

# 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.

**November 2012**

**Volume 43, Issue 8**

## **"Climate and the American Pika"**

**Presented by: Dr. Chris Ray, University of Colorado**

**Thursday, Nov. 8, 2012**

**Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Drive, Fort Collins**

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

Will the pika succumb to global warming, or does its use of favorable microclimates place it among the less vulnerable species? Many species—especially alpine species—are expected to be sensitive to climate change, but many also have ways to adapt. The pika is considered a "cold-adapted" species with limited ability to move through warmer regions. However, pikas persist in some very warm places by taking shelter in cool microhabitats found beneath the surface of boulder-fields and other rocky features.

Dr. Chris Ray, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, University of Colorado, Boulder, is a researcher studying threatened plants and animals. In addition to authoring many scientific papers, she has studied pikas throughout

the western United States for over 20 years. Chris has been interviewed about the plight of the pika for national and international news broadcasts, and her knowledge of pika behavior

helped the producers of David Attenborough's, "Life of Mammals," film their wonderful sequence on pikas. She has taught field studies centered on the pika almost every summer since 1989, and often brings her pika stories into the classroom for the benefit of students and teachers interested in the scientific method.

Join us at the Fort Collins Senior Center on Nov. 8 as Dr. Ray explores

the adaptability of American pikas to climate change. This program is free and open to the public.



**American Pika with mountain bluebells  
by Chris Ray.**

FCAS welcomes new National Audubon Society members by sending one complimentary copy of our newsletter. Join us at our monthly programs on the second Thursday of the month to find out more. National dues do not cover the costs of the newsletter, so to keep receiving the *Ptarmigan*, please join FCAS. See details on Page 6, or on our website at [www.fortnet.org/Audubon](http://www.fortnet.org/Audubon).

## President's Corner

by Bill Miller

"The only trouble with capitalism is capitalists—they are too damn greedy."  
-- Herbert Hoover, 31st president (1874-1964)

### Christmas Bird Counts

It is that time of year again for the two Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) that FCAS sponsors each year. The Fort Collins CBC will take place on Saturday, Dec. 15, coordinated and compiled by Tom Hall, [n2redbear@hotmail.com](mailto:n2redbear@hotmail.com) or 970-419-5535. The Loveland CBC will occur on January 1, 2013, and be coordinated by Nick Komar, [quetzal65@comcast.net](mailto:quetzal65@comcast.net) or 970-449-3645. If you are interested in participating in either CBC give the appropriate compiler a call or send them an email.

In an email to chapter leaders, National Audubon announced the following: "First, the CBC is now a free program. Audubon will no longer charge the \$5 fee of field participants. Second, to minimize the effects of the loss of fee income,

American Birds will no longer be printed on paper and mailed to participants, and Audubon will move to an online delivery of the summary results of the CBC."



### Upcoming Chapter Elections

The FCAS Board of Directors is currently asking chapter members to consider serving on the FCAS Board of Directors for the year 2013. Identifying persons to serve in any capacity is difficult every year. When a board position can't be filled it generally means that someone else already serving has to pick up an additional set of responsibilities, which leads to premature burnout. Please consider taking a role in the operation of your chapter.

Job descriptions for each board position (both elected and appointed) can be found in the chapter bylaws at the location given in the piece about bylaws revisions.

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### Fort Collins Audubon Society Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Jean Darst  
Ken and Judi Jackson  
Sarah Allely

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.



"Conservation is a great moral issue, for it involves the patriotic duty of insuring the safety and continuance of the nation."

-- Theodore Roosevelt, *New Nationalism speech, Ossawatimie, Kansas, August 31, 1910*

## Rebuttal to Comments Received on September Conservation Corner

In the September issue of the Ptarmigan I ran an article titled, "Why Conservation is Conservative." Unfortunately the point I was trying to bring out was either missed or misunderstood by several readers who sent in the following three comments:

1. "...The last Republican administrations were very aggressive against conservation in this country and this nation's efforts to promote conservation abroad..."

2. "As an environmentalist, I have a number of concerns that have to do with maintaining a healthy planet for both human beings and other forms of life. My questions are simple: Which political party is doing a better job of protecting the safety and quality of our air and water? Which political party is doing a better job of expanding, protecting, and supporting open space, wilderness areas, and public parks? Is any political party acting to protect wetlands and other delicate ecosystems to preserve biological diversity? And finally, which political party is more willing to regulate powerful corporations and/or individuals who might try to damage our land, water and air? The answers to these questions are in the public record—the voting record of our political representatives. It is very concrete!"



3. "Theodore Roosevelt was a progressive liberal. Furthermore, he would never approve of either Ronald Reagan or the Republican Party of today."

The point that I was trying to make when I wrote the article was that much of current environmental legislation originated with conservatives (i.e., Republicans.) Unfortunately, people have lost sight of that fact, and now believe that conservation and environmental protection are liberal causes.

My article went on to state that, "The misperception stems from the fact that the GOP establishment has lost sight of these values (largely due to the influence of corporate lobbies and political leaders beholden to them

for campaign support) and from the willingness of populist Democrats to embrace environmental protection. The result has been a polarizing battle that is not at all about the advance of conservative principles, but rather the advance of special interest political agendas."

One may draw their own conclusions, but I dare venture to say that the influence of corporate monies upon politics had apparently driven the conservative party away from many of the values that they once embraced.

### Upcoming Field Trips

**Nov. 11, Sunday, Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey.** Leader: Denise Bretting, [dbretting@swloveland.com](mailto: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.

### FCAS Pocket Guide to Local Birds

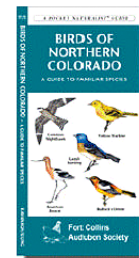
Is available at the following retailers who support our organization with the sales:

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

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

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

Jax Farm & Ranch  
1000 N. Hwy. 287  
(970) 481-2221





## France—Food, Art, Scenery, and Coots!

A month in France—divine! Delicious food, warm people, beautiful art, spectacular scenery, and strange birds. Well, not so strange; my first French bird was a magpie!

France is a country of gilded monuments, so it was not unexpected that on our visit to Versailles, Louis XIV's residence outside of Paris, after six hours of magnificent art, statuary, gardens, fountains (it's hard to imagine the wealth it took to create this opulence), I wandered far afield to Marie Antoinette's re-creation of a village from her native Austria. There in this gentle rolling countryside were the birds.

Now I could relate. As I quietly walked out to the lake, several coots accompanied me. What a treat! Coots for me were always seen afar—on the far shore of the water, or swimming in a distance. I've seen the brilliant red chicks in North Park, but only with binoculars. But the one coot characteristic I'd never seen close up is the lobed toes. This trait allows the coot to look as if it is walking on water while it is feeding.



Coot by Joann Thomas.

And, then, amid the opulence of Versailles was a coot whose feet I could clearly see. Yes, the toes are lobately webbed on each joint of the toe. The toes seemed inordinately long and the webs on each joint undulated as it walked. I remembered a photo I'd seen in which it appeared that the coot was walking on a floating raft of reeds just below the water surface. The lobed webs kept it afloat.

Coots are present across North America into Canada. They only migrate short distances and nest almost exclusively in freshwater

marshlands. These raucous and territorial rails live in almost any body of water, including sewer ponds, and are easily recognized by their swimming style in which they bob their necks back and forth.

Yes, France was everything I wanted it to be—food, scenery, art—but who would have thought that I'd bring home wonderful birding memories, too. And, with photos of a coot's toes to savor through the years.

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## Food, Water, Shelter, Space—Habitat is a Wonderful Place

On the last Saturday in September each year, the Northern Colorado Birding Fair fills Fossil Creek Regional Open Space with families checking out the many birding activities. This year was no exception. It was a gorgeous day—blue skies, mild weather, and about 600 friendly people curious about birding.

This year FCAS partnered with Bath Nursery to create a habitat experience for the visitors who stopped by to see what was going on. At the FCAS table, children enthusiastically painted



wooden bird houses, while at the Bath table they painted pine cones with peanut butter and rolled them in bird seed to create feeders.

Volunteers from Fort Collins Key Club joined Audubon members in helping the children with the painting and pine cones. Join us next year on the last weekend in September—we already have our craft ready.

Children enjoy painting bird-houses at the Colorado Birding Fair.



## Field Trip Report – Fall Shorebird Migration at Jackson Lake State Park

Trip participants had a wonderful time at Jackson Lake State Park on the weekend of Sept 22-23 with Nick Komar leading the Quetzal Tours field trip to view migrating fall shorebirds. The reservoir is very low this time of year, which pro-



**Baird's Sandpiper**  
by Nick Komar.

vides an opportunity to hike out onto the mudflats and set up scopes close to the shorebirds.

The reservoir was teeming with birds—literally thousands of individuals; there

were huge flocks of White Pelicans and American Coots resting and feeding. It was an excellent opportunity for studying the sandpipers as

the birds were crowded together on the shrunken lake. We made side-by-side comparisons of Least, Western, Semipalmated, Baird's, and Pectoral Sandpipers as well as Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Willets, Stilt Sandpipers, Long-billed Dowitchers, and Sanderlings. Other highlights included Black-bellied Plover, American Golden Plover, Semipalmated Plover, and Black Tern. We also were treated to a spectacular demonstration of aerial acrobatics when a Peregrine Falcon zeroed in on a Dowitcher and pursued it for nearly five heart pounding minutes over the reservoir. It was like watching a dogfight of flying aces. Amazingly, the Dowitcher escaped!

The trip was a great success and more daylong trips will be offered this fall. Look for details on the December trip to Front Range lakes for late fall migrants in the field trip section of the newsletter.

### Guatemala—Tikal Excursion, Feb. 16 - 24

This February, join fellow Auduboners in experiencing the mystique of Guatemala's highland volcanoes and rainforests at the breathtaking Mayan ruins of Tikal National Park. Quetzal Tours is offering an eight-day, relaxed-pace birding and nature photography adventure, led by Guatemala's premier bilingual birding guides, Knut Eisermann and Claudia Aven-  
daño, authors of the *Aves de Guatemala*, an Annotated Checklist. Not only will this be a unique experience at a low price (just \$2100 per person), but the event also serves as a fundraiser for FCAS. Visit locations such as Los Tarrales Reserve and Antigua, as well as Tikal. Expect to see Toucans, Motmots, Trogons, Woodcreepers, Sabrewings, and hundreds of other species in the land of the Mayan indigenous peoples. The tour is limited to six people. For more information, contact Nick Komar at [info@quetzal-tours.com](mailto:info@quetzal-tours.com), or 970-449-3645.

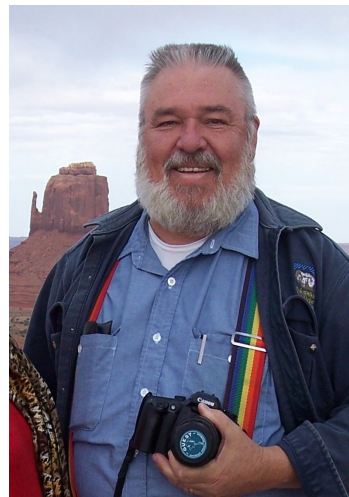


**Ornate Hawk-Eagle**, by  
Knut Eisermann.

### Join Us in a Roast and Toast Celebrating Bill Miller's Years of Service to FCAS Thursday, Dec. 13, 2012, 6:30 p.m.


Bill Miller is stepping down after multiple years as president of FCAS. Over the years Bill has stepped up to help FCAS and we decided it's time to say, "Thank you, Bill."

While we usually have a potluck in December, for this event, Audubon will be supplying the entrees—one vegetarian and one meat dish. You may bring a side dish for 10 people and your table service. We will supply the drinks. After toasting and/or roasting Bill, we will be having our usual December show and tell, so please bring your slides. Limit of 10 minutes each so we can depart at 9 p.m.





Fort Collins Audubon Society  
PO Box 271968  
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::

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

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

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

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

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

☐ **Lifetime Chapter Member** \$750  
Receive *Ptarmigan* by email \_\_\_\_  
Or receive *Ptarmigan* by mail \_\_\_\_

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☐ **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:  
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)