

# PTARMIGAN



FORT COLLINS AUDUBON SOCIETY  
P.O. Box 271968·Fort Collins, CO·80527-1968·[www.fortcollinsaudubon.org](http://www.fortcollinsaudubon.org)

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

**May 2016**

**Volume 47, Issue 5**

**FCAS Hosts:**

**Kristin Reynolds, Bee Safe Boulder;**

**Bee Safe Earth's Director of Communications and Development**

**"Bee Safe Earth, Saving the Bees, One Neighborhood at a Time!"**

**Thursday, May 12**

**Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Dr.**

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

From early 2014, the nonprofit Bee Safe Boulder has been working in Boulder County to save bees (by getting rid of pesticides—neonics for starters—but also Roundup, etc.) one neighborhood at a time. Bee Safe Boulder has successfully used the Bee Safe Neighborhood protocol, created by the Living Systems Institute, in which 75 contiguous households pledge not to use neonicotinoid pesticides. The goal is to educate and change behavior in citizens, businesses, and local governments. The cities of Boulder and Lafayette, and Boulder County, passed Bee Safe/pollinator protection resolutions. In April, 2016, Bee Safe Boulder was selected as an inaugural recipient of the Climate Culture Collaborative's Earth Champion Award. Kristin Reynolds, Bee Safe Earth's Director of

Communications and Development, is an idealist with a bit of a southern accent and a huge passion for change.

Since her graduation from Appalachian State University in 2014, she has worked tirelessly in the non-profit sector.

After bouncing between Boone, North Carolina, Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Denver, Colorado, in the past couple of years, Kristin has

finally found her home in Boulder. When she's not busy working with Bee Safe Boulder, Kristin is taking part in anti-fossil fuel protests, writing about feminism, and enjoying coop life.

Join us on May 12 at the Fort Collins Senior Center for this program that is free and open to the public.



**Honey Bees by David Wheeler of Bee Safe Boulder.**

## President's Corner

by John Shenot

I'm drafting this month's article on a plane flying from Johannesburg, South Africa, to Walvis Bay, Namibia, and I'm wondering what the heck I'm doing here. I've been on planes and in airports for almost 40 hours now on my way



to—get this—a *two day* conference. Crazy, right? And when you add to this absurdity the fact that my job is essentially to help governments fight climate change, it just seems crazier still.

So what keeps me sane? Well, for starters the birds that I hope to see this week in Namibia and South Africa. And I guess the hope that what I'm doing makes a difference. But what really saves me from the insanity of business trips like this one is knowing that when I get home to Fort Collins I can do almost anything I want on my feet or on my bicycle, with no carbon footprint left behind, which brings me to the FCAS connection.

Like many of you, I'm looking forward to participating in this month's Birdathon (details on Page 5). But I've decided to form a team that

do a carbon-free Birdathon on bikes, and do it entirely within the Poudre River corridor that FCAS is working to get designated by National Audubon as an Important Bird Area (IBA—see Page 4). It's my way of having fun, supporting our fundraiser, promoting the IBA, and recovering from the business travel craziness. Wish me luck!

### 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.fortcollinsaudubon.org](http://www.fortcollinsaudubon.org).



### FCAS CONTACTS

[Audubon@fortnet.org](mailto:Audubon@fortnet.org)

#### President and Field Trip Coordinator

John Shenot

970-682-2551

[johnshenot@gmail.com](mailto:johnshenot@gmail.com)

#### Vice President and Membership Chair

Liz Pruessner

970-484-4371

[fortcollinsaudubonmembership@gmail.com](mailto:fortcollinsaudubonmembership@gmail.com)

#### Program Chair

Jessie Meschievitz

[jmesch@slbbi.com](mailto:jmesch@slbbi.com)

970-686-1424

#### Newsletter Editor

Carol Jones

970-482-6295

[cjones@cowisp.net](mailto:cjones@cowisp.net)

For other FCAS contacts visit

[www.fortcollinsaudubon.org](http://www.fortcollinsaudubon.org)

Visit us on Facebook:

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

### FCAS Pocket Guide to Local Birds

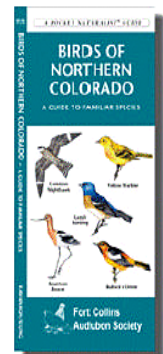
Is available at the following retailers who support our organization with the sales:

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



## Two Favorite Patches: The More You Look, the More You See!

As a life-long birder for whom birding had been relegated to “casual” during busy work and family years, retirement offered an opportunity to put more focus on feathered friends. In 2014, I suggested to my wife that we initiate weekly bird counts of two favorite “patches:” our neighborhood and North Shields Ponds Natural Area



**Mountain Bluebird**  
(in the neighborhood patch)  
by Doug Swartz.

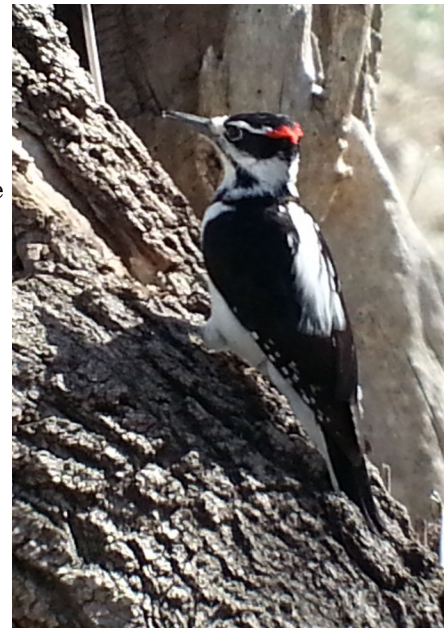
(NSPNA). The former is 16 acres that we helped design and develop 20 years ago. It’s been rewarding to watch it evolve from a monoculture (cornfield) to diverse habitat with 12 acres of open space and native plants.

Bird diversity and numbers continue to increase. NSPNA’s topography was recently modified by City of Fort Collins to reconnect it with the Poudre River and improve aquatic habitat; extensive new native plantings offer additional promise. The two locations are complementary: our neighborhood is an upland site while NSPNA includes substantial riparian habitat.

How’s our project going? In two words: fun and rewarding! We have learned more about area birds in the last 18 months than in our prior 35 years in Northern Colorado. We’re looking more closely, regular practice sharpens our observational skills, and recordkeeping reinforces what we experience. We are getting a much better feel for the seasonal ebbs and flows of particular species. We have a good sense of where to look for them. We are better at identification and appreciate more details about behavior. And, keeping it fresh, almost every survey brings a nice

surprise.

Species counts since the regular counts began total 95 in the ‘hood and 105 at NSPNA. Favorite memories include two American Pipits on a river-edge ice shelf; huge, mixed sparrow flocks on a damp spring morning; an entertaining mid-winter band of Bushtits; Mountain Bluebirds in a spring snowstorm; a Cooper’s Hawk playing cat-and-mouse with a Belted Kingfisher; Sora calls; an Osprey striking and breaking off a dead cottonwood branch for nesting material; and thousands of Sandhill Cranes streaming overhead last October.



**Hairy Woodpecker at NSPNA**  
by Doug Swartz.



**Western Meadowlark in the ‘hood patch** by Doug Swartz

What about the data? We are lucky that eBird ([www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org)) makes it easy to keep track of what we see, and to share our observations through its at-large citizen-science database. We also forward NSPNA reports to City of Fort Collins staff to help them track what’s happening as the natural area evolves.

Patch birding—try it, you’ll like it!

(Special thanks to John Shenot for filling in on several NSPNA counts when we were traveling and to Dave Leatherman for expanding our horizons about interrelationships among birds, bugs, and plants.)





## What's So Important about "Important Bird Areas"?

Imagine a spring morning and in happy anticipation you are taking your first steps on a new trail you've been told is very "birdy." Who knows what exciting migrants the day holds? Then, upon entering, you see a white and green sign boldly proclaiming you've entered an "Important Bird Area." A what? The first of these signs I ever saw, I thought, "Aren't all bird areas important?" But, further reading clarifies, "This site is part of a global network of places recognized for their outstanding value to bird conservation." It was signed by the National Audubon Society (NAS) and BirdLife International.

The NAS actually acts as the U.S. partner of BirdLife International that began the Important Bird Area (IBA) Program in Europe in the 1980s; it now has partners around the globe. John Cecil, NAS director of the IBA program for 10 years, stated the IBA designation "flags to the world, to the nation, and, most importantly really, to the people living close by, that this area is a gem

beyond price. And they can then appreciate it all the more—and start getting involved protecting it from environmental degradation..."

Such hidden gems must first be nominated to IBA status based on one or more of the following criteria: (1) the area provides habitat for a threatened species, (2) the habitat is of limited range, and (3) at times the area is used by unusually large numbers of birds. Fort Collins already boasts one IBA: the Fossil Creek Reservoir Natural Area IBA. We are now on target for a second: The Cache la Poudre Urban River Corridor IBA, which will extend from Watson Lake in the northwest to I-25 in the southeast, about 12

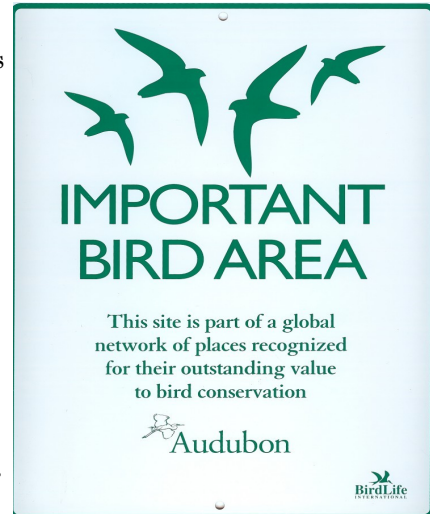
miles as the crow flies. This IBA designation process was initiated by former FCAS member Phil Cafaro and current member Nick Komar in 2007, but hit some bumps and stalled.

FCAS Member Bill Miller is now leading the charge, a process that requires getting permission from landowners (public and private) within the proposed area. In this case, the primary players are the City of Fort Collins,

Larimer County, and the Colorado Department of Parks and Wildlife. There are many other steps to climb, but Bill hopes

to have the process completed in time for the Poudre River Fest on Saturday, June 4.

The IBA program is voluntary, carries no legal weight, and is for informational purposes only, so, can it really help birdlife? Absolutely! When the NAS designates a property as an IBA, decision makers listen. In addition, Audubon Colorado provides support by identifying and providing expertise for possible restoration activities. The IBA Program truly is a grassroots effort for local birdlife on a global scale, one important bird area at a time.



Northern Shovelers at Prospect Ponds, proposed Poudre River IBA, by Bill Miller.



## Birdathon Coming in May by Bill Miller

It's getting closer: The *Challenge* Birdathon! We haven't conducted a Birdathon since 2012. This year, with a few changes, we hope members will help their chapter meet its financial needs through their tax-deductible contributions.

Some things remain the same: (1) Teams consist of two to four members, (2) pledges will be solicited in support of our conservation efforts, and (3) teams are limited to counting species in a 24-hour period. Some things have changed: (1) The Birdathon Count Period (BCP) has been extended from two days to 10 days, Friday, May 13 through Sunday, May 22; and (2) there will be two sets of prizes. One set will go to the team with the highest species count; the other to the team that has the most unique species.

Unique, in this case, means species not counted by any other team. As of April 17, the prizes had not been determined.

Pledges are of two types: (1) an amount per species and/or, (2) a fixed amount. Pledges made to a team will be calculated using that team's spe-



Cooper's Hawk by Bill Miller.

cies count. Pledges made to the chapter will be calculated using the highest species count by the teams. We encourage team members to solicit

pledges from others in addition to making their own. This year, FCAS board members are asked to solicit at least five pledges other than their own, and it would be great if every FCAS member would gather two pledges in addition to their own. Successful pledge solicitors should collect and turn in pledge funds to me (Bill Miller) or our Treasurer, John Waddell.

The Birdathon is a good time for camaraderie and an excellent way for less experienced birders to learn more from more experienced birders. Please consider volunteering to serve on a team. If you don't know a team leader, let me know and we'll assign you

to a team. This is a fun event and more eyes spot more birds! And a successful Birdathon brings us much closer to achieving more of our conservation goals. For more information visit <http://www.fortcollinsaudubon.org/birdathon.html>

---

## Belvoir Ranch BioBlitz—June 10–12

BioBlitz is a 24-hour event in which teams of scientists, teachers, volunteers, environmental educators, and community members join forces to find, identify, and learn about as many local plant, insect, and animal species as possible.

Join us at Belvoir Ranch, located 15 miles west of Cheyenne, June 10-12, for Audubon Rockies 7<sup>th</sup> annual BioBlitz in partnership with University of Wyoming Biodiversity Institute and The Nature Conservancy. Belvoir Ranch consists of 18,800 acres with an additional 3,400 acres of private land leased from the State of Wyoming. The landscape is a rich mosaic of ecosystems, from rolling prairie, several



water features, to a spectacular red rock canyon supporting antelope, deer, small mammals, and varied bird species, including Golden Eagles. In addition to beautiful landscapes rich with biodiversity there is a lot of pioneer history, including archaeological rem-

nants of homesteads, quarries, and a missile plant.

For more information including activities, packing tips, FAQs, registration and to watch videos of previous BioBlitz, visit us at <http://rockies.audubon.org/engagement/bioblitz> or contact Dusty Downey, Senior Community Naturalist, at [ddowney@audubon.org](mailto:ddowney@audubon.org) or [307-756-3941](tel:307-756-3941).





## Upcoming Field Trips

*All field trips are free (unless otherwise noted) and open to the public. All experience levels are welcome. Bring snacks or lunch, water, binoculars, and spotting scopes. Please understand that changes to the dates, meeting times or locations, and trip leaders are occasionally unavoidable. Contact the listed trip leader prior to the day of the trip or visit [fortcollinsaudubon.org](http://fortcollinsaudubon.org) for more information and updates. RSVP strongly encouraged.*

**May 7, Saturday, Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey.** Leader: Denise Bretting, [dbretting@swloveland.com](mailto: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 6:30 a.m. in the parking lot. Call for any change. Dates and times for future surveys are as follows: June 12, Sunday, 6:30 a.m.; July and August, check FCAS website or Facebook page in early July for details.

**May 14, Saturday, Pineridge Natural Area.** Leader: Sirena Brownlee, [warblerak@yahoo.com](mailto:warblerak@yahoo.com). Join us for an early morning bird walk around Pineridge trails to celebrate the return of many migrant songbirds. Meet at 8 a.m. at the parking lot on the north side of 42C (Maxwell Natural Area, not the Dixon Reservoir Parking lot).



Male American Wigeon by Bill Miller.

**May 25, Wednesday, CSU Environmental Learning Center.** Leader: Sirena Brownlee, [warblerak@yahoo.com](mailto:warblerak@yahoo.com). Meet at 6 p.m. at the parking lot at 2400 Environmental Drive. This evening walk will cover approximately 1–2 miles along the CSU-ELC trails. It will be a kid-friendly walk with lots of stopping to look at birds and listen for bird songs.

**June 2, Thursday, Pineridge Natural Area.** Leader: Sirena Brownlee, [warblerak@yahoo.com](mailto:warblerak@yahoo.com). This will be an evening walk around Pineridge trails to look for late migrants and listen to eve-



Burrowing Owl by Nick Komar.

ning bird song. We will do the 3-mile upper forested trail loop. Sirena has seen wild turkeys, coyote, and bobcat in this area on several occasions in the evenings. Meet at 6:30 p.m. at the parking lot on the north side of 42C (Maxwell Natural Area, not the Dixon Reservoir Parking lot).

**June 19, Sunday, Pawnee National Grasslands. This is a date change.** Leader: Bill Miller, [5mcorp@comcast.net](mailto:5mcorp@comcast.net), 970-493-7693. This field trip will leave Fort Collins at 6 a.m. Contact Bill for details. The grasslands, 35 miles east of Fort Collins, are a world-class birding area. Join Bill for a special day in search of Burrowing Owls, Mountain Plovers, McCown's Longspurs, and Ferruginous Hawks. Carpooling is necessary. Please contribute \$3/ person to your driver for fuel.



McCown's Longspur from <http://www.surfbirds.com/>



## More From the "Patches"

All Photos by Doug Swartz (see Page 3)



**Top:** Bushtit in the neighborhood patch.



**Left:** Merlin in the neighborhood patch.



**Right:** Red-winged Blackbird at North Shields Ponds Natural Area patch.

### FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Robert Buderman  
James & Ruth DeMartini  
Kenneth F. Dunnington  
April Eisele  
Jon Kindschy  
Carol MacLean

Linda O'Brien  
Gary Robinson  
C. Paul Sayers  
Frank Stermitz  
Wild Birds Unlimited  
William Zelt

Thank you for your membership. Your support makes our programs and conservation efforts possible, and helps us achieve our mission of connecting people with the natural world.

**ENJOY  
\*\*YOUR\*\*  
SUMMER!**

PROFILEBRAND.COM



PTARMIGAN

[www.fortcollinsaudubon.org](http://www.fortcollinsaudubon.org)

Page 7

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



Printed on recycled paper

### Membership Application

Join Fort Collins Audubon Society (FCAS), National Audubon Society (NAS), or both.

- |                          |   |         |  |
|--------------------------|---|---------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | New or renewing FCAS Chapter Member<br>Receive the FCAS <i>Ptarmigan</i> by email | \$ 20   | Name: _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | New or renewing FCAS Chapter Member<br>Receive the FCAS <i>Ptarmigan</i> by mail  | \$ 30   | Address: _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Lifetime FCAS Chapter Member<br>Receive FCAS <i>Ptarmigan</i> by mail or email    | \$750   | City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Additional support for FCAS programs  | \$ ____ | Phone: _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Additional support for Alex Cringan Fund<br>(natural history education grants)    | \$ ____ | Email: _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | New NAS member<br>Receive the NAS <i>Audubon</i> by mail                          | \$ 20   | May we send you FCAS email alerts if updates occur for field trips, programs, etc.? Yes or No                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Renewing NAS member<br>Receive the NAS <i>Audubon</i> by mail                     | \$ 35   | May we contact you for volunteer activities such as helping at 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](http://www.fortcollinsaudubon.org).