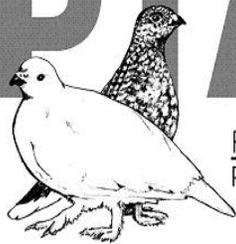


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FORT COLLINS AUDUBON SOCIETY
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Promoting the appreciation, conservation, and restoration of ecosystems,
focusing on birds and other wildlife, through education, participation, stewardship, and advocacy.

March 2012

Volume 43, Issue 3

More Than Just The Amazon:

A Sampling of the Geography of Birds and their Habitats in South America

Presented by Eric DeFonso: Naturalist, Birder, and Bird-Sound Recordist

Thursday, March 8, 2012

Fort Collins Senior Center—Multi-Use Room

1200 Raintree Drive, Fort Collins

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

In 2011, northern Colorado birder regular, Eric DeFonso, embarked on a year-long journey through much of tropical South America, starting in Bogota, Colombia, and traveling mostly overland to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. His circuitous route led him through four countries, 40-plus nature reserves, the Galapagos, the Pantanal, and five months of volunteering in three locations in the Amazon. Eric's philosophy of travel was to not only see birds, but understand the context of their lives. He explored the many diverse habitats from the Andes to the Atlantic that are home to the 3,200 documented bird species in South America. This presentation will introduce us to a few of those surprising regions and ecosystems.

Eric DeFonso began birdwatching 18 years ago as a casual hobby, but his interest turned into a consuming passion. He has a Masters degree in



Violet-throated Metaltail by
Eric DeFonso.

Atmospheric Science from the University of California, Davis, and worked in computing for several years before drastically changing course to follow his love of birds wherever it led him. He has since become a certified Master Naturalist for the City of Fort Collins, served on the Board of Directors for FCAS, and worked as a volunteer educational bird handler at the Rocky Mountain Raptor Program. In addition to photography, he also has become an experienced bird-sound re-

cordist, logging recordings of over 400 species in just the past year.

Join us for this opportunity on March 8 at 7 p.m. at the Fort Collins Senior Center to view Eric's pictures and hear recordings, including those of toucans, tanagers, antpittas, tropical raptors, hummingbirds, cotingas, and also learn about the other plants and animals that typify where they live.

President's Corner

by Bill Miller

"Optimism is a good characteristic, but if carried to an excess, it becomes foolishness. We are prone to speak of the resources of this country as inexhaustible; this is not so."

-- Theodore Roosevelt, *Seventh Annual Message to Congress, Dec. 3, 1907*

"For 200 years we've been conquering nature. Now we're beating it to death."

-- Tom McMillan, *quoted in Francesca Lyman, The Greenhouse Trap, 1990*

Birdathon Coming in May

Friday and Saturday, May 11 and 12, will be our annual fundraiser known as the Birdathon. On those two days we will have several teams of birders roaming around northern Colorado trying to see or hear as many different species of birds possible within a 24-hour period. Prior to that time, team members as well as other FCAS members will have collected pledges from other Audubon members, family, and friends. Pledges may be of two types—either for a fixed amount or for a specified amount per species.

As the Birdathon Coordinator I'm trying something new this year. I have asked board members to seek five pledges each. I also would like to ask every FCAS

member to try to solicit at least two pledges each. If we are all successful in this effort we will be that much closer to establishing a meaningful scholarship fund.



Male American Kestrel by Rob Palmer.

You are responsible for collecting any funds you solicit and for turning them into either me or our Treasurer, John Waddell.

Also, please consider volunteering to serve on a team. If you don't know a team leader let me know and we'll assign you to a team. This is an important and fun event, and more eyes spot more birds! Let's all try to make this the most successful Birdathon in several years.

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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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(970) 225-2557

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144. N. College
(970) 472-4284

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1000 N. Hwy. 287
(970) 484-2221



"Optimism is a good characteristic, but if carried to an excess, it becomes foolishness. We are prone to speak of the resources of this country as inexhaustible; this is not so."

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Climate Change—It's Worse than We Thought—Part 3

Humans apparently are in disagreement with one another on the whole issue of global warming/global climate change. In this episode of the continuing saga, I will address what the skeptics are saying.



"Climate change denial is a set of organized attempts to downplay, deny, or dismiss the scientific consensus on the extent of global warming, its significance, and its connection to human behavior, especially for commercial or ideological reasons."¹ Usually attempts to deny that climate change has anthropogenic (attributed to man) causes are structured to look like a form of scientific debate. For the past two decades climate change denial has been associated with the energy lobby, industry advocates, and free market think tanks. Today we are witness to a partisan divide where most conservatives state that man's activities are not the cause of global climate change, while liberals, for the most part, believe that human activities are the root cause of global climate change.

Peter Christoff, writing in *The Age* (2007), said that climate change deniers should be distinguished from climate skeptics. Skepticism is essential to good science. Those scientists who test uncertain parts of the theories and models of climate change with ones of their own are, in a sense, skeptics. But now, almost two decades

after the issue became one of global concern, the scientific debate over climate change is over. There are now no credible scientific skeptics challenging the underlying scientific theory, or the broad projections, of climate change.²

Scientific consensus has been reached, mostly by climatologists, that global warming is due mainly to human activity.¹ However, this conclusion continues to be debated and denied by those who perceive a threat to their interests if global warming is true and we decide to combat it. Economic concerns fuel this response.

Arguments against anthropogenic global warming have been well summarized at <http://www.skepticalscience.com/argument.php>. The more blatant ones are: 1) The climate has changed before. *Response:* Climate reacts to whatever forces it to change at the time; humans are now the dominant force. 2) It's the sun. *Response:* In the last 35 years of global warming, sun and climate have gone in opposite directions. 3) Ocean acidification isn't serious. *Response:* Ocean acidification threatens entire marine food chains. 4) Hurricanes aren't linked to global warming. *Response:* Increasing evidence shows hurricanes are getting stronger due to global warming. 5) Extreme weather isn't caused by global warming. *Response:* Global warming amplifies risk factors for extreme weather events—that is all climate science claims. 6) It's not happening. *Response:* Many lines of evidence indicate global warming is unequivocal.

We are at a critical point in the history of mankind; become more knowledgeable about global climate disruption and its consequences.

References:

1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climate_change_denial
2. <http://www.theage.com.au/news/opinion/climate-change-is-another-grim-tale-to-be-treated-with-respect/2007/07/08/1183833338608.html>



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 and Sunday of months March through July.

March 17 or 18: Inland Ocean

Much of Colorado's lowlands were once under water, which may explain the inland route of



Bonaparte's Gull by Nick Komar.

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.

Leaders: Cole Wild (17th), Nick Komar (18th), co-authors, *Wild Birding Colorado*.

April 21 or 22: 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.



Scaled Quail by Nick Komar.

Leader: Jeff Gordon, president, American Birding Association, both days.

May 19 or 20: 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.

Leaders: Nick Komar (19th), Cole Wild (20th).

June 16 or 17: Rocky Mountains

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

Birds: Virginia's and MacGillivray's Warblers, Red-naped and Williamson's Sapsuckers, Fox Sparrow, Pine Grosbeak, Brown-capped Rosy-Finch, White-tailed Ptarmigan, Black Swift, and American Three-toed Woodpecker.

Leader: Ted Floyd, editor, *Birding* magazine, both days.

July 21 or 22: 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, both days.

Cost:

\$75 per trip for FCAS members; \$100 per trip for non-members; \$325 for FCAS members 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.

Upcoming Field Trips

All field trips are free of charge and open to the public. All experience levels are welcome.

Mar. 11, 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 are welcome.

Mar. 9-11, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, Monte Vista Crane Festival at Monte Vista, CO. Contact online at: www.cranefest.com.



Ever feel like a Martian?

I found it! I found it! For two years people have told me about the melanistic Red-tailed Hawk hanging out by the Bald Eagles’ nest off Road 30E. A melanistic bird has coloration much darker than normal due to an excess of melanin in its feathers. I’ve looked carefully each time I visit the eagles’ nest and had yet to find the hawk—until Saturday.

After spending two hours in frigid weather watching eagles at Fossil Creek, I drove over I-25 to check out the eagles’ nest. They were there, faithful as ever. I go often hoping to catch them in their courtship aerial display. I know two people who’ve seen the hawk, but I never seem to catch it. Sitting alone in my car, warming up, I noticed a large dark bird sitting in a tree quite close to the road. We’d seen seven immature eagles at Fossil Creek, so I sort of dismissed it as another one, but it really wasn’t that big. Was it possibly the elusive melanistic hawk?

Get the book. No, get the scope. No, I’m in the road. Please don’t move—plesase! It doesn’t, and I get the scope out of the box and line it up. There sits my hawk, glistening in the sun. It is gorgeous. The head is slightly reddish and the chest solid black. Its wings tucked on its chest have faint white edges. I drink in the sight. What a treat!



Melanistic Red-tailed Hawk.

My mind wandered and I wondered how it feels to be a Red-tailed Hawk and look different. Oh, I know I’m anthropomorphizing, but really, how difficult is it to find a mate?

Female birds tend to look for the males that display the most perfect markings of the male of their species. Can this bird only mate with another melanistic bird? In researching melanism, I discovered that two mating melanistic birds produce less offspring than a normally patterned pair. Additionally, the extra melanin in the feathers tends to make them brittle and more susceptible to breaking. So, is melanism a handicap? Probably. As I watched this bird, I remembered my move to the East Coast in 1984. Being a

GRITS (girl raised in the south), I felt culture shock for the first time in my life. My anthropology professor said that’s how he felt when he did his first field research. He called it “feeling like a Martian.” Did this hawk feel like a Martian? Is that why it’s been in one place for two years?

I sat with my bird and pondered life. That’s what birding does for me. It gives me glimpses into the inner depths of my soul and the outer reaches of my life. We communed for about 15 minutes before it flew off. I whispered to my hawk and myself: “Farewell and godspeed, my fellow Martian.”

FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

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Dale E. Agger
Nancy Aley
Julie Barraza
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Nathan F. Donovan
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