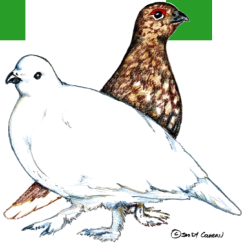


PTARMIGAN



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.

December 2021

Volume 53, Issue 8

FCAS Hosts Member Photo Slideshow

(Due to Covid, there will be no potluck as has been offered in the past)

Thursday, Dec. 9

Announcements, 7 p.m.; Program, 7:20 p.m.

Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Dr.

Masks Required

*****This program will also 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/85847079852>

December is traditionally the program month when members share a potluck dinner and show photos from their personal collections. This year we will not have food at the live event, but we will have a slide show. Those wanting to present their photos can do so in person at the Senior Center or virtually through Zoom. Suggested this year are the photo themes of "Critter Photo Captures," "Birds in Motion," or "This Scenery is a WOW!" We are limiting participants to 10 slides and 10 minutes per household, and asking everyone who wishes to share photos to upload them to <http://fortcollinsaudubon.org/wp/2021-dec-slides/> by 7 p.m. on December 7. Instructions are available



Cooper's Hawk by Jay Breidt.

at the link. Names of members who submit photos will be entered in a random drawing for a gift certificate to Wild Birds Unlimited.

NOTE: Due to the unpredictable nature of the pandemic, it may become necessary to cancel the in-person portion of our meeting and conduct the meeting entirely via Zoom. If you plan to attend the meeting in person, please check our website, Instagram, or Facebook page the day of the meeting to see if the in-person gathering has been canceled. We hope that won't be necessary.

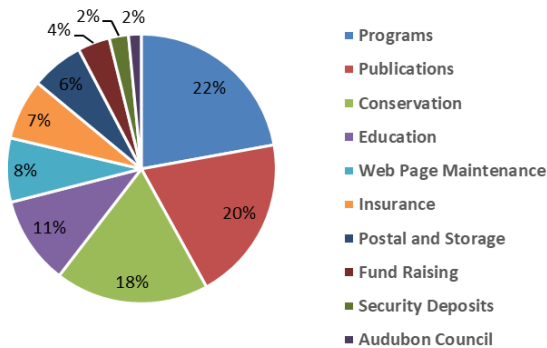
Join us on Dec. 9 for an evening of member photos that will awe and entertain you! The public is welcomed.

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.

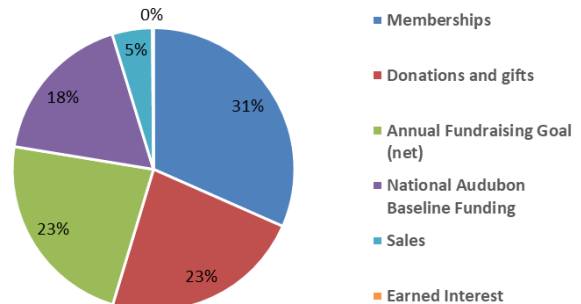
In keeping with our bylaws, the FCAS Board agreed in November on a proposed annual budget for our 2022 operations. Members can vote on whether to approve the budget at our annual meeting in January. The following charts show our proposed expenses and revenues for 2022 by category. The proposed budget represents a 19.4 percent increase in budgeted expenditures compared to 2021. This significant increase reflects the fact that our chapter boundaries expanded this year, meaning we are serving more Audubon members and a larger geographic area than ever before.

We also have very active conservation and education committees looking to increase the impact FCAS has in the communities we serve. The Board is confident we can increase revenues to meet this demand and do so without raising member dues (which haven't increased in a decade). The complete budget proposal with details on expenses and revenues is available to any member upon request.

2022 Proposed Budget Expenditures = \$13,005



2022 Proposed Budget Revenues = \$13,005



Report of the Nominating Committee on 2022 FCAS Board Candidates

In October, the FCAS Board of Directors appointed a nominating committee, consisting of Andrew Monson, Barb Patterson, and John Shenot, to identify candidates to serve as officers and directors on the 2022 Board. The president serves a two-year term and is not up for election this year, but all other board members serve one-year terms. In keeping with our bylaws, the nominating committee hereby announces a slate of recommended candidates to be officially nominated at our January membership meeting: President-Elect, none (volunteer needed); Vice-President, Liz Pruessner; Treasurer, Joe Polazzi; Secretary, Kim Vercimak; Directors-at-Large (up to six positions to fill), Jay Breidt, Kate Burgess, Alan Godwin, Kit Gray, and Ron Harden (one more volunteer needed).

More nominations will be accepted from the floor at the January meeting. Members present will vote, and those elected will be installed at the conclusion of the meeting.

The nominating committee also identified recommended candidates to chair our standing committees in 2022.

Committee chairs are not elected; rather, they are appointed by the president with the consent of the board. The recommended candidates are: Conservation, Ellie Harrison; Membership, Harry Rose; Education, Sheila Webber; Finance, still seeking a volunteer; Programs, Jessie Meschivitz; Field Trips, Nolan Bunting; Publications, Janae Malpas; Public Relations, Andrew Monson; Hospitality, still seeking a volunteer.

If you could fill a vacancy, please contact any of our current board members or nominees.

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www.fortcollinsaudubon.org

Visit us on Facebook:

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



The Health Benefit of Habitat Corridors

As conservationists, we all enjoy observing nature and caring for wildlife. The natural world benefits us in many ways as we exercise through it, receive ecosystem services from it and, even more amazingly, we help prevent disease with it!

Research on the emergence of zoonotic diseases has shown a strong correlation between increased disease transmission and decreased biodiversity. Most recently, a study on Lyme disease transmission in the Appalachians showed that areas with a higher biodiversity index — meaning it contains more species of plants and animals — had a significant decrease in tick borne disease transmission to humans. The reason for this? Diffusion, meaning the more species there are, the less likely disease transmission occurs. This is because emerging diseases, such as SARS-COV-2, or Lyme disease, tend to originate in species with shorter lifespans, which have greater environmental resiliency and higher birth rates. Biodiversity helps this through allowing the opposite species to exist within nature. Species with longer lifespans, which are more susceptible to environmental changes and have lower birth rates, are less likely to transmit diseases to humans. Thus with increased biodiversity, we decrease the population of disease transmitting animals through competition and predation.

So, how does this relate to habitat corridors? Habitat corridors are a valuable tool for improving biodiversity

and shifting the scales toward longer lived species. What do an elk and Bald Eagle have in common? Large home ranges and long lives. Elk are migratory animals, as are many long-lived species, including wildebeest in Africa and caribou in the Arctic. Migrations require large amounts of protected land that connect to allow this migration to occur. Migration improves the biodiversity of an ecosystem through indirect competition with existing overpopulated species that decreases disease transmission to humans. Bald Eagles, and other predators, such as mountain lions, need large areas to hunt for prey. Predation increases biodiversity through loss of animals directly and changes in animal behavior. The only way to ensure these large areas are available is through habitat corridors.

Current policies for conservation in the United States often aim for the protection of specific species. We promote the protection of wolves, Bald Eagles, and pandas, and while this is valuable, we do not often see this trickle down through an ecosystem. That is why the best way to support conservation is through habitat and ecosystem level management.

How can you help? Donate to conservation efforts to support habitat corridors. There are many emerging around the world, such as the Great Limpopo Trans-frontier Park in Africa, the Yellowstone to Yukon initiative, and the Foothills to Prairie Corridor here in Fort Collins. Additionally, we recommend purchasing a habitat stamp from Colorado Parks and Wildlife



From <https://actionnetwork.org>.

It's Time to Renew Your Membership



Renew

It is time to renew your annual membership. FCAS chapter memberships run for the calendar year from January through December. Dues are \$20 to receive the *Ptarmigan* electronically or \$30 for a printed copy through the mail. Please use the form on the back

page of the newsletter to renew by mail or renew at a program meeting. You also can renew online at our website: www.fortcollinsaudubon.org. Remember, your membership and contributions are tax deductible.

Your local chapter dues strengthen our efforts and make possible our programs, meetings, education, and advocacy for birds and wildlife habitat. Keep the *Ptarmigan* coming by renewing today.

FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Mary Bledsoe
Kerstin Braun
Sirena Brownlee
Randy & Kathy Fischer
Gina C. Janett
Carla Johns
Todd Johns

Phoebe Larson
Susan McGoldrick
Cheryl Owig
Barbara Patterson
Patricia D. Quier
Carolyn Sanders

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.



Iceland Offers Excellent Birding Opportunities

Iceland, a country with remarkable glaciers, volcanoes, waterfalls, and fjords, is only 100,000 km² and would fit within the boundaries of Colorado. Much of the island consists of uninhabitable mountain territory, is rather barren, and almost treeless. Lowland areas



Marshes, mountains, and farmland in southern Iceland.
Photo by Barbara Patterson.

as consist of marshes, moors, and shrubs. Iceland's climate, location, and lack of forests are definite limitations to certain aspects of its avian life, but not all. Just how does Nature respond to the cards this island in the North Atlantic has been dealt?

Over 330 bird species have been observed in Iceland, 79 percent of them being non-breeders. Only 73 bird species breed regularly in Iceland, with some spending three to five months on the island, and the rest being residents. That is a small number of birds, but the populations of some types are so large that Iceland is considered rich in birdlife. Most Icelandic birds are associated with the sea or wetlands. The conditions are particularly favorable for seabirds, with abundant food in the ocean and excellent nesting grounds on cliffs and islands. Passerines are uncommon, with only 10 species breeding.

The southernmost region of Iceland has one of the country's largest Arctic Tern colonies, Northern Fulmar breeding grounds, a large Atlantic Puffin colony, and breeding Black Guillemots. In Skaftafell National Park, stunted downy birch forests host Redwings (a thrush), and Iceland's race of Winter Wren that favors open stream sides. On the heathland you will find Rock Ptarmigans and Snow Buntings. The sandy plains south of Iceland's largest icecap are an important breeding ground for Great Skuas. The eastern fjords have a stable climate sheltered by the mountains and

the highlands. Shallow fjords harbor abundant sea floor vegetation, while salt marshes and ponds provide important staging areas for migrants. Breeding birds include Atlantic Puffin, Common Eider, Ringed Plover, Red-necked Phalarope, Common Scoter, plus Whooper Swans and Graylag Geese by the thousands.

Lake Myvatn, also called "Midge Lake," is one of Iceland's largest lakes. It is rich in nutrients and sustains a huge population of midges, the latter being a vital link in food chains involving birds. All Iceland's duck species are found here, and in numbers and variety rivaled by few other spots on Earth. Two American species, the Harlequin Duck and the Barrow's Goldeneye are common breeders, and Lake Myvatn is their only breeding place in Europe.

Snaeflesnes Peninsula on the west coast is well-vegetated meadows and moors, with nutrient-rich mudflats and beaches. This area is particularly important to species that migrate between

their breeding grounds north of the Arctic Circle and winter homes in mainland Europe or farther south.

On the coast you will find Great Black-backed Gulls and the Harlequin Ducks playing in the waves below the cliffs. Farther north is the spectacular



Atlantic Puffin by Dave Leatherman.

lar Latrabjarg bird cliff, the largest seabird nesting site in Iceland. It hosts up to a million birds, including the largest Razorbill colony in the world, Northern Fulmars, and Black-legged Kittiwakes. Majestic White-tailed Eagles, the only raptors found in Iceland besides Merlin and Gyrfalcon, breed there.

As this overview teases, Iceland's habitats that range from ocean and sea cliffs to moorlands and marshes, support a wonderful array of birdlife amid some of the most stunning landscapes you will ever see.



Christmas Bird Count — 122 Years and Still Going Strong



The 122nd Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will take place from December 14 to January

5. Fort Collins has the longest continuous CBC in Colorado, beginning in 1947. The CBC is the longest running citizen science survey in the world, and it provides critical data on bird population trends. Tens of thousands of participants know that it is also a great way to make new friends and have fun! Volunteers are assigned in teams to cover designated areas within a 15-mile diameter circle, counting every bird they see or hear all day. Advanced birding skills are not required; beginners can be paired with more experienced birders. Volunteers who live within a count circle that just wish to record what comes to their backyard feeders also are welcome to participate; they should contact the CBC

coordinator for details. To help bolster this year's involvement, FCAS will not be hosting any December field trips. Instead, the following is information on the upcoming CBC locations and compliers. Happy Holidays and happy birding to all.

Pawnee Grasslands: Complier Gary Lefko: coloradobirder@yahoo.com, Saturday, Dec. 18, Crow Valley; Sunday, Dec. 19, Nunn; Friday, Dec. 24, Stoneham; Friday, Dec. 31, Pawnee Buttes.

Fort Collins: Complier Thomas Hall: redbear44@msn.com, Saturday, Dec. 18.

Rawhide Energy Station: Complier Douglas Kibbe: dpkibbe@msn.com or 303-910-9476. Date to be announced, contact complier for information.

Loveland: Complier Denise Bretting: dbretting@swloveland.com, Saturday, Jan. 1.

Rocky Mountain National Park: Complier Scott Rashid: pygmyowl@frii.com or 970-227-9425. Monday, Jan. 3.

Traveling for the holidays? Visit this link to find CBCs in your travel location. <https://audubon.maps.arcgis.com/apps/View/index.html?appid=ac275eeb01434cedb1c5dcd0fd3fc7b4>

Past Field Trip Highlights

Saturday, October 16, Well Gulch Trail-Lory State Park.

Leader: Nolan Bunting. Eleven species; highlights included a Great Horned Owl being scolded by a Prairie Falcon and flock of Black-billed Magpies. The trail was quiet at the start of the hike picking up as the sun rose into the gulch.

Sunday, October 24, Loveland Lakes area.

Leader: Nick Komar. A fantastic trip around the many water features of Loveland. The greatest highlight of the trip was a rare Arctic Tern migrating through Horseshoe Reservoir on its way south to Antarctica.



Goose with white head: Snow X Canada.
Photo by Joseph Webber.

Sunday, November 7, Fossil Creek Reservoir. Leader: Sirena Brownlee. Twenty-six species, including Goldeneye, Buffleheads, and American White Pelicans. The waterfowl were very active, and the weather was perfect.

Saturday November 13, Riverbend Ponds.

Leader: Nolan Bunting. Twelve species, but over 600 birds. Highlights for the trip were by far the number of hybrids within the flock. This included three Canada/

Cackling X Ross's/Snow Geese, and a Ross's X Snow Goose hybrid. There were also shovelers, teal, coots, and other waterfowl. Good migration location.



Wishing Everyone a Very Happy Holidays



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.