

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.

September 2013

Volume 44, Issue 6

“Owls, Owls, Owls” and “Birds of the Tropical Honduras Wilderness”

Presented by

**Rob Palmer, Naturalist and Wildlife Photographer
and Fi Rust, Nature Photographer**

Thursday, Sept. 12

Fort Collins Senior Center, 1900 Raintree Dr.

Social Time: 7:00 pm; Program 7:30 p.m.

Over the last 10 years, Rob Palmer, naturalist and wildlife photographer, has photographed many owls, mainly burrowing owls. Rob's work has appeared in various magazines and journals including, *Audubon*, *Nature's Best*, *Wild Bird*, and *Birder's World*. Rob has been involved with animals since he was young, and he has a particular passion for birds of prey. In the past, he spent time researching Screech Owls nesting along the Boulder Creek trail, and he has traveled the world photographing falcons. He is co-photographer for the book,



Burrowing Owl by Rob Palmer.

Raptors of the West, and author of a photo book, *Prairie Owl*.

In addition to Rob's presentation, Fi Rust, nature photographer, will give a short presentation on the birds of the tropical wilderness of northern Honduras. Fi took his photographs during a trip to Pico Bonito National Park, his prize for winning the professional division in the 2012 Audubon magazine's photography contest.

Don't miss this program of spectacular photography and narration. Join us on Sept. 12 at 7:30 p.m. at the Fort Collins Senior Center. The program is free and open to the public.

Welcome New National Members

FCAS welcomes new National Audubon Society members by sending one copy of our newsletter. Join us on the second Thursday of the month to find out more about FCAS. National dues do not cover the cost of the newsletter, so to receive the *Ptarmigan* after the complimentary issue, please subscribe. Details are on Page 6 or on our website at www.fortnet.org/Audubon.

President's Corner

by Joann Thomas

Greetings FCAS members: As I write, my son and I are in Quito, Ecuador, waiting to leave for the Galapagos Islands and a week of exploring Darwin territory. It's hard to believe how fast the summer has flown. We in FCAS are looking at an exciting year of exploring the possibilities in nature through Quetzal Tours. Nick Komar of Quetzal Tours, in conjunction with Neblina Tours here in Ecuador, arranged the fantastic trip my son and I are experiencing.

We spent a week in the cloud forest viewing motmots, potoos, antpittas, cock-of-the-rocks, and the oddest bird, a thistletail. And my personal favorite, hummingbirds—they have more personality than birds three times their size!

But, the most impressive aspect of the trip has been meeting Ecuadorians who have developed a true conservation ethic and are working deep in the forests creating islands of safety to protect the birds. I truly have been awed by their determination to hold what they have dear and, at the same time, to share it with the world.

They face a daunting task as we have witnessed deforestation at a staggering pace.

We are very fortunate to have the ability to support the activism of the Audubon Society in the United States. But, importantly, I now know that we are a part of a larger group of people who are working to ensure protection of habitat in their country. Feeling a part of that larger whole is a very good feeling. See you at the September program meeting!



Great Potoo by Nick Komar.

FCAS CONTACTS

Audubon@fortnet.org

President & Education Chair

Joann Thomas

970-482-7125

jthomas91@aol.com

Conservation Chair

Bill Miller

970-493-7693

5mcorp@comcast.net

Membership Chair

Liz Pruessner

970-484-4371

fortcollinsaudubonmembership@gmail.com

Field Trip Coordinator

John Shenot

970-682-2551

johnshenot@gmail.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

FCAS Pocket Guide to Local Birds

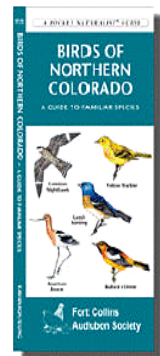
Is available at the following retailers who support our organization with the sales:

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



"We of an older generation can get along with what we have, though with growing hardship; but in your full manhood and womanhood you will want what nature once so bountifully supplied and man so thoughtlessly destroyed; and because of that want you will reproach us, not for what we have used, but for what we have wasted. So any nation which in its youth lives only for the day, reaps without sowing, and consumes without husbanding, must expect the penalty of the prodigal whose labor could with difficulty find him the bare means of life."

--Theodore Roosevelt (1858 - 1919) "Arbor Day—A Message to the School Children of the United States," April 15, 1907

My Summer Vacation

This has been the "summer of my discontent." While doing some spring house cleaning, my wife conked her head on a heavy table, then a few

These programs have conserved some of our nation's rarest and most cherished fish and wildlife; restored vital wetlands; and protected priority forests, grasslands, coasts, and other impor-



Photos by American Bird Conservancy.

days later developed some suspicious rashes, then experienced a massive headache, and, finally, was diagnosed with shingles.

The net result was, in addition to almost a month of her suffering, my wife ended up with almost total paralysis of her arm. She is now in physical therapy with many months of recovery still ahead. Needless to say, there are a lot of things that I haven't accomplished this summer, such as yard work. Moral of the story: give strong consideration to getting a shingles shot.

Meanwhile the world, our country, and planet earth all seem to be going to "you know where" as the human race becomes more dysfunctional.

Adding insult to injury, I received an Action Alert on Aug. 12 from the American Bird Conservancy stating that the House Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee eliminated funding for next fiscal year from the popular and highly successful State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program, North American Wetland Conservation Fund, Neotropical Migratory Bird Fund, Forest Legacy Program, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

tant habitats. Complete elimination of funding for these popular programs is unprecedented.

The action alert requested that organizations help convince members of the U.S. House and Senate just how important these programs are to fish and wildlife and request that funding be restored for the next fiscal year beginning Oct. 1. To that end, I signed our chapter on to the sign-on letter supporting these vital programs. Zeroing out these programs would have serious consequences for fish and wildlife conservation.

Open House: Poudre River Downtown Project

The city of Fort Collins is embarking on a year-long master plan process to design improvements to the river corridor from Shields Street to Mulberry. Potential improvements include in-river and bank-side recreation, habitat connectivity restoration and rehabilitation, bank protection, storm water/floodplain management, water quality, public safety and access, and transportation in and adjacent to the Poudre

Open House continued on Page 5



Deep in the Ecuadorian jungle lives a farmer who, as all farmers, struggles to work the land and support his family. But this farmer has a form of feathered gold on his land: a lek where cock-of-the-rock birds met to display for the females of their species. I had the privilege to go to this lek during my birding trip to Ecuador.

Slipping and sliding down a steep, narrow path into the darkest part of the forest at 5:30 a.m. was daunting. The only thing that made it palatable was the fact that I was accompanied by about eight eager birders—four Ecuadorian bird guides and our four drivers. We stood in the dark behind a wooden log fence waiting for something to happen as the sky slowly lightened. Suddenly the air was filled with the raspiest, noisiest, shrieking that I have ever heard.

My eyes strained to find the source. It was coming from one spot, but suddenly the shrieker was joined by a chorus of noise that boggled the mind. Slowly as the sky lightened more, forms were visible moving in the dense leaf canopy of the trees in front of us. Just as slowly my binoculars began to focus on the shapes as they became the strangest looking bird I've ever seen.

The feathers are beautifully colored with a red head and chest, black wings, and a white back. But the shape is something that can only be described as other-worldly. The head has a yellow beak, which is hidden by its feathers. And, in the darkness, it was difficult to see the eyes at first. The bird's head resembled a sort-of sculptured

comma.

The males create a mighty racket while, as far as I could see, they posture using their backsides and their wings. Females only visit the lek a few times a year and I'm told that when they do, the males create an ear-splitting ruckus.

But, this was not all the farmer had to offer. He has developed a relationship with antipittas, shy

birds of the forest. He calls them out by name as he tosses worms to entice them to show up for us. Sometimes they come and sometimes they don't. But, the best was "Shakira." This little bird stood on a rock, moving her body back and forth as if in time to a music beat that only she hears!

The farmer showed us more birds, some of which come to eat the bananas he holds in his hands; the farmer has a passionate

one-on-one relationship with each of his feathered friends.

As we slowly climbed out of the forest, we were greeted with delicious smells of a traditional Ecuadorian breakfast prepared by the farmer's wife and his family. We sat under a open-air shelter on the top of a mountain enjoying delicious food and marveling at the passion and commitment this simple man has for the protection of his birds. He was diligent in not keeping a bird visible for too long and for forbidding flash on cameras.

This was just one experience during a week of birding treat after treat. The farmer is part of a chorus of Ecuadorians who are working to protect habitat from deforestation and degradation. We should do no less!



Cock-of-the-rock by Joann Thomas.

FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Robert Buderman
Charles & Shelly Calisher
Jeremy & Bonnie Chignell
Kathleen M. Hardy

Sue Kenney
Jared Overman
Jana K. Palermo
Jim Welch

Thank you for your membership!
Your support makes our programs
and conservation efforts possible!



Highlights of Summer FCAS Field Trips ————— by John Shenot

FCAS sponsored numerous field trips since our last program meeting in May. The trip to Falcon Ridge (private property) in May featured close-up looks at Clay-colored Sparrows, while during an outing at Dixon Reservoir we encountered a male Black-chinned Hummingbird.

In June, the “Rocky Mountain Chorus” field trip focused on bird songs, but an unexpected Lewis’s Woodpecker also made an appearance. That same month, more than 20 people attended our joint

“butterflies and birds” field trip with Boulder Audubon to Rocky Mountain Nat. Park!

The highlight of our June trip to Pawnee National Grasslands may have been a Prairie Rattlesnake, although many birds including Burrowing Owls and a singing Cassin’s Sparrow also were seen. And finally, the monthly surveys at Bobcat Ridge were well attended and more than 50 resident species were observed throughout the summer.



It definitely was a Prairie Rattler!
Photo by Bill Miller.

Upcoming Field Trips

All field trips are free (unless otherwise noted) and open to the public. Visit www.fortnet.org/Audubon for more information and updates.

Sept. 8, 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 6:30 a.m. in the parking lot. FCAS performs a monthly bird census for the city of Fort Collins. All levels are welcome.

Sept. 13, Friday, “All A-Bird” to Watson Lake State Wildlife Area. Leader: John Shenot, johnshenot@gmail.com, 970-682-2551. Meet at 5:30 p.m. at the parking area near the Southeast corner of the lake.

Oct. 12, Saturday, Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey. Meet at 7 a.m. See description and contact details above (Sept. 8) for this recurring, monthly survey.

Looking for Field Trip Volunteers (Again)

I am once again looking for volunteers who are willing to lead an FCAS field trip this fall or winter—at a time and location of your choosing. I’ll help you do the rest. Expert birding skills are not required of trip leaders! We just need people who want to spend time in the field with fellow birders and have fun. Please contact me at johnshenot@gmail.com or 970-682-2551 if you are interested in volunteering.

Grand Opening of Rivers Edge Natural Area

FCAS will be represented at the grand opening of the Rivers Edge Natural Area in Loveland on Sat., Sept. 28, from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The property, on the southeast corner of S. Taft and W. 1st St., is a great, close-in natural area, and includes a stretch of the Big Thompson River as its northeast boundary. Denise Bretting will lead a morning bird walk and Ron Harden, an afternoon one. Louise Parker is organizing a table to provide information about FCAS to visitors. If you can help staff our table, please contact Louise at: clp484@gmail.com or 970-484-1441.



Open House continued from Page 3

River from Shields to Lincoln streets. There will be extensive public outreach and engagement opportunities.

An open house will be held on Thursday, Sept. 5, 6 to 8 p.m. at the Lincoln Center's Columbine Room, 417 W. Magnolia St. This is your chance to learn about opportunities and constraints along the river corridor from Shields to Mulberry streets, and to provide input for improving recreation, habitat, and storm water mitigation. A special presentation about kayaking opportunities and constraints will be held from 5 to 6 p.m. in Founders Room. These events are free.





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:

- ☐ **New or Renewing FCAS Chapter Member** \$20
Receive the FCAS *Ptarmigan* by email

- ☐ **New or Renewing FCAS Chapter Member** \$30
Receive the FCAS *Ptarmigan* by mail

- ☐ **Lifetime FCAS Chapter Member** \$750
Receive the FCAS *Ptarmigan* by email ____
or receive the FCAS *Ptarmigan* by mail ____

- ☐ **Additional Support for the FCAS Mission** \$ ____

- ☐ **New NAS Member** \$20
Receive the NAS *Audubon* by mail

- ☐ **Renewing NAS Member** \$35
Receive the NAS *Audubon* by mail

Total Amount Enclosed: \$ ____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____

Phone #: _____

Email: _____

May we send you FCAS email alerts if updates occur for field trips, programs etc.?

Yes or No

May we contact you if volunteer opportunities occur from helping at events to contacting legislators on important environmental issues?

Yes or No

Please make your tax-exempt check payable to FCAS and mail with this form to FCAS, P.O. Box 271968, Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968. Your cancelled check is your receipt. All renewals are due in January. New memberships begun after August 31st extend through the following year. Applications can be completed at www.fortnet.org/Audubon