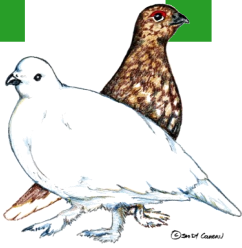


PTARMIGAN



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 2018

Volume 49, Issue 6

FCAS Presents"

Michael Wilson, Rocky Mountain Wolf Project

"Restoring Natural Balance"

Thursday, September 13

Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Dr.

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

Seventy years ago wolves were systematically exterminated from their natural habitat across the west, including the Rocky Mountains of Western Colorado. Without wolves, the natural balance in Colorado was disturbed. Our ecosystem has long suffered due to an over population of elk and deer, in large part because their natural predator, the wolf, was eliminated. Fortunately, opportunity still exists for wolves in Colorado. Our expansive and remote public lands offer the perfect habitat for a gradual reintroduction of wolves into Western Colorado to restore the natural and historical balance. Successful reintroductions, like those in Yellowstone and the Northern Rockies, prove both the benefit and viability of wolf reintroduction.



Wolf by Michael Wilson.

Through careful management, wolves can restore the natural balance in Colorado without placing a significant burden on anyone living, working, or recreating on Colorado's vast public lands.

Michael Wilson joined the Rocky Mountain Wolf Project (RMWP) in 2016 to grow the movement and provide his unique perspective of agriculture and wildlife coexisting peacefully. His work for RMWP primarily is tasked around public speaking, developing educational events, growing the volunteer base, and

community outreach.

Join us on September 13 for this evening to learn more about the RMWP. This program is free and the public is welcomed.

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. See the details on the last page of the newsletter or on our website at www.fortcollinsaudubon.org.

When I was a kid, nothing was more glorious than the start of summer vacation. And almost nothing was more dreaded than the end of summer. I was not one of those kids who looked forward to going back to school to see friends. Going back to school meant waking up early, sitting in one place for hours at a time, and—worst of all—wearing shoes.

How times change! Nowadays, I look forward to the end of summer and the start of fall. My dog sleeps in past 4:30 a.m., cool weather replaces searing heat, the crowds at Rocky Mountain National Park thin out, and songbirds start to migrate. And, after a three-month hiatus, FCAS returns from our “summer vacation” with new editions of *The Ptarmigan*, a stimulating lineup of monthly speakers, and fun field trips.

And that brings me around to this month's main message. Although I support many non-profit organizations, none of the others provides similar benefits. They're all worthy causes, but with FCAS, being a member feels like being a member of a community. It's not just about supporting a good cause. The other members are my friends, and I personally benefit from the services FCAS provides: educational programs, conservation advocacy, and fun outings. I hope you feel the same way and will bring a friend to our next monthly meeting or field trip!



Lesser Goldfinch by John Shenot.

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Visit us on Facebook:

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

FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Marialexia Alfano
Sarah Allely
Rick Barry
Sean Caufield
Joan M. Craig
Nigel Dewing

Diana L. Dwyer
Daniel & Donna Hogan
Marian Nemeth
Daphne O'Grady
Beth Oehlerts
Anne T. Stewart

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

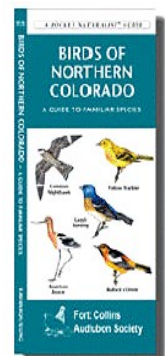
Is available at the following retailers who support our organization with the sales:

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



“Anything else you’re interested in is not going to happen if you can’t breathe the air and drink the water. Don’t sit this one out. Do something. You are by accident of fate alive at an absolutely critical moment in the history of the planet.” —*Carl Sagan*

“The price of apathy towards public affairs is to be ruled by evil men.” —*Plato*

IBA’s Have Been a Long Time Coming, but Worth It

An Important Bird Area (IBA) is defined by the National Audubon Society (NAS) as a site that provides essential habitat to one or more species of birds during some portion of the year. This designation conveys no legal authority over land ownership or its uses and management.

Starting back in 2001, and again in 2002 and 2006, dedicated volunteers inventoried numerous properties along the Cache la Poudre River from I-25 to Watson Lake at Bellvue. Most of the properties were owned by the City of Fort Collins; however, other non-city properties were included, such as CSU’s Environmental Learning Center; Larimer County’s Strauss Cabin area; a segment of the lower Poudre Canyon; and Watson Lake, a CDOW fish hatchery. City-owned areas inventoried included the Arapahoe Bend, Prospect Ponds, Riverbend Ponds, and the North Shields Ponds natural areas, as well as Lee Martinez Park and the Poudre River Trail from E. Prospect Ave to Timberline and from Lemay to Timberline.

A long overdue expression of gratitude is due for the efforts of David Bray, Phil Cafaro, S. Davies, Eric DeFonso, H. Galbraith, Rich Hoyer, Lynne Hull, Joel Hurmence, Diann Johnston, Nick Komar, Ann Molison, and Dick Pillmore. Many hours and foot miles were expended by these FCAS members and interested non-members to collect data on the species observed. The data collected also included any evidence of breeding in the areas surveyed.

Nick Komar and Phil Cafaro then filled out an IBA nomination form for the Poudre Urban River Corridor IBA. On March 31, 2007, the IBA nomination form was faxed under a cover letter from FCAS president Joel Hurmence to Ken Strom of the Audubon Colorado (AC) state office in Denver.

Among his many duties as Director of Bird Conservation, Ken coordinated the efforts of an IBA Review Committee. Around 2010, the NAS closed the AC state office and the IBA nomination lay in limbo.

In 2014, as FCAS Conservation Chair, I resurrected the Poudre IBA by showing copies of the original application to Alison Holloran, Executive Director of Audubon Rockies, a new regional NAS office located in Fort Collins. Alison, in turn, forwarded for review the IBA information to staff of the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies. Their opinion was that the IBA nomination was very appropriate.

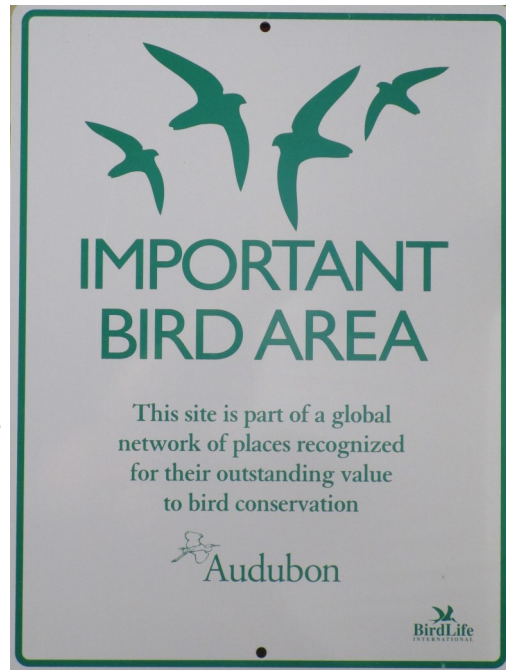
The IBA information was provided to John Stokes, Director, City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Department, and other staff members. Following their review, I took the IBA nomination information to four Fort Collins advisory boards for review and to elicit letters of endorsement to City Council.

Early in 2018, I submitted a draft resolution to Jen Shanahan, Watershed Planner within the Natural Resources Department, who then obtained the approval of the directors of all the departments that managed city-owned properties within the Poudre River Corridor from I-25 to North Taft Hill

Road. Those properties include the Archery Range, two waste water treatment plants and some storm water detention ponds, several parks, and numerous natural areas purchased with the City’s natural area tax monies.

Finally, on Tuesday, June 5, City Council approved the agenda item summary. The next step will be to coordinate with the Natural Resources

Department on the placement of signs provided by Audubon Rockies to identify many of the properties that are open to public visitation.



The (Un) Common Gallinule

Fort Collins was graced this summer by the rare presence of a Common Gallinule (CG) lurking in a marsh in Running Deer Natural Area. The illusive CG rewarded select birders (not me) with a brief glimpse. My interest via reference books was piqued by its re-

bright red facial shield, which turns rusty brown in autumn; the AC has a very small brown facial shield.

The AC has many descriptive nicknames: baldface, blue hen, blue peter, crow-bill, crow-duck, flusterer, hen-bill, ivory-billed coot, mud duck, mud hen, pelick,

pond crow, pull-doo, sea crow, spatterer, shuffler, and water hen. Mud hen was the most common moniker due to the similarity of its sounds to an annoyed hen. The word "coot" goes back to the 1300s when the word "cote" was used for waterfowl of uncertain origins. In 1430, in John Lydgate's *Chronicle of Troy*: "... and yet he was as balde as a coote." Balde referred to the coot's white bill and forehead. By the late 1700s the word coot meant silly person or fool. This may refer to the sometimes comical antics and vocalizations of the AC, or it could refer to the whimsical Ebenezer Scrooge-like visage of the adolescent AC.

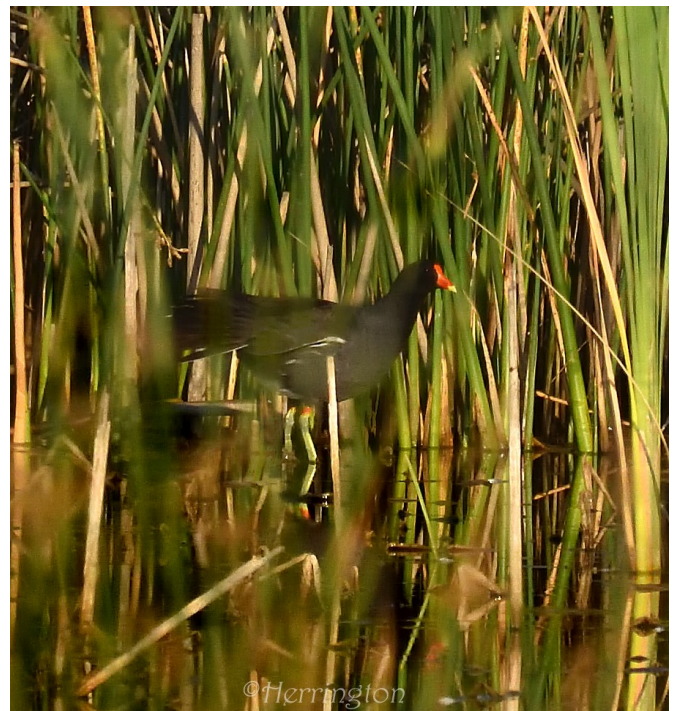
Behaviors in common are: feeding on water vegetation and small creatures such as snails and tadpoles; being irascible toward other birds; building platform nests over water; clumsy takeoffs, but strong flight; and making noises such as shrieks, grunts, and maniacal laughter.



American Coot chick being fed by parent
by Richard A. Herrington.

semblance to the American Coot (AC) and I wanted to explore their similarities and differences. Both are in the order *Gruiformes*, family *Rallidae*. The CG's Latin name is *Gallinula galeata*, which was split from the Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) by the American Ornithologists' Union in July 2011. *Galeata* means helmet or skull-shaped, which is an apt description of its frontal facial shield. The new classification reflects that the CG's territory consists of parts of North and South America instead of the Old World (Europe, Asia, and Africa). The AC's Latin name is *Fulica americana*, literally, American Coot. Its distribution is now remarkably similar to the CG.

The word gallinule appeared in the late 1700s, meaning hen (gallin) plus diminutive (ule) thus "little hen." Both the CG and the slightly larger AC resemble hens. The CG is reclusive, requires more marsh growth and does less diving compared to the AC, whose pelvis and hind limb are modified for diving. Indeed their very large feet are different: the CG has long slender toes which enable it to walk on lily pads and the AC has lobate toes, which helps it swim and dive deeply to capture food. Another difference is the color of their facial shields: during the breeding season, the CG has a



Wading Common Gallinule
by Richard A. Herrington.



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 for more information and updates. RSVP strongly encouraged.

Sunday, Sept. 9, 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 7 a.m. in the parking lot. Call for any change. Future dates: Sunday, Oct. 14, 7:30 a.m.; Sunday, Nov. 11, 7:30 a.m.; and Sunday, Dec. 9, 8 a.m.

Saturday, Sept. 15, Fossil Creek Reservoir. Leader: Nolan Bunting and Sirena Brownlee, sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com or 970-980-6184. Meet at parking lot at 8 a.m. for a two-hour morning walk to view waterfowl that are starting to congregate for migration. We will have a spotting scope to share, but feel free to bring a scope along if you have one.

Friday, Sept. 21, Grandview Cemetery. Leader: Sirena Brownlee sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com or 970-980-6184. In the heart of Old Town Fort Collins, the mature trees in Grandview Cemetery create an urban oasis and a birding hotspot. In fall, the cemetery is a great place to look for fall migrating warblers, thrushes, and other songbirds. Meet at 6:30 p.m. in the parking lot on the south side of Mountain Avenue, just west of S. Bryan Avenue. What a great way to spend a Friday night.



Brown-capped Rosy-Finch by Ron Harden.



Olive-sided Flycatcher by Ron Harden.

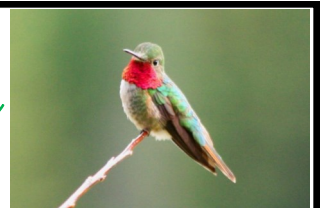
June 2 Field Trip Report: Rocky Mountain National Park

On June 2, FCAS members enjoyed a beautiful morning in Rocky Mountain National Park. The group visited the high altitude tundra, down through the sub-alpine and into the montane forests, after starting at the lower altitude Beaver Meadows Visitor Center.

On the tundra, no Ptarmigan were found, but Brown-capped Rosy-Finches were watched foraging, as were American Pipit, White-crowned Sparrow, and Horned Lark. Descending in altitude, the succession of first sightings were: Yellow-rumped Warbler, American Robin, Mountain Bluebird, Common Raven, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Violet-green Swallow, Pygmy Nuthatch, Western Tanager, Turkey Vulture, Warbling Vireo, House Wren, Western Wood-Peewee, Steller's Jay, Dusky Flycatcher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Mountain Chickadee, Red-naped Sapsucker, Pine Siskin, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Wild Turkey, Red-tailed Hawk, Tree Swallow, Chipping Sparrow, Northern Flicker, Black-billed Magpie, and White-breasted Nuthatch.

Observers included Patricia Cohn, Barbara Jones, Irene Fortune, Diane Kristoff, Christine and Richard Sparks, and Ron Harden.

Welcome Back
Hope you had a
great summer!



Broad-tailed Hummingbird by Nick Komar.



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.

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | New or renewing FCAS Chapter Member
Receive the FCAS <i>Ptarmigan</i> by email | \$ 20 | Name: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | New or renewing FCAS Chapter Member
Receive the FCAS <i>Ptarmigan</i> by mail | \$ 30 | Address: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Lifetime FCAS Chapter Member
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
(natural history education grants) | \$ ____ | Email: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | New NAS member
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
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.