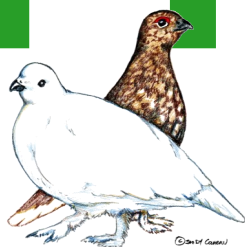


PTARMIGAN



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.

May 2018

Volume 49, Issue 5

FCAS Hosts

Kristen Nelson, Coordinator, The Prairie Dog Coalition and Katherine Jordan, Intern

Presenting: The Connection: Prairie Dogs and Birds

Thursday, May 10

Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Dr.

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

Prairie dogs are an ecologically important component of the short grass prairie. They are listed as a keystone species, meaning that they influence both living and nonliving components of the ecosystem. Without them, other species and ecological processes suffer and, currently, their numbers are critically low. Species that are impacted by their decline are: burrowing owls, ferruginous hawks, mountain plovers, and many more. Prairie

Dog Coalition (PDC) of The Humane Society works to preserve these important species, not only for the current health of the prairie, but for generations to come. Kristen Nelson and Katherine Jordan of the PDC will present a brief discussion of the characteristics of prairie dogs and the many myths and situations that have led to their decline. They will include how key bird species are connected to prairie dogs and how they are affected by prairie dog decline, and what can be done to protect this ecosystem that is supported and supports these different species.



Black-tailed Prairie Dogs by Kristen Nelson.

Kristen Nelson graduated with a bachelor's in music therapy from Utah State University; however, her love for both social justice and animals led her to pursue a different career path. She obtained a master's degree in social work with a concentration in conservation, community leadership, and animal-assisted social work. She completed another degree in Conservation Leadership at Colorado State University, look-

ing into the social and psychological factors affecting people's behavior toward wildlife, particularly prairie dogs.

Katherine Jordan currently is an intern for the PDC and attends the graduate school of social work at the University of Denver, with a concentration in sustainable development and global practice. She is completing certification in animal-assisted social work, equine-assisted therapy for mental health professionals, and equine specialist in mental health and learning.

Join us on May 10 at the Fort Collins Senior Center for this program that is free and open to the public.

"To a person uninstructed in natural history, his country or seaside stroll is a walk through a gallery filled with wonderful works of art, nine-tenths of which have their faces turned to the wall." —Thomas Huxley, On the Educational Value of the Natural History Sciences (1854).

Perhaps you've noticed a reference on our website or membership application forms to something called the Alex Cringan Fund. Dr. Alex Cringan was a Colorado State University Professor of Wildlife Biology, a founding member and past president of FCAS, a frequent FCAS field trip leader, and a friend and role model for many FCAS members. He was instrumental in the early development of Gustav Swanson Natural Area in Fort Collins and the initiation of the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas. Dr. Cringan passed away in October 2012.

Shortly after his passing, FCAS created the Alex Cringan Fund to provide small grants for natural history educational purposes. We can use Cringan Fund donations to support teachers who want to provide natural history education in their classrooms, or students who wish to pursue extracurricular educational opportunities.

Natural history education is fundamental to the mission of FCAS and, for that matter, fundamental to the future of humanity. We have a new Education Committee Chair in 2018, Barb Patterson, who is chock full of ideas and enthusiasm. Barb has recruited a great group of volunteers for her committee. Now, I'm hoping to put more money in the Cringan Fund so our Education Committee can offer more and bigger grants to



educators and students in our community. Many of you have generously donated to this fund already, but this month I want to encourage everyone to consider a donation—even if, like me, you never met Dr. Cringan.

Have a great summer!



Remember that *The Ptarmigan* is not printed in June, July, and August.
See you in September!

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Visit us on Facebook:

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

FCAS Pocket Guide to Local Birds

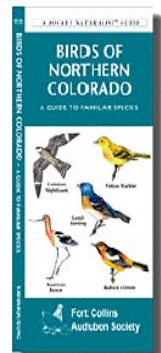
Is available at the following retailers who support our organization with the sales:

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



Celebrating Sandhill Cranes

Each year in March an ancient migration of Sandhill Cranes takes place. When flying in groups, the sound of their call carries for up to one mile and is haunting, beautiful, and unforgettable. Cranes have an annual stopover in southern Colorado, mainly at the San Luis Valley (SLV) National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) complex. This migration was documented 3,000 years ago by native dwellers with a well-hidden petroglyph recently discovered in the SLV. The petroglyph depicts what appears to be a crane. This ancient artwork indicates their migration is a ritual that has occurred for thousands of years, possibly even longer.

The migrating Rocky Mountain population is composed mostly of Greater Sandhill Cranes (23,000–25,000 birds), who actually spend more time in the SLV than their breeding sites in the greater Yellowstone area or their wintering areas in the

night with their feet in water; thus their preference for shallow water wetlands.

While visiting the SLV, much of their diet is actually grain provided by the combined efforts of local farmers and Coors Brewing. Coors annually donates hundreds of pounds of organic barley seed for farmers to plant in their fields. When cranes begin arriving in February/March, the barley fields are cut by the farmers, which provides nutritious food for the cranes. Without this grain, the habitat today could not support this number of birds.

Cranes mate for life and pair-bonds typically last for many years. When a mate dies, the surviving crane will find a new mate. During breed-

ing season the cranes perform elaborate dancing displays. Many of their moves have been documented and defined by crane experts into a language of sorts.

During their stopover in the SLV, the town of Monte Vista holds a Crane Festival (2018 was the 35th annual) to celebrate the return of these magnificent birds. The local residents do a tremendous job of providing crane viewing tours, photography workshops, a craft/nature fair, and evening programs with educational speakers and films. I urge you to put this small but well done festival on your bucket list of birding experiences!



Petroglyph of a Sandhill Crane
by Joe Crane.



Sandhill Cranes courtesy of Monte Vista Crane Festival.

Bosque del Apache NWR in southern New Mexico. These cranes spend most of their lives in freshwater wetlands throughout the Rockies. While visiting the refuge complex, they spend their days in fields eating or in a pasture “loafing,” and their nights roosting in the SLV refuge wetlands.

Interestingly, cranes are different from herons in that their foot track is “game bird” style. Cranes do not have a back toe that would allow them to grasp a branch for roosting in a tree as do herons. Instead, they roost at



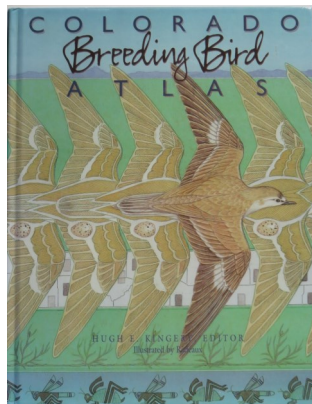
Sandhill Cranes courtesy of Monte Vista Crane Festival.



Forward into the Past

During my first visit to Fort Collins in early November 2003, I saw a Northern Cardinal. I was thrilled to have my first ever sight of that beautiful red bird and assumed that Northern Cardinals were typical residents of Fort Collins. After moving here, I eventually learned that the Northern Cardinal is a rather uncommon bird in Colorado. Now, thanks to having the two volume set of *Birds of Colorado* by A. Bailey and R. Niedrach of the Denver Museum of National History (published in 1965) and *Colorado Birds* by R. Andrews and R. Righter (published in 1992), and the first and second *Colorado Breeding Bird Atlases* (published respectively in 1998 and 2016), I now

can go backward and forward in time and discover which species have risen in numbers, which species have declined, and which new species have made Colorado their home.



Life on earth is constantly changing; geography, water sources, and life forms emerge, evolve, adapt, or sometimes disappear. Sometimes change takes eons; sometimes it takes moments. In our own time, we are witnessing climate change as it grows measurably warmer. Some species will thrive and expand their turf and others will not. Alpine species, such as Brown-capped Rosy-Finches and White-tailed

Ptarmigans, will suffer as a warmer climate pushes different species of vegetation upward, changing their habitat. Could climate change be why we are having more visitors from warmer climes, such as a Harris's Hawk, a

Vermillion Flycatcher, and increased breeding success of the Curved-bill Thrasher?

It is fascinating to look through the books previously mentioned to learn about past and present bird species in Colorado. For example, I had assumed that the Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*) was a relatively recent dweller in Colorado. However, in *Birds of Colorado* it was called "formerly uncommon," and the first record of it was in Yuma County in 1905.

Colorado has at least two species that were not documented until the second *Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas*: the White-winged Dove and the seemingly ubiquitous



Eurasian Collared-Doves by Carole Hossan.

Eurasian Collared-Dove. The White-winged Dove was listed as a casual visitor to Colorado in 1965, but now breeds mostly in urban environments in eastern Colorado. The Eurasian Collared-Dove, which originated in India, initially entered the United States in Florida, first appearing in Colorado in 1996. These successful invasions prompted me to look up the Spotted Dove (*Streptopelia chinensis*), a species of dove I was seeing in my back yard during my last several years in Southern California. I wanted to discover if it would be leading the next dove invasion of Colorado. You can rest easy—although the Spotted Dove was introduced into Los Angeles in 1917, it has stayed within California boundaries and currently is declining.

FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Barbara Benik	Paul Husted
Bob Blinderman	Julia Jordan
F. Jay Breidt	Monique & Sonny
Sean Caufield	Jorgensen
Ann Donoghue	Thomas Lynch
Andrew Goris	Susan Peterson
Margaret S. Grant	Scott Powell
David Hartley	April Whicker

Thank you for your membership!

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*, 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.



Upcoming Field Trips

All field trips are free (unless otherwise noted) and open to the public. All experience levels are welcome. Inquire with the FCAS field trip coordinator (Sirena Brownlee), the trip leader named below, or the website (fortcollinsaudubon.org) prior to the day of the trip to check for any changes in dates, meeting times, or locations. This is particularly important during the summer as The Ptarmigan is not printed in June, July, or August.

May 11, Friday, Sylvan Dale Ranch. Leader: Denise Bretting, dbretting@swloveland.com or call 970-669-8095 or 669-1185 to reserve your spot. Start time: 7 a.m. We will meet in the Hilltop parking lot at Sylvan Dale Ranch (Highway 34, at the mouth of the Big Thompson Canyon). To get to the Hilltop parking lot, take main road through the ranch over the river, up the hill, turn right at the dead end and follow the dirt road to the end where there is a parking area. Look for birds gathered. We will explore Sulzer Gulch, the Big Thompson River corridor, and Ranch grounds. Waivers need to be signed upon arrival.

May 13, Sunday, Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey. Leader: Denise Bretting, dbretting@swloveland.com, 970-669-1185 or 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 6:30 a.m. in the parking lot. Call for any change. Future dates are: June 10, July 8, and Aug. 12; all meet at 6:30 a.m.

May 18, Friday, Fossil Creek Reservoir. Leader: Sirena Brownlee, sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com or 970-980-6184. Meet at parking lot at 6 p.m. for a two-hour evening bird walk to view waterfowl and returning grassland and marsh birds that will be starting to sing. We will have a spotting scope to share, but feel free to bring a scope along if you have one.

May 20, Sunday, Red Mountain Open Space. Leader: Sirena Brownlee, sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com or 970-980-6184. Red Mountain Open Space contains a diversity of avian habitat: rock outcrops, riparian systems, shrub land, grassland, and woodland. Small drainages, including Sand and Boxelder creeks, provide rich riparian habitat and canopy structure. High rock outcrops provide nesting and foraging locations for hunting and perching raptors, including Prairie Falcon, Peregrine Falcon, Cooper's Hawk, Turkey Vulture, Ferruginous Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Barn Owl, Great-horned Owl, Bald Eagle, and Golden Eagle. Meet at 10 a.m. at the trailhead parking area for a three-mile birding hike, with a picnic along the creek on the way back to watch soaring falcons and eagles. Kids are welcome and there will be water for kids to play in. Directions: Take State Hwy 1/Terry Lake Rd to CR15 (aka the Waverly turn off). Go north (left) on CR15, turn west (left)

on CR78, turn north (right) on CR17, turn west (left) on CR80, turn north (right) on CR19 (pass gravel pit on left), turn left on CR21. Go over several cattle guards, traveling about seven miles on CR21, which will end at the trailhead parking area (<https://www.larimer.org/naturalresources/parks/red-mountain>). Bring sunscreen, hat, picnic lunch and water. Limited to 12 people—please register with Sirena.

May 29, Tuesday, Reservoir Ridge Natural Area. Leader: John Shenot, johnshenot@gmail.com, 802-595-

1669. In recent years, this Fort Collins natural area has been the most reliable location in Larimer County to find a favorite species: the Bobolink. Reservoir Ridge also offers good habitat for grassland species such as Grasshopper Sparrows, Blue Grosbeaks, and Western Meadowlarks. Meet at the parking lot on N. Overland Trail at 6 p.m. for an early evening bird walk. Important note: Reservoir Ridge is a

large natural area with three

parking lots. Be sure to meet at the lot on N. Overland Trail, not the lot on Michaud Lane or N. CR 23.

June 2, Saturday, Rocky Mountain National Park Breeding Birds. Leader: Ron Harden, 970-667-3819. Visit a very active breeding bird area in the park and watch sapsuckers, flycatchers, thrush family species, warblers, vireos, other passerine species, and raptors of the montane forest. Possible species include Williamson's and Red-naped Sapsucker, Dusky and Hammond's Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, Mountain Bluebird, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Green-tailed Towhee, Pygmy and White-breasted Nuthatch, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Wilson's and Audubon Warbler. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center parking lot. Bring lunch and water. Carpool from the Visitor Center. An entrance fee is required.

June 16, Saturday, CSU Environmental Learning Center (ELC). Leader: Serena Mangus, 760-497-7143. Breeding season will be in full swing, and the woods and riparian habitat around the ELC should be loaded with resident and migrant breeding birds. Meet at 7 a.m. at the Drake Site parking lot off Environmental Drive. Directions can be found at <https://www.csuelc.org/location/>. Bring bug spray and sunscreen.



Mountain Bluebird by John Shenot.



FCAS/Friends of Lory State Park Partner Environmental Education Programs

All of the following programs are held at Lory State Park.

Thursday, May 31:

Wildscaping 101, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., Lory State Park Visitor Center. Leader: Jamie Weiss, Habitat Hero Coordinator, Audubon Rockies. In this free class, learn how we can positively impact our communities by providing homes and food for wildlife. There is no park entrance fee for this class.

Summer Bird Programs

The following summer bird programs are free of charge with the purchase of a valid state park pass. Day passes are \$7; annual passes, good in all 41 Colorado State Parks are \$70. Purchase passes at the Visitor's Center.



To register for a program, call the Park Visitor's Center at 970-493-1623.

All summer bird programs are held at the Eltuck Group Picnic Area from 10 a.m. to noon. Presentations are one hour, followed by an optional one-hour hike along the Well Gulch Nature Trail to Homestead picnic area (1.5 miles/moderate).

Saturday, June 9: Home Sweet Home: The Art and Architecture of Bird Nests. Leader: Sirena Brownlee, wildlife biologist and avid birder. Co-leaders: Barbara Patterson, FCAS; Karen Wheeler, Friends of Lory State Park.

Saturday, July 14: Nature's Buffet: Plants that Provide Nutrition for Birds. Leader: Dave Leatherman, naturalist, ornithologist; Marcee Camenson. Native Plant Master with Native Plant Society of Colorado. Co-leaders: Barbara Patterson, FCAS; Karen Wheeler, Friends of Lory State Park.

Saturday, August 11: Amazing Journeys: Migrating Birds. Leader: Sirena Brownlee, wildlife biologist and avid birder. Co-leaders: Lori Pivonka, FCAS; Karen Wheeler, Friends of Lory State Park.



Blue Grosbeak by Ron Harden.

Stop by FCAS Educational Booths

FCAS will host educational booths at the following events. Be sure to stop by, or better yet, volunteer!

Poudre RiverFest; Saturday, June 2; 12 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Poudre RiverFest is a free, family-friendly festival in Fort Collins that restores, celebrates, and educates people about the Cache La Poudre River featuring a variety of educational and volunteer activities. It will be held at New Belgium Brewery, 500 Linden Street.

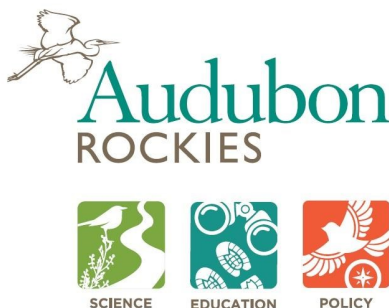
Pleasant Valley Rendezvous; Sunday, June 3; 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The goal is to engage the people of Bellvue and LaPorte in caring for and enjoying their local wildlife area. Historical education of the valley and the importance of the Watson Lake is also a focus. It will be held at Watson Lake Fish Hatchery, 4936 W County Road 52E, Bellvue.



Audubon Rockies Presents: Habitat Hero Workshops

Birds, bees, and butterflies cannot survive in sterile communities. Audubon Rockies' Habitat Hero Program works with partners and community members to make a difference by stitching our fractured landscape back together. Our gardens and backyards provide homes, food sources, and quality of life for people and wildlife. Consider attending one of the following workshops:



Planting Event: Help Plant a Habitat Hero and Water-Smart Garden

The Public Utilities Board in Cheyenne has partnered with Audubon Rockies to plant a Habitat Hero demonstration garden to showcase water smart landscapes and increase wildlife habitat. **June 2**, Cheyenne, interested volunteers should contact Dena at denahoff@cheyennebopu.org or 307-637-6415.

Wildscape Ambassador 201 Workshops (Cost \$10)

May 10, Longmont, register at <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/3362103>.

May 30, Colorado Springs, call 719-574-8058 to register.

Habitat Hero: Wildscaping 101 (Free)

May 31, Fort Collins, register at <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/3373710>.

Habitat Hero Garden Tour (Cost \$20-25). In celebration of Native Plant Week proclaimed by Governor Hickenlooper, Audubon Rockies and Colorado Native Plant Society will present a garden tour that features Habitat Heroes of Fort Collins. These gardens provide homes, food sources, and quality of life for people and wildlife alike, while also benefiting the environment. **June 9**, Fort Collins, register at <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/3333540>.



Audubon ROCKIES



• **BEGINNER BANDING COURSE** •

MAY 23-25

Join us for a 3 day beginner bird banding course! Space is limited to 15 participants. Deadline for registration is May 2nd.

COST \$250 (\$50 Deposit)
CONTACT Zach Hutchinson - zhutchinson@audubon.org
LOCATION Johnstown, CO
TIME 6 AM - 4 PM





Northern Pygmy Owl with a vole prey by Ron Harden.



Bald Eagle by Ron Harden.



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 (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.