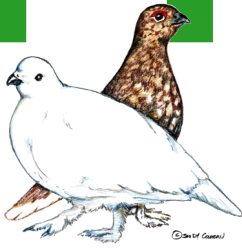


# PTARMIGAN



## 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.

**April 2018**

**Volume 49, Issue 4**

### FCAS Hosts

**F. Boyd Wright, Native Aquatic Species Biologist, Colorado Parks and Wildlife**

**Presenting "From Tadpoles to Egg Masses:**

**A Boreal Toad Reintroduction Success Story in Larimer County"**

**Thursday, April 12**

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

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

Over the past several decades, the boreal toad, a long-lived montane amphibian, has declined drastically in distribution and abundance across the southeastern portion of its native range in the southern Rocky Mountains. This decline is chiefly linked to the spread of a chytrid fungus, which is linked to declines of

certain amphibian species globally. Unfortunately, the few attempts to establish boreal toad breeding populations through translocation (introduction of individuals into suitable breeding habitat where the species is not currently found), has had little success. One exception is a translocation site in a small wetland in Larimer County, near Cameron Pass, where biologists first began introducing boreal toad tadpoles in 2006. A robust adult population of boreal toads now breeds annually at this site and has expanded to use nearby aquatic habitats for breeding. Successful translocation projects, such as this one, may play a critical role in the long-



**Boreal Toad submitted by Boyd Wright.**

term persistence of boreal toads in the face of chytrid fungus.

Boyd Wright's fascination with water and all the creatures that lurk therein was transferred to a formal education in aquatic ecology by earning a degree in Fishery Biology from Colorado State University. He joined the Colorado Division of Wildlife in 2007 as the aquatic biologist for the White

and Yampa River basins, where he managed sport fish populations, conducted native cutthroat trout conservation projects, and assisted in the recovery of endangered fishes of the Upper Colorado River Basin. Boyd moved to his current position with Colorado Parks and Wildlife as Native Aquatic Species Biologist for the Platte Basin in 2011. Currently, he is responsible for advancing conservation priorities for native greenback trout, boreal toads, and non-game native fishes of the eastern plains.

Join us on April 12 at the Fort Collins Senior Center. This program is free and the public is welcomed.

This month I have good news and bad news concerning chapter leadership. First, dispensing with the bad news, Helmut Retzer had to resign from the FCAS Board of Directors shortly after joining us, because he is relocating outside Larimer County and it isn't practical for him

to continue serving. I wish Helmut the best in his new home and note that his resignation leaves one vacancy in our roster of at-large directors.

On a positive note, Lori Pivonka has volunteered to serve

as our chapter's Recording Secretary for the remainder of 2018, and the Board approved her appointment to that office at our March meeting. We're very happy to have a secretary again, and especially to have someone with Lori's enthusiasm and energy. This also means we have filled the two key positions that opened up when long-serving FCAS officers resigned at the end of 2017: Lori replacing Scott Cobble as our Secretary and Joe Polazzi replacing John Waddell as our Treasurer. I must confess I was quite nervous when Scott and John told me they didn't want to continue in those positions, because I wasn't certain we'd find volunteers to replace them and I didn't relish the idea of trying to do everything myself. But once again our membership came through, and we found very capable volunteers to keep the organization sound and keep me sane!



So here we are, entering Spring 2018 with a nearly full Board of Directors and our finances in order. From where I sit, FCAS is in great shape—and with the help of all our volunteers, I'm looking forward to even bigger and better things.

## 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).



Ring-billed Gull (juvenile)  
by Nick Komar.

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Visit us on Facebook:

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

## FCAS Pocket Guide to Local Birds

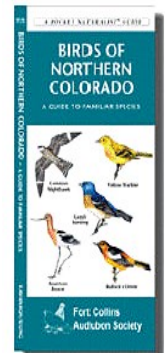
Is available at the following retailers who support our organization with the sales:

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





"A nation can survive its fools, and even the ambitious. But it cannot survive treason from within. An enemy at the gates is less formidable, for he is known and carries his banner openly. But the traitor moves amongst those within the gate freely, his sly whispers rustling through all the alleys, heard in the very halls of government itself." –*Roman statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC)*

## "We Have Met the Enemy and He is Us"

April 1970 to April 2018. It is hard to believe that the first Earth Day was 48 years ago. We, the people, have discovered a lot in that interval, but our corporate-dominated government apparently hasn't. The experts (scientists and engineers) have attempted to alert our government to the disastrous predictions for earth's future if we don't change our ways, to no avail.



Pogo daily strip from Earth Day, 1971  
by Walt Kelly

Many scientists say that the earth has entered into a new epoch, the Anthropocene, which is dominated more by humans than by nature. The Anthropocene occurred with the exponential growth in most measurable parameters, from population growth to energy consumption to new chemicals introduced into the biosphere.

With increased human influence, the rate of species extinction is now 100 to 1,000 times greater than before the spread of humankind. This means that most species alive today will disappear without ever having been recorded.

In a recent article, "The 8 Million Species We Don't Know," Edward O. Wilson remarks that, "The extinction of species by human activity continues to accelerate, fast enough to eliminate more than half of all species by the end of this century."

We have the knowledge to solve the problem of climate change, but need the collective will to make it happen. Extinction of species, on the other hand, is not reversible. A growing number of researchers, including Mr. Wilson, believe that the only way to reverse the extinction crisis is through implementing a radical conservation idea: enlarge the area of Earth devoted to the natural world enough to save the variety of life within it.

Those conservation scientists who support this idea believe we must set aside half the land and sea of the planet as wild and protected from human intervention or activity. This conservation goal, called the Half-

Earth Project, is led by a group of biodiversity and conservation experts. Areas to be protected would be selected according to three criteria: (1) areas judged best in number and rareness of species, (2) hot spot areas known to support a large number of a specific group such as birds or trees, and (3) large areas delineated by geography and vegetation, called ecoregions. Making this selection process more difficult is how little we know about the living environment. It is estimated that there are about 10 million different species. Only slightly more than two million have been classified and given names, leaving approximately eight million species about which we know nothing.

We have the opportunity to support the most biodiverse places in the world. Conservation areas will be



chosen for what species they contain, but they also must be supported by the people living within and around them. To effectively manage these protected habitats, we must learn more about all the species of our planet and their interactions within ecosystems by accelerating the effort to discover, describe, and conduct natural history studies for all the eight million species estimated to exist. As we focus on climate change, we also must act decisively to protect the living world while we still have time.

It would be humanity's ultimate achievement.



## Small Bird, Big Story—The Bobolink

Last May 25 was chilly and overcast. Yet birders entering Reservoir Ridge Natural Area that morning were greeted by the enthusiastic singing and displaying of 10 newly arrived male Bobolinks. They finally had completed an exhausting trip that likely began in the Pampas of Argentina, with a stopover in Venezuela, a non-stop flight across the Gulf and a final push on to Colorado; half of a roughly 12,000 mile round trip. Some Bobolinks continue as far north as southern Canada, one of the longest migrations of any passerine. The females would soon be arriving. No wonder these boys were singing.

In their lives, adult Bobolinks eventually may travel the equivalent of five times around the earth. Unusual in the bird world, they will also molt twice each year, once before each leg of migration, presumably in preparation for their epic flight. Bobolinks fly at night to take advantage of cooler and calmer conditions and are known to cover up to 1,100 miles in one day; especially remarkable considering a Bobolink weighs about an ounce and a half.

The potential benefits of long distance migration are better nesting sites, more abundant food, and lower predation; all resulting in greater breeding success. Yet, benefiting the population as a whole seems little compensation to the individual. What causes a tiny Bobolink to jump off into the unknown? What guides it on its perilous journey? And, how does it know where it needs to go?

Environmental factors such as weather, day length, and food supply may cause a bird to begin migration. Indeed, these stimulate the production of hormones in birds, which in turn change its behavior and physiology and prepare it for migration. Research shows it is genetics, however, that is king, determining both the timing of migration and the direction and duration of the trip. The migratory urge of some night-migrating passerines can be so strong that they will throw themselves in their migratory direction even when confined to a cage. It seems the decision to join in such a dan-

gerous journey isn't a decision at all. The Bobolink appears to be pre-programmed to migrate.

What guides them? Bobolinks depend on several abilities to find their way. Studies indicate some night flyers navigate by the stars and may actually learn the night sky, the North Star, and constellations, while

still in the nest. However, Bobolinks seem to have an edge, an avian magnetic compass. They have minute amounts of magnetite in their nasal tissues and beak, allowing them to use information from the earth's geomagnetic field for orientation.

Finally, how did Bobolinks learn where to go? There are several theories for the origins of long distance bird migration. One popular theory focuses on the end of the ice age when birds were confined to the equatorial belt. As glaciers retreated, birds began temporarily traveling north to breed, returning to their tropical homes as winter approached. As glaciers continued to retreat, optimal breeding grounds moved incrementally farther north and the birds' journeys became longer. Giving support to this theory are the many North American passerines that have their ge-

netic roots in the tropics. Simplistically speaking, through millennia, their migratory paths became a part of their DNA.

We're fortunate to see Bobolinks in Larimer County. Their numbers have declined in the United States by 65% since 1965. Bobolinks are ground nesters who need unplowed grasslands and hayfields, one of the most threatened habitats here and in Argentina.

Contact Bobbie at [bobbietilmant@comcast.net](mailto:bobbietilmant@comcast.net) for more information and references.



Bobolink by David Leatherman.



Welcome  
To  
Spring!





## Upcoming Field Trips

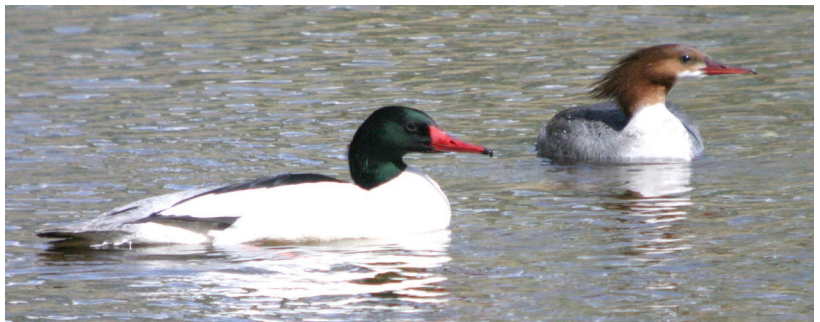
*All field trips are free (unless otherwise noted) and open to the public. All experience levels are welcome. Bring snacks or lunch, water, binoculars, and spotting scopes. Inquire with the FCAS field trip coordinator (Sirena Brownlee) or the trip leader named below to borrow binoculars. Please understand 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.*

**April 8, 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 May 13 at 6:30 a.m. and June 10 at 6:30 a.m.



Greetings from a cousin in Valdez, Alaska.  
Willow Ptarmigan by Laura Grant.

**April 14, Saturday, Pineridge Natural Area.** Leader: Sirena Brownlee, [sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com](mailto:sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com), 970-980-6184. Meet at 7 a.m. for an early morning walk on the 3-mile upper forested trail loop to listen for resident birds singing and starting courtship. We'll scope out the lake for rare gulls and other waterfowl. Meet at the parking lot on the north side of 42C (Maxwell Natural Area parking lot, not the Dixon Reservoir parking lot).



Common Mergansers by Ron Harden.



American Dipper with caddis fly prey  
by Ron Harden.

## FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Barb Adams  
Judith Ann Balice  
Robert Buderman  
Jennifer Griffin  
Kathleen Hardy  
James Hayes

Sue Kenney  
Nicholas Komar/Quetzal Tours  
Kristin Long  
Susan Massa  
Jessie Meschievitz  
Laurie Paulik

Phil Phelan  
Anne Saunders  
James Shover  
Patricia Stinson  
Austen Stone  
Doug Swartz  
Lisa Voelker

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  
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### 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).