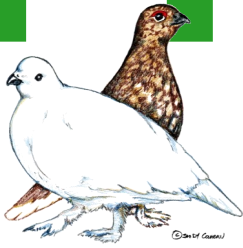


PTARMIGAN



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 2020

Volume 51, Issue 6

FCAS Presents

Kevin Cook, Writer-Naturalist

Corvids (Not Covies!) of Colorado

Thursday, Sept. 10 – Announcements: 7 p.m.; Program 7:20 p.m.

This will be an online meeting using Zoom

Enter the following link on your web browser at or before 7 p.m. and follow the instructions to join the meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84603685579>

As birding popularity grew, life-listing assumed a prominent role in finding birds. Birders soon recognized a distinctive attribute of the life-list that was easily expressed: Show me your life-list and I'll tell you where you've been! Today, we can meaningfully paraphrase that attribute: Tell me which corvids you're seeing, and I'll tell you where you are in Colorado! Because the family's Latin name is Corvidae, "corvid" serves as a general reference name for any crow, jay, magpie, or nutcracker.

Colorado ranks fourth among all states regarding diversity of resident corvids, and each of our 10 species represents a unique yet connected story of discovery, ecology, and geography. Pick a place in Colorado and that place will support its own set of corvid species. In his presenta-



Gray Jay photo by Dennis Thiers.

tion, "Corvids (Not Covies!) of Colorado," Kevin will explain what makes a bird a corvid, then present 10 stories, one for each member of the Crow family in Colorado.

Since 1981, Kevin Cook, has worked full time as a writer-naturalist, a career that has included writing, editing, speaking, consulting, teaching, and guiding, all of it involving Colorado's lifescapes and wildlife.

To summarize his career, Kevin says, "When working, I walk among the trees that I might engage the birds and wildflowers that I might learn about them to enrich the lives of others. When relaxing, I walk among the trees that I might engage the birds and wildflowers to enrich my own life."

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.

I've heard it said that "may you live in interesting times" is an English translation of a Chinese curse. But I've also heard that the Chinese word for crisis is composed of two characters: one representing danger and the other representing opportunity. Well, we sure do live in interesting times. We are in the greatest public health and economic crises of my lifetime, with massive social unrest thrown in. Times are indeed tough, but we are not cursed and FCAS is trying to find opportunities in the current crises.

First, regarding the danger of COVID, I regret to announce that the Board of Directors decided to cancel all in-person meetings of our membership through the end of the year. Fortunately, we have the opportunity to meet virtually via Zoom. I understand that virtual meetings don't work well for some members, and they are no substitute for the social portion of our in-person meetings. But there are indications from Audubon chapters around the country that people are tuning in to virtual meetings—so that goes in the plus column. It also means we can invite experts from outside of our region to speak to you at chapter meetings, which we hope to do at least once later this Fall.

Secondly, regarding the danger of social upheaval, I am excited and proud to announce that your Board of Directors, led by Director-at-Large Alan Godwin, has seized the opportunity to adopt the following long-overdue Policy Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:

"Fort Collins Audubon Society (FCAS) as an organization is dedicated to practicing inclusion, making our programs as accessible as possible to all, and adopting organizational practices that actively promote inclusion and equity.

"FCAS does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of ability status, age, citizenship, color, disability, family/parental status, gender identity and expression, marital status, military status, national or ethnic origin, political beliefs, pregnancy, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or veteran's status in any of its activities, including, but not limited to: field trips, Christmas bird counts, and other FCAS sponsored events, as well as on the FCAS website and social media accounts."

We are a society, and I hope all our members will embrace this policy statement and help us live up to it.

Help Shape the Future of FCAS

At our annual meeting in January 2021, the members present will elect five officers (President, President-Elect, Vice-President, Treasurer, and 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.

The first step is to create a Nominating Committee. This committee identifies and nominates a slate of candidates for all elected positions, and assists in identifying members to be appointed as chairs of our various committees.

We need three volunteers as soon as possible to serve on the Nominating Committee. The more FCAS members you know, the better you'll be at this task—but don't hesitate to volunteer even if you moved here yesterday. The current board members will do everything possible to make sure the Nominating Committee succeeds.

If anyone reading this is potentially interested in a position on the Board of Directors, please contact me or another board member. We'll share your name with the Nominating Committee. You don't need to be an expert in birding, wildlife, non-profit management, or anything else to serve on the board. In fact, this could be a good resume builder for someone still in school or just starting their career. The time commitment rarely exceeds 10 hours per month for most board members, though more time may be required for some positions like President and Treasurer.

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www.fortcollinsaudubon.org

Visit us on Facebook:

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



Conservation Corner

by Bill Miller

"The price of apathy towards public affairs is to be ruled by evil men." –*Plato*

"To announce that there shall be no criticism of the president, or that we are to stand by the president, right or wrong, it is not only unpatriotic and servile, but is morally treasonable to the American people." –*Theodore Roosevelt*

Salvation for the Land and Water Conservation Fund

In 1958, increasing awareness of public health and environmental issues, and an expanding need for recreational space combined into a bipartisan mandate creating the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC). After three years of research, the commission developed five specific recommendations for a national recreation program. Their fifth recommendation laid the groundwork for the establishment of "a federal funding program...to provide grants to states that would stimulate and assist them to meet new demands for outdoor recreation and to pay for additions to the federal recreation estate."

The Kennedy Administration introduced funding legislation in 1962, but no action was taken in that Congress. In February 1963, President Kennedy again proposed legislation that would establish a "Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)" to assist states in planning, acquisition, and development of recreation resources, and to finance new federal recreation lands. With strong bipartisan support in both houses of Congress, the bill was passed and signed into law in September 1964. The Act established a funding source for both federal acquisition of park and recreation lands, and matching grants to state and local governments for recreation planning, acquisition, and development. It set requirements for state planning and provided a formula for allocating annual LWCF appropriations to the states and territories.

Initially, three sources of revenue were designated: proceeds from sales of surplus federal real property, motorboat fuel taxes, and fees for recreation use of federal lands. The level of funding from 1966 through 1968 reached about \$100 million per year, which was far short of Congress' expectations. To remedy this shortfall, it was proposed that Outer Continental shelf (OCS) mineral leasing receipts be tapped. In 1968 the

level of funding was raised to \$200 million a year for five years, beginning in 1969, making OCS reve-

nues available to cover the difference between this minimum level and receipts from other sources. In 1970 the funding level was raised again to \$300 million annually from 1971 through 1989. In 1976, the LWCF Act was amended to state that not less than 40% of the appropriations from the fund were to be available for federal purposes. The remaining appropriations after the federal withdrawal were for states that could come up with the requisite matching funds. When states could not come up with the matching funds, additional funding was provided to the federal agencies for acquisition purposes. In June 1977, the funding level was once again raised to its current level of \$900 million for 1978 and subsequent years.

The LWCF was permanently reauthorized as part of the bipartisan John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, signed into law in March 2019. It requires at least 40% of funds to be used by federal agencies and at least 40% to be allocated to the states. The Dingell Act, however, did not provide permanent funding for the LWCF, merely permanent authorization.

The Great American Outdoors Act was introduced in the House of Representatives by John Lewis (D-GA) in March 2019. After inserting amendments, Senator Cory Gardner (R-CO) reintroduced the bill in the U.S. Senate in March 2020, during the 116th United States Congress. The bill passed the Senate on June 17 by a vote of 73–25, and by 310–107 in the House on July 22.

Considered bipartisan in nature for the 116th Congress, the bill attracted 59 co-sponsors, both Democrats and Republicans. President Trump initially was opposed to the LWCF but, after being shown an impressive picture of land within Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park protected by LWCF funds, expressed a willingness to sign the act.



At 2,300 vertical feet, the Painted Wall in the Black Canyon of the Gunnison is the highest cliff in Colorado.
Photo by Bill Miller.



Avocets at the Golden Hour

One of my favorite birds is the quirky yet elegant American Avocet (AA). Its breeding plumage colors and patterns look as if they were created by an avian graphic designer. Its bill is extremely long and thin, and has an upturn at its ends. Its legs are long and slim. It is



Avocet chicks by Richard Herrington.

the world's only avocet with distinct basic and alternate plumages. In winter, the basic plumage shows a gray head and neck, while spring breeding adults have rusty cinnamon on the head and neck. They mostly feed on water insects and crustaceans. American Avocets also seem to have an instinctive inner choreographer; I have witnessed the AAs performing a dashing syncopated celebratory dance after mating. Fortunately, AAs also engaged the interest of Richard Herrington, a dedicated local photographer who journaled their story from courtship to parenthood to fledging their chicks.

Richard Herrington wrote in his journal: "Many mornings I go out around sunrise. I've found needed escape watching a pair of AAs hatch, raise, and fledge their three chicks. I have observed two other nesting pair; both lost their chicks after only 3–5 days. Now, to see these chicks fly is almost as exciting for me as for their parents.

"The chicks hatched on June 8, and were immediately hit with a thunderstorm and 60 mph wind gusts. Their

first night was the worst night. After that, whenever I couldn't locate the chicks, I'd count how many legs mom had. They would seek her out and dive under her wings and brood. The only thing visible was their legs. The chicks would come to mom to brood; never to dad. Sometimes you just need your mother.

"The parents (often the male) diligently chased off potential predators; Herons, Egrets, Osprey, Tur-



Avocet parents in disagreement by Richard Herrington.

keys, Sandpipers, Rails, Ducks, Killdeer, and people. Every day brought a new threat. There was another AA family, but this pair wouldn't let the other chicks in their pond—all four parents faced off and a knock down fight ensued over whose kids could play in the neighborhood pond. "One day pesticide spray crews came; I pointed out the Avocet, Sandpiper, and Killdeer nests and asked they not drive over them. They didn't. The chicks were growing up fast, but their pond was drying up even faster. After 33 days, the first chick flew a few feet, then 50 feet. On day 35 their pond dried up. They all managed to fly to a new pond a couple hundred yards away—one chick still a little unsure about the move. At 36 days they were all following mom flying in huge arcs across the sky. The final morning, with the red dawn behind them, I watched mom and her three chicks flying high. Then they flew out of sight."



Flying with mom by Richard Herrington.



Field Trips Cancelled Through End of Year

What a summer! It was nice to see lots of folks out birding this summer and things are picking up again now that fall migration has started. We were hoping to be able to start field trips again this fall, but our Board has decided not to host any field trips for the remainder of the year. We will reassess in December for 2021 field trips, and post updates on our website and January 2021 newsletter. Thank you for your patience and support. We want to hear from you about any concerns, and encourage you to both practice social distancing and



Grace and Isabelle Wallace birding this summer with mom, Sirena Brownlee, who took the photo.

to spend time in nature to relieve stress and anxiety.

For field trip ideas on your own, we recommend you go to our Field Trip page and toggle the calendar to earlier dates and check our local birding list <http://www.fortcollinsaudubon.org/pages/localbirding.html>. Some of my favorite fall birding locations you can try on your own include Tinmath Reservoir, Bobcat Ridge Natural Area, Fossil Creek Reservoir, Douglas Reservoir, McMurtry Natural Area, and the Environmental Learning Center.

Chapter Bylaws Revisions

Early this year the chapter recognized the need to update its constitution and bylaws (a single document) to correct some errors in spelling and wording, and also so that it more closely represented the way the organization had been operating. In February, President John Shenot asked for volunteers to serve on an ad hoc Bylaws Revision Committee, consisting of Ron Harden, Liz Pruessner, Larry Sherman, and chaired by Bill Miller. This committee met once prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and then conferred by email to present a draft version of the document to the Board at its July meeting. It was tweaked a bit, and approved at its August meeting. The number of changes are too numerous to enumerate here, so the current revisions and proposed revisions will be available for members to compare prior to the October program meeting. Because our program meetings are now conducted virtually, we will conduct the vote electronically prior to the meeting date (October 8). Instructions on how to access the two versions of the document and how to cast your vote for approval (or non-approval) will appear in the October issue of the *Ptarmigan*.

Look for Us on Instagram

FCAS has maintained a Facebook page for several years. We now have more than 600 followers, which doesn't seem like much to avid Facebook users, but feels pretty good for an organization that has fewer than 1,000 members. And I see room for growth.

Frankly, we haven't done as much as we can to capitalize on social media. That's why in July, with guidance and assistance from an "Ad Hawk" Committee that is advising us on ways to reach youth and young adults, FCAS opened an account on Instagram. If you use Instagram, we hope you will follow us and use our hashtag (#fcaudubon) when you post photos of wildlife in Northern Colorado. We'll do our best to up our game, too, with more frequent and more interesting posts on both Facebook and Instagram. Spread the word, please!



Instagram

FCAS Online Photo Contest Coming This Fall

We have missed seeing you at our programs and on field trips, so we thought it would be fun to get together via the internet and see your photographs in a contest format. Therefore, FCAS will hold an online photo contest fundraiser this fall with winners to be announced at our December program meeting.

Full details will be outlined in the October newsletter and on our website. Start reviewing your photos now and consider which ones you would like to enter in the category: Birdlife and any other wildlife.



Sharp-shinned Hawk with Slate-colored Junco prey. Photo by Ron Harden.



FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members



Susan Barbour
Frank Breidt
Joe Brummer
Lori Brummer
Larry Casswell
Kristy Clark
Helen Day
Charles Edelson

Carole Ferrand
James R. Hayes
Jon Kindschy
Andrew Klingensmith
Carol Klingensmith
Kristin Long
Andrew Monson
Chase Moore

Lori Nitzel
Patricia Olson
Susan Quinlan
Joanne Rankin
Arjun Sharma
Bill Smith
Lori Zabel

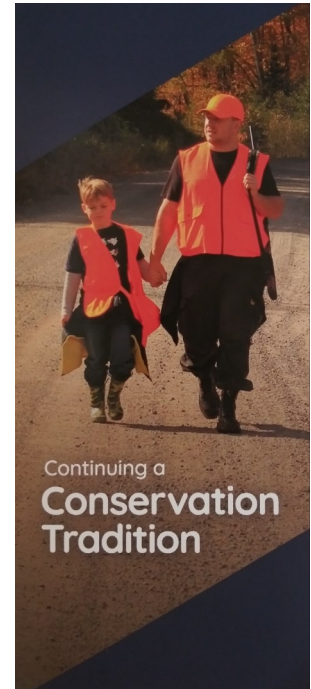
Thank you for your membership. Your support makes our programs and conservation efforts possible, and helps us achieve our mission of connecting people to the natural world.

Continuing a Conservation Tradition

Hunters have been leaders in wildlife and habitat stewardship for over 100 years and remain a strong force in conservation. That tradition continues as hunters partner with conservation organizations championing the change to non-lead ammunition in the 21st century.

FCAS is partnering with Denver Audubon and Audubon Colorado Council to educate the public about the use of non-lead ammunition to safeguard wildlife from becoming unintended victims of lead poisoning. When a lead bullet enters the target animal, it fragments. These fragments remain in the environment after the target animal is cleaned. Scavengers such as hawks, eagles, vultures, and other wildlife ingest these fragments; the consequences are often fatal. Lead attacks the nervous system—causing tremors, cognitive delays, and poor coordination. The poisoned victim either dies as a result of lead in the body, or because it is unable to defend itself against predators. Non-lead ammunition has proven as effective as lead, as it expands, but does not fragment. Non-lead bullets are typically made of copper or copper alloys.

Non-lead ammunition brochures will be distributed to several locations in Fort Collins and Loveland that sell hunting supplies.



Eastern Kingbird
by Doug Swartz.

FCAS Pocket Guide to Local Birds

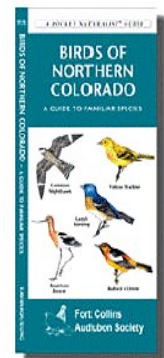
Is available at the following retailers who support our organization with the sales:

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 Great Summer of Birding

Photos by Doug Swartz



Barn Swallow feeding juvenile.



Gray Catbird.



Spotted Towhee feeding on
Three-leaf Sumac fruit.



Lark Bunting, female.



Happy Fall Birding!



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.