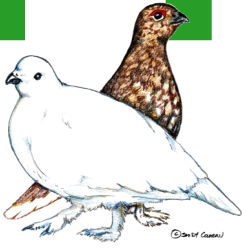


PTARMIGAN



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.

February 2022

Volume 54, Issue 2

FCAS Hosts Carmen Farmer

Project Manager for Colorado Open Lands

Presenting:

"Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse in the North Fork of the Poudre River Watershed"

Thursday, February 10

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

Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Dr.

Masks Required

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

Enter the following link at or before 7 p.m.

to join the meeting virtually: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82898433255>

The Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse (*Zapus hudsonius preblei*) only exists along Colorado's Front Range and southeastern Wyoming. The North Fork of the Cache La Poudre River watershed provides good riparian habitat for the mouse that was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1998. Learn about efforts by private landowners and local, state, and federal land managers to manage and enhance habitat for this species. This presentation outlines some of the voluntary measures landowners are incorporating, ranging from riparian restoration efforts to the implementation of conservation easements.



Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse by Dr. Robert Schorr.

Carmen Farmer is Project Manager for Colorado Open Lands, a statewide land trust that holds easements on over 600,000 acres. Based in Fort Collins, Carmen oversees conservation easements for the Northern Front Range and Lower South Platte Basin. Join us for this informational evening on Feb. 10. The public is welcomed.

Note: Due to the unpredictable nature of the pandemic, it may become necessary to cancel the in-person portion of our meeting and conduct it entirely via Zoom. If you plan to attend in person, please check our website, Instagram, or Facebook page the day of the meeting.

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.

We were extremely successful at the end of 2021 with recruiting volunteers to serve on the FCAS Board of Directors. Consequently, we start 2022 in a better position than any other time since I joined the Board nine years ago. I'm eager to bring the new board members up to speed so they can contribute to positive change and help us achieve our mission.

As strong as we are, when I look ahead to the next year, I see two big challenges for FCAS. The first is to continue diversifying the organization. Our best hope for long-term success is if the membership and leadership of FCAS reflect the diversity of the communities we purport to serve. We've already made progress on gender and age: our current Board of Directors is split evenly among men and women, and ranges in age from college students to retirees. Now I'm hoping to attract greater diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, and other qualities. In any case, FCAS will be stronger if all people who share our values feel welcomed.

The second big challenge for us this year is to return to some semblance of normal operations, despite the ongoing pandemic. For almost two years now, we've conducted FCAS board meetings virtually. Last summer we resumed field trips, with limits on attendance. And starting last fall we began offering our monthly programs in a hybrid format: both in-person and vir-

tually. The first few hybrid meetings did not go smoothly, but we learned a little each time and I think we now know how to do it right. In 2022, we will continue the virtual board meet-



ings and hybrid programs, but we hope to lift the attendance limits on our field trips sometime this spring and participate, in person, in more community activities. Having said that, FCAS will continue to follow all public health guidelines and we will continue to offer virtual activities so all members can benefit.

Species Highlight

To celebrate the New Year and the 25th Great Backyard Bird Count, we will highlight a bird species in each newsletter this year, as well as on Facebook and Instagram. Want to submit a suggestion or photo? Email nbunting@rams.colostate.edu.

This month's highlight is the House Sparrow. The House Sparrow is the one of two introduced members of the Passeridae family found in the North America. In fact, the



Male House Sparrow
by Evan Lipton, Macaulay Library.

House Sparrow is one of the most successfully introduced species in the world, living on every continent except Antarctica, and has been introduced to many islands in the Pacific and the Atlantic. The US population was introduced in 1851 in Brooklyn, New York, and had migrated to the Rocky Mountains by 1900. It is one of the most studied passerines with almost 5,000 papers written on them.

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Visit us on Facebook:

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

FCAS Pocket Guide to Local Birds

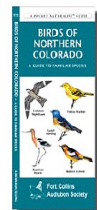
Available at:

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



Your Support Makes a Difference

Each year FCAS must submit a report of our activities to the National Audubon Society as part of our responsibilities as a chapter. It is always interesting to see just how much one all-volunteer organization can accomplish. Your support as members is critical to achieving our mission of promoting the appreciation, conservation, and restoration of ecosystems for birds and other wildlife through education, participation, stewardship and advocacy. The last two years have been particularly challenging during these crazy Covid times, however FCAS stayed nimble and figured out how to persevere and even thrive. In March 2020, with the hard shutdown, all in-person activities including field trips, educational events, and program meetings were cancelled or postponed. We quickly became adept at holding our board and program meetings via Zoom. That technology has allowed us to expand our program offerings to include speakers from remote locations and reach a larger audience. By 2021, we began recording the programs and launched an FCAS YouTube channel making our programs available online.

During 2020 we had many conservation successes despite the pandemic. FCAS presented a virtual slideshow program at the Poudre River Fest titled "The Poudre River: An Important Bird Area (IBA)," with a goal of galvanizing support for protecting and conserving the river and the IBA. The program highlighted birds commonly found along the river and described the efforts of FCAS to achieve the IBA designation for the Poudre and the vital role of IBAs in bird conservation. A Poudre River IBA poster was created and eventually installed at the Poudre Trail kiosk on North Taft Hill.



FCAS was able to offer two educational scholarships to fund student research projects: Project Feederwatch with the CSU Field Ornithology Club; and The Effects of Barbed Wire on Wildlife and Birds, a study on the Pawnee National Grassland. The students (Nolan Bunting and Saige Griffis West) presented their results at our September program meeting. We also updated our Pocket Guide to the Birds of Northern Colorado and distributed to local retailers a hunter education brochure on the benefits to birds and wildlife of using non-lead ammunition.

The board has been fortunate to gain some new younger members, many of whom came from an effort to improve our outreach to youth and young adults. The self-titled "Ad Hawk" advisory committee recommendations included boosting our social media profile by adding an Instagram account and establishing a new partnership with the CSU Student Field Ornithology Club.

In 2021 we safely resumed field trips and expanded our conservation efforts by partnering with other nonprofits to hold conservation/educational events, including: birding programs for underserved populations; co-sponsoring a Habitat Hero webinar series and promoting landscaping with native plants; offering two more student educational scholarships; a Wings and Wheels bike ride on the Poudre Trail with nine educational tables; assisting UCHealth Infusion Center with developing a Mindful Birding Program for cancer patients; and much, much more.

It is remarkable how much we have been able to accomplish with the help of our members, volunteers, and partners. We are grateful for your support!

Upcoming Field Trips

To register, please visit (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/123106328705>), (<https://www.instagram.com/fcaudubon/>), or fortcollinsaudubon.org. Registrants are posted one week before the trip. Attendance is limited to 14.

Feb. 7, Monday, Arapahoe Bend Natural Area. Leader: Nolan Bunting, nbunting@rams.colostate.edu, Cell 907-299-4625. Meet at 10 a.m. in the parking lot near Rigden Reservoir. This trip will involve a lot of walking to look for waterfowl, shorebirds, and some

forest birds. A scope will be provided.

Feb. 18-21, Friday-Monday, The 25th Great Backyard Bird Count. For the last 25 years, the Great Backyard Bird Count has monitored bird populations around the world through citizen science. From Uganda to Alaska, people submit eBird lists and photos to help scientists better understand bird populations. We encourage you to participate in this great event either as an individual or in a group. Instructions to participate can be found at <https://www.birdcount.org/participate/>.



The Role of Herbaceous Vegetation During Winters on Colorado's Eastern Plains

To those in the know, the eastern plains are Colorado's best kept secret. A visit during the late spring or early summer is a spectacular opportunity to experience the diversity of life found on what is called the shortgrass prairie of the Great Plains. But what about the quiet dormancy of winter? After breeding birds have migrated south, the vast landscape is left to the year-round residents. How do plant communities play a role in their survival when conditions are dominated by harsh winds, freezing temperatures, and limited food sources?

Much of the dominant vegetation throughout the shortgrass prairie consists of short-statured grasses/grasslike plants such as blue grama and buffalograss. However, tall grasses commonly occur naturally throughout native rangeland (i.e., ecosystems dominated by herbaceous vegetation) or through management actions

on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) fields (i.e., retired cropland planted to native grasses, forbs, and shrubs). These tall dormant plants provide strong structures that protect wildlife from cold winds and predators. Native bunchgrasses (e.g., little bluestem, sand bluestem, and prairie sandreed) and shrubs (e.g., sand sagebrush and fourwing saltbush) are critical for a variety of resident wildlife species.



Blue grama from Water Conservation for Lawn and Landscape.

In the winter, birds switch from primarily consuming insects to seeds derived from native plants, cropland, and soil seed banks. Perennial grasses such as switchgrass and sand dropseed as well as annual forbs and crop grain serve as primary food sources. Farmers often harvest their crop with a stripper head leaving residue and stubble suitable for multiple game and nongame species. Wildlife biologists manage State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) CRP as heterogeneous communities of herbaceous vegetation that

appear quite different from the well-manicured lawns found in town. These fields will provide food sources and shelter for a diverse set of year-round residents, most notably upland bird species like Eastern Plains Sharp-tailed Grouse and Greater/Lesser Prairie Chick-en.

Good land management during the growing season can have a substantial influence on the quality of winter habitat. Thoughtful ranchers know where grazing fits into their system and use it accordingly to meet their objectives. Some see their primary roles as growing grass and graze in such a way that promotes soil health and plant regrowth. This perspective is not only suitable for a successful operation, but has positive effects on ecological health and year-round habitat quality. Ranchers that defer or rest fields from grazing create tall,



Winter Prairie by Justin Lambert.

heterogeneous plant structures useful to wildlife throughout the winter.

It's important to note that managing for vegetation height and structure is not a one-size-fits-all approach applicable to all seasons. Habitat is species-specific and consideration should be given to a wide variety of other factors. Ranchers, land managers, and other professionals attempt to strike a balance that meets requirements for a broad range of species and uses while addressing the societal complexities of the eastern plains. Various techniques and practices are used to maintain a landscape that meets the life cycles of wildlife throughout the plains.

Justin Lambert is a current graduate student at University of Idaho focusing on grassland bird conservation based out of Brush, Colorado.



Justin Lambert holding a Swainson's Thrush by Jesse Reese.



FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

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.

Dale Agger
Marianne Black
Frank Breidt
Linda Cashman
Matthew Dane
Cynthia DeCrescentis
Susan Degutz
James Dolan
Ann Donoghue
Mary Ellner
Irene Fortune
Barbara Black Fredman
William Gerke
Alan Godwin
Kristin Gray
Larry Griffin

Ron Harden
Ellie Harrison
Carol Hossan
Michael Huntington
Ted Huston
Carol Jones
Nancy Jones
Phoebe Larson
Jane M. Low
Marcia Maeda
Carolyn Mahakian
Anna Makovec-Fuller
Ed & Judy Martens
Connie Marvel
Margo Matthews
Barbara Maynard

Jessie Meschievitz
Martha Morgan
Rosemary Rader
Kristopher Reif
Helmut Retzel
Rich Roberts
Gary Robinson
Harry Rose
Anne Saunders
Lynette Seymour
John Shenot
Mary Beck & Gary Spivak
David Steingraeber
Paula Sterns
Trudy Verser
Mark Wagner



Red-bellied Woodpecker by Jay Breidt.
Taken at Lon Hagler Reservoir the day before the Loveland CBC.



Solitary Sandpiper by Denise Bretting. Photo taken during the Loveland CBC. It is the first time the bird has been documented overwintering here since the winter of 1986-1987.



Interested in leading a Birding Trip? Have an idea for a trip?
Email nbunting@rams.colostate.edu
if you would like to volunteer or suggest a trip.

Pine Siskin by Doug Swartz, taken during the Fort Collins CBC.



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.