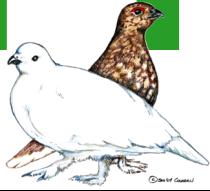


PTARMIGAN



FORT COLLINS AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. Box 271968·Fort Collins,CO-80527-1968·www.fortcollinsaudubon.org

Promoting the appreciation, conservation, and restoration of ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife through education, participation, stewardship, and advocacy.

November 2015

Volume 46, Issue 8

FCAS Presents

Perry Conway

Photographer, Conservation Educator, and Animal Advocate

“Helping Wildlife Survive”

Thursday, Nov. 12

Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Dr

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

Perry Conway, photographer, animal advocate, and conservation educator, will be filling us with facts as well as inspiring and entertaining us with his multimedia program that includes his own photography, music, and narration.



Long-eared Owl by Perry Conway.

For over 30 years, he has devoted his technical, emotional, and artistic energy to “conservation with a camera.” He creates photographic images that make a visual statement about the value of

wildlife and wild places.

His life focus blends with the FCAS mission statement: “To promote the appreciation, conservation, and restoration of ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife through education, participation, stew-

ardship, and advocacy.”

Join us on Nov. 12 at the Senior Center for this evening dedicated to “Helping Wildlife Survive.” This free program is open to all.

FCAS welcomes new National Audubon Society members by sending one complimentary copy of our newsletter. 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 costs of 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.fortcollinsaudubon.org.

President's Corner

by John Shenot

The FCAS Board met in early October for our annual strategic planning session. Starting with our mission statement, we completed a top to bottom review of what we do and how we do it, looking for areas of improvement and where to focus our efforts in 2016. We reached the conclusion that FCAS is on reasonably sound footing, and "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Radical change is not necessary, but continual improvement is, so the board ultimately agreed on a reasonably short list of strategic priorities for 2016, which I would like to share with you.

Three of our priorities are essential to the continuing health of the organization and will come as no surprise. We want to retain and boost membership, recruit new leaders to the board and volunteer positions, and implement some new fundraising ideas. FCAS has not raised dues in a very long time, and we have a decent level of reserves in our bank account. But the dues we receive from our current level of membership are not by themselves enough to sustain the organization, and in 2015 we will actually spend a little more than we take in. In 2016 we want to get



back in balance by increasing membership and raising money through special fundraisers, just as we traditionally have done.

Of course, these things that allow FCAS to function are not the reason we exist, so we added to this list four more strategic priorities that are all about fulfilling our mission. First, FCAS wants to make more of an effort to educate our membership on opportunities for each of us, individually and collectively, to make more of a positive impact on the community through conservation efforts. Second, we want to complete a top-to-bottom review of our website to update out-of-date information and make it a more effective vehicle for sharing information about monthly programs, field trips, special events, etc. Third, we intend to finish the job of winning an "important bird area" designation for the Cache la Poudre Urban River Corridor. This project was initiated by FCAS years ago, and is now tantalizingly close to the finish line. Fourth, and finally, FCAS will seek to identify a "legacy project" and begin any necessary fundraising to make the project a reality. As I noted in last month's President's Corner, this project could be a bird blind, a park bench, or some other structure or property that will benefit the public at large while, at the same time, raising awareness and appreciation of FCAS. Stay tuned in the coming months for progress reports on all of our strategic priorities!

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www.fortcollinsaudubon.org

Visit us on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/FortCollinsAudubonSociety>



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Trap/Neuter/Release—Feral Cats and Wildlife Conservation

Feral domestic cats are an invasive predatory problem, with estimates of over 100 million cats roaming free throughout the United States. Whether abandoned or born feral, the majority of these cats lead wretched lives, exposed to harsh living conditions and disease, often suffering horrible deaths. Additionally, feral cats' negative effects on native bird and other wildlife populations are well documented.

By the 1990s, many states adopted the practice of trap/neuter/release (TNR) as a way of trying to "manage" feral cat colonies. The idea behind TNR is that colonies can be "managed" by trapping, neutering, and releasing cats back into their colonies, with the belief that the colonies then eventually die off. Unfortunately, feral colonies have been found to be self-perpetuating. They are a natural attractant for other stray cats because of the food and are a dumping ground for unwanted cats.

Free-roaming cats (feral and well-fed domestics) are deadly predators (see *Domestic Cat Predation on Birds and Other Wildlife*, <http://abcbirds.org/cats>). According to the American Bird Conservancy, "...cats kill approximately 2.4 billion birds in the U.S. alone, making cat predation by far the largest human-caused mortality threat to birds."

In addition to being a threat to wildlife, feral cats pose a health hazard to humans. Many diseases (ringworm, toxoplasmosis, and cat scratch fever) can't be managed successfully in colonies.



Cat with bird by <http://npr.org>.

Rabies is an ever present danger. Feeding stations at cat colonies attract raccoons, skunks, foxes, and other wildlife. Raccoons and skunks are the most common carriers of rabies in the

wild, and cats are the most reported domestic carrier of rabies.

While acknowledging the efforts of those who strive to make a positive difference in the lives of feral cats, managed cat colonies do not appear to be a humane solution. TNR cats continue to face

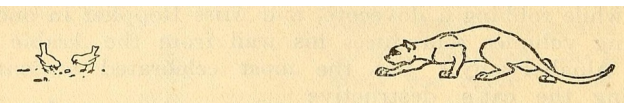


Cat release by <http://tri1025.com>.

a multitude of hazards and diseases. Many life-threatening and debilitating diseases can't be treated effectively in one veterinary visit, and cats that have been trapped once are difficult to re-trap for subsequent treatment. Free-roaming cats are also subject to being shot, killed by larger predators and domestic dogs, or hit by vehicles. Many freeze to death in colder climates. The life of a feral cat is often cruel.

Controversy regarding TNR continues, with the social aspect of feral cat management proving to be the biggest challenge in decision-making and action. The American Bird Conservancy's "Cats Indoors! The Campaign for Safer Birds and Cats" (www.njaudubon.org/Portals/10/CatsIndoors/PDF/Colonies.pdf) offers possible actions in hopes of bringing cat lovers, TNR volunteers, wildlife and veterinary professionals, and the public together to find solutions to cat overpopulation problems.

As a cat lover, zoologist, and bird enthusiast, I strive to provide the best life for my indoor cat while preserving the native ecosystem. Perhaps if some monies spent on TNR (re-abandon) were put toward more education about the plight of feral cats, we might be closer to a solution. We must work together with collaboration and compassion to solve this serious issue. America's other favorite pet deserves our help!



Reminiscing

I just returned from a 10-day trip home to New Orleans for my 55th annual high school reunion, and I met a new birding friend, although I did not know it at the time. Our organizer, Ruth, had hired a friend to photograph the weekend's activities, so that the rest of us would not have to bother. Said friend is a retired photographer and we wound up in the same car on the many excursions we took. After becoming friends on Facebook, he began sending photos.

His photos were all coded; for example, KCP10-2-15. I got the date, but the KCP was an unknown. After chatting with him, I learned that it stood for Kenner City Park, which did not exist when I lived in New Orleans. The photos were stunning and I have included two. I never saw either bird

Texas. We visited a remote swampy area, and there it was feeding with that oddly shaped beak, swishing it back and forth in the water. I saw it a few times in flight after that, but as we moved north and west—never again.

And now here was a series of beautiful pictures, taken in what was once my backyard! The Wood Duck is one of my favorite birds, simply because it has been so elusive in my birding life. Searching, and never finding, was my Wood Duck experience, until visiting



Roseate Spoonbill, Kenner City Park, New Orleans, by Jimmy Pilet.

Bombay Hook National Wildlife Area in Delaware. After finally getting out birding on a glorious Sunday, the day after my graduate exams, I drove into a secluded area with a series of ponds. There, to my amazement, were two pairs of Wood Ducks only five feet from my car. And, funny enough, after I'd seen my first Wood Ducks, I began seeing them everywhere—in ditches and in every state in which I lived. They have become my omen of good tidings, as I did pass my exams. In my first days in Fort Collins in 1999, I saw one slowly swimming across the lake in City Park as I sat deciding where I was headed next. Smiling, I knew my decision was made.

The photo with this article shows the Wood Duck and its cousin, the Mandarin Duck (Page 5), not a native, just an escapee. But, it's fun to have the photo to compare the markings.

It's been fun seeing all of Jimmy Pilet's bird photos, and now some of his friends' photos also. Sharpening my skills on birds that I do not see here, like the spoonbill, helps overall, and sharpens my appetite for new and far adventures. Happy reminiscing and good birding!



Male Wood Duck by Jimmy Pilet.

when I lived there, but then the habitat did not exist then either.

The Roseate Spoonbill truly is one of the most beautiful and unusual birds. I discovered it on one of my first birding trips ever in Galveston,



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.

Nov. 8, Sunday, Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey. Leader: Denise Bretting, dbretting@swloveland.com, work: 970-669-1185; home: 970-669-8095. FCAS performs a monthly bird census for the City of Fort Collins. All levels are welcome. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot. Call for any change.

Nov. 14, Saturday, Douglas Reservoir State Wildlife Area. Leader: John Shenot, johnshenot@gmail.com, 802-595-1669. Dress warmly for an early start at one of the best spots in Larimer County for migrating waterfowl. Douglas Reservoir is an excellent place to look for scoters and loons in November. Meet at 7 a.m. in the parking area at the south end of the reservoir.

Dec. 13, Sunday, Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey. Leader: Denise Bretting, dbretting@swloveland.com, work: 970-669-1185; home: 970-669-8095. FCAS performs a monthly bird census for the City of Fort Collins. All levels are welcome. Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot. Call for any change.



McCown's Longspur seen on a recent FCAS field trip by Austin Hess.



Mandarin Duck by Jimmy Pilet.

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



FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Caroline Brennan
William Henderson
Janice Johnson
Wilma S. Kirwin
Bob Lucas
Larry Sherman
Bobbie Tilmant

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.



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 (NSA), or both.

- New or renewing FCAS Chapter Member \$ 20 Name: _____
Receive the FCAS *Ptarmigan* by email
- New or renewing FCAS Chapter Member \$ 30 Address: _____
Receive the FCAS *Ptarmigan* by mail
- Lifetime FCAS Chapter Member \$750 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Receive FCAS *Ptarmigan* by mail or email
- Additional support for FCAS programs \$ ___ Phone: _____
- Additional support for Alex Cringan Fund \$ ___ Email: _____
(natural history education grants)
- New NAS member \$ 20 May we send you FCAS email alerts if updates occur for field
Receive the NAS *Audubon* by mail trips, programs, etc.? Yes or No
- Renewing NAS member \$ 35 May we contact you for volunteer activities such as helping at
Receive the NAS *Audubon* by mail events or contacting legislators on important issues? Yes or No

Total 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 31 extend throughout the following year. Applications can be
completed at www.fortcollinsaudubon.org.