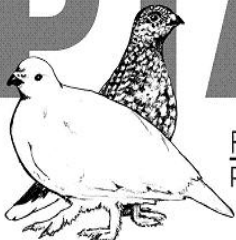


# PTARMIGAN



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.

**January 2013**

**Volume 44, Issue 1**

## **"Shortgrass Prairie Birds, Climate Change, and Plague"**

**Presented by Dr. Reesa Conrey, Colorado Parks and Wildlife**

**Thursday, January 10, 2013**

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

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

Climate change in northern Colorado is expected to result in warmer temperatures and more extreme precipitation, with larger storms separated by longer droughts during the growing season. Studies suggest that these conditions are unfavorable for shortgrass passerines, with mixed impacts on mountain plovers and burrowing owls. Plague, introduced to northern Colorado in 1948, has a high mortality rate in prairie dogs and can result in localized declines of species associated with colonies, such as plovers and owls. Plague prevalence may be affected by climate change and a new vaccine being tested.



**Young Burrowing Owls by Reesa Conrey.**

Reesa Yale Conrey currently works as an Avian Researcher with Colorado Parks and Wildlife in Fort Collins. She specializes in grassland species of special concern. Reesa got her B.A. at Dartmouth College, M.S. at the University of Montana, and Ph.D. at Colorado State University. She worked as a post-doctoral researcher at U.S. Geological Survey Fort Collins Science Center and as the Nebraska

Program Biologist at Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory before joining CPW in June 2012.

Join us for this informative program on Jan. 10 at 7:30 p.m. at the Fort Collins Senior Center. This program is free and the public is welcomed.

### **FCAS Annual Membership Renewal**

It is time to renew your annual membership. Please use the form on the back page of the *Ptarmigan* to renew by mail or at a program meeting, or renew online at: [www.fortnet.org/audubon](http://www.fortnet.org/audubon). Dues are \$20.00 to receive the *Ptarmigan* electronically or \$30.00 for a printed copy via mail. Your local chapter dues make possible our programs, meetings, education, and advocacy for birds and wildlife habitat. Your membership and contributions are tax deductible. Please renew today, and thanks!

## President's Corner

by Bill Miller

"Some people want it to happen, some wish it to happen, others make it happen."

-- *Anonymous*

"Volunteers aren't paid, not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless."

-- *Anonymous*

"The highest reward for a person's work is not what they get for it, but what they become because of it."

-- *John Ruskin (2 Nov. 2004 by Caitlin Rohrer, Girl Scouts, Trillium Council, Penn.)*

"Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does." -- *William James*

Happy New Year! I hope that everyone had an enjoyable holiday season. This is intended to be my last President's Corner as my term concludes with the election that will take place at the January program meeting.

Only history will tell if the eight years I was privileged to be in that office, on three different occasions, were effective. There have been many changes, most of which reflect the way our society has changed. Electronic communications are now the norm, making the printed version of our newsletter almost obsolete. The savings realized by switching to an electronic version of the newsletter has allowed us to convert the previous volunteer positions of newsletter editor and webmaster to paid contract positions. These two

positions provide vital communication, are time consuming, and worthy of being paid.

I have been negligent in acknowledging the efforts of both board and chapter members, as well as that of other volunteers, for contributing time, materials, and monetary support in helping the chapter further its goals as stated in our mission statement. The success of our chapter is not determined by the actions of just one or two people who may get more public recognition, but by the collective actions of many.



Such volunteers include those who represent FCAS at events such as the Bath Avian Appreciation Days each January and the Northern Colorado Bird Fair each September, as well as field trip leaders who share their expertise with attendees.

Perhaps the greatest contribution to our chapter's success is that made by our Board of Directors who attend monthly board and program meetings. Our secretary and treasurer spend numerous hours each month attending to the historical and financial aspects of our chapter. Our conservation, education, field trips, public relations, membership, and program chairs attend to many details. Our directors-at-large provide valuable input to board processes.

Throughout the 39-year history of FCAS, which first became a National Audubon Society affiliate in 1974, it has always been volunteers who stepped up to effectively guide the chapter.

At our Jan. 10, meeting there will be an election of officers and directors whose names were published in the December 2012 issue of the *Ptarmigan*. Please give your whole-hearted support to the new president, Joann Thomas, and the rest of the board in the coming years.

Thank you for your past support.

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## Conservation Corner \_\_\_\_\_ by Bill Miller

"Never, no, never, did Nature say one thing, and Wisdom say another."

-- Edmund Burke (1729 - 1797) *Third Letter on Regicide Peace*, 1797

"Conservation of our resources is the fundamental question before this nation, and that our first and greatest task is to set our house in order and begin to live within our means."

-- Theodore Roosevelt (1858 - 1919) January 1909, in letter transmitting report of National Conservation Commission to Congress

### Rights of Nature for Fort Collins and Larimer County

(From Steven Jones of Boulder Audubon)

Ecuador did it in 2008. Bolivia followed suit in 2011. Peru has jumped on board. More than 100 municipalities in the United States, mostly in

Pennsylvania, also have passed rights of nature ordinances. It's high time that Boulder and Boulder County recognized the rights of nature. Here is a paragraph from our proposed ordinance, which we

plan to present to local governments and eventually would like to see incorporated into the state constitution:

"Section 2. Preamble and Purpose. We the People of [ ] declare that all human and non-human beings are part of nature, and that living in balance and harmony with nature is essential for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—both for people and for the ecological systems that give life to all species. We further declare that we have the duty to secure and enforce the inalienable Rights of Nature, upon which all life depends."

At its Dec. 6 board meeting, the FCAS board unanimously voted to support a similar ordi-

nance for Fort Collins, believing that it is time that Fort Collins recognized the rights of nature. We are entering this arena with very little background, but have already asked to be included in

the Boulder County Audubon Society's communications.

If you would like more information on this topic, take a look at <http://therightsofnature.org/>.

There you will read the follow-



Wilderness

ing: "Rather than treating nature as property under the law, rights of nature acknowledges that nature in all its life forms has the *right to exist, persist, maintain, and regenerate its vital cycles*." Also: "We know that when we disrespect and harm Nature we diminish ourselves and impoverish our children. A human right to life and dignity is meaningless without water and wilderness."

If you believe that it's time for other forms of life to enjoy the same rights that have been granted to corporations, consider supporting FCAS' efforts to formulate a proposed ordinance to be presented to the Fort Collins City Council. Stay tuned.

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

Amy Cheese

Susan Cottingham

Susan and Bill Friedman

Bill von Kaenel

Dorothy Leising

Krista Spencer

Joann Thomas

John Waddell



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.





### My Friend Flicker

Now the long wait begins. The soft snowfalls, the winter silence. Longer days of light cannot come soon enough for me. I remember the first spring in my Fort Collins home. The air was filled with a bird sound strange to me... kikikikiki. Carefully watching the trees, I discovered the Northern Flicker. It's become my friend and I its protector. Never again has spring

sounded as sweet as that first year. Have I become used to the calls of mating flickers or the sounds of them drumming rhythmically on the roof vents?

Oh no, I have fallen in love with them. My neighbor's maple tree, on its last legs, hosted a pair every year until it was cut down. Seeking identification, she said it was a bird like Woody Woodpecker. A Pileated Woodpecker? Not so, I was assured. Not here. So, I sat in wait to identify it. It is our most common woodpecker, but what an uncommon woodpecker: it eats ants on the ground with its long tongue that can be coiled into its skull like a retracting garden hose. In class, we once pulled the tongue out on a freshly dead flicker. The uncoiling could be felt on the skull.

But its anatomy isn't the most intriguing aspect of a flicker. Its dedication to the dating, mating, and chick raising process is admirable. The males and females take their time courting with their calls and drumming noisily on anything that resonates. Together they carefully excavate a hole in a decaying tree. Then, there is the nesting, the laying, the hatching, the feeding, and the fledging. The entire process will take up the entire summer. But what a trip it is!

I now have my own flicker hole in an old crab apple tree in my backyard. I watched as the hole was excavated, the female was wooed, the eggs were laid, the adults flew back and forth feeding their young, and then they were all gone. Flickers stay around quietly all winter—a behavior with which I identify. Then, spring comes and they begin calling.



Northern Flicker by Joann Thomas.

Flickers are timid birds. They do not fight for their homes. One year during the wooing process, a cat came, stretched up on tip-toes, and reached up to the edge of the hole. The flicker flew out; there were no young flickers that year. The cat could not reach into the hole, but just the presence of a predator was enough to cause desertion of a good nest.

If you do not have an appropriate tree, a flicker box works beautifully, though keeping the starling and grackles from using the box is a chore. We had to evict squatters several times before the flickers stood their ground. They give up easily and each time the box has to be refilled with clean wood chips, so while they are our most common woodpecker, nesting presents its challenges.

Our resident flickers are the red-shafted subspecies. The shafts of their wing feathers are red and in flight they flash beautiful red wings just as the yellow-shafted subspecies flashes yellow. While both are present in Fort Collins, the yellow-shafted tends to be the eastern variety while the red-shafted tends to be the western variety. I wait each year for a pair to begin a home in my tree. Watching what you have near at hand is one of the joys of birding.

### Upcoming Field Trips

*All field trips are free (unless otherwise noted) and open to the public. All experience levels are welcome. Bring snacks or lunch, water, binoculars, and spotting scopes. Visit [www.fortnet.org/Audubon](http://www.fortnet.org/Audubon) for more information.*

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



## Christmas Bird Count

The 113th annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) began Dec. 14 and continues through Jan. 5. There is a specific methodology to the CBC, but everyone can participate. Counts take place within 15 mile diameter "count circles," which focus on specific geographical areas. Each count is organized by a count compiler.

New this year is that there is no longer a \$5 participation fee. The CBC summary, "American Birds," previously funded by participation fees, will no longer be printed and mailed; it will be available online.



Cedar Waxwing, 2012 Fort Collins CBC, by Bill Miller.

FCAS sponsors two CBCs each year. The Fort Collins CBC was Dec. 15 and was compiled by Tom Hall. The Loveland CBC occurs on Tuesday, Jan. 1, and is coordinated by Nick Komar. To participate, contact Nick at [quetzal65@comcast.net](mailto:quetzal65@comcast.net) or 970-449-3645.

### 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



Long-eared Owl by Nick Komar.

### Welcome New National Members

FCAS welcomes new National Audubon Society members by sending complimentary 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 complimentary issue, please support your local chapter and subscribe to the newsletter. See the details on the last page of the newsletter or on our website at [www.fortnet.org/Audubon](http://www.fortnet.org/Audubon).

**HAPPY NEW YEAR**




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[www.fortnet.org/audubon](http://www.fortnet.org/audubon)

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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 \_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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:  
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)