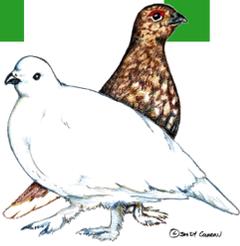


# PTARMIGAN



## 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.

October 2018

Volume 49, Issue 7

### FCAS Hosts

Stephen Jones, Author and Teacher

Presenting: “Magical, Mysterious Milkweed”

Thursday, October 11

Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Dr.

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

In addition to hosting more than 100 million breeding monarch butterflies, milkweeds support a dizzying array of insect life, from day-glo aphids and lime-green mantids to milkweed beetles, jumping spiders, and dozens of dragonfly species. Yet milkweeds are among the most toxic plants growing in our area. Steve Jones will address the questions of how did these plants evolve to ward off excessive consumption and at the same time become a keystone species for maintaining populations of prairie insects? What does the future hold for monarchs in our area and throughout North America? Close-up



Milkweed beetle photo by Steve Jones.

images highlight the beauty and uniqueness of milkweed-insect relationships.

In addition to authoring the books, *The Last Prairie*, *A Sandhills Journal*, and *Owls of Boulder County*, Steve Jones has taught nature classes to children and adults for 38 years and taught in the Boulder Valley Public Schools for 33 years. He currently trains and supervises more than 200 volunteers working on wildlife monitoring projects in Boulder County.

Join us on October 11 at the Fort Collins Senior Center for this program that is free and open to the public.

### 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).

It's that time of year again when I invite FCAS members to consider volunteering to serve on our Board of Directors. At our annual meeting in January, the membership will elect five officers (President, President-Elect, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Recording Secretary) and up to six Directors at Large. The president serves a two-year term, starting immediately after the January meeting. All other positions serve one-year terms.

I want to emphasize that you don't need to be an expert in birding, wildlife, non-profit management, or anything else to serve on the board. The only exception is that we like to have a treasurer who has financial management, accounting, bookkeeping, or related experience.

I also get asked questions about the time commitment required to serve. The answer varies from one board member to the next, but something like six to 10 hours per month is probably the minimum time commitment. Board members volunteer their time in several ways. First, the Board of Directors meets once a month for two hours, every month. Second, board members attend our two-hour monthly membership meetings, which occur only nine times per year. (It is acceptable and commonplace for board members to occasionally miss board and membership meetings, so the possibility of missing some meetings should not stop anyone from volunteering to serve.) Third, officers and directors may spend a few hours each month keeping up with email correspondence related to FCAS business. And fourth, board members share the burden of miscellaneous ac-



tivities such as supporting FCAS outreach (e.g., by attending community events), and monitoring and participating in public policy debates (e.g., by drafting comments on a land use proposal or regulation). The time commitment for these activities is variable and unpredictable, but usually won't exceed 10 hours per month for Directors at Large. The time commitment may be somewhat greater for officers.

If you might be interested in a position on the Board of Directors, please contact me or one of the members of our nominating committee, whose names will be announced at the October 11 monthly meeting. I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have

**FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members**

Gina C Janett  
James Kuhn  
Sue Taigman  
Bruce Vigneault  
John W Waddell

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 CONTACTS**

[Audubon@fortnet.org](mailto:Audubon@fortnet.org)

**President**

John Shenot  
970-682-2551

[johnshenot@gmail.com](mailto:johnshenot@gmail.com)

**Vice President**

Liz Pruessner  
970-484-4371

[fortcollinsaudubonmembership@gmail.com](mailto:fortcollinsaudubonmembership@gmail.com)

**Program Chair**

Jessie Meschievitz  
[jmesch@slbbi.com](mailto:jmesch@slbbi.com)  
970-686-1424

**Field Trip Coordinator**

Sirena Brownlee  
[sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com](mailto:sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com)  
970-669-8095

**Newsletter Editor**

Carol Jones  
970-482-6295

[cjones@cowisp.net](mailto:cjones@cowisp.net)

For other FCAS contacts visit

[www.fortcollinsaudubon.org](http://www.fortcollinsaudubon.org)

Visit us on Facebook:

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

**FCAS Pocket Guide to Local Birds**

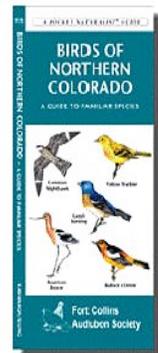
Is available at the following retailers who support our organization with the sales:

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



## unBELIZEable Biodiversity

Belize is situated in the Mesoamerican hotspot and has a high level of both terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity. As a country, Belize is about the same size as the state of Massachusetts and was formed in 1981 when it declared independence from Britain (formerly known as British Honduras). Almost immediately upon declaring its independence, Belize began enacting laws for the



Scarlet Macaw from <http://barebonestours.com/scarlet-macaws-red-bank-belize-tour-christian-bech-macaw-easter-departure/>.

preservation of the country's natural and cultural heritage, including the National Park Systems Act and Wildlife Preservation Act.

It is impressive that more than 25 percent of the land and sea area of Belize has been set aside for conservation within 95 preserves that vary in their purpose and level of protection. It has two wetlands that have been recognized as internationally important, Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary and Temash National Park, and six Important Bird Areas (IBAs) comprising over 7.6 million acres.

From a biodiversity standpoint, Belize is rich in bird species and listed on eBird as having a total of 513 species sighted over six districts throughout the country. What this tells you is the birding opportunities in Belize are indeed "unBeliezeable" as residents like to say! Although Belize is rather small, 160 miles north to south and 70 miles from east to west, good highways are rather limited and it is important to visit many different habitats to find birds, which can take time using rather circuitous routes.

Approximately 20 percent of the bird species in Belize are neotropical migrants from North America; many of these are warblers who winter in the warm Central American climate. As a result of migration to North America, the species you are likely to see varies greatly

depending on time of year and when the migrants leave for their summer breeding grounds in North America. At these times, your target species will be those permanent residents who do not migrate, but complete their life cycle in Belize itself.

In general, the two most sought after birds to see in their natural setting in Belize are the Scarlet Macaw [International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) list: endangered] and the Orange-breasted Falcon (IUCN list: vulnerable), both of which are poached either for the illegal pet trade (Macaw) or for sale on the black-market to falconers in the Middle East.

Even if you don't get to see either of these beautiful birds, with over 500 species already sighted, there are plenty of other birds to experience in Belize at any time of year. Happy Birding!

Recommended Birding resources in Belize: Crystal Paradise Lodge: <http://www.birdinginbelize.com/>. Experienced guide: Jonathan Urbina: <mailto:anibru.feathers@gmail.com>.



Orange-breasted Falcon from <http://www.neotropicalraptors.org/art/en>



Is Your Feeder Killing the Birds You Love?

Fall often means hanging bird feeders and plugging in heated bird baths. It is possible, however, that these items are sickening and even killing the very birds we love. At your feeder have you ever seen a House Finch or American Goldfinch with swollen and or crusty eyes, or growths around eyes, legs or base of beak?

Such symptoms may indicate House Finch Eye Disease (Mycoplasmal conjunctivitis) or Avian Pox. Either condition will make the infected bird miserable. Both diseases can be fatal. When we set out feeders and bird baths that attract large numbers of birds, we potentially create the perfect environment for spreading these and other diseases. Sick birds can infect others by direct contact or depositing the disease-producing bacteria or virus on feeders and baths. Don't fret, there are ways to attract birds to our yard and protect their health.



House Finch with House Finch Eye Disease on a large-port feeder that may help transmit this and other diseases. Photo by Greg Tally.



House Finch with House Finch Eye Disease from [www.thewoodthrushshop.com](http://www.thewoodthrushshop.com).

soapy water is effective, but less so, and removal of debris is critical. It was found that feeders which still contained debris, and washed in soap and water, still had enough bacteria to risk transmission. The debris on the ground under a feeder (seed hulls and droppings) also should be removed.

**Spread the Love (and Feeders) Around**

The likelihood of spreading disease increases when birds crowd and touch. Putting distance between feeders, placing them in different parts of your yard, means less opportunity for a sick bird to come in contact with others.

**Leave Sick Birds Alone**

It is illegal to care for ill or injured wild birds unless under supervision of someone licensed to do so. If a sick bird visits your feeder, the feeder should be cleaned thoroughly. If multiple sick birds are seen, the feeders should be cleaned and removed for several weeks to encourage the birds to disperse.

**Take a "Bird's Eye" Look at the Design of your Feeder**

This past year we watched a sick bird at our feeder. It had scabs around its swollen and lifeless eyes. There it was, standing on the perch and pushing its head into the large port,

taking seed. With each plunge its weepy eyes rubbed the edge of the port, potentially depositing pathogens that could infect the next visiting bird. We have since replaced that feeder (arguably the most common style available) with a metal mesh sunflower feeder that only requires the bird to use the tip of its beak to take seeds and a mixed-seed feeder in which the seed disperses at the base. The folks behind <https://feederwatch.org/> discourage the use of feeders with "head sized" openings if sick birds are seen. If your feeder has similar design flaws, or rough or sharp edges, please consider throwing it out and replacing it with one that does not.



Bird feeder with small ports that may reduce the risk of transmitting House Finch Eye Disease.

The U.S. Geological Society website, <https://www.usgs.gov/> states: "Just because bird feeding is not problem-free does not mean that it is bad or should be stopped. It does mean you have an ethical obligation not to jeopardize wild birds. What is called for is intelligent bird feeding." There are many informative websites on this important subject. Both <https://feederwatch.org/> and <https://www.thespruce.com/> offer helpful advice on cleaning bird baths.



Owls have often been associated with darkness and occasionally with the occult, ghosts, and death. From Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: "Lizard's leg and howlet's wing, for a charm of powerful trouble, like a hell-broth



Great Horned Owl photo by Carole Hossan.

boil and bubble." Interestingly, the word owl comes from a proto-Indo-European verb meaning "to howl." I know if I didn't have access to books about owls and recordings of them, I would have been startled, if not terrified in the dark by hearing overhead the rasping shriek of a Barn Owl (BO) or the eerie whinny of the Eastern Screech-Owl (EASO). Having

been conditioned by various films and especially David Lynch's "Twin Peaks" television series,

hearing the classic nocturnal hoots of two Great Horned Owls (GHOs) (one GHO in a large cottonwood tree in front of my upstairs bedroom, and the other in a tree behind my upstairs bedroom), was enough to give me shivers down my spine despite my recognition of their origin.

However, in my experience the BO holds the scariest title. In addition to its unearthly screeches, it is visually striking. One dark night as I was driving into my unlit alley, I was startled by a white shape that came swooping out of the alley over my car and vanished into the alley across the street. I easily imagined how people could think a BO in flight was a disembodied spirit. Another behavior that could strike fear into the unprepared observer is its defensive posture: head lowered and crouching body with downward spread wings, with the dorsal surface facing the intruder.

It is not surprising that as owls are dusk and/or nocturnal hunters, and that owls have eyes in front of their faces as humans do, that many cultures associated owls with the occult. Some cultures believed that owls were embodiments of deceased humans. In Greek mythology, the owl was associated with Athena, the goddess of wisdom. Many cultures, including ours, ascribe to that view. In Japan, owls are associated with luck and protection from suffering. However, in Kenya, owls are seen as harbingers of death. Although most American Indians considered owls to be bad omens, the Pawnee tribe believed owls were symbols of protection from danger.

We in Fort Collins are fortunate to have BOs, EASOs, and GHOs within our city. These owls help keep the rodent population down as well as providing opportunities to view their behavior. I once saw a GHO flee from



Eastern Screech-Owl owlets photo by Richard Herrington.

American Crows and land on a branch on a large tree trunk in a Natural Area; the GHO's feathers blended so well with the cottonwood tree's bark that the crows could not see it, although it was several feet away from them. Now that's magic!

### Upcoming Field Trips

All field trips are free and open to the public. 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.

**Sunday, Oct. 14, Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey.** Leader: Denise Bretting, [dbretting@swloveland.com](mailto: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 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot. Call for any change. Future dates: Sunday, Nov. 11, 7:30 a.m.; and Sunday, Dec. 9, 8 a.m.

**Saturday, Oct. 20, Running Deer and Cottonwood Hollow Natural Area, 8 a.m.** Leader: Robert Beauchamp, [tyrannusb@gmail.com](mailto:tyrannusb@gmail.com), 970-232-9296. We will explore a few marshes and ponds during this 1.5–2.0 mile saunter through the natural area. All levels are welcome.



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<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).