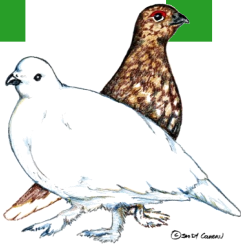


PTARMIGAN



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.

October 2020

Volume 51, Issue 7

FCAS Hosts Erica LeMoine

**LoonWatch, Citizen Science Coordinator of Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute
Northland College, Ashland WI**

**Presenting: "Uncommon to Colorado, the Common Loon:
A Symbol of Northern Waters"**

Thursday, October 8; 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/87016234953>

The haunting call of the Common Loon is familiar to many in northern states of the Midwest, but loon calls and sightings are uncommon for Coloradoans, although we may have opportunity to hear or see loons in Colorado during migration. The loon is a sentinel species—a living symbol of clean water, good fisheries, and an indicator of healthy aquatic ecosystems. Since 1978, LoonWatch of the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute—Northland College in northern Wisconsin has protected Common Loons and their aquatic habitats through education, monitoring, and research. Erica LeMoine, LoonWatch's Citizen Science



Common Loon adults with chick by Aaron Crawford.

Coordinator, will present the fascinating facts about the Common Loon—including their calls, ecology, behavior, habitat, threats, the impacts of climate change, and what is being done to protect them.

Erica LeMoine is Northland College's LoonWatch and Citizen

Science Coordinator, located at the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute in Ashland, WI. Erica works with over 400 volunteers to coordinate the Annual Lakes Monitoring Program, a loon-monitoring program on hundreds of lakes throughout northern Wisconsin.

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.

In the midst of this pandemic, we are all desperately seeking normalcy, sanity, and comfort. When I need to find some sanity and comfort, to feel like things are almost normal, I shut off the computer and go for a hike. I go birding. Seeking sanity in the natural world is not a new idea. More than 150 years ago, Henry David Thoreau wrote in *Walden*:

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."

However, as much as I admire Thoreau's asceticism, I believe human beings are social by nature. We can be healed by nature, but we also crave community and a sense of belonging—especially during a pandemic. We can't get that from birding, but we can get it from belonging to a society—like FCAS.

My wife and I moved to Fort Collins in 2011 not knowing a soul in all of Larimer County. We both worked from home, and nearly all our colleagues and clients were in other states, so meeting new people was going to require a little extra effort. For me, joining FCAS was the solution. By going on field trips and attending monthly programs, I met some people with a common interest and made friends. But things really took off when I volunteered to serve on the Board, first

as Field Trip Committee Chair and eventually as president. FCAS became my society, my community. Now I have lots of birding

friends, and I often see them in the field even when I am socially distancing. I've also built connections with people in local government and at other non-profit organizations. All told, I'm sure I've gotten more out of volunteering for FCAS than I've put into it. Thank you!



Proposed Changes to FCAS Bylaws Available for Review

In last month's newsletter we announced that the Board of Directors would be proposing changes to the FCAS constitution and bylaws for approval by the membership this fall. As a reminder, in February I created an ad hoc Bylaws Revision Committee and appointed Ron Harden, Liz Pruessner, Larry Sherman, and Bill Miller (Chair) to serve. The committee brought forward a comprehensive proposal to update the bylaws that was unanimously approved by the Board at our September meeting. However, the Board cannot change the bylaws without the approval of the members, so we will formally ask for your approval of the changes and take a vote at our regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday, November 12. (Note: the September issue of the *Ptarmigan* indicated this vote would happen at the October 8 meeting, but it became necessary to postpone the vote until November 12.)

The Board encourages members to review the proposed new bylaws prior to the vote in November. For your convenience, we are providing copies of the current bylaws (Revision G of 2015), the proposed new bylaws (Revision H of 2020), and a "redline" document that compares the two and shows all the changes that are proposed. You can download these three documents from <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1OP0MuZBA4Q4MQJFVmh8Y16SyyBmmsKqL?usp=sharing>. You also may contact me if you prefer to receive a hard copy—see FCAS Contacts on this page for my contact information.

Most of the proposed changes to the bylaws are technical rather than substantive. The most important changes are those that allow the Board of Directors to conduct more of our business electronically, which is essential in the midst of this pandemic but useful during normal times as well.

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Visit us on Facebook:

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



“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

We Were Warned—Decades Ago

What a year 2020 has been: the worst political turmoil in America’s history; Hurricane Laura, an innocuous tropical depression that suddenly strengthened into a Category 4 hurricane before slamming into parts of Louisiana, killing 26 people and causing massive infrastructure damage;

and then a daisy-chain of six tropical depressions off of Africa, all headed west towards Central and North America. The year also experienced a longer and stronger tornado season in the east while the west experienced one of its worst drought seasons on record. The COVID-19 pandemic became full-blown in March, followed by the nation’s worst fire season ever. Scientists have warned us for decades to expect these conditions as a result of human-caused global climate disruption—but who was listening?

It is recognized within the scientific community that there are multiple earth climate systems (ECS) that could be affected by climate change. If a particular ECS passes a particular point in its course of change, that change process becomes irreversible and self-perpetuating. Those points within each earth climate system’s change process are referred to as “tipping points.” A cascade of tipping points could amount to a global tipping point, where multiple earth systems march past the point of no return. Such a collapse of earth’s systems could lead to “hothouse earth” conditions with a global temperature rise of 9 degrees F (5 degrees C), sea levels rising 20 to 30 feet, the complete loss of the world’s coral reefs and the Amazon forest, and with large parts of the planet uninhabitable.

The idea of tipping points was introduced 20 years ago by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate

Change. Nine of the 30 major tipping points, once theoretical but now real, are documented to already have occurred over the past two decades. Those nine tipping points are: (1) melting of the West Antarctic ice sheet;

(2) melting of the East Antarctic ice sheet; (3) melting of the Greenland ice sheet; (4) the loss of the Amazon rainforest that acts as a carbon sink; (5) extensive thawing of permafrost releasing copious quantities of carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere; (6) the loss of Arctic sea ice in summers over the last 40 years, result-

ing in the water absorbing heat; (7) the drying out of the boreal forest, thus releasing carbon dioxide to the atmosphere; (8) a recent 15 percent slowdown of the Atlantic meridional overturning circulation in the Atlantic Ocean that circulates cold and warm waters around the earth’s oceans; and (9) the loss of coral reefs.

The Earth’s climate and ecological systems are deeply intertwined. Powered by heat energy from the sun, the atmosphere, oceans, ice sheets, living organisms like forests, and the soils all affect, to a greater or lesser extent, the movement of heat around the Earth’s surface. The interactions among the elements of our global climate system mean a substantial change in one will affect others.

It’s already too late to prevent some tipping points from happening, since there is evidence that at least nine have already been breached. The risk of those cascading into an irreversible global tipping point with tremendous impacts on human civilization warrants a declaration of a planetary climate emergency.



Cameron Peak fire from *The Coloradoan*.

Fort Collins Audubon Society Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Laura Campbell

Brian Ellis

Michelle A. Haebele

Michael Knowles

Peter A. Thiemann

Uday Vissa

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.



From Tundra to Turnstones—What to Know About Birding in Alaska

This spring (before COVID-19) I got a job in Anchorage, Alaska. I had always wanted to go to Alaska and two months after I saw the job advertised, I was in the land of the midnight sun. I was immediately out of my



Horned Puffin by Carrie Olson.

depth. It turns out I learned little about Alaska from watching “Balto” as a kid, especially in terms of finding cool birds. Fortunately, my husband happens to be an Alaska bird guide extraordinaire. Through his knowledge and a little trial and error, we figured out what we were doing. After about six months we have seen and experienced so much more than I ever imagined possible. Travelling is pretty tough right now, but in the future if you decide to give Alaska a try, here are some helpful things we’ve learned along the way.

First, Alaska is huge and contains many different habitats: rainforest, tundra, boreal forest, coastal plains, fjords, and more. Take advantage of it all, but don’t assume you’re going to find puffins, Snowy Owls, Black Turnstones, and Bluethroats all in one day.

Things change fast here. Summers are not long and the opportunity to see some birds lasts only a few weeks. For instance, the spring shorebird migration in Homer is about three weeks. Bluethroats are even worse, only singing for about two weeks before going completely incognito. Make a list of priorities, do research on timing and location, and manage your schedule so you can fit as many cool things as possible

into your trip.

Second, get off the beaten path. It’s convenient to go to the easy, reliable places everybody goes. However, you can have more unique encounters if you hike, drive around, or get on a boat. We found a whole brood of fledgling Hawk Owls by camping in a random pull-off on the side of the road. We also see a lot when we go fishing, including a brood of Harlequin Ducks happily foraging in front of a napping Grizzly bear. If that isn’t Alaska, I don’t know what is.

Fourth, the seabirds are amazing and underappreciated. When I first moved here, my thoughts were of Snowy Owls, ptarmigan, and ducks. But it’s not difficult or expensive to get out on the ocean and see birds like Horned Puffins, Rhinoceros Auklets, and Kittlitz’s Murrelets. If you hire a fishing charter, you also can pick up some delicious halibut on the way.

Lastly, be prepared. Alaska is a wild place.

Most of the major highways fade into glorified jeep tracks, and cell service and gas stations are few and far between once you’re out of the big cities. And be prepared. Bear spray is essential. A birding friend of ours could have been killed by a surprised cow moose this spring had he not had a can of it on his hip. Be safe, be smart, and do your research. Knowledge is your best defense against becoming grizzly droppings.

Travelling isn’t an option for many of us right now, but look on the bright side—you can use all this time at home to research and plan the most epic Alaska trip ever! The tourism industry has been hit especially hard here and they will welcome you with open arms once it’s safe to do so. See you soon.



Red-throated Loon by Carrie Olson.



Willow Ptarmigan by Carrie Olson.



FCAS Online Photo Contest Fundraiser

Attention all bird lovers and amateur photographers. Since we cannot meet in person, we thought it would be fun to get together virtually to see your photos and let our members vote for their favorite.



Marsh Wren by Ron Harden.

FCAS will hold an online photo contest fundraiser this fall with winners to be announced at our December program meeting. The prize winners will be shown at our December meeting, along with as many entries as time allows. Hopefully, you have been scouring your photos for the best pictures to enter. Cash prizes will be awarded for first (\$100), second (\$75), and third (\$50) place winners.

The contest will start Oct. 1 and end Nov. 30. The rules are:

1. Submit your photos to the website from Oct. 1 through Oct. 31. The contest is open to members and non-members, but please no professional photographers.
2. Submission fee is \$10.00/photo with a limit of five photos/person. Photos can be uploaded to the website and the fee submitted via Paypal. Website: <http://www.fortcollinsaudubon.org/wp>. Register with an email address, username, and password to create your login.
3. The photography category is: Birdlife and other

Wildlife. A short description of the subject/location, etc., can be submitted with each photo.

4. Photographer should not be identified on photo—we do not want to influence the voting!

5. Photographers understand that submitting photos constitutes an agreement to allow the limited use of their photo by FCAS—such as in publicity of the winner/s and in displays (in the contest gallery on the website, in the newsletter, and in the December program ZOOM meeting). The website will be taken down after the contest so FCAS will not retain the photos.

6. Voting by our FCAS members will begin on Nov. 1 with the last day to vote on Nov. 30. Members may only vote once for their favorite photo—no stuffing of the ballot box.

FCAS members will be the judges in the contest with one vote per person. The photo with the most votes will be the winner followed

by second and third place vote tallies. View the photos and vote for your favorite from Nov. 1 through Nov. 30 by registering on the website and creating a login. Once registered the website can be accessed by members any time during the contest. Please contact our webmaster Scott Miller at scott@bulletboydesign.com if you have any issues with the website.



Great Horned Owls by Doug Swartz.

We cannot wait to see your photos of birds and other wildlife, so register and login to the photo contest website and get started today!

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 100- N. Hwy. 1 (970) 481-2221
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**Due to COVID-19,
FCAS Field Trips
are suspended until
further notice.**



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.

- ☐ New or renewing FCAS Chapter Member \$ 20 Name: _____
Receive the FCAS *Ptarmigan* by email
- ☐ New or renewing FCAS Chapter Member \$ 30 Address: _____
Receive the FCAS *Ptarmigan* by mail
- ☐ Lifetime FCAS Chapter Member \$750 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Receive FCAS *Ptarmigan* by mail or email
- ☐ Additional support for FCAS programs \$ _____ Phone: _____
- ☐ Additional support for Alex Cringan Fund \$ _____ Email: _____
(natural history education grants)
- ☐ New NAS member \$ 20 May we send you FCAS email alerts if updates occur for field
Receive the NAS *Audubon* by mail trips, programs, etc.? Yes or No
- ☐ Renewing NAS member \$ 35 May we contact you for volunteer activities such as helping at
Receive the NAS *Audubon* by mail 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.