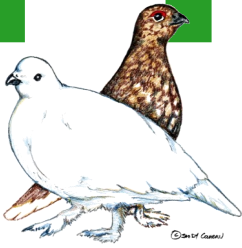


# PTARMIGAN



## 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.

**May 2019**

**Volume 50, Issue 5**

### FCAS Hosts

**Brady Godwin, PhD Candidate, Population Ecologist**

**Wildlife Genomics and Disease Ecology Laboratory, University of Wyoming**

**Presenting:**

**“Hummingbirds—Research, Banding, and Conservation  
in the Rocky Mountains and Beyond”**

**Thursday, May 9**

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

**Habitat Hero Garden Party: 6:30-7:15 p.m.; Program: 7:20 p.m.**

Brady Godwin will present an overview of the work done with hummingbirds at the “Wildlife Genomics and Disease Ecology Laboratory” at the University of Wyoming. His talk will include general hummingbird ecology in the Rocky Mountains, hummingbird conservation, local gardening tips, how banding helps birds, hummingbird population genetic information, and information on emerging hummingbird diseases.

Brady is a PhD candidate at the University of Wyoming working with Dr. Holly Ernest on the population



**Broad-tailed Hummingbird photo by Mark Gocke.**

genomics of Broad-tailed Hummingbirds in Wyoming and Colorado, and Allen's Hummingbirds in California. In addition to being a wildlife biologist, conservationist, geneticist, and genomicist. Brady also studies wildlife diseases, including avian blood parasites in hummingbirds. A significant part of his PhD work will contribute to the current Hummingbird Health Monitoring Program throughout the Rocky Mountain West based at the University of Wyoming.

Join us on May 9 at the Fort Collins Senior Center 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](http://www.fortcollinsaudubon.org).

As most of you know, FCAS does not publish newsletters or hold chapter meetings in the summer months (June–August). It's been that way since before I moved to Fort Collins. I'm curious whether our members would be interested in changing that. It would keep us in touch throughout the year, but also would increase our costs and might require an increase in membership dues. Drop me a line if you have an opinion, please.

Just because we aren't publishing in the summer doesn't mean our activities cease. In fact, this summer might just be our busiest ever. The best way to keep up with us or contact FCAS during the summer months is to follow us on Facebook and check our website from time to time. However, I thought it might help to outline some of the summer activities we already have planned.

As you will see elsewhere in this issue of *The Ptarmigan*, our field trip committee chair Sirena Brownlee has lined up lots of great summer outings. Most summers we only have the monthly Bobcat Ridge surveys. We're curious to see if these extra summer trips will be as popular as those we offer the rest of the year. Summer trips offer great opportunities to observe late arriving and early departing species that are hard to see in spring and fall. There are also more opportunities to observe nesting, hatching, and fledging.

The FCAS education committee also has been busy organizing a wide variety of summer events to reach beyond our membership to the broader northern Colorado community. As you'll see in Barb Patterson's ar-

rado community. As you'll see in Barb Patterson's article elsewhere in *The Ptarmigan*, we're partnering with several local organizations to offer birding classes and hikes, and we'll take our education booth to several community festivals.

Finally, I want to note that the Board of Directors continues to meet monthly throughout the summer. We'll be ready and available if you have questions or concerns, or if there is an urgent need to engage in public interest advocacy efforts on behalf of our members.



House Finch by Michele Black.

## 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

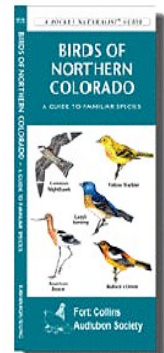
Is available at the following retailers who support our organization with the sales:

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





"A state divided into a small number of rich and a large number of poor will always develop a government manipulated by the rich to protect the amenities represented by their property."  
—Harold Laski

## Will Federal Policies Doom the Greater Sage-Grouse to Extinction?

In September 2015, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced that the Greater Sage-Grouse did not warrant listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Ranchers, politicians, conservationists, and industry had been nervous in anticipation of this decision because the possibility of a listing sparked fears of huge economic losses in the sage-grouse's expansive habitat, as it would have greatly restricted energy development, livestock grazing, and residential construction. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell confirmed that a major factor in the USFWS determination was the cooperative efforts of federal agencies, states, private landowners and ranchers, oil drillers, and environmental groups to safeguard the bird.

The sagebrush steppe is like a miniature old-growth forest, with some sage species living more than a century. Development has cut the sage-grouse habitat to half its historical size, and today it spans 173 million acres across 11 states. Sage-grouse populations, once numbering in the millions, now number between 200,000 and 500,000.

The sage-grouse evolved to be dependent upon the sagebrush ecosystem that provides cover from raptors and other predators, serves as shelter for nesting birds in the summer, and supplies the grouse's sole source of food in the winter. More than 350 other species of wildlife, such as pronghorn, deer, prairie dogs, and numerous bird species, depend on a healthy sagebrush ecosystem.

Efforts to avoid an ESA listing spanned a decade and ultimately culminated in the 2015 release of the Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI) by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) consolidated 98 distinct land use plans into 14 new sage-grouse recovery plans that would conserve 35

million acres of federal lands across 10 states. Also contained within the SGI were provisions to steer energy development away from prime Greater Sage-Grouse areas. The conservation commitments in the compromise

would ensure that high-quality sage-grouse lands would be minimally disturbed.

Fast-forward to the current federal government. In early December 2018, the Department of the Interior announced its plans to replace the 2015 SGI conservation agreement with a new set of BLM plans that more heavily favor oil and gas development.

The sale of oil leases in late February 2019 is the latest in a series of Interior actions that further imperil a species that has lost more than 90 percent of its historic population and nearly half its original range due to road-building, oil and gas development, and other disturbance. It's been said that we are in the age of the "Sixth Extinction." I wonder why.



A Greater Sage-Grouse male displays for the attention of females near Pinedale, Wyoming. Photo by Dave Showalter.



A Wyoming lease sale includes key habitat for pronghorn. Photo from USFWS.



Greater Sage-Grouse in flight by Tatiana Gettelman/USGS.



## Do birds have fun?

(Adapted from an article by Emory and Clayton in Current Biology 2015)

When we imagine fun, the first behavior that comes to mind is play. These activities can enhance the learning of motor and sensory skills and social behaviors, but otherwise may serve no immediate purpose. Young screech owls pounce at leaves; young crows and jays pick, inspect, and hide shiny objects; young gulls and terns carry small items aloft and drop them, catch them in mid-air, and drop and catch them again (<https://allaboutbirds.org>). Unlike humans, time is a rare commodity for birds. They live within a strict time budget in which they must find food, water, avoid predators, court and mate, and raise offspring. Do they have the time or the energy to have fun?

Birds engage in three types of play. Locomotor play, like children sledding down a hill, includes all types of flight-related play, such as aerial acrobatics, hanging, and flying upside down. Object play includes exploration, curiosity, or object manipulation to learn about the structure, taste, and function of an object. Social play, which can be confused with fighting and courtship, involves chasing, tussling, and roughhousing. For example, a tug of war between rooks over a strip of newspaper (when they are standing on thousands of papers) suggests that they are having a pleasurable experience.

The problem is that it is hard to prove scientifically. First, birds lack the facial musculature to smile. That does not mean that birds do not have other means for expressing emotions; for example, head crests, facial feathers, vocalization, gestures, and displays. Second, it is a simple trap to assign human characteristics to animals, which is called anthropomorphism. We automatically project human thoughts and feelings onto an animal and we want to assume they are happy.

How may fun be represented in the bird's brain? Fun involves doing something rewarding that elicits a tendency to repeatedly approach a reward inducing stimulus, and it provides a sense of pleasure. The avian brain

has neurotransmitters, such as dopamine, that are essential for reward and endogenous opiates, which are



Snowboarding crow

from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dWw9GLcOeA>

has neurotransmitters, such as dopamine, essential for experiencing pleasure. Although there are purely functional reasons for song, such as attracting a mate or maintaining a territory, dopamine provides the drive to sing, and opiates make singing rewarding.

In an example of “having fun,” a crow carries a jar lid to the top of a sloping snowy rooftop, sits on the lid, and slides down the roof, like surfing. It picks up the lid and repeats this behavior again and again. The bird behavior does not seem to provide any obvious function. Similarly, a group of swans ride the crest of a wave and once the wave reaches the beach, the swans fly back to another wave crest and perform the same actions again. In either case, they look like they are having fun. For some scientists this is as far as we need to go: the bird looks like it's having fun so, of course, it is!

**FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members:**

Eileen Baker  
Donald Beaver  
Cynthia Jacobson  
Nancy Jones  
Janet Larsen  
Lori Pivonka  
Austen Stone

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.





## Upcoming FCAS Education Events

The mission of the FCAS is to promote the appreciation, conservation, and restoration of ecosystems. Foremost in that mission is education. The educational events that we participate in throughout the year cannot take place without the time and expertise of the chapter members. In the last year we have developed some new partnerships, creating an opportunity to spread the word about FCAS and conservation education to more people. Please contact Barbara Patterson to volunteer: [Barbara.patterson@frontrange.edu](mailto:Barbara.patterson@frontrange.edu); (970) 214-3888.

The events for this spring include:

**Two FCAS guided bird hikes at the Fort Collins Senior Center and Rolland Moore Park:** (1) Wednesday, May 8, 9–11 a.m.; and (2) Wednesday, May 29, 9–11 a.m.

**The Senior Center Garden Open House:** Thursday, May 9, 6:30–7:15 p.m. (before the regularly scheduled FCAS program meeting). Stop by the back patio of the Fort Collins Senior Center on your way to the meeting for refreshments, photos and used books for sale, and educational information on native plants and attracting pollinators to your backyard. Learn what you can do to have your own “Habitat Hero Garden.” This grant from Excel Energy was collaborated between Audubon Rockies, the City of Fort Collins, and the FCAS.

**Two beginning bird classes at the Fort Collins Senior Center:** (1) Wednesday, May 15, 9–11 a.m.; and (2) Wednesday, May 22, 9–11 a.m.

**Three Community Festivals:** Two events at the High Plains Environmental Center–Native Plant Sale; (1) Saturday, May 4, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., FCAS booth with children’s activities; and (2) Saturday, May 18, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., FCAS booth with two bird hikes led by Sheila Webber. One event at the Pleasant Valley Rendezvous at Watson Lake, Sunday, June 2, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**Lory State Park Partnership** (each event from 9 to 11:00 a.m.): (1)

Beginning Birding, Saturday, May 18; (2) Nesting, Saturday, June 15; (3) Native plants, Saturday, July 20; and (4) Migration, Saturday, August 17.

If you haven’t banded birds before you will not want to miss this event: **Howard’s Grove Bird**

**Banding in Longmont with the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies:** These events–Tuesday, May 21, 9–11 a.m., and Tuesday, May 28, 9–11 a.m.–are first-come, first-serve; carpooling is provided; and cost is \$5.



**Banding a Pacific-slope Flycatcher at Cibola National Wildlife Refuge . BLM photo.**

---

## FCAS Shows First Graders Birding Basics

FCAS volunteers Sirena Brownlee, Ron Harden, Lori Pivonka, and Alan Godwin worked with the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Coordinator at Shepardson Elementary to lead a bird walk for 75 first graders at nearby Warren Lake on April 5. The volunteers spent half a day working with the first graders to show them how to use binoculars, how to use a field guide, and what common birds are in the area. The kids got great views of a couple of local birds through spotting scopes. Kids and adults had a blast and hopefully the kids will share their new love of birding with others!



Shepardson Elementary students learn to spot birds with FCAS’s Lori Pivonka (left photo) and Ron Harden (right photo).



## A Summer Filled with Birding Field Trips

The *Ptarmigan* is not published June through August; the field trips for those months follow. Please always check the FCAS website site ([www.fortcollinsaudubon.org](http://www.fortcollinsaudubon.org)) or Facebook page for weather conditions and any changes to field trips.

**Every month, 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 in the parking lot on the following Sundays at 6:30 a.m.: May 12, June 9, July 14, and August 11.

### May 2019

**Friday, May 3, Running Deer and Cottonwood Hollow Natural Area.** Leader: Sirena Brownlee, [sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com](mailto:sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com), 970-980-6184. Nesting Osprey, Great Horned Owls, Killdeer and Great Blue Herons are just a few of the treasures you will see on this evening walk around this natural area. Meet at 6 p.m. in the parking lot.

**Saturday, May 18, Arapahoe Bend Natural Area –Rigden Reservoir.** Leader: Robert Beauchamp, [tyrannusb@gmail.com](mailto:tyrannusb@gmail.com), 970-232-9296. This will be a leisurely 1.5–2-mile walk to explore Rigden Reservoir, the riparian habitat, and the ponds for migrating birds. All levels are welcome. Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot.

**Wednesday, May 22, Dixon Reservoir/Pineridge Natural Area.** Leader: Sirena Brownlee, [sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com](mailto:sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com), 970-980-6184. Pineridge is great for resident foothills species and end of May is peak singing time for breeding songbirds in this area.



Burrowing Owl by Rob Palmer.

This early morning walk will focus on listening and identifying birds by songs, but expect good good views in the early morning light. Meet at 6 a.m. at the parking lot for Maxwell Natural Area. You can still be to work by 8 a.m.!

**Saturday, May 25, Well Gulch Nature Trail Lory State Park.**

Leader: Nolan Bunting, [nolanbunting@hotmail.com](mailto:nolanbunting@hotmail.com). A hidden gem for birding in Lory State Park, the abundant wild plum thickets and other native shrubs provide habitat for a variety of rare foothills birds. Meet at the Eltuck Group Picnic Area at 8:30 a.m. for a 1.5-mile moderate hike up the Well Gulch trail. Daily passes are \$8 per vehicle.

### June 2019

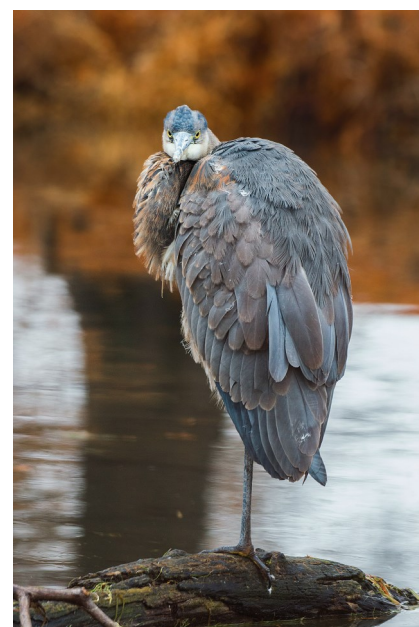
**Saturday, June 8, Soapstone Prairie.**

Leader: Sirena Brownlee, [sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com](mailto:sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com), 970-980-6184. Breeding Baird's Sparrow return in early May to this remarkable native prairie habitat along with many other rare native grassland species that breed there, including Lark Buntings, Vesper Sparrows, and Burrowing Owls. Trip is limited to 8 people. Carpooling is encouraged; please RSVP to Sirena for information. Trip will start at approximately 8 a.m. from the north parking lot. Plan for 4 miles of rugged walking in the heat. Bring lots of water, picnic lunch, sunscreen, and hat.

**Saturday, June 15, Well Gulch Nature Trail Lory State Park.** Leader: Sirena Brownlee, [sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com](mailto:sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com), 970-980-6184. This walk will focus on nesting birds along the trail. In previous years we have seen nesting Cedar Waxwings, Cordilleran Flycatchers, Blue Grosbeaks, and many more native species. Meet at the Eltuck Group Picnic Area at 9 a.m. for a 1.5 mile moderate hike. Daily passes are \$8 per vehicle. This walk is in partnership with Lory State Park..

**Saturday, June 15, Rocky Mountain National Park.** Leader: Ron Harden, [hardenrr@msn.com](mailto:hardenrr@msn.com). Meet at 8 a.m. at the parking lot of the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center on Highway 36. Trail will be announced that day based on conditions and what birds have been spotted recently. A national park pass is required and the group will carpool to the trail entrance. Please bring rain gear and layers consistent with the weather forecast, snacks, sunscreen, and water. The group may do lunch in a local cafe after the morning birding walk. Please RSVP to Ron by June 12 at [hardenrr@msn.com](mailto:hardenrr@msn.com).

(Field Trips continued on Page 7.)



Great Blue Heron  
by Emily Moore





(Field Trips continued from Page 6.)

**Thursday, June 20, Reservoir Ridge Natural Area.** Leader: John Shenot, [johnshenot@gmail.com](mailto: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 Bobolink. Reservoir Ridge also offers good habitat for grassland species such as Dickcissel, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Blue Grosbeak. Meet at the parking lot on N. Overland Trail (not the lot on Michaud Lane or N. CR 23) at 6 p.m. for an early evening bird walk.

**Sunday, June 23, Pawnee National Grasslands.** Leader: Bill Miller, [bill5mcorp@gmail.com](mailto:bill5mcorp@gmail.com), 970-493-7693. This field trip will leave Fort Collins at 6 a.m. and return by 3 p.m. Contact Bill for details. The grasslands, 35 miles east of Fort Collins, are a world-class birding area. Join Bill for a special day in search of Burrowing Owls, Mountain Plovers, Longspurs, and Hawks. Carpooling is necessary. Please contribute \$3/person to your driver for fuel.

## July 2019

**Wednesday, July 17, Grandview Cemetery.** Leader Dave Leatherman, [daleatherman@msn.com](mailto:daleatherman@msn.com). Grandview's canopy of mature deciduous and evergreen trees has hosted in excess of 200 species over the years, some of them difficult to find in the Fort Collins area. The cemetery is also a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary. Mid-July is a good time to check for nesting Broad-tailed and Black-chinned Hummingbirds. Trip limited to 15 people. Please RSVP by email to Dave Leatherman. Limited to kids over age 5 because much of the viewing will be through spotting scopes. Meet at west terminus of Mountain Avenue by the old stone office at 5 p.m.

**Thursday, July 25, Dixon Reservoir/Pineridge Natural Area.** Leader: Sirena Brownlee, [sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com](mailto:sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com), 970-980-6184. Pineridge is a gem for resident foothills species and this time of year we may see some early fall migratory species, such as hummingbirds, moving through. Meet at 6:30 p.m. at the parking lot for Maxwell Natural Area.

## August 2019

**August 16, Friday, Hewlett Gulch.** Leader: John Shenot, [johnshenot@gmail.com](mailto:johnshenot@gmail.com), 802-595-1669. Nestled in the Poudre Canyon, Hewlett Gulch offers a relatively

flat and extraordinarily pleasant trail along a creek surrounded by scrublands. Birders can expect a nice mix of riparian and foothills species, including flycatchers, warblers and, maybe, Lewis's Woodpecker. Meet at 7 a.m. in the parking lot or arrange to carpool with the trip leader.



Great Horned Owls by Bill Schiess



Dickcissels by Amy Watts.



Fort Collins Audubon Society  
PO Box 271968  
Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968



Printed on recycled paper

## 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).