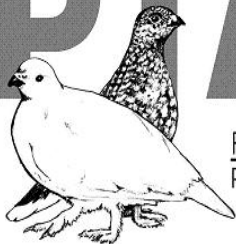


PTARMIGAN



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.

November 2011

Volume 42, Issue 8

"Legacy Land Trust"

Presenter: Ryan Boggs, Executive Director, Legacy Land Trust

Thursday Evening Program – November 10, 2011

Fort Collins Senior Center-Multi-Use Room

1200 Raintree Drive, Fort Collins

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

The mission of Legacy Land Trust is to conserve and protect key natural, scenic, and agricultural lands of northern Colorado that make this region a special place to live and work. Working in collaboration with local landowners, other non-profit organizations, and other land protection agencies, Legacy Land Trust is committed to conserving habitat, regional scenery, agricultural lands, and urban interface areas.

Ryan Boggs, Executive Director of the Legacy Land Trust, will present more information about the history, community involvement, and ongoing efforts of the Legacy Land Trust. Ryan came to Legacy Land Trust with nine years experience with Colorado Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. Ryan received his B.S. in wildlife biology from Colorado State University and is a native of Fort Collins. Ryan brings a wealth of land conservation experience to Legacy Land Trust along with a desire to bring a balanced and healthy

land protection program to our Front Range communities. Being a local gives him a perspective on the rapid changes that have taken place, and he sees many opportunities for retaining some of the rural patterns that make our area such a unique and inspiring place.

Join us for this informative evening on Nov. 10 at 7 p.m. at the Fort Collins Senior Center and learn more about similar mission efforts shared between Legacy Land Trust and FCAS, as well as possible birding field opportunities on Legacy lands.



Photo provided by Legacy Land Trust.

Thanks

A sincere thank you to all members and friends who supported FCAS through your bird seed orders during its first annual bird seed sale! We also want to thank Ranch-Way Feed Mills for partnering with us in this endeavor.

President's Corner

by Bill Miller

"Were we and the rest of the back-boned animals to disappear overnight, the rest of the world would get on pretty well." -- David Attenborough quoted in "Wolf spiders reveal their love secrets," *Telegraph.co.uk*, 15 Nov. 2005.

Strategic Planning Session

Each year the FCAS Board of Directors holds and participates in a Strategic Planning Session (SPS) as required by the National Audubon Society as an affiliate organization. As you may be aware, situations change, and organizations must change also.

At our strategic planning sessions, the FCAS Board attempts some long-range planning as well as planning for the forthcoming year. This year's strategic planning session will be on Saturday, October 22. We have a limited amount of time, but issues could include: engaging our members, recruiting younger members, changing our communication methods, rebuilding our field trip leader base, rebuilding our Education Committee, finances and scholarships, public relations, and upgrading our Web site.

FCAS CONTACTS

Audubon@fortnet.org

President & Conservation Chair

Bill Miller

970-493-7693

5mcorp@comcast.net

Membership Chair

Liz Pruessner

970-484-4371

fortcollinsaudubonmembership@gmail.com

Vice President & Education Chair

Joann Thomas

970-482-7125

jthomas91@aol.com

Field Trip Coordinator

Rich Roberts

970-407-8523

r_c_roberts@msn.com

Program Chair

Jessie Meschievitz

jmesch@slbbi.com

970-686-1424

Newsletter Editor

Carol Jones

970-482-6295

cjones@cowisp.net

For other FCAS contacts visit www.fortnet.org/audubon/leadership.htm

Membership Reminder

As we have announced in the previous two editions of the *Ptarmigan*, we will no longer be sending every issue of the *Ptarmigan* to those who are members of just the National Audubon Society. If you wish to continue receiving each month's issue of the *Ptarmigan* please take out a chapter membership: \$20 per year if you wish to receive the newsletter in electronic form or \$30 per year if you wish to receive the newsletter in printed form.

Lifetime Memberships

Recently the FCAS board authorized the availability of a lifetime membership category for a one-time charge of \$750. The advantage is that the member will no longer have to remember to renew their chapter dues on an annual basis and it gives the chapter a substantial cash infusion in these economically challenging times. By offering this category of membership it is hoped that we might build up an endowment fund that would generate sufficient annual interest to underwrite our scholarship program.

December Pot Luck and Slide Show

In a little more than a month it will be time

again for our December potluck and member slide show. On Dec. 8 bring a dish to serve six to eight people to the Fort Collins Senior Center by 6:30 p.m., along with serving utensils. Also, please bring your own plates, cups or glasses, and silverware. FCAS will provide beverages and napkins. If you want to "strut your stuff," bring up to 15 digital images to show, preferably on a jump drive. Please limit your presentation to no more than 10 minutes to give those after you their fair share of time.



Ron Harden at the 2010 December potluck.



"Every human has a fundamental right to an environment of quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being." -- United Nations Conference on the Human Environment – Stockholm (1972)

I subscribe to too many listservs and electronic newsletters. I do so to remain informed on the numerous and complex issues of the times. They are also the source of much of the information that I use in my *Ptarmigan* articles. But the information contained in those electronic communications can be quite depressing. Information about our national political and economic situations is seldom positive as of late. And the havoc that we, as one species of life on spaceship Earth, are wreaking on virtually all other species of life can definitely ruin one's mood.

Every once in a while there is a bright spot that arrives electronically. For example, I recently received an email from an 8th grade student at Webber Middle School in which she indicated that the students in her science class are preparing to debate the Glade Reservoir Project. She

said that she will assume a character representing the FCAS during the debate and so she asked about FCAS's position on Glade Reservoir.

I don't know if this young person assumed this role on her own or if it was suggested by the class science teacher, but I am uplifted that the students will become more knowledgeable about a complex subject that could have significant consequences for the Cache la Poudre River and the riparian habitat that it supports, as well as the finances of the communities that would be supplied by the Northern Integrated Supply Project (NISP) of which Glade Reservoir is a component.

These students will probably become more informed about this project than most adults in Fort Collins and the subscribing communities. This is good. Stay tuned.

Upcoming Christmas Bird Counts

Where does the time go? Here it is, November, and it is a little less than two months until the



Merlin during 2010 CBC. Photo by Bill Miller.

two FCAS-sponsored Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) are upon us.

This year the 112th Christmas Bird Count will be conducted during the period of Tuesday, December 14 to Wednesday, January 5. Thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas take part in this adventure that finds families, students, birders, and scientists,

armed with binoculars, bird guides, and checklists, roaming the fields and neighborhoods as defined by fifteen-mile diameter circles drawn on maps, called "count circles."

CBC teams tally both the number of species as well as the number of individuals in each species. While the data thus collected may not be precise, they do show trends in bird populations. For example, the Fort Collins count has, over the years, shown that grassland species have declined within the count circle while birds more adapted to urban areas have increased. This phenomenon is attributed to increasing urbanization that has replaced former rural agricultural areas within the count circle.

Welcome New National Members

FCAS 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 FCAS. 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.



Seeing is Believing

Watching five birds in a shrub at the Moose Visitor Center near North Park, I began running through the catalog of birds in my mind trying to identify them. Hmmm! Not too successful. They looked like really large sparrows or female Red-winged Blackbirds. My mind kept saying, "Nope, not here."

As I watched longer, I could see that two of them had black chests and they had slight yellow crescents in their wings. Suddenly, the five lifted and flew to another shrub joining a flock of about 15 similar birds. As they flew, the orange patches on their wings were visible—immature male Red-winged Blackbirds.

Migrating? All males? First year? Second year? So many questions tucked away until I could do some research for answers.

Although distribution maps show Red-winged Blackbirds are present year round, these birds do migrate. Some banded birds originating in Ontario, Canada, were found as far south as northern Florida. The birds at the Moose Center were a flock of first and second year immature birds. With each molt, the young birds develop more and more of the adult plumage accounting for the solid black chests on some of the birds. Blackbirds, in general, can take two years to achieve the adult breeding plumage. Migrating flocks are usually same sex, accounting for the birds I saw all having orange epaulets with very

thin yellow crescents.

Males especially are confirmed to double their fat in the pre-migration season. Sunflowers are their food of choice and the Moose Visitor Center's bird feeders were full. Stellar's Jays were noisily feeding while flipping seeds onto the ground. The young Red-winged Blackbird males were feeding on the ground, but if they could get onto a feeder, they did.

Red-winged Blackbirds have varied diets, often using a unique feeding mechanism known as "gaping." The bird forcibly opens its mouth against resistance, enabling it to turn over stones or sticks seeking seeds or insects. In addition to

the food being in plentiful supply at the Moose Center, the habitat was perfect. They prefer dense cover that may include coniferous stands and wetland habitat, all of which exists around the building.

It was hard to leave, but we had more birds to find. I highly recommend a trip to the Moose Visitor Center on Hwy. 14 just past Cameron Pass. Just make sure to enter the building through the front door and check out the feeders through the back windows before going out. If you walk around the building, you might scare away that once-in-a-lifetime bird you've been waiting to see. And, I have seen some life birds there!



Red-winged Blackbird in defense posture by Joann Thomas.

FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Ann Donoghue
Lynne Hull
Star Jorgensen
Connie M. Marvel

Lynn Morales
Anne Saunders
John Shenot
Leslye Sherman

Doris Sumrall
Barbara J. Turnbull
William O. West
Wild Birds Unlimited of Fort Collins



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.



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.

Nov. 3, Thursday, Snowbirds: The Identification and Ecology Of Colorado Winter Raptors. Presenter: Jeff Birek, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO). Meet at 6 p.m. at the RMBO offices, 230 Cherry St., Suite 150, Fort Collins. Registration required by calling Rob Gartell at Wild Birds Unlimited 970-225-2557 or rgatrellwbu@gmail.com.

Nov. 13, 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 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot. FCAS performs a monthly bird census for the city of Fort Collins. All levels welcome.



Yellow-headed Blackbird by Bill Miller.

Please remember to provide us with any new email addresses. Otherwise you may not receive your electronic version of the *Ptarmigan*. Send changes to: soilresearch@peakpeak.com



Great-horned Owl taken Dec. 25, 2010, by Bill Miller.

FCAS Pocket Guide to Local Birds

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

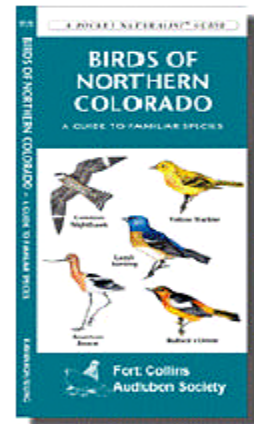
Wild Birds Unlimited
3636 S. College Ave
Ste. C
(970) 225-2557

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 Bookstore/
Bean Cycle Coffee Shop
144 N. College
(970) 472-4284





Fort Collins Audubon Society
PO Box 271968
Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968

Printed on recycled paper



NON PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
US Postage PAID
Fort Collins, CO
Permit Number 184

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 *Ptarmigan* by email)
- ☐ **New or renewing FCAS Chapter Member** \$30
(Receive *Ptarmigan* by postal mail)
- ☐ **Lifetime Chapter Member** \$750
Receive *Ptarmigan* by email _____
Or receive *Ptarmigan* by post _____
- ☐ **Additional Support for FCAS's Mission** \$_____
- ☐ **New NAS Member** \$20

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____

Phone #: _____

Email: _____

(Receive *Audubon* magazine by postal mail)

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

Receive email alerts (no more than one per month): Yes _____ No _____
FCAS **never** shares contact information.

Total Enclosed

\$_____ Would you like to volunteer? Yes _____ No _____

Please make your tax exempt 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