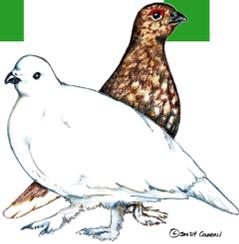


# PTARMIGAN



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.

September 2017

Volume 48, Issue 6

**FCAS Presents: Luke George**

**Science Director, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies**

**“Brown-capped Rosy-Finches: Sirens of the Mountain Tops”**

**Thursday, September 14**

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

**Social Time: 7 p.m.; Program 7:20 p.m.**

Brown-capped Rosy-Finches (*Leucosticte australis*) nest at higher elevations than any other bird species in the United States, and their breeding distribution is almost entirely limited to Colorado. They spend most of the year above tree line, feeding on seeds and insects on snow fields and in short tundra vegetation, moving to lower elevations for short periods during winter storms. Despite residing in an almost pristine environment for most of the year, Brown-capped



**Brown-capped Rosy-Finch by Joel Such.**

Rosy-Finches have declined by as much as 95% over the past 50 years and, unfortunately, we don't know why. The Bird Conservancy of the Rockies in collaboration with the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, the University of California at Santa Cruz, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Forest Service is initiating a research program

to better understand the causes of their decline. Luke George will summarize the little information we currently know about Rosy-Finches and our plans for future research.

Luke has spent a lifetime studying birds across North America. His research has focused on songbird ecology, demography, habitat selection, and conservation, but he has worked on a variety of species including Greater Sage-Grouse, Golden Eagles, Northern Spotted Owls, and small mammals.

In addition to his role as Science Director at the Bird Conservancy, he currently is teaching a course in the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology at Colorado State University.

Join us on September 14 at the Fort Collins Senior Center for this free program. The public is welcomed.

## Welcome New National Members

FCAS welcomes new National Audubon Society members by sending one complimentary copy 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. 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).

Welcome back! I hope everyone had a great summer. One of my highlights was a visit from Heidi and Chuck, close friends from Wisconsin. Heidi is an avid novice birder, still learning to ID birds, but exceptionally observant. She was eager to see some Colorado birds that can't be found in Wisconsin. One day we drove up the Poudre for a day in the mountains. Although the birds that day were few and far between, I was determined to entertain Heidi and I had a backup plan. So, on the way home, we stopped at one of those small resort businesses that keeps hummingbird feeders out front. The feeders were swarming with Broad-tailed Hummingbirds. Heidi stood in their midst, mesmerized, even giddy. "They're like faeries!" she said. "I'm surrounded by faeries!" I told her to be on the lookout for any that looked a little different, and it was Heidi who spotted a lone Rufous Hummingbird. I was almost as mesmerized as Heidi, and my wife and Chuck enjoyed it too. Later Heidi posted a hummingbird video on Facebook with the caption: "And today I found my happy place."

It's so easy to become bored with the beauty of the commonplace. Sometimes it takes fresh eyes and a fresh perspective to remind us of all that nature can offer, but this is a gift we all can give. We can open other people's eyes—neighbors, co-workers, relatives, and especially kids—to the beauty of the commonplace. The joy of this kind of experience is available to each of us, almost every day, right outside our door. In my backyard, on late summer afternoons, I enjoy watching dragonflies buzzing overhead. Swallows and chimney swifts dance on unseen winds. Bees and insects feed in the herb gar-

den. The closer I look, the more interesting it becomes. There probably isn't a "rare" creature anywhere in sight, but searching for rarity and novelty are only one way to find happiness. Enjoying what's there is another.

My advice to you is to make a habit of observing and enjoying the commonplace. You don't have to understand it all, or know the names of everything, or study it like a scientist. And it's okay to seek out the rare and exotic. But a true appreciation for nature begins with an appreciation for the commonplace. Perhaps most importantly, I urge you to share your passion and enthusiasm with those around you. It's contagious!



Broad-tailed Hummingbird by Nick Komar.

**FCAS presents.....  
Our 2017 Fundraiser: A Silent Auction**

Including original art and sculptures, classic out-of-print books, field guides, photographic equipment, matted photos, wildlife memorabilia, and many more items.



- October 12, 6:30 p.m., at the Fort Collins Senior Center
- Special Guest Speaker: Kevin Cook
- Coffee, tea, and punch.



You still have time to support FCAS by donating any lightly used books, photographic equipment, or artwork for our silent auction that will go toward promoting birding and sustainable appreciation of our community environment. If you can support our projects by volunteering to help, contact Liz Prussner, [Elizabeth.Prussner@colostate.edu](mailto:Elizabeth.Prussner@colostate.edu). If you have items to donate for the silent auction, contact Hildy Morgan, [hildy.morgan@gmail.com](mailto:hildy.morgan@gmail.com).



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*“The death of democracy is not likely to be an assassination from ambush. It will be a slow extinction from apathy, indifference, and undernourishment.”* —Robert M. Hutchins

*“Since the days of Greece and Rome, when the word ‘citizen’ was a title of honor, we have often seen more emphasis put on the rights of citizenship than on its responsibilities.”* —Robert Kennedy

One hundred ninety-six nations negotiated the Paris Climate Accord. The accord was adopted by consensus on Dec. 12, 2015. As of August 2017, 195 nations have signed the agreement, 159 of which have already ratified it. Three nations have either not signed the agreement or, in the case of the United States, have withdrawn from the agreement. What is a bright light in an otherwise dark time is that numerous American cities and some states have gone on record as saying that



Island nations like Kiribati are particularly vulnerable to rising sea levels (© David Doubilet).

they will live up to the goals of the Paris agreement despite the position taken by the federal government.

The

term, global climate disruption, is a more accurate description of what is happening, instead of global warming. Yes, the earth, overall, is becoming warmer, but it is not doing so uniformly, as in placing a pie in an oven and turning on the heat and letting the pie gradually warm up. Instead, parts of the earth (the arctic) are warming up faster than other parts, and some regions may actually become colder, in the short term.

It has been scientifically shown that the world’s ice sheets are melting at an unprecedented rate. There are 1.4 billion people in Southeast Asia dependent on the water derived from glaciers and snow melt in the Himalayas. A similar situation also is occurring in the mountains of South America, affecting countries such as Peru and Ecuador. Not only are fresh water supplies being threatened, but the runoff is causing the world’s

oceans to rise, threatening to inundate the coastal lands currently occupied by billions of people. In fact, some island nations will become totally submerged.

Many people have yet to grasp the other impacts that global climate disruption will cause. Increasing temperatures allows more insects to infest forests and crops; the pine bark beetle in Colorado is one case. Bird wintering



A farmer in Ethiopia surveys crops decimated by drought (© Peter Essick/Aurora Photos).

ranges already have shown some northward shifting. Spring migration is occurring earlier, with birds arriving on nesting grounds before the food stuff has matured. Drought will affect increasing areas of the earth’s surface.

What is extremely troubling to me is that the current administration and the conservative elements of both the U.S. Senate and House claim that human activity does not contribute to global climate disruption, despite what 98.5% of the scientific community say. I can only conjecture what the rationale is behind this thinking. I cannot stress the importance for voters to be more astute and seek to understand the values held by candidates for positions of great responsibility. It is no longer valid to vote in a particular fashion just because.... We must become better informed and make sound decisions when electing our leaders.

### FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Susan Barbour  
Robert Blinderman  
Sirena Brownlee  
Thomas Butler  
Susan Degutz  
Lauren DeRosa  
Kathleen Dowd

Vincent Griesemer  
Melannie Hartman  
James Hayes  
Paul W. Husted  
Dorothy Leising  
Jean Locken  
Jane Low

Kerry Miller  
Pam Parish  
Laurie Paulik  
Judith Sanborn  
Jenelle Sharpley  
Lawrence Tucci  
Corinne Wieben  
Sandra Winkler

**Thank you for your membership!**



**We Built It . . . And They Did Come!**

(All photos are from the Greyrock infrared nest box camera, rendered as grayscale images.)

Good news on the nesting front at Greyrock Commons! As reported in last May's *Ptarmigan*, it appeared that a pair of American Kestrels was bonding to the neighborhood's nest box and had begun sleeping in there by late March. Since then, four eggs were laid over a 10-day period ending May 25, all eggs hatched on June 20, and four newly minted kestrels fledged July 8-9. In the 10 years the box has been up, this was the latest nesting cycle by a week. This is the sixth successful nest, with a total of 25 birds fledging.

The bad news: I was traveling for two months and missed most of the action! Thanks to Willie Schreurs, who monitored the nest box camera and kept the neighborhood posted during that period.

box" that takes videos from more than one angle, and includes a microphone and temperature sensors. While the Czech smart nest boxes were primarily used to record Boreal Owl parenting, the researchers hope the device can be used to educate students and the public. To date the Czech researchers have set up more than 30 smart nest boxes around the Czech Republic and Poland to record owls and other birds.

*Audubon* reports that the video clips are played in classrooms to show the "daily drama of avian families," that includes nest building, chick care, and the unfortunate demise of some chicks. The Czech researchers hope to introduce the smart nest box in the United States next year.



Kestrels at 19-days old.

While Doug and other Greyrock residents have kept us abreast with local video data, *Audubon's* summer 2017 issue reported that an ecologist at Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague developed a "smart nest



Kestrels at 12 days old.



Kestrels at 23-days old.



## 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](http://fortcollinsaudubon.org) for more information and updates. RSVP strongly encouraged.

**Sept. 10, Sunday, 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 on the second Sunday of each month. All levels are welcome. Meet at 7 a.m. in the parking lot. Call for any change. Dates and times for future surveys are: Oct. 8, 7:30 a.m.; Nov. 12, 7:30 a.m.; Dec. 10, 8 a.m.

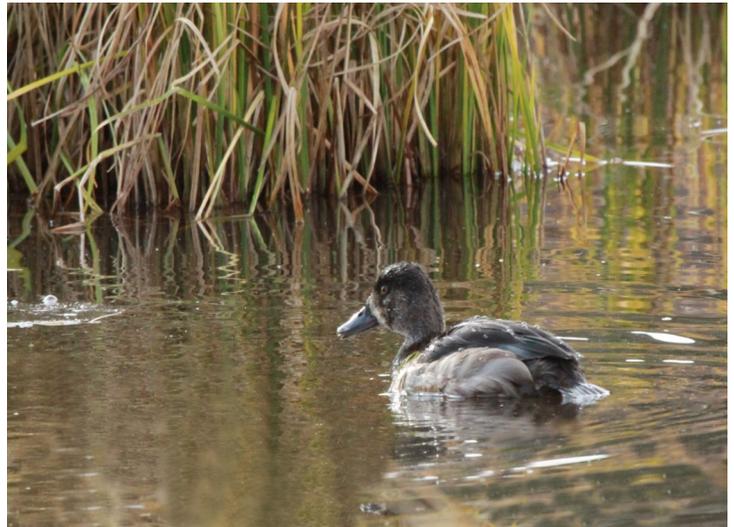
**Sept. 16, Saturday, Eagle's Nest Open Space.** Leader: John Shenot, [johnshenot@gmail.com](mailto:johnshenot@gmail.com), 802-595-

1669. This open space in Livermore offers a combination of grasslands, foothills scrub, and riparian habitat. It receives relatively little attention from birders, but Golden Eagles successfully bred here this summer. Attendees should view this field trip primarily as a hike, with the possibility of some interesting birds. We'll walk about 3.4 miles (round trip), with a break halfway through for snacks or lunch. The terrain isn't flat, but there are no long or steep climbs. We'll start from the open space parking lot at 7 a.m. Check with leader for carpooling or if the weather looks questionable.

## June 3 Field Trip Report—Lily Lake, Rocky Mountain National Park

On June 3, 13 FCAS participants enjoyed a beautiful morning in Rocky Mountain National Park. They visited Lily Lake on the east side of the park, then walked the Matthews/Reeser Trail along Lake Estes in Estes Park.

Bird species observed were: Song Sparrow, Ring-necked Duck, Wilson's Warbler, Hammond's Flycatcher, Sora, Chipping Sparrow, Violet-green Swallow, Tree Swallow, Common Raven, Red-winged Blackbird, Brewer's Blackbird, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, White-breasted Nuthatch, Pygmy Nuthatch, Western Tanager (heard), Mallard, and Yellow-rumped Warbler. Along with the bird species seen, Muskrat, Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel, and Colorado Chipmunk also were viewed.



Ring-necked Duck by Ron Harden.



Violet-green Swallow by Ron Harden.

### 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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Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968



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### Membership Application

Join Fort Collins Audubon Society (FCAS), National Audubon Society (NAS), 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](http://www.fortcollinsaudubon.org).