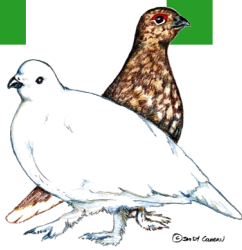


# PTARMIGAN



## 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.

April 2021

Volume 52, Issue 4

### FCAS Hosts

Whitney Cranshaw, Emeritus Professor of Entomology, CSU

Presenting: "Army Cutworm—Colorado's Migrant 'Miller' Moth"

Thursday, April 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/84890366654>

Annual migrations of some kinds of North American butterflies and dragonflies (as well as birds) are well known and often highly popularized. However, perhaps one of the most interesting migration



Miller Moth from CSU Extension.

stories in North America involves the Army Cutworm with its low elevation/high elevation migration cycle that occurs

entirely within the borders of the United States, and is most clearly evident in eastern Colorado. The focus of the April 8 discussion will be this rather notorious

"Miller Moth." Whitney Cranshaw will explore the life history and habits of this insect and the various impacts it has on ecology and human interests.

Whitney Cranshaw is an emeritus professor of entomology at CSU, following retirement in July 2020.

During his 37 years at CSU, he primarily worked on issues related to the better understanding and management of insects that affected horticultural plants in the state.

Zoom in with us on April 8 to learn about the Army Cutworm.



Whitney Cranshaw.

**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 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).

I'm sorry to report that we will soon have a vacancy in the important position of chapter secretary. Our current secretary, Darla Anderson, has done a fantastic job in 2020 and 2021, but will be moving back East this summer. I will truly miss her efficiency and accuracy as secretary and her thoughtful contributions to the



Board's discussion of important issues. If you know Darla, be sure to thank her for serving FCAS so well!

Ideally, I'd like to find a volunteer to replace Darla beginning with our June Board meeting. The chapter secretary is an officer of the organization, responsible for compiling the agenda, and recording minutes for our Board meetings. It's a position we can't afford to leave vacant. If you might be interested in volunteering, please contact me as soon as possible. The time commitment for secretary probably averages 10—15 hours per month.

While I'm at it I might as well point out that we started the year with two other vacancies on the Board of Directors. We have one opening for a Director-at-Large and we lack a chairperson for our Finance Committee. The Director-at-Large position has no specific duties other than to attend Board meetings and participate in all decisions regarding the governance of FCAS. The Finance Committee chairperson does the same,

but also would be responsible this fall for pulling together our annual budget for 2022. If either of these positions interest you, again, please let me know. It isn't as important to fill these as it is to find a new secretary, but we'd love to have someone in all three positions!



Whimbrel by Jay Breidt.



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Visit us on Facebook:

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

## FCAS Pocket Guide to Local Birds

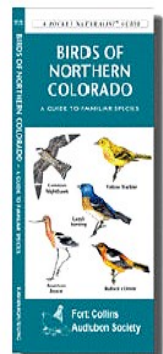
Is available at the following retailers who support our organization with the sales:

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



## Birds and Bills: Conservation Policy Options

Policy is the least glamorous bird protection option—no feathers, no flocks, only filing. While many of us prefer a day out in the field banding chickadees or counting swallows, legislation plays a key role in determining the longevity of our avian friends.

Over the last 200 years, bird conservation policymaking has significantly evolved as ornithologists, ecologists, and citizen scientists have learned how to keep our favorite species in flight. Starting with the first state law in 1818, when Massachusetts passed legislation to protect non-game bird species, to the century-later Migratory Bird Act, to today's robust conservation plans and executive orders, we have undoubtedly expanded the suite of protection options. Yet, many of these advancements are in direct response to the damage humans continue to inflict upon species and their life-supporting resources. To put it simply: we will never run out of work to do.

So, given this undulating legislative history, what's the current status on legal bird protection?

At the federal level, the new administration is set on reopening public debate over the Migratory Bird Act, which prohibits the take of protected migratory bird species. This act, along with other federal bird-relevant statutes, has been revised and watered down during previous administrations; re-engaging citizens seems to be a way to give back teeth to these laws. Since federal policies are subject to a seesaw effect—based on political fluctuations in environmental values—much of the onus has fallen on states to introduce legislation that is long lasting and specific to the winged constituents of their jurisdictions.

Around the nation, states have been creative in their policymaking. Some options are direct, like bird safe building laws or neonicotinoid restrictions, and others help birds indirectly, like those that conserve key habi-

tat/migratory corridors or designate hotspots as protected areas. States also can implement/strengthen a State Endangered Species Act (SESA) to list species

not included at the federal level and keep them on if delisted; 46 states already have SESAs. For example, last month Florida added the Eastern Black Rail to their SESA list, a nod to the importance of maintaining key wetland species.

In Colorado specifically, the outlook for the 2021 session isn't particularly inspiring, mostly due to the prioritization of public health and pandemic related bills that understandably have taken precedence.

Previously, the majority of Colorado bird policies have concerned specific endangered species listings, designation of habitat, or restriction of trade and pesticides. There's also been a whirlwind of grassroots efforts supporting projects like the Lights Out Campaign, aimed at reducing light pollution for both birds and marginalized communities, as well as the creation

of the Important Bird Areas program, which serves to provide essential habitat to one or more bird species.

Legislators may drive the actual decision making and legislation introduction, but you have the power to leverage the process. A great way to advocate for your favorite species is to call your local state House or Senate district representative. Ask friends to do the same. Also voting for legislators that support SESAs are a way to make change. In

addition, you have the right to testify at hearings for bills that you support or oppose. You can learn more about how to shape policies affecting birds in Colorado by researching the National Audubon Society's "Getting Green Laws 2021" program, launched just last month.

Policymaking may not come with binoculars, bucket hats, or Barred Owls, but it sure can help ensure that you keep hearing the calls that you love.



Sandhill Crane by Ron Harden.



Snow Geese by Ron Harden.





## Ptarmigan Prouble

Having moved from Colorado to Alaska last year, I've been stunned by the effects of climate change up here in the north. Once massive glaciers, as old as time itself, are bleeding away before our eyes, wildfires are burning with a frequent and savage intensity, and Anchorage reached 90 degrees for the first time in recorded history in 2019. Wildlife are feeling the heat too, and the ptarmigan—a bird so beloved by Alaskans that it was designated the state bird four years before Alaska even became a state—is no exception.

Ptarmigan are members of the *Lagopus* genus, which contains three species. All three are found in Alaska, with White-tailed Ptarmigan being the one species we share with Colorado and several other states. While there are minor differences between the species, all ptarmigan live in tundra habitat and have amazing

changing climates. Due to snow melting earlier and falling later in the season than ever before, ptarmigan are finding themselves doing the opposite of blending in. Since their seasonal plumage transition is based on changes in daylight and not temperature, they are often still white when the snow is already gone and turn

white again long before it returns. While this is great for us birders trying to spot one, a white bird on a brown background is as good as wearing a giant red target to golden eagles and other predators. Some studies on ptarmigan populations around the world have shown that while an early spring means earlier nesting and quicker access to nutritious spring greens, the late winter has a distinctly negative effect on ptarmigan survival.

This is just one of several issues ptarmigan are facing, including habitat loss and sensitivity to human recreational activities. However, it isn't all bad news for ptarmigan at the moment. While some populations around the world

are in obvious decline, many others are holding steady for the time being, including the White-tailed Ptarmigan population in Colorado. In late 2020, Colorado Parks and Wildlife declined to list the Southern White-tailed Ptarmigan as an endangered species after a five year population study. The results indicated that ptarmigan are doing okay for now. However, continued monitoring is a must to ensure ptarmigan remain a part of the tundra for future generations.



White-tailed Ptarmigan by Andy Bankert.



Rock Ptarmigan by Andy Bankert.

adaptations that allow them to exist in some of the harshest environments on earth. These include feathered, snowshoe-like feet, black eyeliner that protects their eyes from the blinding snow, and two different plumages that allow them to become virtually invisible against the sparse and barren landscape they call home.

However, this last adaptation—which has been sculpted to perfection over the course of several million years of evolution—isn't aging well in the face of rapidly



Willow Ptarmigan by Laura Grant.



Spring migration is approaching, and we hope that everyone is staying safe. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, FCAS currently does not have any field trips scheduled for 2021. However, this does not mean that birds are absent. We hope that everyone has taken the time between Zoom conferences to enjoy the sights and sounds of the outdoors. To help with this, FCAS plans to produce a virtual field trip of Lee Martinez and Legacy Parks.

This virtual field trip is a first for FCAS. Our intent is to provide knowledge and information on some of the common birds of Fort Collins. We hope it will help you, as individuals, learn how to spot birds in Lee Martinez Park and enjoy this area of the Poudre River for yourself. This 15-minute virtual trip will cover some fun facts about the birds in the area, the ecology of the Poudre River's riparian habitat, and familiar hotspots that birds tend to visit along the trail. So far, the trip features bird species such as Black-capped Chickadees,



American Goldfinch by Nick Komar.

American Goldfinch, and Belted Kingfishers.

The link for this trip will be posted to the FCAS Facebook and Instagram sometime in early April. It will be free to view and record, so you can watch it any time. We hope that you enjoy it, and would love to hear any suggestions afterward.

## FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Dale Agger  
Rick Barry  
Ann Colpitts  
Joan Craig  
James & Ruth DeMartini  
David Dennis  
Barbara Denny  
Lauren DeRosa  
Kathryn Fieseler  
Randy & Kathy Fischer  
Ray & Joan Glabach  
Andrew Goris  
Kathleen M. Hardy

Tom & Nancy Hill  
Mary Humstone  
Ted Huston  
Barbara Jones  
Kristin J. Joy  
Elen Klaver  
Dave Landers  
Rosemary Lucas  
Kelli McKay  
Martha Morgan  
Lori Nixon  
Barbara Patterson  
Thad Pawlikowski

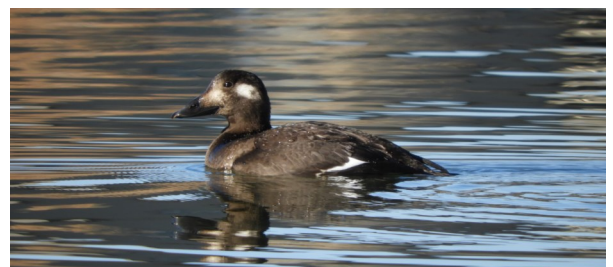
Susan Peterson  
Lori P. Pivonka  
Elizabeth Pruessner  
Rosemary Rader  
Ted & Sunny Ranieri  
Jodie Rankin  
Lynette Seymour  
Myron & Marguerite Smith  
Paula Stearns  
Frank & Pat Stermitz  
Lisa Voelker  
Sandra Winkler



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.



Left: Snowy Plover.  
Right: White-winged Scoter.  
Both photos by Jay Breidt.



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).