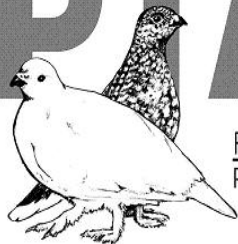


PTARMIGAN



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.

February 2012

Volume 43, Issue 2

Two Years in the Life of a Cemetery

Presented by David Leatherman

Thursday, February 9, 2012

Fort Collins Senior Center-Multi-Use Room

1200 Raintree Drive, Fort Collins

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

Much more than just a graveyard, the 40-acre Grandview Cemetery at the west end of Mountain Avenue is home to over 600 trees (two of them state champions), around 20 species of birds on any given visit (190 seen during the last 38 years), amazing insects, a wide variety of plants (native, weedy, ornamental, and plastic), mushrooms, and interesting/exotic animals like crayfish, deer, squirrels, foxes, golfers, and much more. This presentation by Dave Leatherman, long-time local entomologist, birder, and naturalist, chronicles natural events observed over the last two years during 300-plus visits to Grandview. Learn about shiny wasps with bodies over two inches long, baby birds six times

their parents' mass, the building materials of hornets, peonies decorated with meadowhawks, and how cute little squirrels can be anything but cute. Featured will be the unprecedented double-nesting at low elevation by Loxy and Larry, an endearing pair of White-winged Crossbills during the winter of 2009-2010. And no description of this remarkable place would be complete without touching on the strong ties to nature memorialized at Grandview by the people and families who rest there.

Join us on Feb. 9 at the Fort Collins Senior Center at 7 p.m. The program is free and open to the public.



Photo by
David Leatherman.

Welcome New National Members

FCAS welcomes new National Audubon Society members by sending complementary copies of our newsletter for one month. 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 complementary issue, please join FCAS. See the details on the last page of the newsletter or on our Web site at www.fortnet.org/Audubon.

President's Corner

by Bill Miller

"Growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell."

-- Edward Abbey, writer, essayist, novelist (1927-1989)

"More than any other time in history, mankind faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness. The other, to total extinction. Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly."

-- Woody Allen, comedian and writer.

During our January program meeting we elected officers and directors. We were fortunate to have 2011 incumbents as candidates for all critical positions. Those who will be serving in 2012 are:

Vice-Pres./Pres.-Elect:	Joann Thomas	Director-at-large:	Ron Harden
Secretary:	Scott Cobble	Director-at-large:	Hildy Morgan
Treasurer:	John Waddell	Director-at-large:	Paul Opler

We still have three openings for directors-at-large.

The following volunteers, also incumbents, agreed to continue as committee chairpersons:

Conservation:	Bill Miller	Programs:	Jessie Meschievitz
Education:	Joann Thomas	Publications:	Carol Jones
Field Trips:	Rich Roberts	Hospitality:	Pat Adams
Publicity:	Louise Parker	Birdathon:	Bill Miller
Finance:	Heman Adams	Scholarship:	Lisa Evans
Membership:	Liz Pruessner	Web Site:	Joel Hurmence

There was no election for the position of president as that position carries a two-year term and 2012 is the second year of that term.

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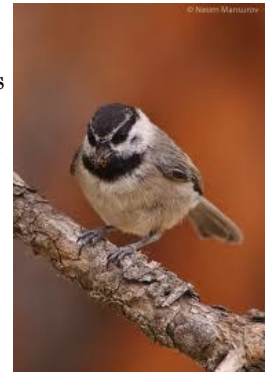
cjones@cowisp.net

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

Spring is in the Air (Sort Of)

Spring is when FCAS undertakes one of its most important fund-raisers of the year: the Birdathon! This annual effort features teams whose members go out to count different bird species in a 24-hour period. Prior to the event, team members solicit pledges from friends and family. After the count, team members may gather at a local watering hole for some pizza, beer, and bragging. Team leaders and team members collect the pledges they solicited.

Most of the money thus raised will go to the FCAS scholarship fund. Scholarships are made available to teachers to encourage them to take coursework to make them more effective in their classrooms. We also hope to provide scholarships for grade school children. FCAS will continue to look for innovative ways to provide both teacher and student support—with your support, of course!



"After one look at this planet, any visitor from outer space would say, 'I want to see the manager'."
—William S. Burroughs, American novelist, poet, essayist, and spoken word performer (1914–1997)

"A child born in a wealthy country is likely to consume, waste, and pollute more in his lifetime than 50 children born in developing nations. Our energy-burning lifestyles are pushing our planet to the point of no return. It is dawning on us at last that the life of our world is as vulnerable as the children we raise."
— George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury, UK

Climate Change – It's Worse Than We Thought (Part 2 of 4 parts) What is the Evidence that Climate Change is Real?

Climate change occurs when the equilibrium between the energy received from the sun and the rate at which it is lost to space is upset. Energy that is received from the sun is distributed around the world by winds, ocean currents, and other mechanisms.¹

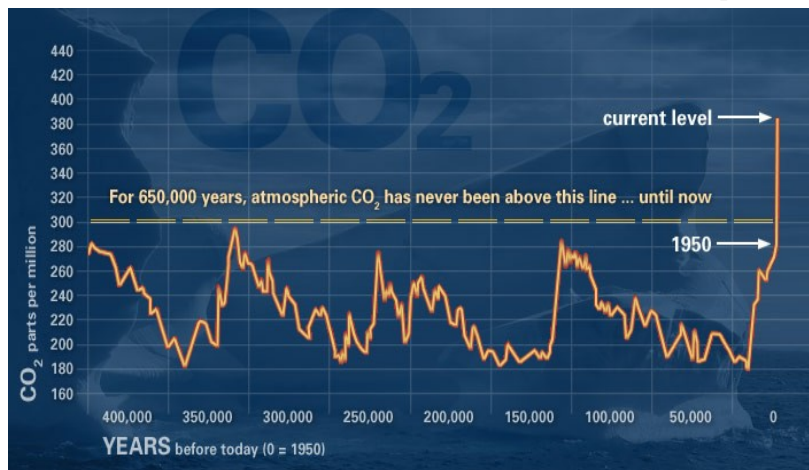
Causes of this upset in the energy balance are called "forcing mechanisms" and can be either internal or external. Internal forcing mechanisms are natural processes within the climate system, such as the "thermohaline circulation." This is sometimes called the ocean conveyor belt, the great ocean conveyor, or the global conveyor belt, and can be influenced by temperature, salinity, wind, and tides. External forcing mechanisms can be either natural (e.g., changes in solar output) or anthropogenic (e.g., increased emissions of greenhouse gases).²

Regardless of whether the forcing mechanism is internal or external, the response of the climate system might be fast (e.g., a sudden cooling due to volcanic ash reflecting sunlight), slow (e.g., thermal expansion of warming ocean waters), or a combination. While the climate system can respond quickly the full response to forcing mechanisms might not be fully developed for centuries or even longer.¹

The dominant opinion today as to what has driven climate change is that global atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxides have increased drastically due to human activities since 1750. These concentra-

tions now far exceed pre-industrial values, as determined from ice cores that span thousands of years.³

In the graph below, the horizontal yellow dashed line drawn at 300 parts per million (ppm) represents the highest atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide ever attained in the previ-



ous 400,000 years. Then, in approximately 1950, the concentrations of atmospheric carbon dioxide began to spike above the 300 ppm level and today stand at about 392 ppm.⁴

The sudden increases in carbon dioxide concentration is attributed primarily to the burning of fossil fuels and land use changes, while increases in methane and nitrous oxide are primarily due to agriculture.³

Carbon dioxide is a two-edged sword. As a greenhouse gas it contributes more to preventing the escape of heat back to space than any other greenhouse gas. The second effect of carbon diox-

(Climate Change continued on Page 4)



Ignorance is no excuse!

As I wrote the information for FCAS's program of five one-day birding field trips, I reflected on how accessible environmental education is in Fort Collins (see article on Page 5). The program offers an opportunity to learn from expert leaders in small groups covering Colorado terrain from the eastern plains to the high plains of North Park. It really doesn't get much better than this!

Don't forget the series of Bald Eagle programs that the city's Natural Areas Department sponsors in January, February, and early March. I will be leading the program on Saturday, Feb. 11 from 9 to 11 a.m. In January we

spotted seven mature and three immature eagles. As we left, one adult rose to fly over us eye-to-eyeball. A stellar day in the field!

In Berthoud, a small group of dedicated birders meets at the Community Center on the first Monday of each month. They meet at 7 p.m. for programs that vary from speakers to films. In January we watched a film on "How Birds Fly." Their enthusiastic energy and love of birding makes for a fun evening.

As I reflected, I remembered that the first event

(Climate Change continued from Page 3)

ide is that about 55 percent of atmospheric carbon dioxide is absorbed by the oceans where it forms, among other things, carbonic acid—the stuff that, over eons, has dissolved limestone layers to produce the caverns of the world. Calcium carbonate is the main ingredient in limestone and actually consists of the accumulation of calcareous-shelled creatures over millions of years. Many marine animals such as corals, foraminifera (plankton), echinoderms, crustaceans, and mollusks, have evolved to use shells or plates for their own protection. Such shells and plates are comprised of calcium carbonate, which can be dissolved in acidic ocean waters. If the world's oceans become too acidic the food chains in the

in which I participated in 1999 after moving to Fort Collins was Kevin Cook's birding classes at JAX. It's now 12 years later and I'm still going to classes—just one example of the wealth of opportunities in northern Colorado to learn about birds.



In addition to his classes, Kevin Cook gives a lunchtime monthly program at Loveland Library (first Tuesday) and Fort Collins Council Tree Library (second Tuesday). This year each program examines one species of tree and the life forms that subsist in it. January's program was "Ponderosa Hotel," and February's program is "Aspen Retreat."

Coordinating with these programs, Kevin began a new series of classes in January at both the Loveland and Fort Collins JAX locations. The series includes four classes on raptors, gulls, waterfowl, and owls; followed by four classes on trees and their relationship to specific birds. Learning the relationship between the species of trees and the birds offers a great opportunity for more purposeful birding.

The old adage "ignorance is no excuse" certainly applies to learning about birds in Colorado!

oceans will undergo a mass extinction not seen during the past 55 million years.⁵

If you haven't developed a sense of urgency about global climate change yet, you should. We are talking about the survival of numerous species, including our own. Are we too wedded to our ways and too selfish to make the sacrifices to make the best of our situation before it is too late?

References:

¹<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climatechange>

²http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thermohaline_circulation

³<http://www.climatepath.org/aboutus/science>

⁴<http://wikipedia.org/wiki/CarbondioxideinEarth'satmosphere>

⁵<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oceanacidification>



Birds of Colorado: An Exceptional Opportunity

Join FCAS for an exceptional opportunity to learn about the birds of Colorado from birding professionals through a series of five one-day educational field trips. This exceptional program allows you to learn from the experts while traveling through five Colorado life zones. Each trip is limited to six participants along with a leader and a driver. Trips are scheduled for the third Saturday of months March through July.



Western Grebe by Bill Miller.

March 17: Inland Ocean

Much of Colorado's lowlands were once under water, which may explain the inland route of some migrating oceanic birds through Colorado. This outing visits large reservoirs in northeast Colorado, including Jackson Lake and Prewitt Reservoir, when oceanic migrants are returning to their breeding grounds in the Arctic Circle.

Birds: Loons, grebes, scoters, gulls, terns, shorebirds.

Leader: Nick Komar, co-author, *Wild Birding Colorado*.

April 21: Chihuahuan Desert

South-central Colorado represents the northern margin of the 1,000-mile wide Chihuahuan Desert, with many bird species more typical of Texas and New Mexico.

Birds: Scaled Quail, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Greater Roadrunner, Chihuahuan Raven, Juniper Titmouse, Curve-billed Thrasher, Canyon Towhee, and Rufous-crowned Sparrow.

Leader: Jeff Gordon, president, American Birding Association.

May 19: Eastern Plains.

The tour will visit a variety of birding hot-spots in Weld County.

Birds: Flycatchers, Warblers, Vireos, Ferruginous Hawk, Mountain Plover, Burrowing Owl, Lark Bunting, and McCown's Longspur.

Leader: Cole Wild, co-author, *Wild Birding Colorado*.

June 16: Rocky Mountains

An elevational tour of western Boulder County: foothill canyons to the alpine tundra.

Birds: Northern Goshawk, American Three-toed Woodpecker, MacGillivray's Warbler, Western Tanager, Green-tailed Towhee, Lincoln's Sparrows, White-crowned Sparrows, and Lazuli Bunting.

Leader: Ted Floyd, editor, *Birding* magazine

July 21: High Plains of North Park

The best water bird nesting is found in North Park (Jackson County).

Birds: Pied-billed and Eared Grebes, Double-crested Cormorants, American White Pelicans, American Coots, California Gulls, Willets, Wilson's Phalaropes, Marsh Wrens and more.

Leader: Chuck Hundertmark, president, Denver Field Ornithologists.



Greater Roadrunner by Bill Miller.

Cost:

\$75 per trip for FCAS members. Payment due on first day of month attending.

\$100 per trip for non-members. Payment due on first day of month attending.

\$325 for FCAS members signing up for all five trips. Payment due by March 1.

For more information and/or reservations, contact Joann Thomas at 970-482-7125 or 970-222-0741, or jthomas91@aol.com.



Bobcat Checklist a Done Deal

By Denise Bretting

As you may be aware, FCAS has been involved in a long-term inventory of bird species in the Bobcat Ridge Natural Area (<http://www.fcgov.com/naturalareas/finder/bobcat>) located to the west of Masonville. The inventory was done at the request of the Fort Collins Natural Areas Program that manages Bobcat Ridge for the public's enjoyment.

The Bobcat Ridge bird checklists are being printed and should be available at the kiosk there soon. This is a culmination of several years



Bobcat Ridge.

of work by numerous volunteers; 152 species have been identified at Bobcat Ridge. Leaders of the surveys over the years include Nick Komar, Cole Wild, Solomon Miller, and Denise Bretting. The surveys will continue, but the routes may vary from time to time.

The next survey will be at 7:30 a.m. on Sunday, Feb. 12. Highlights of last month's survey were Northern Goshawk, Northern Shrike, and a pair of Golden Eagles scoping out possible nest sites on the cliff face.

Audubon-Sierra Club 2012 Legislative Forum

The Audubon Society of Greater Denver (ASGD) and the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Sierra Club invite you to attend the 2012 Legislative Forum on Saturday, Feb. 4. Come to the First Plymouth Church, 3501 S. Colorado Blvd. in Denver, from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. to learn about the hot environmental topics of the 2012 Colorado legislative session. This is always an entertaining and educational event!

After the 8:30 a.m. continental breakfast, Audubon Colorado Lobbyist Jen Boulton and the Sierra Club lobbyist Chuck Malick will review the session's environmental bills and we'll discuss several of the key issues with invited experts, including legislators. In 2012 we'll cover, among others, the merger of the Colorado Divisions of Wildlife and State Parks with Director Rick Cables, oil and gas development, and possible threats to GOCO. A final agenda will be available shortly before the meeting on the ASGD website.

The cost of the Forum is \$12 in advance and \$15 at the door. We can always use help with setup and cleanup, so if you are interested in

volunteering call Rhonda in the Audubon office at 303-973-9530 or send an email to Polly Reetz, Conservation Chairman, at reetzfam@juno.com.

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-
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(970) 472-4284



FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members



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Mary Beck
Charles & Nancy Bell
Denise A. Bretting
Larry & Margie Caswell
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Phil Phelan
Sandra Pitcaithley
John & Ann Reichhardt
Robert Righter
Rafael Tello
Hank Thode
Sandra Tinsman
Robin Welsh
Suzanne Yehle

Thank You for Your Membership!

Your support makes our programs and conservation efforts possible

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.

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



Western Tanager



American Goldfinch by Nick Komar.

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





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Membership Application

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

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Address: _____

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City: _____ State: _____

☐ **Lifetime Chapter Member** \$750
Receive *Ptarmigan* by email _____
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Phone #: _____

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

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

Email: _____

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

Total Enclosed \$_____

Please make your tax exempt checks payable to FCAS and mail with this form to:
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