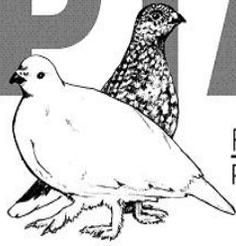


PTARMIGAN



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 2015

Volume 46, Issue 2

"The Allure, Perils, and Promise of the Brazilian Atlantic Rainforest"

Presented by: Eric DeFonso

Naturalist, Birder, and Bird-Sound Recordist

Thursday, Feb. 12

Fort Collins Senior Center-Multi-Use Room

1200 Raintree Drive, Fort Collins

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

Conservation organizations focus much attention and concern on the Amazon rainforest of South America, and rightly so. But too few people are aware of another rainforest in South America that holds even higher rates of bird endemism, but which is terribly threatened by historic and rampant habitat loss: the Atlantic Rainforest, the Mata Atlântica, ranging largely in Brazil along the Atlantic seaboard and extending barely into northern Paraguay and Argentina. Starting in August 2014, northern Colorado birder regular Eric DeFonso spent two and a half months volunteering at the large and scenic private nature reserve, Reserva Ecológica de Guapiaçu or REGUA, located a couple hours north of Rio de Janeiro, and consisting of both untouched primary forest and regenerating secondary forest recovered from agricultural use. He worked as a



Atlanta Forest of REGUA by Eric DeFonso.

bird guide for visitors to the lodge. With the help of REGUA managers Nicholas and Raquel Locke, he also delved into the conservation challenges and successes in the now 19,000 acres of reserve.

Eric DeFonso began birdwatching 20 years ago as a casual hobby, but his interest has now turned into a consuming passion. Eric is a certified Master Naturalist for the City of Fort Collins, served on the Board of Directors for FCAS, and worked as a volunteer educational bird handler at the Rocky Mountain Raptor Center. In addition to photography, he also has become an experienced bird-sound recordist, logging recordings of over 750 species.

Join us on Feb. 12 at the Fort Collins Senior Center to see photos and hear sounds from the diverse tropical avifauna of southeastern Brazil. This program is free and open to the public.

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President's Corner

by John Shenot

I want to thank the FCAS membership and my fellow Board members for entrusting me with the honor and privilege of serving as your new chapter president. I also will continue serving as the chapter's field trip coordinator. It will be a lot of work, but I'm excited to get started. We have a thriving chapter, and I will do my best to continue and build upon our success.

I wanted to take most of my first President's Corner column to introduce myself to those of you I've not yet met. I grew up in Maryland, where all of my immediate family still live. I studied engineering and environmental policy, and I currently work with a non-profit that advises governments on energy efficiency and renewable energy policies. My wife, Amy, and I moved to Fort Collins in 2011 after both of us reached a point in our careers where we could live wherever we want. Shortly after arriving in Fort Collins, I joined FCAS!

I credit my older brother, Jeff, with sparking my interest in birds and nature. Jeff has always had an infectious enthusiasm for all manner of wild creatures and a gift for teaching. When I



Thank you John, for stepping up!

was a year or two out of college, we spent a memorable week hiking and canoeing in Big Bend National Park. For the first time, I found myself interested in birds: a Turkey Vulture sitting on a picnic table, a Greater Roadrunner keeping pace with our car, and Canyon Wrens singing as we paddled down the Rio Grande. The seed was planted, but when our trip ended I think it was quite some time before I once again paid attention to birds.

Three or four years later I was wrapping up graduate school in Ann Arbor, Michigan and found myself temporarily under-employed. I was bored and broke and looking for something to do that didn't cost any money. One late winter day I happened to see a male Common Goldeneye on the Huron River. I couldn't believe how gorgeous that bird was, so I started checking the river almost every day, and before long I was crazy about ducks. So many beautiful species, wild but accessible, and free! The seed planted in Big Bend had borne fruit and I had a new hobby.

When I look back over the past 20 years of my life, so many of my favorite memories involve birds and the habitats on which they depend. Even more so, they revolve around the people I was with: some good local friends, some far away, and some sadly departed. Birding can be a rewarding and enjoyable solitary activity, connecting you with nature in ways that are sometimes almost spiritual. But it is also a great way to connect with your fellow human beings. This, to me, is the reason we are Audubon members. We want to connect to nature and to each other, to work together to protect the places and creatures that inspire us, and to share our knowledge and passion. I hope all of you will remain active members of FCAS and will share your love of birds with everyone you meet!

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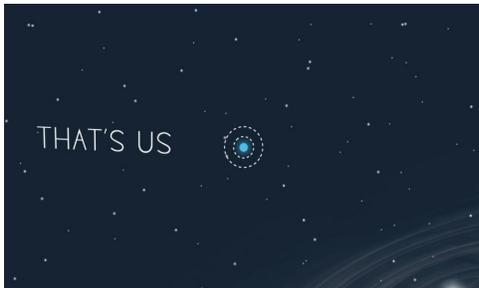


Love Your Mother Earth

It's February and love is all around. While many show their love for one another individually or by serving others for the greater good of all, we must not forget to include love for our home: Mother Earth, for without her, we would cease to exist.

As Carl Sagan said after viewing the photo taken of Earth by Voyager 1 from some four billion miles in space, "That's home. That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The Earth is the only world known so far to harbor life. There is nowhere else, at least in the near future, to which our species could migrate. Earth is where we make our stand" ("Pale Blue Dot," 1994).

Today, more than ever, we must understand our interrelationship with one another and every-



That's us—the Pale Blue Dot.

thing else on our planet. The rapidity with which we are altering our planet's atmosphere and oceans, stripping the forests, depleting the soils, and sucking dry the precious waters requires more than love, however. We must find ways to preserve and cherish our Pale Blue Dot, Earth. The decline of Earth's biodiversity requires strong conservation and sustainability practices that convey this crucial interdependence between all things.

By conserving the land that provides food for our bodies and nurtures our souls, we ensure a legacy for future generations to come. Land conservation protects the habitats and natural landscapes that affect the overall quality of the food we consume, the water we drink, and the air we breathe. Forests are "the planet's lungs," according to the World Wildlife Fund, and they are essential to life on Earth.

Water conservation is extremely important.

Water covers 71 percent of Earth's surface, but 96.5 percent of that water is in the oceans as saltwater, unsuitable for human use. With the world's population estimated to reach 7.2 billion in 2015 and freshwater accounting for only about three percent of the planet's water, the importance of water conservation cannot be understated.



Photo from: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth_Day

Conservation Colorado notes that "water lies at the core of Colorado's economy, lifestyle, and identity. We need water for a productive agricultural economy, to support our growing cities, and sustain our natural environment. It's the lifeblood of our rivers and streams that support a diversity of fish, wildlife, and ecosystems which, in turn, draw visitors to our state. But our water supply and resources have been compromised by competing demands, a changing climate, population growth, overuse, and outdated management plans. Unless we learn how to better manage and conserve our resources and to do more with less, we're facing a water crisis."

Population growth means increased development. By practicing sustainability alongside development, we can help ensure growth doesn't come at the expense of quality of life.

Sustainable communities, alternative energies, mass transit to ease congestion and reduce pollution, education, reducing-reusing-recycling, and land and water conservation can help preserve this Pale Blue Dot for future generations.



Lucy's Warbler

One of the first questions people often ask a newcomer is: "Where are you from?" Aside from its incorrect grammatical construction, it raises many issues. In plant life, we say "alien species;" in animal life, we say "migrant;" in human life we say "immigrant," or if they are here to stay, "resident alien."

I am a resident of Fort Collins, but I am a transplant from the Deep South of New Orleans, Louisiana. As I moved around the country before settling here, I often felt like a Martian in the many different cultures that form the United States. One sociologist claims we have 35 distinct cultural regions in America. But, somehow Fort Collins felt like home!

Species of all kinds can arrive in several ways: by choice or by chance. On my recent visit home for the holidays, the annual Audubon Christmas bird count listed a Lucy's Warbler found in Grand Isle, Louisiana. Curiously, this bit of information made the evening news on all four major television channels. Why? Because this tiny visitor was a migrant.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's website, <http://www.allaboutbirds.org/>, states that "one of the smallest warblers, the Lucy's Warbler, is a bird of the hot Sonoran desert. It occupies the driest habitat of all the warblers breeding in that area." Lucy's Warbler measures 3.5 to 4 inches in length and weighs only 0.2 to 0.3 ounces. Its indiscriminate gray coloration is broken only by a slightly buff chest and a faint white eye ring. What is so astonishing about this rare find on Grand Isle is habitat. While the Sonoran Desert is one of the driest places in America, Grand

Isla, LA, a spot of land on the tip of the continent, is one of the most humid places.

This bird is also one of only two cavity nesting warblers; it uses mesquite trees or cacti. Grand Isle is a windswept island of sand beaches. The Lucy's Warbler uses old woodpecker nests or other cavities, filled with debris that they build the nest atop. This gives them a clear view of any predator approaching. They also nest in densities of five pairs per acre, which



Lucy's Warbler from www.allaboutbirds.org/.

makes sorting the male songs difficult and makes an accurate count hard to ascertain.

Yet here was this one Lucy's Warbler on Grand Isle, obviously an unwilling migrant, blown in by the wind. Listening to the news stories, I reflected on my human dislocation. It was by choice, not chance. And, even then, fitting

in had its challenges. I don't know how long the warbler stayed on Grand Isle, but I would hope that a strong instinct for dry climate and a cavity shelter drove it to find its way back to the far southwestern Sonoran Desert.

I thought of myself and my translocation from the green, moist land of the Deep South and believe it or not, I missed the seven inches of snow that fell on my Colorado home over Christmas. I hopped my wings on January 2 and it is good to be home—dry climate, snow, and all. I hope that the migrant Lucy's Warbler found its way home also!



Lucy's Warbler from <http://www.blog.naturearts.com/>.



FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Judith Balice
Robert Beauchamp
Hetty Bixby
Denise Bretting
Monica Brewer
Tom & Anne Butler
Morris & Katy Clark
Jon S. Cobble
Susan Degutz
James DeMartini
Larry DeMers

Robert Gobeille
Larry Griffin
Thomas Hall
James Hayes
William J. Henderson
Joel Humence
Barbara Jones
Carol Jones & Tim Martin
Julia Jordan
Dorothy Leising
Frances R. Lipp

Ron & Marcia Maeda
David Michaels
Larry Moskowitz
Shannon Perry
Elizabeth Pruessner
Judith Putnam
Ann Reichhardt
Paua Stearns
Mary Stonaker
Hank Thode
Joann Thomas
Jim Welch

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.

More Photos from this Month's Presentation by Eric DeFonso (see Page 1 for details)



White-throated Hummingbird, SE Brazil.



Inspecting prospective property for protection in the Atlantic Forest., Brazil.



Male Swallow-tailed Cotinga, SE Brazil.

FCAS Annual Membership Renewal

The annual FCAS Membership Renewal drive for 2015 is in full swing. Membership renewals run from January through December of the calendar year, so please renew today if you have not already done so for this year.

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

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

Remember, your membership and contributions are tax deductible. Thank you to all who have already renewed.



Mark Your Calendar for the Great Backyard Bird Count, February 13-16



This year's Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) runs from Friday, Feb. 13 through Monday, Feb. 16. Participants are asked to watch for birds at any location for at

least 15 consecutive minutes, then submit a checklist of their observations on a website. More information about the GBBC can be found at

<http://gbbc.birdcount.org/about/>. FCAS will provide a brief tutorial on how to participate at our February 12 chapter meeting, the day before the count begins.

FCAS also is planning some special outings in conjunction with this year's GBBC. We will schedule group GBBC counts at two or three local spots (to be announced at a later date) that don't typically attract much attention from birders. These group counts will be similar to field trips, but allow for interested people to participate in short blocks of time (15 minutes or more) and socialize with other birders. Details on these group counts will be provided on the FCAS website, FCAS Facebook page, and at the February chapter meeting. Stay tuned!

Upcoming Field Trips

All field trips are free of charge (unless otherwise noted) and open to the public. All experience levels are welcome. Visit www.fortnet.org/Audubon for more information and updates. RSVP is recommended.

Feb. 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 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. 13-16, Great Backyard Bird Count. See article above. If you are interested in joining one of the group counts described in the article, contact John Shenot for detail at johnshenot@gmail.com or 970-682-2551.

March 8, Sunday, Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey. Meet at 7:30 a.m. See description and contact details above for this recurring, monthly survey.



Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch by Georgia Doyle.



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



Welcome New National Members

FCAS welcomes new National Audubon Society members by sending one complimentary copies of our newsletter. We invite you to join us at our monthly programs on the second Thursday of the month to find out more about FCAS. If you'd like to keep receiving the *Ptarmigan* after the complimentary issue, please subscribe on the last page of the newsletter or at www.fortnet.org/Audubon.



Christmas Bird Count Reports

The Fort Collins CBC took place on Saturday, Dec. 20, 2014. We wound up with 95 species, an exotic (Chukar), and three count-week species, with a total of 44,120 birds counted. Seventy-five



Scrub Jay by Ron Harden.

observers participated his year, which was a good showing. Birding highlights included a Sandhill Crane, Hermit Thrush, Wild Turkeys near Lee Martinez Park, a Red-breasted Merganser, a record number of Redheads (115), and a record number of Eastern Screech-Owls (13)!

The Loveland CBC was held Thursday Jan 1 in cold but otherwise pleasant weather. A record 71 observers participated, identifying 26,072 birds

of 94 species, plus two additional species (American Three-toed Woodpecker and Varied Thrush) during count week. Highlights on count day included Greater Scaup, White-winged Scoter, Eared Grebe, Northern Goshawk, California Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Long-eared Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Northern Pygmy-Owl, Pinyon Jay, Mountain Bluebird, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Harris's Sparrow, Common Grackle, Great-tailed Grackle, Lesser Goldfinch, and Pine Grosbeak.

Thanks to all who participated! Next up: The Great Backyard Bird Count!



Cassin's Finch by Ron Harden.

Make Your Voice Heard—Meet Legislators and Fellow Activists

Audubon of Greater Denver and the Denver Metro Network of the Sierra Club are teaming up to present the 2015 Legislative Forum on Saturday, Feb. 28 from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Come meet other activists and learn about the hot environmental topics in this year's State legislature. The Forum, held at the First Plymouth Church, 3501 S. Colorado Blvd., Denver, always provides both education and entertainment.

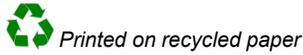
Legislators are invited to speak during lunch and stay for further discussions, which gives you a chance to meet and engage them. The elections in November 2014 have provided some new and interesting faces at the Capitol and a raft of new bills. We already have seen one on protecting birds and bats at wind farms; water will certainly be another major topic.

The cost of the Forum is \$12 in advance and \$15 at the door. You can register and pay on line at www.denveraudubon.org/programs/localfieldtrips. Alternatively, call the Audubon office at 303-973-9530, or send a check to: Audubon of Greater Denver, 9308 S. Wadsworth Blvd., Littleton, CO 80128.

If you are interested in volunteering at the Forum, mention this when you register and be sure to leave a phone number where you can be contacted. Remember: Decisions are made by those who participate!



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 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