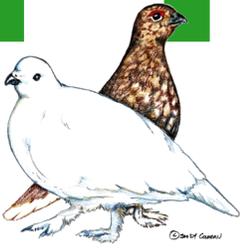


PTARMIGAN



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.

January 2019

Volume 50, Issue 1

FCAS Hosts

David Leatherman: Birder, Entomologist, Writer

Presenting

“Extolling the Natural Wonders of Southeastern Colorado”

Thursday, January 10

Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Dr.

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

Although some think it is a good place for prisons, fracking, wind turbines, pig farms, and water redirection from agriculture to urban, any birder/naturalist who's been in Colorado 10 minutes knows the southeastern corner of our state is good for a lot more. There, where Baca County is pronounced "Backa," amazing natural wonders persist despite harshness in myriad forms. It can snow five feet on New Year's Day, be 90 degrees in February, top 100 degrees for 20 straight summer days, and hurl hail the size of your fist. Dust storms didn't end in the 1930s and 50s. The town of Holly was flattened by a tornado in March. On the right October day, tumbleweeds blowing mindless angles across the road can challenge your ability to keep it between the lines. Hoppers, wind, and drought haunt the dreams of every farmer who dares book his Vegas golf vacation before



Couch's Kingbird from <https://www.audubon.org/>
Photo:by Rolf Nussbaummer.

the harvest. But even so, whether they have the right or not, abundant, resilient, mind-blowing life forms await the observant visitor to Southeast Colorado. In this presentation, Dave will extoll the virtues of southeastern Colorado's biodiversity discovered during 40-plus years, including herps, insects, arachnids, flowers, trees, fungi, crustaceans, mammals and, of course, birds.

Dave served as the forest entomologist for the Colorado State Forest Service from 1974 to 2005 where his major responsibilities included all aspects of Mountain Pine Beetle, teaching, and surveys. He is an avid birder, active in the Colorado Field Ornithologists, has seen 449 species in the state, and has been part of finding four First State Records, including a Couch's Kingbird seen in Lamar last Spring. Join us on January 10 for this program that is free and open to the public.

FCAS welcomes new National Audubon Society members by sending one complimentary copy of our newsletter. 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 it, please support your local chapter and subscribe. See details on the last page of the newsletter or on our website at www.fortcollinsaudubon.org.

My passion for birding frequently gets me out of the house and into northern Colorado's most beautiful places. In the field, I encounter other nature lovers on a regular basis. Sharing tips and chatting with acquaintances (old and new) is often the highlight of my day. But, if you get out there often enough, you sometimes see people—even, gasp(!), fellow birders—doing things they probably shouldn't. So, let's start the new year with a refresher on birding ethics. The American Birding Association offers a comprehensive Code of Ethics at <http://listing.aba.org/ethics/>. I'm going to excerpt (verbatim) some of the most crucial points:

- To avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger, exercise restraint and caution during observation, photography, sound recording, or filming. Limit the use of recordings and other methods of attracting birds, and never use such methods in heavily birded areas or for attracting any species that is threatened, endangered, of special concern, or is rare in your local area. Use artificial light sparingly for filming or photography, especially for close-ups.
- Keep well back from nests and nesting colonies, roosts, display areas, and important feeding sites.
- Before advertising the presence of a rare bird, evaluate the potential for disturbance to the bird, its surroundings, and other people in the area, and proceed only if access can be controlled, disturbance minimized, and permission has been obtained from private landowners. The sites of rare nesting birds should be divulged only to the proper conservation authorities.



Wood Duck drake at Prospect Ponds Natural Area. Photo by John Shenot.

- Stay on roads, trails, and paths where they exist; otherwise, keep habitat disturbance to a minimum. Do not enter private property without the owner's explicit permission.
- Follow all laws, rules, and regulations governing use of roads and public areas.
- Respect the interests, rights, and skills of fellow birders, as well as people participating in other legitimate outdoor activities.
- If you witness unethical birding behavior, assess the situation and intervene if you think it prudent.



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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



"What is a conservative after all but one who conserves, one who is committed to protecting and holding close the things by which we live. And we want to protect and conserve the land on which we live—our countryside, our rivers and mountains, our plains and meadows and forests. This is our patrimony. This is what we leave to our children. And our great moral responsibility is to leave it to them either as we found it or better than we found it." — *Ronald Reagan*

And, A River Runs Through It

Fort Collins is a community blessed with the good fortune of having a river run through it. The river began carving its canyon during the Laramide Orogeny (mountain building period) around 70 to 80 million years ago, and ending 35 to 55 million years ago. Approximately 16,000 years ago, sea levels were lowered during a period of continental glaciation, exposing a land bridge that allowed both large mammals and early humans to cross from Asia to the North American continent. Those human migrants became the Native Americans of North America.

The Poudre River Valley was settled by settlers of European descent, beginning with the arrival of Antoine Janis in 1844. As the population of the area increased so did the development of the local natural landscape as people cleared their land, built their houses, pastured their livestock, and planted their non-native crops. The conversion of the natural landscapes here has resulted in habitat fragmentation and its associated ecological consequences.

Land conversion for human activities constitutes the most serious threat to the Earth's biological diversity. Habitat fragmentation reduces the amount of suitable

habitat available for organisms and allows an influx of exotic and pest species, as well as an invasion by non-native plant species, and often results in genetic risks for all species within a habitat fragment. Generally, a 10% remnant contiguous habitat will result in a 50% biodiversity loss.

In 1992, Fort Collins voters approved a quarter percent sales tax that provided monies for the acquisition and maintenance of lands with significant natural values. Today Fort Collins owns several thousand acres of such natural areas, much of which lie along the Poudre River between I-25 and North Taft Hill Road. On June 5, 2018, the Fort Collins City Council approved a resolution designating City-owned properties along the Poudre River as the Poudre Urban River Important Bird Area. These properties contain natural values that

represent critical habitat for birds during migration and breeding seasons. On November 30, we had a small gathering of members of Audubon Rockies, the Natural Resources Department, and FCAS at the Riverbend Ponds Natural Area to celebrate the establishment of the Poudre Urban River Important Bird Area.



(Left to right) Alison Holloran, Executive Director, Audubon Rockies; Bill Miller, FCAS Conservation Chair; and Zoe Shark, Natural Resources Community Relations Manager, celebrating the Poudre Urban River Important Bird Area. Photo by Robert Godwin.

FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Hetty Bixby
Chancree Davis
Ann Donoghue
Willard Flowers
Irene Fortune
William Gerck

Julia R. Jordan
Katherine Lybecker
Kim Manajek
Patricia Olsen
Paul A. Opler
Cheryl Orwig

Patricia Quier
Richard Roberts
Holmes Rolston III
Frank Stermitz
Danette Vassilopoulos
Greg Vassilopoulos
Roger Wieck



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.



The Joy of Gleaning

When I first volunteered to “Adopt a Natural Area” via the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Department, which requires picking up trash (which I prefer to call gleaning) at my assigned location Udall Natural Area (UNA), I had no inkling of how much wildlife I would see. I had no expectation of seeing birds or other animals as UNA is so close to Old Town, traffic, and the train tracks. However, I really should not have been surprised, as my very first encounter with UNA was due to participating in a Natural Area Frog Survey at night. Therefore, I was prepared to hear and, thus wasn’t frightened, to hear the Woodhouse’s Toad’s croak that sounds like a distant woman screaming. Another thrill was actually seeing, rather than merely hearing, the loud but tiny Western Chorus Frog. Surprisingly, UNA’s several settling ponds also provided a respite for migratory ducks, such as Cinnamon Teal, Green-winged and Blue-winged Teal, and the more common Mallards, Gadwalls, and American Wigeons. My biggest thrill was a one-time-only sighting of a Long-tailed Weasel scampering among the rocks along the Cache la Poudre River. My saddest moment came when I discovered a young Red Fox dying of mange. One of my happiest moments came when the Natural Area Department gave us gleaners “grabbers” to pick up litter instead of having to bend down and reach into brush to remove trash with gloved hands.



Red-tailed Hawk by Carole Hossan.

Running Deer Natural Area (RDNA). I was thrilled; RDNA is the only site where I have heard (but not seen) the watercooler-bubbling sound of the American Bittern. My partner, Harry Rose, and I have to do much more walking to collect a much smaller amount of trash than we would find at UNA in much less time. We don’t mind as it gives us more opportunities to see birds, particularly raptors such as the Osprey, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, and Red-tailed Hawk. This year RDNA was also a temporary shelter for the (rare to Colorado) Common Gallinule. We also have been fortunate to see North American Beaver and an American Mink.

Gleaning at a Natural Area has many positive attributes: 1) ridding the NA of trash, 2) getting you outside doing moderate exercise, 3) giving you a reason to become familiar with a specific place at various times of day and seasons of the year, and 4) providing you the opportunity to see common and occasionally uncommon birds and other wildlife. If you are interested in becoming an adopter, go to <https://www.fcgov.com/naturalareas/adopt-a-natural-area>. It’s a triple win for you, the city, and nature.



Song Sparrow by Carole Hossan.



Pied-billed Grebe by Carole Hossan.

After years of gleaning at UNA, I was reassigned to gleaning at the larger, but much less trash infested,



HAPPY NEW YEAR



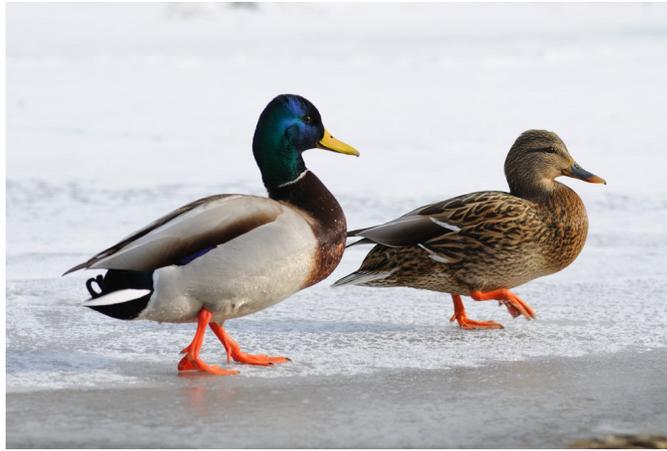
Upcoming Field Trips

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. Changes to dates, meeting times or locations, and trip leaders are occasionally unavoidable (check the FCAS Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/FortCollinsAudubonSociety> for cancellations due to inclement weather). Contact the listed trip leader prior to the day of the trip or visit fortcollinsaudubon.org for more information and updates. RSVP strongly encouraged.

Saturday, Jan. 5, North Shields Ponds and McMurry Natural Areas.

Leader: Sirena Brownlee, sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com or 970-980-6184. Start your new year off right with a birding walk on North Shields Ponds and then over to McMurry Natural Area. Park at the North Shields Ponds Natural Area parking lot on Shields St, north of Shields/Vine, on the west side of road. The approximate address is 1333 North Shields Street, Fort Collins. Meet at 10 a.m.

Sunday, Jan. 13, Bobcat Ridge Natural Area



Mallards by Glenn Upton.

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 8 a.m. in the parking lot.

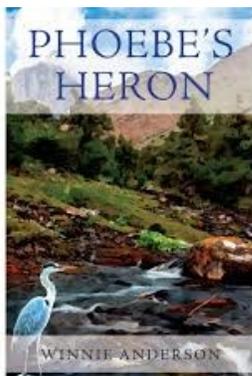
Saturday, Jan. 19, Running Deer and Cottonwood Hollow Natural Area.

Leader: Robert Beauchamp, tyranus@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. Meet at 8 a.m. All levels are welcome.

Phoebe's Heron

If you're a bird watcher and a supporter of Audubon, you need to acquire a copy of *Phoebe's Heron* by



Winnie Anderson. This book is a young adult novel about a girl in Evergreen, Colorado, in 1900 who discovers a Great Blue Heron's nest. Young Phoebe realizes that the heron will likely be killed for its plumes. Her best

friend in Denver comes from a family of milliners, making and selling hats adorned with bird feathers and even entire birds. The underlying theme in *Phoebe's Heron* is the near extinction of many North American birds for their plumes. This context, then, draws us to the early founding of the Audubon Society, begun by women who work to protect the birds and end the practice of shooting them for the millinery trade. The book is available from Amazon.

FCAS Annual Membership Renewal

It is January and that means it is time to renew your annual membership. FCAS chapter memberships run for the calendar year from January through December. Dues are \$20 to receive the *Ptarmigan* electronically or \$30 for a printed copy through the mail.

Please use the form on the back page of the newsletter to renew by mail or renew at a program meeting. You also can renew online at our website:

www.fortcollinsaudubon.org. Remember, your membership and contributions are tax deductible.

Your local chapter dues strengthen our efforts and make possible our programs, meetings, education, and advocacy for birds and wildlife habitat. Keep the *Ptarmigan* coming by renewing today.

If you renewed September–December 2018, your membership is good through January 2020. Thank you to all those who have already renewed. We appreciate your support!



Renew



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.