

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.

September 2016

Volume 47, Issue 6

Matt Smith, Citizen Science Coordinator

Bird Conservancy of the Rockies

Presents: Bald Eagles in Colorado

Thursday, Sept. 8

Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Dr

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

Matt Smith, Citizen Science Coordinator for the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, will present materials on the natural history of Bald Eagles and their status in Colorado. Emphasis will be placed on nesting behavior, and the conservation challenges bald eagles face in the increasingly developed Colorado Front Range Region.

Matt earned his bachelor's degree in environmental science from the University of South Florida, and began work as a seasonal field technician with Audubon Florida while still in school. During that time he assisted with a variety of research and conservation projects focused



Bald Eagle by Nick Komar.

mainly on colonial waterbirds and shorebirds, such as the Reddish Egret and American Oystercatcher. Prior to joining the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, Matt was managing a Bald Eagle nest monitoring program for the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey. Matt is an avid outdoorsman and a licensed falconer.

Join us on Sept. 8 at the Fort Collins Senior Center to learn more about Bald Ea-

gles in Colorado. This program is free and the public welcome!

FCAS 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.



Bald Eagle
by Nick Komar.

President's Corner

by John Shenot

Although the vast majority of our members live in Fort Collins and Loveland, FCAS serves members in quite a few smaller communities in northern Colorado. One such example is the town of Berthoud. We have recently embarked on a new collaboration with the town's Parks and Recreation Department to refresh and improve the 11-acre Hillsdale Park. When the park was first created in 2006, FCAS provided a "Birds of Hillsdale Park" checklist. But earlier this year we learned that there were no longer any checklists at the park, and no information about birds or birding. So this summer we created new checklists, and with permission from the town we will place the new checklists and some educational information about identifying common birds at a kiosk in the park. Knowing that town resources are stretched thin, we've even reached out to a Boy Scout troop to see if it might be possible for volunteer scouts to spruce up the kiosk and the trails in the park. Hopefully our members in Berthoud will see signs of improvement this fall, and even more residents of Berthoud might take an interest in birds. If you live in one of the smaller communities served by FCAS and you know of a similar opportunity, please let us know!



Red-tailed Hawk at Bear Creek Lake Park,
City of Lakewood, CO.
Photo by Alex Avery.



FCAS CONTACTS

Audubon@fortnet.org

President and Field Trip Coordinator

John Shenot
970-682-2551

johnshenot@gmail.com

Vice President and Membership Chair

Liz Pruessner
970-484-4371

fortcollinsaudubonmembership@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.fortcollinsaudubon.org

Visit us on Facebook:

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

Welcome New and Renewing Members

Angus Day	Susan Peterson
Kim Dunlap	Scott Peterson
John Freeseaman	Holmes Rolston
Margaret Grant	James Shover
Julie Holding	Austen Stone
Sally Lee	Thomas Thomson
Connie Marvel	Barbara Turnbull
Daniel J. O'Donnell	Roger Wieck
Jerry Partin	Suzanne Yehle

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.

FCAS Pocket Guide to Local Birds

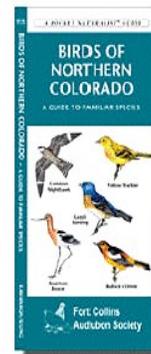
Is available at the following retailers who support our organization with the sales:

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



Birding Opportunities Abound in Cuba

As a long time birder who has lived in Fort Collins as well as overseas, I look for opportunities to widen my birding horizons. Cuba is a country that has always intrigued me and it has 30 endemic species of birds. In December, 2015, The Caribbean Conservation Trust



Cuban Tody by David Dunwiddie.

helped me and a group travel to Cuba to take part in an ongoing bird survey. The Trust has taken groups legally into Cuba since the 1990s. We flew to Havana with a humanitarian visa for a 12-day stay, free to travel to natural areas used in bird counts of previous years.

As soon as we stepped out of the airport, members of our group

began to count birds, including the Cuban crows. Before leaving Havana, we visited the home of Cuba's famous naturalist



Red-legged Thrush by Peter Dunwiddie.

and ornithologist, Orlando Garrido. With field guides in hand, signed by the author, we set off for one of the wildest UNESCO biospheres, Guanahacabibes National Park, on the furthest western tip of Cuba.

From then on we began searching and tallying, from before sunrise to after sunset, more than 160 species of

birds, including almost all of the 30 endemic species. The roads we traveled had some of the most interesting sights: old cars, horse carts, horses and riders, goats, bikers, walkers, locals selling garlic and chickens, and plenty of birds were countable. As we drove the two-lane roads, swirls of Turkey Vultures caught the thermals. Shrines and references to national heroes were as common as the Cattle Egrets.

Moving from place to place, we kept track of the birds, meeting every evening to compare notes and tally what we saw.

We began to realize that Cuba is rich in biodiversity. The number of endemic plant and animal species is said to be as high as 40%; there are over 350 recorded bird

species. In Guanahacabibes, we saw the Bee Hummingbird, but the showiest birds were a flock of Spindalis, a colorful striped-headed tanager. Bright migrant warblers were everywhere, but also

the pretty Cuban Tody and the magnificent Cuban Trogon in vermilion, violet blue, and iridescent green. My favorite bird was the Great Lizard Cuckoo. We also counted Cuban Grassquits, Yellow-faced Grassquits, and Pygmy Owls.

In the Sierra de los Organos, we found the Cuban Solitaire, known as Cuba's best singer, and the Giant Kingbird. In Cienaga de Zapata National Park, we found the Bare-legged Owl, Ferdinandina's flicker, the rare Zapata Wren, and the pretty Zapata Sparrow. In other areas we saw the Cuban Gnatcatcher, the Oriente Warbler, and the Thick-billed Vireo. It is satisfying that the bird data is shared with American and Cuban conservationists cooperatively as part of an ongoing census of migratory and endemic birds.

Cuba is certainly a country that is haunting in so many ways. It will stir the emotions even after leaving this beautiful island that has such remarkable flora and fauna.



Cuban Pygmy Owl and Cuban Emerald Hummingbird by David Dunwiddie.



Birding in Yellowstone

In lieu of visiting Yellowstone National Park in early September for the fourth consecutive year, I will find solace by reminiscing via this article about my birding experiences during those visits. If you are planning a visit to Yellowstone National Park or would like to peruse what birds you may encounter, the following is a link to a checklist of birds you might see: <https://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/nature/upload/BirdChecklist2014.pdf>.



Osprey nesting in the Grand Canyon of Yellowstone by Carole Hossan.

Bird sighting records have been kept in Yellowstone National Park since its establishment in 1872. Please note that use of audio bird calls is illegal in our National Parks.

Trumpeter Swans, Ospreys, and Bald Eagles were the stand-out species of the 20-plus species usually observed during hiking. However,

Yellowstone has 285 documented species with roughly 150 species nesting in the park.

During the first visit in 2013, I saw a pair of Sandhill Cranes flying over the Yellowstone River in which several Trumpeter Swans were stirring up silt. My first viewing of Old Faithful's eruption with the accompaniment of Mountain Bluebirds and a large American Bison bull provided subject matter for me to create a painting for an exhibition at the Community Creative Center in Fort Collins.

In 2015, I saw Trumpeter Swans meticulously preening. Trumpeter Swans are full time park residents, and are listed as uncommon. The Yellowstone National Park website lists the Trumpeter Swan and the Common Loon as species of concern. Species of concern is a rather loose term for species that might need concentrated conservation actions depending on population health and types, and degree of threats.

I saw Ospreys every year at a nest on top of a jutting



Trumpeter Swans in the Yellowstone River by Carole Hossan.

rock in the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. Possibly the remaining Ospreys were fledged adolescents whose parents had moved on.

The Bald Eagle, like the Osprey, is in the common category on the Yellowstone bird checklist; I saw them on every visit. During a walk in 2015 along the shore of Yellowstone Lake, I was treated to a long visit with an immature Bald Eagle that was perched atop a tall tree overlooking Lake Yellowstone.

A favorite birding moment from last year occurred at the West Thumb Geyser Basin: the weather was cool, cloudy, and windy, which seemed to drive several Mountain Bluebirds and a small flock of White-crowned Sparrows into a temporary state of whirling der-vish insanity.



Immature Bald Eagle by Carole Hossan.

A closing tip for how to bird when the weather is inclement: visit the Fishing Bridge Museum and Visitor Center! Inside this 1931 national park rustic architectural gem, you will find specimens, mounted by Carl Russell, of a variety of birds that may be found in Yellowstone, and that hold perfectly still for your photographs.



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. Inquire with the FCAS field trip coordinator (John Shenot) or the trip leader named below if you need to borrow binoculars. 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 for more information and updates. RSVP strongly encouraged.

Sept. 5, Monday (Labor Day), McMurry Natural Area. Leader: John Shenot, johnshenot@gmail.com or 802-595-1669. McMurry Natural Area is better known to anglers than birders, as it has more fish diversity than any other city natural area. But it has a nice mix of bird habitat in a small area and easy level trails. It's a good place for beginners to learn about common birds, but some exciting rarities have also been found here in the past. Meet at 7 a.m. in the river access parking lot on the west side of N. Shields Street just north of the Poudre River bridge.

Sept. 11, 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



White-tailed Ptarmigan in Rocky Mountain National Park by Emily Chetelat.

a.m. in the parking lot. Call for any change. Dates and times for future surveys are as follows: Oct. 9, Sunday, 7:30 a.m.; Nov. 13, Sunday, 7:30 a.m.; and Dec. 11, Sunday, 8 a.m.

Oct. 2, Sunday, Wyoming Hereford Ranch. Leader: Irene Fortune, irene.fortune@msn.com, 970-613-0966. This ranch, located on the outskirts of Cheyenne, is a favorite destination among Cheyenne-area birders and an Audubon-designated "Important Bird Area." It offers a variety of habitats

that can attract fall migrants and the owners welcome birders. Meet at the north end of the Harmony Road Park and Ride at 6 a.m. to carpool to the ranch, or call Irene to make other arrangements.

Guatemala—Tikal Excursion, Nov. 5–13



Pink-headed Warbler by Claudia Avendano.

This November, join fellow Auduboners in experiencing the mystique of Guatemala's highland volcanoes and rainforests at the breathtaking Mayan ruins of Tikal National Park. Quetzal Tours is offering an eight-day, relaxed-pace birding and nature photography adventure, led by

Guatemala's premier bilingual birding guide, Claudia Avendaño, co-author of the *Aves de Guatemala*, an Annotated Checklist.

Not only will this be a unique experience at a low price (just \$2,500 per person), but the event also serves as a fundraiser for FCAS. Visit locations such as Los Tar-

rales Reserve and Antigua, as well as Tikal. Expect to see Toucans, Motmots, Trogons, Woodcreepers, Sabrewings, and hundreds of other species in the land of the Mayan indigenous peoples. The tour is limited to six people. For more information, contact Nick Komar at info@quetzal-tours.com, or 970-449-3645.

Field Trip News

FCAS recently received a generous grant from National Audubon that enabled us to purchase four extra pairs of binoculars. Our goal is to encourage people that don't own binoculars to attend our field trips. Two of the pairs are small and light, and suitable for use by children. If you or someone you know wants to borrow binoculars for one of our field trips, please contact me or the trip leader in advance and we will make it happen. We also will make our new binoculars available for community, social, and educational events that are consistent with FCAS' mission and strategic plans.



At last March's meeting of the FCAS Board, the decision was made that we would once again try to organize a Birdathon Fund raiser, historically a major source of funds for the chapter. We announced the challenge Birdathon at the March program meeting and also started to collect pledges at that time. At the April



Western Tanager by Helmut Retzer.

board meeting, president John Shenot indicated that it would be great if our website would allow Birdathon teams and members to register, and allow donors to make their pledges. Being a sucker for punishment, I volunteered to be the Birdathon coordinator and develop the information to be included on our chapter website. Our webmaster happens to be my oldest son, Scott, who also is a paid contractor with FCAS. Scott went to work, and after several glitches were corrected, we started to receive both pledges and

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Komar's team tallied the highest number of unique species, i.e., those species observed by just one team. Irene Fortune's four-person team obtained the highest species count of 135 species. Prizes for those two teams will be presented at the September program meeting.

The results of the Birdathon were astounding. The board members were totally taken aback (and thrilled) by the number of pledges made. Even more astounding was the level of participation and the value of the pledges for the 10-day count period of May 13-22: (1) seven teams; (2) 22 team members, two served on two teams;



Nick Komar's team (from left): Nick Komar, John and Ann Reichhardt, Forrest Luke, and Nora and Jack Jones. Photo taken at Canyon, Baca County, CO.



Birdathon team of Doug Swartz and John Shenot.

Birdathon team registrations through the website.

We found that because of the late start in organizing this year's Birdathon, there were some ground rules overlooked. Six of the seven teams counted species in Larimer and Weld counties, while Nick Komar conducted a birding tour to southeast Colorado and convinced some of his clientele to support the Birdathon. Hence

(3) 222 species observed; (4) 50 unique species seen, by one team; (5) 74 donations; (6) 68 donors, six donors made two donations; (7) \$5,189 pledged; (8) \$5,050 received to date; (9) \$198.50 pledges still outstanding; and (10) \$5,248 potential income.

A more complete summary of results will appear on the website in the near future.

The members of the FCAS Board wish to thank all those who supported this year's Birdathon effort with their time and/or financial contributions.



Great-horned Owl chicks by Helmut Retzer.

In Memorium: Dr. Ronald A. Ryder, Feb. 3, 1918–Aug. 2, 2016

by Bill Miller



It is with great sadness that we announce to the FCAS membership the passing of Dr. Ronald A. Ryder, a retired CSU Professor of Wildlife Biology. We know that many current and former members of FCAS were either students of Ron at one time or another, or knew Ron through an association with his many projects and activities.

Dr. Ryder initiated the Breeding Bird Survey in Colorado as its first state coordinator and recruited the first route-runners. This effort led to the publishing of the first Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas. He also spearheaded the search for Boreal Owls on Cameron Pass, confirming breeding at that location.

My path crossed with Ron's over the years as I attended seminars, Christmas Bird Counts, and field trips to the Rawhide Power Plant where Ron was an environmental consultant.

The following are just a few of the comments gleaned from emails and other sources:

"He advanced much in the ways of Colorado ornithology with his studies and education of others."—*Rebecca Kosten and all at Colorado Birding Society*

"The wonderful thing about Ron Ryder was that he encouraged everyone who had an interest in wildlife—professional biologists, citizen scientists, plain beginners. He provided encouragement to anyone starting or conducting any constructive wildlife project... I always thought of him as the center of Colorado's ornithological pulse. His legion of contributions did and still enriches our field ornithology in Colorado."—*Hugh Kingery, Franktown, CO*

"Dr. Ryder conducted the earliest Fort Collins Christmas Bird Counts—sometimes on skis, no less!"—*Meredith Morris, a deceased neighbor of Bill Miller*

"...before there was Google, there was 'Ask Ron'."—*Dale Hein, at Dr. Ryder's memorial service*

"Dr. Ryder was the original founder' of the Fort Collins Bird Club in 1962...this morphed into the Fort Collins Audubon Society (in 1973)."—*Clait E. Braun, Tucson, AZ*

A Couple More Birdathon Photos



Broad-winged Hawk by Nick Komar.



Marsh Wren by Bill Miller.



Fort Collins Audubon Society
PO Box 271968
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- 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
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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.