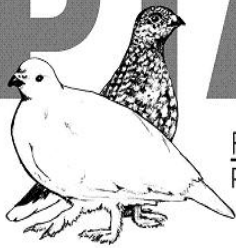


PTARMIGAN



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.

December 2014

Volume 45, Issue 9

FCAS December Potluck and Member Slide Show Program

Thursday, December 11

Beginning at 6:30 p.m.

Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Drive

Presented by:

YOU, the Members (and Guests Invited too)

Our December program will be presented by our members and guests who wish to share wildlife photos from their own photography collections in a slide show (please limit your slide presentation to 10 minutes). The Senior Center will provide the screen, digital projector, and sound system. You bring the photos!

For the potluck, FCAS will



POTLUCK DINNER

provide the entree, coffee, tea, and water. Please bring a dish to share, your own place setting, and serving, and eating utensils.

This is your opportunity and time to receive the applause! Join us for this very special program meeting on Thursday, Dec. 11, 6:30 p.m., at the Fort Collins Senior Center.

Photos From Last Year's Potluck by Bill Miller



New Year's Eve flock of American Robins



Cedar Waxwing

President's Corner

Two annual FCAS traditions: the December Potluck meeting and the publishing of a new slate of officers. The first is a pleasure; the second took some deep and hard soul searching.

The first tradition is always a good time. On Thursday, Dec. 11, you are invited to a festive evening of food and film. Please bring a place setting with which to eat dinner, a side dish to share, and your pictures to show. The evening starts at 6:30 p.m. at the Senior Center. The entrées of either meat or vegetarian, coffee, tea, and hot chocolate will be provided.

The second tradition required a thoughtful process of reflection and commitment. Here is the proposed slate of officers: President, John Shenot; Vice-President, Liz Pruessner; Treasurer, John Waddell; and Secretary, Scott Coble.

Several of us will continue in our avocations with FCAS: Liz Pruessner as Membership Chair, Joann Thomas as Education Chair, and

The Board Members

by Joann Thomas

John Shenot as Field Trip Chair. As it has been in the past, several will hold two positions. Our promise

to ourselves is that we will share many of the directorial duties. You may see us changing hats as we help each other seek to retain the present structure of FCAS. As we work out the next year, there may be some changes made to the present by-laws, as we test the waters of new organization.

We are still open for nominations from the floor. Think of it: at one time each of us was sitting out there with you wondering if we should volunteer or not. Obviously, we did, and with no regrets. I appreciate deeply the respect with which Audubon is held. As I leave the lead position behind, I am excited to return to shaping and presenting the FCAS education function. We invite you to join us. We took the leap and have not looked back!

Happy Holidays



Thanks to New and Renewing Members

Julie Holding
Rich Roberts

Your support makes our programs and conservation efforts possible!

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



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Conserving the Holidays

The holidays are a time for giving, offering opportunities to give back to the Earth, and creating new eco-friendly traditions.



Living tree from web.extension.illinois.edu

During this season of celebration, we need to be mindful about the impacts the holidays can have on the environment. With a little effort, the holidays can be both enjoyable and “green.” Here are

branches green delight us,” but every year millions of fir, pine, and spruce trees are cut down to adorn our homes for a brief period. This year, opt for a living holiday by purchasing a live tree with the roots intact. Live trees are a renewable resource and they’re usually locally grown and sold. There are several options to consider when purchasing a live tree. Live potted trees can be re-used for several years, especially if you purchase a small tree in a large pot. Once the tree grows too large for its pot, you can plant it outdoors or re-pot for several years additional use. If you choose a larger tree initially, once the holidays are over you can plant the tree outdoors and watch it grow alongside your family for years to come, symbolizing the value of nature while offsetting tree cutting from a forest. And

some easy ways to celebrate the season while promoting conservation and sustainability.

As members of Audubon, the Annual Christmas Bird Count promotes “citizen science in action.” Grab your binoculars, field guide, and notepad or journal and walk a course through your neighborhood or nearby park. Try to identify and count every bird you see. Make it an annual holiday tradition and involve everyone in the family, including even the youngest members who will delight in being part of this historic event. Creating such a tradition will not only make the holidays more special, it will instill a sense of value for our feathered friends in the younger members of your family as well as make an enormous contribution to conservation.

Audubon and other organizations use the data collected in the bird count to assess the health of bird populations all across the Americas, which in turn guides conservation action. Adding the Annual Christmas Bird Count to your list of holiday traditions is an important way to give back to nature while making a difference for science and bird conservation.

“O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum, your



Nuthatch on suet ball from inhabitat.com

don’t throw away any tree! Live cut trees make great compost and most communities offer composting and mulching services. Check for tree drop-off locations.

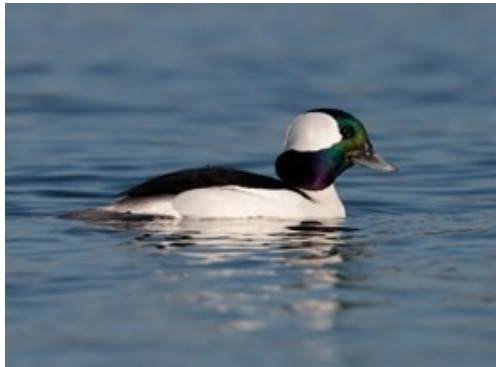
Consider decorating a tree in your yard for the birds with suet and seed balls, pine cones with peanut butter, and seed trays. Involve the family by making edible ornaments for the birds. It’s a great way to share the holiday spirit with our feathered friends, and you’ll be providing an important food source for the birds during the winter.

There are many ways to be “green” this holiday season—be resourceful—share the spirit. Happy Holidays to each and all!



Bufflehead Bonanza

You never quite forget the first bird that you identify by yourself. No asking your mentor, "What is that?" No checking the book first. Just, "Oh! that's a..." My first was a male Bufflehead duck. I saw it on a pond on the Outer Banks of



Male Bufflehead from <http://www.allaboutbirds.org>

North Carolina while visiting relatives for the holidays. Without thinking about it, I just knew it was a Buffle-

head. It continually dove and rose while feeding all alone. No others, male or female, joined my moment of glory: my first personal identification. Recently while visiting a pond along the Poudre River Trail west of North Taft Hill, I got to relive that moment. This time, however, my birding companion and I counted 20-plus male and female Buffleheads along with several Hooded Mergansers.

So much going on here! Mentally documenting the black and white patterns on both species and watching the bird behavior helps in future identification. You begin to get into it—sort of like viewing black and white photos. You begin to see the shades of gray and the distinct lines of markings.

The Bufflehead is smaller than the Hooded Merganser. A Bufflehead is 13 to 15 inches while the merganser is 16 to 19 inches. It's the patterns of black and white that cement the identifi-

cation. The male Bufflehead has significantly more white. While the heads of both birds give you a flash of white, the shape of the Bufflehead is clearly different, and the placement and amount of white visible is larger. The body of the Bufflehead is white, and that white at the waterline separates it from the Hooded Merganser, which is a darker reddish brown.

That separates the males. The female Bufflehead has her own ID problems with a white cheek spot that resembles the female Ruddy Duck. It is, however, much smaller than the Ruddy Duck's and a clear look at the head shape also can help. The shape of the Bufflehead's head is the source of its name, meaning "big-headed."

While it doesn't sound so difficult, making these ID's is challenging because the ducks are busy feeders and you just get the scope focused on one and it dives. If you can discern the diving pattern, you are good! They dive here and come up there, and just when you find it again, there they go disappearing below the surface.

It was great fun reliving my first Bufflehead and knowing that I now can separate them from the Hooded Mergansers.



Male Hooded Merganser from <http://www.allaboutbirds.org>

FCAS Annual Membership Renewal
The 2015 annual membership renewal drive begins in January. You can take care of it right now by renewing online or via US mail. Please use the form on the back page of the *Ptarmigan* newsletter to renew by mail or 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. Remember, your membership and contributions are tax deductible.



Sign Up for Christmas Bird Counts

The 115th annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will take place from December 14 to January 5, 2015. The CBC is the longest running citizen science survey in the world, and it provides critical data on bird population trends. Tens of thousands of participants know that it is also a great way to make new friends and have fun. Volunteers are assigned in teams to cover designated areas within a 15-mile diameter circle, counting every bird they see or hear all day. This year, the Fort Collins CBC is scheduled for Saturday, December 20 and will be coordinated by Tom Hall (redbear44@msn.com). The Rawhide CBC is set for Friday, December 26 and organized by Doug Kibbe (dpkibbe@msn.com). And

finally, the Loveland count will be on Thursday,

January 1 and coordinated by Denise Bretting (dbretting@swloveland.com). Contact Tom, Doug, or Denise to participate in these fun events. Advanced birding skills are not required; beginners can be paired with more experienced birders. Volunteers who live within a count circle that just wish to record what comes to their backyard feeders also are welcome to participate; they should contact the CBC coordinator for details.



Audubon

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT



Cassin's Finch 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.

December 14, 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.



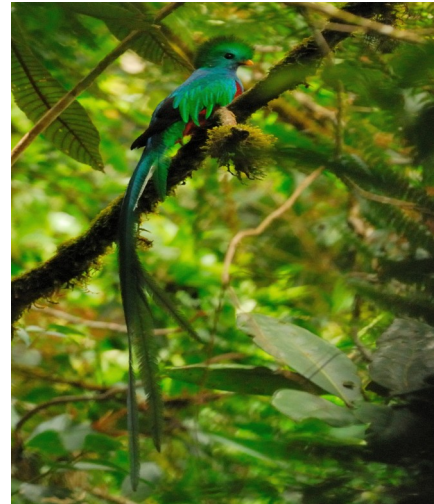
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Guatemala Cloud Forest Excursion: March 14-22, 2015

Join fellow Auduboners in experiencing the pristine cloud forest at Chelem-ha and Mayan ruins at

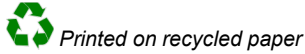
Quirigua in the Atlantic lowlands of Guatemala. Quetzal Tours is offering an eight-day, relaxed-pace birding and nature photography adventure, led by Guatemala's premier bilingual birding guide, Knut Eisermann, co-author of the

Aves de Guatemala, an Annotated Checklist. Not only will this be a unique experience at a low price (just \$2,100 per person), but the event also serves as a fundraiser for FCAS. Expect to see Resplendent Quetzals, Toucans, Motmots, Trogons, Woodcreepers, Sabrewings, and hundreds of other species in the land of the Mayan indigenous peoples. The tour is limited to four people. For more information, contact Nick Komar at info@quetzal-tours.com, or 970-449-3645.



Resplendent Quetzal
by Knut Eisermann.

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**
 Receive the NAS *Audubon* by mail \$20

- 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 you 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