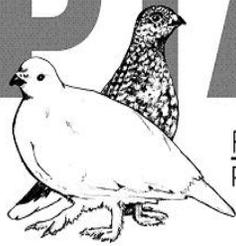


PTARMIGAN



FORT COLLINS AUDUBON SOCIETY
P.O. Box 271968 • Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968 • www.fortnet.org/Audubon

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

April 2011

Volume 42, Issue 4

Mountain Plovers

Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory

Thursday Evening Program – April 14, 2011

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

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

The Mountain Plover is now a species of conservation concern in Colorado. Seth Gallagher, of the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO), will speak on the life history and ecology of this species. He will summarize the overall efforts of RMBO and, in particular, its work with landowners to conserve the Mountain Plover.

Seth Gallagher is the Stewardship Division Director of RMBO. His duties include managing the Natural Resources Conservation Service-Colorado Divi-

sion of Wildlife Private Lands Wildlife Program, assisting with landowner outreach activities, and designing and implementing on-the-ground habi-

tat enhancement projects with partners.

Join us on Thursday, April 14 at 7 p.m. in the multi-purpose room of the Fort Collins Senior Center for this opportunity to learn more about the ground-nesting Mountain Plover and efforts to conserve its needed habitat. Come at 7 p.m. to meet and mingle with FCAS members.



Mountain Plover by Bill Miller.

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 fortcollinsaudubonmembership@gmail.com or phone 484-4371.

President's Corner

by Bill Miller

"Politicians and diapers have one thing in common: They should both be changed regularly, and for the same reason." -- *Anonymous*

"Politics swings like a pendulum." -- *Ed Gillespie*

If you are like me you are immensely discouraged over our nation's politics. The individuals currently in office appear to be unable to come together to do what is right for our country and its citizens. Compounding matters is the 2010 U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United* that removed limits on corporations to influence our system of free elections. Currently, a major political party seems hell-bent on undoing all of the good legislation that was enacted over the past 40 years or so with respect to putting in safeguards to protect citizens against the egresses of corporations.

What immediately comes to mind are the threats being proposed to the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the Environmental Protection Agency. The assaults currently being launched against these

pieces of legislation and the agency threaten to remove the protections they offer to the health, safety, and well-being of our citizens. Why? For the sake of maximizing corporate profits and filling the coffers of those who already have more money than they know what to do with.

It is for these reasons that America's citizens must become more politically knowledgeable and active, or else we can expect to see the principals upon which this country was founded to become usurped and corrupted, to the detriment of our health, safety, and financial well-being. Please become better informed, and vote!

2011 Birdathon

Friday and Saturday, May 13 and 14, are the dates of the 2011 Birdathon, an essential fundraiser for FCAS in support of our scholarship program. This annual event is a challenging and



American Goldfinch by Nick Komar.

fun-filled day for participants, and is a good way for less-skilled birders to go out with more experienced birders to enjoy a day in the field, experience good camaraderie, and also benefit the chapter financially as a result of their efforts.

Prior to the actual Birdathon, team members solicit pledges from friends, co-workers, and family members. Pledges can be in the form of a fixed amount or as an amount per species. For example, if a donor pledged 10 cents per species and the team they pledged to identified 100 species, the donor would contribute \$10 to FCAS. This donation is tax-deductible.

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“We are grossly wasting our energy resources ... as though their supply was infinite. We must even face the prospect of changing our basic ways of living. This change will either be made on our own initiative in a planned and rational way, or forced on us with chaos and suffering by the inexorable laws of nature.”
 -- Jimmy Carter, 1976

Fracking

When President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney came to office in 2001, one of the first things they did was to convene the Energy Task Force, officially the National Energy Policy Development Group. This was done during their second week in office, and Cheney was named

chairman. This group was intended to “develop a national energy policy designed to help the private sector, and, as necessary and appropriate, state and local governments promote dependable, affordable, and environmentally-sound production and distribution of energy

for the future.” Much of what took place behind closed doors still has not been disclosed to the public under the Freedom of Information Act despite numerous efforts to access that information.¹

It was not too many years after that meeting that the public became aware of a new technology to more easily extract the natural gas (and some oil) in tightly compressed shale rock formations. That process is commonly referred to as “fracking” or hydraulic fracturing and has been around for about 60 years. The process involves forcing large amounts of pressurized water, a proppant (usually sand), and very small amounts of chemicals down the wellbore to create tiny fissures in the rock so the oil and gas can flow through the wellbore to the surface. The sand “props” the fissures open to prevent them from closing once the pressure is removed. This technique is often used in conjunction with a type of drilling where the wellbore is directionally ori-



Fracking operation near Rife, Colorado, courtesy of *Transition Times*.

ented to extend horizontally through the rock strata being developed. I am supposing that the chemicals are added to help dissolve some of the materials that cement the particles of sand and silt so that the rock essentially becomes more porous. According to a recent count, about 596 different chemicals have been identified as being used in fracking. The exact combination of

chemicals used by individual drilling companies is usually of a proprietary nature, so no one, not

even the government, knows exactly what is being put into the ground.²

This is where the problems start to surface, sometimes literally. There are numerous instances

of private well water becoming flammable, strongly indicating that natural gas is seeping into water wells, probably due to bad sealing around the casings in both the gas and the water wells.³ The liquids that are pumped into the ground during the fracking process ultimately come out of the ground as they are forced to the surface by the flow of the gas and oil. Recently there have been reports that drillers operating in Pennsylvania and New York have not been able to adequately treat those liquids that are then released into streams and other river tributaries. Those liquids, in addition to being noxious industrial solvents and the like, also contain a lot of dissolved salts and radioactive materials. Unfortunately, those streams and rivers are the domestic water supplies for millions of people.

One of the outcomes of the 2001 meetings of the Energy Task Force was the secrecy authorized to cloak the whole issue of fracking, as well as

(Fracking continued on Page 4)



(Fracking continued from Page 3)

other aspects of the oil and gas industry. This has created today's problem for those agencies that provide and protect drinking water supplies—they don't have sufficient information before a problem occurs to be able to implement appropriate corrective actions to ensure the safety of water supplies.

Locally we are seeing lots of attention paid to the Niobrara shale formation that straddles the state line and stretches from northern Weld, Logan, and Larimer counties in Colorado to as far north as Torrington, Wyoming.⁴ Virtually all the wells being drilled into the Niobrara are being fracked. Some of the wells on the drawing board will underlie the Galeton Reservoir, part of the proposed Northern Integrated Supply Project (NISP). The presence of those wells has not been addressed in the environmental studies that address NISP.

What are the problems that we may soon witness here in Colorado? In addition to the disturbances caused by the operations of the oil and gas companies there, both ground and surface water supplies could be contaminated. Leakage around the well drill casings in which fracking has occurred would cause contamination of the ground water supplies. And improperly managed discharges of contaminated fracking fluids could be devastating to watersheds and the riparian corridors that sustain wildlife.

Stay tuned. This promises to become an even greater problem of national significance.

References:

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Energy_Task_Force

² [http://blog.energytomorrow.org/2010/11/addressing-hydraulic-fracturing-issues-one-by-one.html?](http://blog.energytomorrow.org/2010/11/addressing-hydraulic-fracturing-issues-one-by-one.html?gclid=CPyuzeWF26cCFQ10gwodsQcW_Q)

[gclid=CPyuzeWF26cCFQ10gwodsQcW_Q](http://blog.energytomorrow.org/2010/11/addressing-hydraulic-fracturing-issues-one-by-one.html?gclid=CPyuzeWF26cCFQ10gwodsQcW_Q)

³ <http://www.care2.com/causes/real-food/blog/communities-can-set-their-drinking-water-on-fire/>

⁴ <http://www.coloradoan.com/article/20110313/NEWS01/103130347/EPA-study-effects-fracking?odyssey=tab|topnews|text|FRONTPAGE>

Additional article on Fracking:

<http://readersupportednews.org/off-site-news-section/49-49/5170-leaked-epa-documents-expose-effort-to-hide-dangers-of-fracking>

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. **Centennial donates \$50 to FCAS for each member of Audubon who signs up.** Help us build our resources while you enjoy an educational, family-friendly, and fun experience!



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, eagles.

Hike into Colorado's newest wilderness.

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 or call toll free, 1-877-353-1850.



A Stellar Day Afield

Challenged to go “ducking,” not birding, in the latest round of Kevin Cook’s classes at JAX, a fellow student and I spent four hours one Saturday morning doing just that. It’s not easy. Did we see ducks—you bet! But, along the way we were distracted so often by the many wonders of birding that at day’s end, my birding buddy, declared, “What a stellar birding day!”

If you love bird watching, regardless of your intentions, the distractions will always grab you. In Oklahoma years ago, I was driving while educating my 12-year-old daughter and her friend about birds. Suddenly, I found myself careening along what I

thought was a bumpy road, but was really the farmer’s carefully tilled field. I excitedly showed the girls a Scissors-tailed Flycatcher chasing a hawk as I went barreling across the field with the girls screaming with what I thought was excitement about the bird chase.

Older and wiser, I now carefully monitor my driving while birding. But, the opportunistic moments always grab me. On our “duck” Saturday, we watched as a female Red-tailed Hawk stood on her nest while the male brought her a small rodent he had just caught in a nearby field. Together they sat and dined. Courting behavior! There will no doubt be a happy hawk family soon!

The breeding behavior is what made the day so fascinating. We saw many species of ducks and enjoyed watching the males’ antics in attracting

the females. Three male Buffleheads alternately bobbed their heads and jumped up in the water before they dove. They were attempting to entice one lone female who appeared immune to their heroics.

All of the males were splendid in their breeding plumage. In some cases along Larimer County Road 1, we were so close to the ducks that for the first time I was able to wonder at the beauty of an American Widgeon male. I’d never seen one so close or so clearly. It was one of those peak birding moments.



Killdeer courtesy of Fort Collins Natural Areas.

But, again the crowning experience of our birding day involved not

a duck, but a pair of Killdeer in the grass along the road. They circled around one another with one of them continuously bobbing its head. As we watched, we realized it was the female and she was inviting the male into her boudoir.

He graciously accepted, jumping atop her, gripping her neck feathers with his beak. Then suddenly he flourished his wings, flashing white, and jumped to the ground. He turned his back on her and gazed toward the mountains. She preened and walked around bobbing her head again. It was a touching bird watching moment and I will be checking that roadside for young Killdeer in the following weeks.

The whole morning left me with a roaring desire to get out afield again, to learn more, to identify more, and mostly to experience bird life.

Western Field Ornithologists Conference — Sierra Vista, AZ August 17-21, 2011

If you've never been to southeast Arizona during the late summer season (or even if you have), this is an opportunity you won't want to miss. Besides a program of speakers and workshops, we will offer field trips to all the southeast Arizona hotspots looking for local specialties like Scaled and Montezuma quail; Gray, Short-tailed, and Zone-tailed hawks; a dazzling variety of hummingbirds and flycatchers; Elegant Trogon; Red-faced Warbler; Cassin's; Botteri's, Rufous-winged; Five-striped sparrows; and much more. To register go to: www.westernfieldornithologists.org and click on the annual conference banner in the middle of the page. You will probably want to download the conference details document and review before you begin registration.



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 for more information. For all field trips and surveys, please contact the trip leader for signup and trip details.

April 12, Sunday, Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey. Leader: Denise Bretting, dbretting@swloveland.com, work: 970-669-1185, home: 970-669-8095. Call for any change. Meet at 7 a.m. in the parking lot. FCAS performs a



Great Egret by Bill Miller.

monthly bird census for the city of Fort Collins. All levels welcome.

April 16, Saturday, St. Vrain State Park.

Leader: Bill Miller, 5mcorp@comcast.com, 970-218-3874. Meet at 7 a.m. at the north end of the Transportation Center (I-25 and Harmony Rd.) to car pool. A \$5 fee will cover gas and the park \$7 entry fee.

April 23, Sunday, Birding the Big Thompson. Leader: Connie Kogler, zblueheron@gmail.com, www.birdsofthemorning.com. Meet at the Sylvan Dale Guest Ranch horse corrals at 8 a.m. A \$10

fee and signed waiver is required. Space is limited on this private trip, so contact Connie early for a spot.

April and May, various evenings. What's That Bird? And Become a Better Birder classes.

Leader: Connie Kogler zblueheron@gmail.com, www.birdsofthemorning.com. Classes are at the Chilson Center from 7 to 9 p.m. A \$36 fee is required. Contact Connie for details.

May 7, Saturday, Running Deer Natural Area. Spring Migrant for Beginning Birders. Leader: Nancy Howard, nancy.e.howard@gmail.com. 970-237-2581. Meet at 8 a.m. in the Running Deer parking lot on east Prospect Road.

May 8, Sunday, Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey. Leader: Denise Bretting, dbretting@swloveland.com, work: 970-669-1185, home: 970-669-8095. Call for any change. Meet at 7 a.m. in the parking lot. FCAS performs a monthly bird census for the city of Fort Collins. All levels welcome.

May 13, 14, Friday and Saturday, FCAS 2011 Birdathon, Leader: Bill Miller, 5mcorp@comcast.com, 970-218-3874.

Green Fire

Green Fire, the first full-length, high-definition documentary film ever made about legendary environmentalist Aldo Leopold will be shown on Friday, April 22, at 6 p.m., at CSU's Lory Student Center Theater. *Green Fire* highlights Leopold's extraordinary career, tracing how he shaped and influenced the modern environmental movement.

Curt Meine will open the film with introductory comments. This event is sponsored by Warner College of Natural Resources and is free and open to the public. You may listen to a radio interview with Curt Meine, Jed Meunier, and Rick Knight on KRFC 88.9 FM, Tuesday, April 19, at 6 p.m.

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
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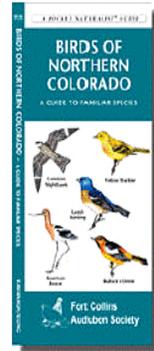
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Albatross Is a Mother at 60; She and Chick Survive Tsunami

“Wisdom,” the oldest known wild bird in the United States, is a new mother, the United States Geological Survey and Fish and Wildlife Service announced recently. See:

<http://green.blogs.ny->

times.com/2011/03/08/albatross-is-a-mother-at-60/

Wisdom, a Laysan albatross that lives on the Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge in the Pacific, northwest of the main Hawaiian island, is 60 years old. Among birds in the wild, albatrosses are believed to be the species that live longest.



Wisdom—oldest known wild bird.

Though the albatross chicks on the Midway Atoll were hit hard by the recent tsunami, apparently Wisdom and her chick survived the

surge. You can read more at the following links:

<http://www.suite101.com/content/oldest-albatross-survives-tsunami-damage-to-midway-atoll-a358474>; and <http://www.wired.com/wired-science/2011/03/albatrosses-tsunami/>

FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

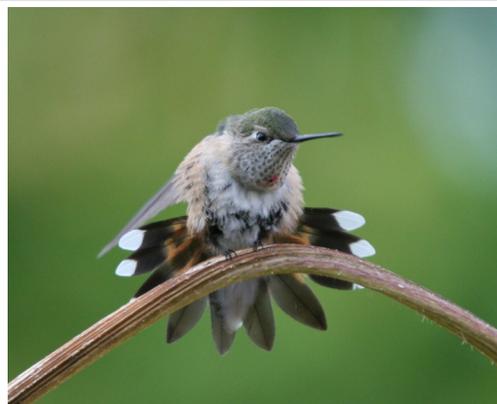
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Thank You for Your Membership

Your support makes our programs and conservation efforts possible and helps us achieve our mission of connecting people to the natural world.

Welcome New National Members

Fort Collins Audubon welcomes new National Audubon Society members by sending complementary copies of our newsletter for three months. We invite you to join us at our monthly programs on the second Thursday of the month to find out more about Fort Collins Audubon. National dues do not cover the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter, so if you'd like to keep receiving the *Ptarmigan* after the three complementary issues, please join FCAS. See the details on the last page of the newsletter or on our Web site at www.fortnet.org/audubon.



Broadtail Hummingbird by Bill Miller.





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