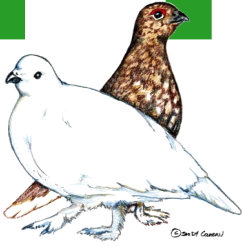


PTARMIGAN



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 2021

Volume 53, Issue 6

FCAS *Live and In-Person* Hosts

Nick Komar, President, Colorado Field Ornithologists

Presenting: "Fall Migration Birding in Larimer County"

Thursday, Sept. 9; Announcements: 7 p.m., Program 7:20 p.m.

Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Dr.

*****This program also will be accessible online using Zoom*****

Enter the following link on your web browser at or before 7 p.m. and follow the instructions to join the meeting virtually: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81221218442>

Nick Komar will summarize some of the more interesting and rare species of birds that show up in our local birding area, and the strategies he uses to find them. He will share what birders look for during fall migration in northern Colorado, focusing on species that only or primarily occur during fall migration (but not in spring), such as Calliope and Rufous Hummingbirds, jaegers, scoters, uncommon loons, Sabine's and Little Gulls, and certain shorebirds species like Buff-breasted Sandpiper. For each of these he will briefly describe their life history, review their identification, and indicate where to find them as they migrate south



Buff-breasted Sandpiper by Nick Komar.

through our local birding area.

Nick Komar is the current President of Colorado Field Ornithologists and also a biologist with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Fort Collins. He leads numerous birding field trips and bird identification workshops for birding organizations in Colorado. He also guides professionally for Partnership in International Birding and his own tour

company, Quetzal Tours, which specializes in tours to Central and South America.

Join us in person or through Zoom on Sept. 9 for this free program that is 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 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.

President's Corner — by John Shenot

Earlier this year, FCAS got permission from the National Audubon Society to expand the boundaries of our chapter. We added several zip codes and about 300 more members to the roughly 1,000 that we already serve. Fort Collins Audubon Society now represents about 1,300 Audubon members across all of Larimer County and parts of Weld County.

The expansion of FCAS is very exciting, but it also raises a question that was on my mind even before we added Estes Park, Windsor, and other communities to our service territory: should we think about changing the name of our chapter? More than a quarter of our members now live somewhere other than Fort Collins. Many Audubon chapters are named for natural features, such as rivers.

I am sympathetic to both sides of this argument. On the one hand, if we change the name of our chapter, we'll need to make changes to a lot of official and unofficial documents: our bank account, tax forms, website, logo, publications, and Facebook and Instagram accounts. That seems like a lot of work. On the other hand, I don't want any member or prospective member of our chapter who lives somewhere else to feel like they are any less important to our organization than members from Fort Collins.

I'd like to know how you feel about this important question, so I've created a three-question survey that you can take at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YPQSBD5>. I hope you will take two to three minutes to fill it out.

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Visit us on Facebook:

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

News from the Board of Directors

In the last issue of the Ptarmigan, I noted that FCAS was looking to find a secretary to replace Darla Anderson, who moved back east. I'm really happy to announce that this summer we found a replacement for Darla in Kim Vercimak, who recently moved to our area from Illinois, where she had been secretary of her local Audubon chapter for nearly 20 years! I can't believe we found someone so perfect for the job, so quickly. Kim looks forward to meeting some of you at our September membership meeting.



Kim Vercimak

On a much sadder note, the passing of Larry Sherman means that our chapter needs to find a new delegate to the Audubon Colorado Council. This could be a great opportunity for someone who is passionate about state and national conservation issues, but it does require a fair amount of effort getting up to speed on the issues and how the Council works, reading emails and action alerts, attending quarterly meetings (one in-person and the rest virtual), and keeping the rest of the FCAS Board of Directors in the loop on everything. If that sounds like something you'd like to do, please contact me at johnshenot@gmail.com.

Save the Date — Fall Fund Raiser

Fort Collins Audubon Society will host its annual fundraiser October 12 (time TBA) at The Lyric in Fort Collins. Make your plans now to hear a live band play bird-themed

songs and to participate in fun activities like bird-song karaoke! Stay tuned for further details.



FCAS Pocket Guide to Local Birds

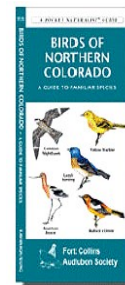
Is available at the following retailers who support our organization with the sales:

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



On Thin Ice: Emperor Penguins and Everyone Else

In early August, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) proposed to list the Emperor Penguin as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). According to their report, more than 98% of Emperor Penguin colonies are expected to be on the brink of extinction by 2100. The USFWS highlighted the melting of sea ice due to climate change as the primary threat to the species.

Sea ice in Antarctica is a vital resource for Emperor Penguins. They use it for feeding, breeding, and molting. They also rest on chunks of sea ice and take advantage of the high ground to avoid aquatic predators. Unfortunately, sea ice cover has shrunk by over 60% since the 1990s. Although protections provided by the ESA might help the penguins to some extent, the only way to effectively conserve the species is to stop the melting. The only way to stop the melting is to stop climate change. And unfortunately, new research shows that this feat will be even harder than we previously thought.

The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, also released in early August, paints the bleakest picture yet of Earth's future in the face of climate change. The report states that humans are unequivocally responsible for climate change and that the impacts are already affecting us in our everyday lives. Some of these changes are irreversible. Oceans are expected to continue warming and acidifying. Wildfires and extreme weather events will increase in frequency and intensity. Sea levels will rise. And, unfortunately for the Emperor Penguins, glaciers and sea ice will continue melting for decades, if not centuries. Even if we were to stop all greenhouse gas emis-

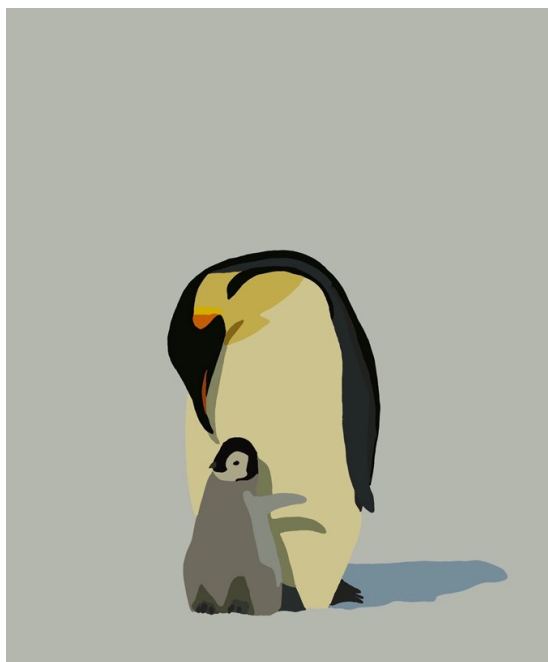
sions today, temperatures will reach 1.5°C above 1850—1900 levels by 2040.

Although we now know with certainty that more damage is to come, there is still hope to preclude some of the worst changes. If we cut global carbon emissions in half by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050, we can prevent temperatures from rising any further. Anyone who has

been impacted by the recent wildfires, tropical storms, intense heat waves, and drought can tell you that a one degree-hotter planet is bad enough. A three- or four- degree hotter planet is hard to imagine — and we won't have to if we take action, and fast.

So, what can we do? We can support policies and politicians that prioritize strong and immediate action on climate. Primarily, these actions should limit carbon emissions, like incentivizing and regulating companies to transition to renewable energy. Another important task will be to bolster actions that remove carbon from our atmosphere, like planting trees and increasing regenerative agriculture. We also need to put Indigenous and traditional knowledge at the forefront of our environmental management practices. However,

we cannot wait for our federal government to make changes. We should push our state and local governments and businesses to get on board too. Stay informed on Colorado policies that need our support (<https://www.quorum.us/spreadsheet/external/lrHsFZxJhVlZBIcCsVuj/>). Encourage your workplaces, local businesses, places of worship, and community centers to transition to greener practices. This is the work of our lifetimes, and each of us can contribute to a cooler future for ourselves and for our feathered friends on the bottom of the globe.



Emperor Penguin and chick.
Original artwork by Ellie Harrison.

FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Rachel Ames
Charles V. & Sheila Baker
Linda Bell
Nolan Bunting
Matthew Dane
Dee Dennis
Nancy Eckardt

Cara Farr
Jane Fine
John Grimm
Linda Kotsides
Sally A. Lee
Tom MacGillivaray
Amelia Martin

Christine Pardee
Michael Payton
Dirk Robinson
Doug Swartz
Terri Torres
Kimberly Vercimak
Mikaila & Steven Viento



September Smorgasbord

We humans and our beloved birds have had a roller coaster of a summer: fiendishly bad air quality due to smoke blown in from vast wildfires in California; heavy flooding in the Cache la Poudre River and other areas; for us humans, the Delta variation of the COVID-19 virus; and for birds, a measure of famine due to much of their habitat being destroyed by last year's ferocious fires.



Osprey on the more traditional pole nest by Joseph Ferlito.

In 2016 scientists of Columbia University in New York wrote that over the past three decades climate change has doubled the area of the western United States that is affected by forest fires. The University of Washington studied how smoke-filled air affected the ability to detect bird species: smoke made it harder to detect some species and easier to detect others. Examples of harder to detect species were Turkey Vultures, Bald Eagles, and Canada Geese, and easier to detect species were Spotted Towhees and Cedar Waxwings. The researchers theorized that reduced visibility due to smoke pushes some birds lower to the ground, while birds of prey relocate to areas with better visibility for hunting their prey. Veterinarians and poultry scientists who have studied captive birds have found that, unsurprisingly, smoke can damage lung tissue and leave birds susceptible to damaging respiratory infections.

However, there were some bright spots and even smiles despite these dire events. For example, Fort Collins was blessed with, at a minimum, two successful Osprey nests: one atop a pole along Prospect Road and another, amazingly enough, atop a cell phone tower. Evidently the second pair wanted modern architecture instead

of the traditional wooden platform on a pole. Another positive occurrence was FCAS and other birding societies' quick pivot to having monthly meetings and special lectures online, where the audience could be safe and yet feel like they were at the usual monthly meeting featuring very educational and entertaining lectures by excellent speakers.



High-tech nesting Ospreys by Carole Hossan.

On a personal note, the hot weather and smoky air pollution reduced the number of my bird observations, both due to me being inside more often and the birds I usually see on my bird feeder not being out as much. Thus I felt very fortunate to go to the Mount Evans Wilderness and view American Pipits enjoying a gentle rainfall at Summit Lake. On the home front, the morning and late afternoon visits of Blue Jays to my backyard feeder have continued unabated. Providing clean water in a location safe from lurking cats is another way to help birds during these challenging conditions. Birds from House Sparrows to Blue Jays to Cooper's Hawks have enjoyed the three-tiered bird baths in my backyard. It is hard to imagine that in the



American Pipit from National Audubon.

not too distant future it will be time for the bird bath heater to keep the water comfortable and drinkable for the birds.



A Tribute to Larry Sherman ——— by John Shenot



With a heavy heart I share the news that our dear friend, Larry Sherman, passed away on July 15, 2021, after a long battle with cancer. Larry was a kind and generous person with a huge intellect, a sharp wit, and a mischievous twinkle in his eye. I first met him on a cold February morning, on one of Denise Bretting's monthly bird surveys at Bobcat Ridge Natural Area. Larry had a big personality, one you couldn't fail to notice,

and his enthusiasm made the morning more fun for everyone. I was thinking even then that he'd make a great addition to the FCAS Board of Directors.

Larry was first elected to the Board as a Director-at-Large in January 2020 and was re-elected this year. He also served as our chapter's representative to the Audubon Colorado Council, an independent organization that combines the voices of all the Audubon chapters in Colorado on state and national issues.

In lieu of flowers, Larry's family welcomes donations in his memory to the [Rocky Mountain Chapter of the ALS Association](#) or the [American Cancer Society](#). You can also visit www.bohlenderfuneralchapel.com to send condolences and share memories with the family. The FCAS will be purchasing copies of a book on the healing powers of bird observation called [Ornithotherapy](#) and donating the books to the U.C. Health Outpatient Infusion Clinic through a partnership that Larry himself encouraged us to start.

Field Trips

All field trips are free (unless otherwise noted) and are currently 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 (Nolan Bunting, nbunting@rams.colostate.edu) or listed trip leader if you need to borrow binoculars. Please understand that changes to the dates, meeting times, locations, and trip leaders are occasionally unavoidable. To register for any trip please visit the Facebook page, Instagram, or fortcollinsaudubon.org for a link to registration, which will be posted one week before the scheduled trip. Due to COVID, attendance is limited to a maximum of 10 individuals. Waitlisted individuals for a trip will be personally sent a link for the next available trip before registration is open to the public.

Saturday, Sept. 18, Dixon Reservoir/Pineridge Natural Area. Leader: Sirena Brownlee. Sign up link will be posted on Facebook and Instagram before the trip. Pineridge is a gem for resident foothills species and while many songbird species have already left the state, there should still be some migrating warblers and other species around the reservoir. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the parking lot for Maxwell Natural Area for a two-mile hike along the trails.

Friday, Sept. 24, Pinewood Reservoir/Ramsay-Shockey Open space. Leader: Denise Bretting. Sign up link will be posted on Facebook and Instagram before the trip. Ramsay-Shockey is a hidden gem for birding, neighboring Carter Lake outside of Loveland. Expect to see some small songbirds and mountain birds. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the open space parking lot for a 2.75-mile moderately difficult loop. A county parks permit is required for entrance.

Past Field Trip Highlights

July 2, Reservoir Ridge. Leader: John Shenot. Saw 29 species in three hours during a 2.28 mile-hike. Highlight was the close view of one of Larimer County's lesser known residents, the Dicksissel. This bird, found only in some areas of Larimer County, was very gregari-



Mountain Bluebird by Christian Narby.

ous to our group. "It was one of the best sightings of this species I have ever seen" according to John Shenot. Other highlights included Blue Grosbeak, a Lazuli Bunting, four Bullock's Oriole, and much more. This is definitely a place that people can spend a great deal of time exploring.



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.

- ☐ 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.