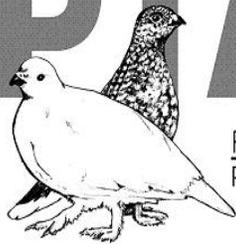


PTARMIGAN



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 2014

Volume 45, Issue 2

David Leatherman: Entomologist, Birder, and Naturalist

Presents

"Psyllids, Shad, and Pseeds, Oh My—Some Food Habits Of Colorado Birds"

Thursday, Feb. 13

Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Dr.

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

Everything a bird does, with few exceptions, is related to two things: eating and reproducing. This program will focus on bird food issues. What do wild birds eat? How do they obtain it? Where do they find it? Which insect, the size of a tiny speck, makes hackberry a tree all bird watchers should know?

Dave Leatherman, born and raised in Columbus, Ohio, has been interested in birds since childhood and got serious about identifying birds in the field around the age of 10. Dave worked as the entomologist for the Colorado State Forest Service from 1974-2005 and is the former editor of the Colorado Field Ornithologists Journal. He has

seen over 440 species of birds in Colorado and has been part of three First State Records: Slaty-

backed Gull, Tropical Parula, and Brown-crested Flycatcher. Dave enjoys nature study, especially photography, collecting insects for the Gillette Museum at CSU, and figuring out what birds eat. Dave is currently working on a book about "life among the headstones" (detailing natural history observations at Fort Collins' Grandview



Chipping Sparrow and nestling by David Leatherman.

Cemetery).

You won't want to miss this photo and fact-filled, entertaining presentation at the Fort Collins Senior Center on Feb. 13. This program is free and the public is welcome!

FCAS welcomes new National Audubon Society members with one complimentary copy of our newsletter. Join us on the second Thursday of each month to find out more about FCAS. National dues do not cover the cost of producing the newsletter, so to keep receiving the *Ptarmigan*, 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.

President's Corner

by Joann Thomas

Holidays are over and the long journey into spring begins. Days slowly get windier and longer: one day is spring-like; the next day is deep frigid winter. As we jump from winter to spring and back to winter, activities multiply, making the February weather more bearable! On Saturday, Feb. 22, FCAS is involved in three major events.

The first is an educational event that FCAS attends as an exhibitor—the High Plains Landscape Workshop (HPLW). This year's event is being held at the Lincoln Center. Annually, it is a sold-out event featuring nationally known speakers. The sessions are about an hour each, after which 400 avid gardeners descend on the exhibits. We sell our Birds of Northern Colorado guide and the Wildscape garden book. It is a very profitable event for us, but mostly I enjoy meeting the attendees and getting caught up with the exhibitors I see every year!

Also scheduled that day is the Legislative Forum, a daylong event held in Denver with our

lobbyist giving an analysis of the bills that will most greatly affect the environment and animal habitats.

We have one of the most successful lobbyists on the hill. In the morning, Jen Boulton gives her report and in the afternoon, we hear from a panel of legislators, government officials, and lawyers who are involved in environmental issues. A most informative day!



Later that evening, the Rocky Mountain Raptor Program hosts its annual fund raiser auction and dinner. Each year through the generosity of John Waddell, our treasurer, FCAS hosts a table for 10 people. We have four tickets left to sell. Contact John Waddell at 970-226-5917 to purchase a ticket and join us at the FCAS table.

I usually attend each event, but with all three being on the same day this year, I have to choose. John Waddell and Louise Parker will represent FCAS at the HPLW, while I attend the Legislative Forum. We will all attend the RMRP dinner. A full day for FCAS in the community!

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



Highlights of Recent Field Trips

by John Shenot

Twelve people braved high winds on the Jan. 12 survey at Bobcat Ridge, but were rewarded with sightings of a huge number of Clark's Nutcrackers (82), as well as some Red Crossbills, Ameri-



Leucistic Branta Goose at Lake Loveland
by John Shenot.

can Tree Sparrows, a Wilson's Snipe, and two Golden Eagles. (Your FCAS field trip coordinator chickened out, stayed home, and saw nothing.)

The preliminary results from this year's Fort Collins and Loveland Christmas Bird Counts are in, and it was another great year. The Fort Collins area count was fairly average in terms of

the number of species seen (almost 90), but there were record high counts of Rough-legged Hawks and several other species. The Loveland area count attracted more participants than ever before, and they observed a record number of species for this count circle: 102 (plus three more during count week)! There were unusually high numbers of owls (35 birds in six species), and several species, such as Dusky Grouse, were seen for the first time in 14 years of Loveland area Christmas Bird Counts.



Adult Iceland Gull taken during the Loveland CBC by Nick Komar.

Upcoming Field Trips

All field trips are free of charge (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 for more information and updates. RSVP is recommended.

Feb. 9, 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 are welcome.

Feb. 15, Saturday, Prospect Ponds and CSU Environmental Learning Center. Leader: John Shenot, johnshenot@gmail.com, 970-682-2551. Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot just south of the first pond on Sharp Point Drive. We will scope ducks and geese on the ponds along Sharp Point Drive and then continue on to the CSU ELC.

March 9, Sunday, Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey. Meet at 7:30 a.m. See description and contact details above for this recurring, monthly survey.

April 5-14, Costa Rica Birding Adventure. This is a professionally guided trip, organized by Quetzal Tours at very competitive rates. Quetzal Tours will make a donation to FCAS for each person who signs up. The tour is limited to eight persons. Request a detailed itinerary and register for the tour with Quetzal Tours (contact Nick Komar at info@quetzal-tours.com or call 970-449-3645).



Another Great Day in the Field with the Eagles

Middle of winter again—warm days, cold days, sunny days, snowy days. Why then with these options are the days that I sign up for the Fossil Creek eagle watch each year so cold and snowy? Yes, it happened again yesterday. Determined not to freeze as I did last year, I dressed in two pairs of socks and pants, two shirts, one sweater, a warm overcoat, two pairs of gloves, a knitted cap and balaclava face mask. It was difficult to move, but, hey, I was warm.



I hosted the Loveland Mountain Club, all hearty hikers. We only hiked a short way down to the platform on the reservoir. After spotting eagles and/or perceived eagles, we set up the scope for better viewing: seventeen in all with only two adults and the remainder immature. Not bad for the day!

With the large number of immatures, we were able to experiment with trying to decide in which year of development each bird was. The second year of the three years of immature plumage was the whitest on the chest. We discovered this by spotting a bird that appeared to be an anomaly at first. After consulting with Sibley’s eGuide on my cell phone, we discovered that the bird we at first thought was not an eagle was indeed a second-year bird. It appeared at first in the distance to have a snow white chest with a dark bib similar to a Swainson’s Hawk, a highly improbable

find. After consulting with the guide, we realized that the illusion of a clear white chest was caused by the distance from which we viewed it.

Our next discovery was a juvenile bird, all dark, feeding on a fish while three friends stood off to the side coveting the meal. All four birds were very dark, indicating first year birds. The friends got bored waiting for their friend to share and flew away. Then, much to everyone’s delight, a mature full plumage adult flew past the

platform. It proceeded to wrest away the fish from the juvenile and begin eating. After moving a distance away, the juvenile gathered enough courage to return to its fish. We assumed the fish was not too good or too little was left of it because the adult flew away, leaving the juvenile happily munching again on its fish.

Amused by the words we’d used in referring to the birds behavior, we proceeded to have a great discussion on anthropomorphizing animals. That’s how the Bald Eagle became our nation’s symbol instead of the turkey, which Benjamin Franklin so greatly wanted. He described the eagle as a lazy bird because it scavenged, which, given what we witnessed, seemed true. But, the moment when that mature adult flew past us, everyone oohed and aahed as visions of nobility, fierceness, and bravery danced in our heads!



Like us on Facebook

As noted in last month’s *Ptarmigan*, FCAS has a Facebook page where we post announcements about upcoming field trips, last minute changes to scheduled trips, and highlights of most of our outings. Just go to <https://www.facebook.com/FortCollinsAudubonSociety>. Then “Like” our page! Our announcements should then appear on your wall. Note: We will continue to announce all field trips in the *Ptarmigan* and on our website.

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.



Andes of Ecuador Excursion, August 2-10, 2014

This fall, join fellow Auduboners in experiencing the mystique of Ecuador's Andean peaks and cloud forests. Quetzal Tours is offering an eight-day, relaxed-pace birding adventure to Ecuador, led by the bilingual Ecuadorian birding guide, Xavier Muñoz.



Chestnut-breasted Coronet
by Nick Komar .

Not only will this be a unique experience at a low price (just \$2200 per person), but the event also serves as a fundraiser for FCAS, as a portion of the proceeds will be donated to our local chapter.

Locations visited include Mindo, Nanegalito, Papalacta Pass, and Guacamayos Pass.

Birding highlights will be dozens of species of brightly colored tanagers and hummingbirds, many of which can be seen at close range for breathtaking photography. And, of course, quetzals.

Ecuador has the highest biodiversity in the world, hosting more bird species than any other country! The tour is limited to six customers in

order to guarantee a quality, personalized experience. Add-on guided birding excursions to the Amazonian rainforests or the unique Galapagos Islands also can be arranged for those who can stay longer.

For more information or to reserve your spot, contact Nick Komar at info@quetzal-tours.com or 970-449-3645.



Dark-backed Wood-Quail by Nick Komar .



FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Dodi & Bob Adel
Robert C. Babbs
Bruce Baker
Judith Ann Balice
Denise Bretting
Anne & Tom Butler
Anne Butner
Margo Butner
Curt Cramer
Beth Dillon
Willard Flowers
Irene Fortune

Alan Godwin
Andy Goris
Thomas Hall
William J. Henderson
Carole Hossan
Anne Hunsinger
Cynthia Jacobson
Gretchen Johnson
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Asenath LaRue &
Art Montana
Dorothy Leising

Dave McKean
William H. Miller
Hildegard S. Morgan
Cheri Orwig
Elizabeth Pruessner
Rich Roberts
Harry Rose
John Shenot
Joan Skurat
Hank Thode
Katrina Vowels
John W. 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.



Spring Fling Seminar Day with Dr. Charles Clarkson—March 29

Have you ever wondered why most species of birds migrate while others do not, or how something as simple as a feather can unlock a world of information for avian researchers? Perhaps you desire more information about the connection between our changing environment and birds, and want to know how you can make a difference in alleviating the stresses faced by birds on a daily basis.

The answers to these questions and more will be presented when the FCAS presents its Spring Fling, “The World of Birds,” on March 29, at the Drake Center on Drake



Dr. Clarkson leading a neo-tropical bird walk.

Road in Fort Collins from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Dr. Charles Clarkson, professor of ornithology, ecology, and conservation at Roger Williams University, will be the featured speaker. Dr. Clarkson will discuss how the biology of birds has baffled scientists for years, the science behind feathers and flight, survival: a year in the life of a bird, how birds cope with a changing planet, and what can I do?: the power of one. For information and registration, please contact Hildy Morgan at hildy.morgan@gmail.com or 970.223.3493.

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FCAS Annual Membership Renewal

It is early in the new year and that means it is time to renew your annual membership!

Please use the form on the back page of the *Ptarmigan* newsletter to renew by mail or renew at a program meeting. You also can renew online at our website: www.fortnet.org/audubon.

Dues are \$20 to receive the *Ptarmigan* electronically or \$30 for a printed copy through the mail.

Your local chapter dues make possible our programs, meetings, education, and advocacy for birds and wildlife habitat.

Remember, your membership and contributions are tax deductible.

Keep the *Ptarmigan* coming by renewing today. We appreciate your support and thank you to all who have already renewed!



2013-2014 Winter Bird Sightings around the Area



At left: Eastern Screech-Owl taken during the Loveland CBC by Cole Wild.

Below: Immature Thayer's Gull taken during the Loveland CBC by Nick Komar.

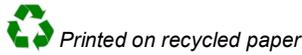
Below: American Tree Sparrow taken during the November Bobcat Ridge monthly survey by Andy Goris.



At right: Western Scrub-Jay taken during the Nov. Bobcat Ridge survey by Andy Goris.



Fort Collins Audubon Society
 PO Box 271968
 Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968



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 Alex Cringan**
Fund natural history education grants \$ _____

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

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

Total Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

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