELC). For the past two years we have provided \$2000 or more toward ELC's cooperative effort with Poudre

School District and the Fort Collins Natural Areas Program to provide summer environmental education programs to underserved and minority children from several northwest Fort Collins schools.

We also decided to build a scholarship fund that would eventually generate enough interest revenue, leaving the principal intact. That will take many years to accomplish.

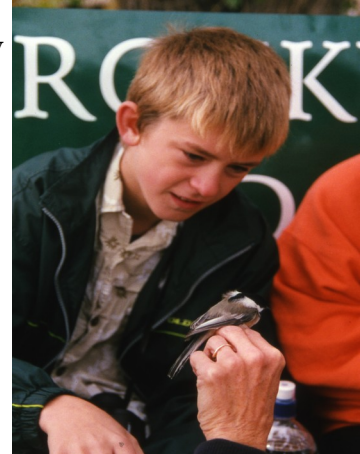
### Fund Raising:

Various ideas about fund raising floated up during our discussion, including organizing another canoe trip in western Colorado; developing a paid advertising policy for the *Ptarmigan*; sending out a fall direct appeal letter; offering paid guided field trips that would be more extensive than our routine field trips; and selling various items, such as embroidered shirts, hats, etc.

**Board Vacancies:** We are fortunate that one of our new Directors-at-Large, Rich Roberts, volunteered to be Field Trip Coordinator. Now needed: two Directors-at-Large and a Public Relations Coordinator. The PR position takes about four to six hours per month and involves sending out publicity about our programs and field trips to media in northern Colorado.

**Junior Program:** We seriously discussed establishing a Junior Audubon Program that will probably fall under our Education Program. Stay tuned for future information.

If you think you might be able to help FCAS in any of these areas feel free to contact Bill Miller at: [5mcorp@comcast.net](mailto:5mcorp@comcast.net) or 970-493-7693.



Unidentified youth at an outdoor education program.

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## Education Corner

by Joann Thomas

The Fossil Creek Eagle Watch on Saturday, Feb. 12, yielded only one mature Bald Eagle. However, a visit to the eagle nest along the Poudre River, which can be accessed from LCR 32E just off LCR 5, revealed a pair, male and female, sitting in bare branches just above the nest. The courting dance has been observed and the female sits on the nest off and on. From the road, the nest is clearly viewed with binoculars. Keep watching!

March is a pivotal month in birding. Last year on the March watch, the weather was windy, snowy, icy, and no one came—I don't blame them. But, I watched the Red-winged Blackbirds flying about with nesting material, indifferent to the frigid weather. If you can stand the changing weather, sometimes warm and sunny, sometimes cold and cloudy, sometimes a gentle breeze, and sometimes a howling wind, you will be rewarded although most often you will be alone. Two years ago, I arrived to hundreds of Red-headed Ducks covering the lake, and there was no one to share the wonder and awe of migration.

This year I am excited to begin the Bird Watch

on Equalizer Lake on March 24 at 8 a.m. with a new scope. Last year we had nesting Osprey, Western and Clark's Grebes, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, and probably more we missed.

High Plains Environmental Center (HPEC), which manages the lake, is moving to develop its land management plan. Our monthly observations contribute to their effort. Denise Bretting, a HPEC board member and FCAS member and field trip leader, contributes to the Breeding Bird Atlas in the Equalizer Lake area. Our observations are of vital interest to her work and she joins us when she can. We will give her reports on bird



Osprey courtesy of the Fort Collins Natural Areas Program.

sightings this year. It is a critical time to join the ranks of citizen scientists in ornithology.

Because bird activity often increases in the evening, our schedule includes both morning and evening viewing during the summers. HPEC Bird Watches on Equalizer Lake this year are all on the following Thursdays: March 24, 8 a.m.; April 28, 8 a.m.; May 26, 7 a.m.; June 23, 7 a.m. and 6 p.m.; July 28, 7 a.m. and 6 p.m., Aug. 25, 7 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Sept. 22, 8 a.m.; and Oct. 27, 8 a.m.

### GUNNISON RIVER 3-DAY TRIP Escalante and Dominguez Canyons

Join FCAS on August 12-14, 2011 as we partner with Centennial Canoe Outfitters for a spectacular trip through the Escalante and Dominguez Canyons.

- Spark your sense of adventure.
- Canoe through canyons of red sandstone.
- Camp along the Gunnison River's edge.
- Free-float down river in your life jacket.
- Walk where dinosaurs walked.
- View huge nests of herons, hawks, and eagles.
- Hike into Colorado's newest wilderness area.
- Wonder at the meaning of ancient Indian petroglyphs.
- Soak in deep, cool swimming pools and waterfalls.

Dr. Gigi Richard, Mesa State College geology professor, and Joann Thomas, FCAS education chair, will provide interpretation and discussion around the campfire on this trip. For more information and to register, please consult [www.CentennialCanoe.com](http://www.CentennialCanoe.com) or call toll free, 1-877-353-1850.

### FCAS Pocket Guide to Local Birds

Is available at the following retailers who support our organization with the sales:

Wild Birds Unlimited  
3636 S. College Ave  
Ste. C  
(970) 225-2557

Jax Outdoor Gear  
1200 N. College  
(970) 221-0544

Jax Farm & Ranch  
1000 N. Hwy. 287  
(970) 484-2221

Bath Garden  
Center & Nursery  
2000 E. Prospect  
(970) 484-5022

Jax Mercantile  
950 E. Eisenhower  
Loveland  
(970) 776-4540

The Matter Book-  
Store/Bean Cycle  
Coffee  
144 N. College  
(970) 472-4284





“The prevailing view holds that a stable population that does not tax the environment’s “carrying capacity” would be sustainable indefinitely, and that this state of equilibrium can be achieved through a combination of birth control, conservation, and reliance on “renewable” resources. Unfortunately, worldwide implementation of a rigorous program of birth control is politically impossible. Conservation is futile as long as population continues to rise. And no resources are truly renewable.”  
— David Price, “Energy and Human Evolution”

## Conspiracies Don’t Kill Birds, But People Do

In early January 2011, headlines reported the mysterious death of about 5,000 Red-winged Blackbirds that fell from the sky in one night in Arkansas. Biologists scrambled to provide answers in order to put the damper on public speculation about pesticides and military tests. The information provided by the biologists pointed out how many birds die each year. The numbers are discouraging, especially upon considering that the majority of the deaths are a result of human activity.

“Five billion birds die in the U.S.

every year,” said Melanie Driscoll, a biologist and direc-

tor of bird conservation for the Gulf of Mexico and Mississippi Flyway for the National Audubon Society (NAS). This works out to about 13.7 million birds dying on average each day.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that a minimum of 10 billion birds breed in the United States every year and that as many as 20 billion may be in the country during the fall migratory season. Each year tens of millions of birds are lost due to natural predators and accidents, even without humans. Mortality rates can be difficult to calculate for certain, but can be estimated using the various tools of modeling and other accepted mathematical techniques. The following are estimates of how many birds

die from various causes each year.

- 1) Domestic and feral cats kill hundreds of millions of birds each year. One study in Wisconsin found that rural cats (excluding suburban and urban cats) killed roughly 39 million birds annually.
- 2) Pesticides are estimated to kill 72 million birds directly, but an unknown and probably

larger number are poisoned and die unseen. Orphaned chicks also go uncounted.

- 3) Flying into objects: Buildings, windows, towers: 97 to 976 million bird deaths per year; car strikes: 60 million or so bird deaths

per year; transmission and power distribution lines: about 174 million bird deaths per year.

- 4) Habitat loss due to development is the largest killer of birds in America.

The reasons given above (as well as others) explain why about a quarter of the 836 species of birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act are in serious decline. NAS has published several reports to this effect. There is not much information about the health of about another third of bird species

*Extracted from an article by Leslie Kaufman in the New York Times, Jan. 11, 2011,*  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/18/science/18birds.html?>



Red-winged Blackbirds by Danny Vowell/Kentucky New Era via Associated Press.

## FCAS Volunteer Opportunity in March

Sat., March 26, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Putnam School Science Carnival: We will host an educational exhibit for this well-attended annual event. A good time is guaranteed as you work with the kids and help them learn about birds. Contact Joann Thomas at 482-7125 or [jthomas91@aol.com](mailto:jthomas91@aol.com).



## Upcoming Field Trips

All field trips are free of charge (unless otherwise noted) and open to the public. All experience levels are welcome. Participants should dress appropriately for the weather. Bring snacks or lunch, water, binoculars, and spotting scopes. Carpooling is encouraged. A \$3.00 (unless otherwise specified) contribution per passenger to the driver is suggested. Visit [www.fortnet.org/Audubon](http://www.fortnet.org/Audubon) for more information. For all field trips and surveys, please contact the trip leader for signup and trip details

**Mar. 13, Sunday, Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey.** Denise Bretting, [dbretting@swloveland.com](mailto:dbretting@swloveland.com); work, 970-669-1185; home, 970-669-8095. Meet at 7 a.m. in the parking lot. FCAS performs a monthly bird census for the city of Fort Collins. All levels welcomed.

**Mar. 19, Saturday, Birding the Big Thompson.** Connie Kogler, [blueheron@gmail.com](mailto:blueheron@gmail.com). Meet at 9 a.m. at Big Thompson Ponds. From Loveland, go 5 miles east on Hwy. 402 to I-25 frontage road, then 3/4 mile north to Interstate overpass. Go 1/4 north. From I-25, take Exit 225, go east to frontage road, then south on frontage road.

**Mar. 26–27, Saturday and Sunday, Sandhill Crane Migration.** Ron

Harden, 970-667-3819. With Foothills Audubon Club in Kearney, Neb.

**April 12, Sunday, Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey.**

Denise Bretting, [dbretting@swloveland.com](mailto:dbretting@swloveland.com); work, 970-669-1185; home, 970-669-8095. Meet at 6:30 a.m. in the parking lot. FCAS performs a monthly bird census for the city of Fort Collins. All levels welcomed.



Sandhill Crane by Nick Komar.

### Birding Classes Offered in Loveland

Presented by Connie Kogler

**What's That Bird?** Discover how to use field guides and binoculars, and to recognize our most common local birds. Select one evening classroom session and one daytime field trip from a choice of four. Age: 14+

**Become a Better Birder:** Four areas in bird identification will be covered. Select one evening classroom session and one daytime field trip from a choice of four. Age: 14+

To Enroll: [www.cityofloveland.org/parksrec/Chilsonmain.htm](http://www.cityofloveland.org/parksrec/Chilsonmain.htm), or call: (970) 962-2383 or (970) 962-2727.

### 2011 Birdathon

Friday, May 13 and Saturday, May 14, are the dates of the 2011 Birdathon, an essential fundraiser for FCAS. This annual event is a challenging and fun-filled day for participants, and a good way for less skilled birders to go out with more experienced birders while benefitting the chapter financially by their efforts.

Please consider becoming a team member and/or a donor. More details to follow at subsequent program meetings

### FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Dale Agger	Barbara & Bruce Hyink
Florence Brady	Gina C. Janett
Irene Briggs	Mildred Johnson
Steve & Karen Dornself	Carol Jones
Douglas Doty	Michelle Haefele & Michael Knowles
Georgia Doyle	Constance Kogler
Wolfgang P. Filusch	Eileen Lebsack
Judy L. Harrigal	Cynthia McDonald
Nicole & Peter Hay	Gary Miller
William Henderson	L. Frederick Moose
Hank Henry	Marilyn J. Morse
Bernice Hinckley	Paul A. Opler
Joel Hurmence	Phil Phelan

Judith Putnam  
John Reichhardt  
Helmut Retzer  
Rich Roberts  
Sylvia & Eric Roll  
Maria Ryder  
Doris Sumrall  
Edie Thompson  
Jim Tolstrup  
William O. West  
William F. & Doris R. Wollenberg  
Suzanne Yehle



**Thank you for your membership**





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Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968

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### Membership Application

Join Fort Collins Audubon Society (FCAS), National Audubon Society (NAS), or both. Check all applicable::

☐ **New or renewing FCAS Chapter Member** \$20  
(Receive the *Ptarmigan* by email)

☐ **New or Renewing FCAS Chapter Member** \$30  
(Receive the *Ptarmigan* by postal mail)

☐ **Additional Support for FCAS's Mission** \$\_\_\_\_\_

☐ **New NAS Member** \$20  
(Receive *Audubon* magazine by postal mail)

☐ **Renewing NAS Member** \$35  
(Receive *Audubon* magazine by postal mail)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Enclosed** \$\_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to FCAS and mail with this form to:  
Fort Collins Audubon Society, P.O. Box 271968, Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968  
Membership applications may be completed online at: [www.fortnet.org/Audubon](http://www.fortnet.org/Audubon)