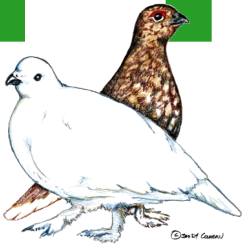


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FORT COLLINS AUDUBON SOCIETY

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 2023

Volume 55, Issue 7

FCAS Hosts Stephen Jones, Author

"Thirty-eight years of Continuity, Change, and Wonder at a Sandhills Wildlife Area"

Thursday, October 12

Social time with Refreshments 7 p.m.; Announcements 7:20; Presentation: 7:30

Door Prize Drawing (must be present to win)

Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Dr.

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

Enter the following link at 7 p.m to join the meeting virtually:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84702648189>

Over four decades, Stephen Jones has spent more than 300 nights camping out by himself at State Wildlife Areas in the north-western Nebraska Sandhills. He was drawn to the Sandhills because it's the last expanse of mostly natural prairie in North America. In this State Wildlife Area alone, he's documented 124 potential breeding bird species while enjoying intimate interactions with Long-eared Owls, Trumpeter Swans, and Wild Turkeys. He will dis-



Sunrise at campsite by Stephen Jones.

cuss the unique natural processes in the Sandhills.

Stephen Jones is the author of several books, his most recent being "Nourishing Waters, Comforting Sky," which explores his intimate interactions with the prairie world of Smith Lake in Nebraska.

Join us on Oct. 12 at the Fort Collins Senior Center for this inspiring program. It is free and 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 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.

Please Vote: FCAS Name Change Referendum

Last month I notified members that the FCAS Board of Directors had decided, unanimously, to recommend a change to our chapter's name to something that isn't specific to Fort Collins and doesn't include the name Audubon. The reasons we are considering this big step



are twofold: 1) almost half of our members (45 percent) don't live in Fort Collins; and 2) John James Audubon was a slave owner and defender of the institution of slavery, and some people may feel that an organization

named in his honor is not a place where they belong or would feel welcomed. The Board adopted a resolution, available at www.fortcollinsaudubon.org/namechangeresolution, that provides a formal statement of the rationale for this recommendation. We also have collected links to additional information on the Audubon name controversy and answers to frequently asked questions, which you can review at www.fortcollinsaudubon.org/namechangeFAQs.

Importantly, the Board decided that we should not

and won't take this big step unless a substantial majority of our members support the resolution. Members in good standing will now have the opportunity to vote on whether to drop the old name and begin the search for a new name. (The Board does not have any alternative names in mind at this time.)

On or about October 1, members for whom we have a current email address will receive an email with these headings:

From: OpaVote Voting Link <noreply@opavote.com>
Subject: Resolution expressing the need to rename the Fort Collins Audubon Society

The email will include a link to a secure webpage where each recipient can vote yes or no on a single question: do you or do you not support the resolution and a name change? The vote will remain open until October 19, but members will only be able to vote once. Non-members cannot vote. The Board of Directors will be able to see who has and has not voted, but not how anyone votes. If you don't vote right away, you may receive reminder emails. If you do not receive an email by October 3 and want to vote in the referendum, contact President John Shenot no later than October 18.

In other news, I want to encourage any FCAS member who might be interested in serving on the Board of Directors in 2024 to contact me at your earliest convenience. We're once again starting the annual process of recruiting volunteers and will announce the members of our nominations committee at the chapter meeting on October 12. I'm always happy to bring new faces to the leadership of FCAS and will gladly answer your questions about the roles we need to fill and what it takes to serve. The most important thing for any potential Board candidate to know is that FCAS is financially strong, has stable membership numbers, and has a superb Board of Directors sharing the load of running the organization. Also, rest assured that you don't have to be an expert birder or have experience leading any type of organization. New Board members will get a lot of coaching and help in whatever role they assume.

Please note that in keeping with our bylaws, the position of president is the only position on the Board that serves two-year terms. I was elected last year to a term that runs through 2024, so that position does not need to be filled. All other officer and director positions serve one-year terms and will be up for election at our annual meeting in January.

JOIN OUR TEAM!



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Visit us on Facebook:

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



Kestrel Fields Natural Area – Open!

Big sky and foothills views. A veritable sea of sunflowers. Agriculture. Neighborhood connections. Habitat enhancement in progress. The newest eBird Hotspot in Fort Collins.

These are all attributes of Kestrel Fields, a 73-acre natural area recently opened to the public. Located in northwest Fort Collins, two former agricultural properties were purchased in 2019/20. Since then, planning and early implementation steps were taken.

This City of Fort Collins natural area conserves an important link in a largely open corridor that extends from foothills to the Cache la Poudre River riparian zone. These corridors are rare as development proceeds in the area.

Habitat improvement work on the north and west portions was jumpstarted with a \$77 thousand “Restoration Fund,” funded in 2020 by contributions



Kestrel Fields sunflowers by Doug Swartz.

diversify habitat with native grasses, forbs, shrubs, and trees.

The south portion hosts a “conservation agriculture” pilot project. [Poudre Valley Community Farms](#), a non-profit whose mission is to make close-in farmland available to newer farmers who can’t afford to purchase their own, leases 30 acres of Kestrel Fields which, in turn, it sub-leases to Native Hill Farm. The formerly monocultural hayfield (non-native smooth brome grass) is being transformed into local organic food production (a wide



Blue Grosbeak: female, left; male, right.
Photo by Doug Swartz.

from more than 100 households, most of them in the vicinity of Kestrel Fields. Plantings to date are the start of the City’s plans to

continue while habitat changes attract a wide variety of other species. Acres of sunflowers (hundreds of thousands of seedheads) are active now (early September) attracting American Goldfinches, Lesser Goldfinches, Lazuli Buntings, Mourning Doves, House Finches, and Blue Grosbeaks.

As you plan your trip to Kestrel Fields, be aware there is no on-site parking. Trailheads are located on West Vine Drive and neighborhoods that abut the natural area. Foot or bicycle access is recommended.

When school is not in session, you may park at Irish Elementary (to the south) and take the short walk to the Vine Drive trailhead.

Kestrel Fields is a “diamond-in-the-rough” that will be polished over time. Learn more and find a trail map at www.fcgov.com/naturalareas/finder/kestrel-fields.

array of veggies) while diversifying the habitat to be much more friendly to wildlife. A substantial pollinator plot will be planted within this section. Improving soil health will be an important part of this work.

Kestrel Fields offers a great opportunity to observe how nature responds to the evolution from farmland to an interesting combination of food production and native habitat. To help document the changes over time, please submit your eBird checklists using the “Kestrel Fields Natural Area” Hotspot.

I’ve been birding this land from the perimeter for more than 25 years. Birds of open country have dominated: Western Meadowlarks, American Kestrels (of course!), an assortment of other raptors (especially in winter), swallows, migrating sparrows, Lark Buntings, shrikes, flycatchers, and bluebirds. I anticipate these will



Sage Thrasher by Doug Swartz.



The Beauty of a Messy Yard

What a beautiful, rainy summer we have had this year. From the foothills to the Pawnee Grasslands there were wildflowers all summer long. In our own garden, sunflowers and Rocky Mountain bee plants have grown to about six feet tall. All this beautiful growth may look to some like so much more to clean up when it's time to put the garden to bed, but consider leaving the garden a bit messy this fall.



Leave the leaves by Sheila Webber.

It has been so much fun watching all the beautiful types of life that have called our yard home over the summer: American Goldfinch, honeybees, native bees, butterflies, and garden spiders. A bull snake came through and I sincerely hope he stayed in the backyard, which is a bit overgrown with our native plants. We even had a new yard bird this September — a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher stopped by on his migration route to have a snack. It is a source of pride to have created a food oasis for these many beings when they are finding such food sources more and more scarce. Manicured, non-native landscapes in human developments are creating what is deemed “food deserts.”

The complexity of habitat structure as a driver of biodiversity in gardens is well documented and this diverse vegetation structure supports a wide variety of ecological niches and microclimates — spaces for these very important creatures to thrive. Planting mostly native plants in a diverse, multi-storied garden will foster the most insect species as native plants and insects have evolved together. Birds rely on a robust insect population for survival.

FCAS Welcome New and Renewing Members

Leslie Coleman
Gary Filerman
Susan Peterson
James Vervaeche

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.



Leaving plant stalks standing until spring provides winter interest to the garden as well as preserving eggs, larva, and even adult insects. Overwintering and nesting habitats are as important to our pollinators and other invertebrates as are food sources in summer. According to the Xerces Society, these sites are two of the most important factors influencing native bee and beneficial insect populations. In addition to leaving plant stalks up until spring, leaving fallen leaves until late spring, either on your lawn, or raked into piles on garden beds or around the base of trees will provide overwintering habitat for many invertebrates. Make sure to rake them up instead of chopping them with a mower to protect the insects. Another good resource for birds and insects are snags (as long as there is no safety issue) and slash piles.

Consider leaving the yard a bit messy. Our important and interesting insects will thank you, not to mention the birds and other species that depend on them. For more information on the subject check out these websites: <https://rockies.audubon.org/habitat-hero>, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10531-023-02694-9>, <https://xerces.org/blog/leave-the-leaves>, <https://xerces.org/publications/fact-sheets/nesting-overwintering-habitat>, and <https://www.audubon.org/news/yards-non-native-plants-create-food-deserts-bugs-and-birds>.



American Tree Sparrow
in blue grama grass
By Sheila Webber.

Sphinx moth
on golden
current
by Joseph
Webber.



Hotspot Highlight: Grandview Cemetery

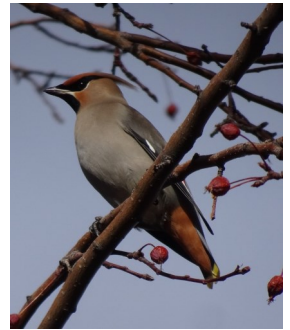


This year's newsletter will include a Hotspot Highlight. The highlight will include a description of a birding hotspot, the kinds of birds you can see, and will be related to the time of year. Want to submit

a suggestion or photo? Email nbunting@rams.colostate.edu.

This month's highlight is Grandview Cemetery. No better way to spend the spookiest time of year than looking for birds at a cemetery. Open dawn to dusk, Grandview Cemetery has been a staple in the Fort Col-

lins birding community for many years since its establishment in 1887, and is known for its rarities and unique species. Over 200 bird species have perched and played along the graves of old residents of Fort Collins. These include all three species of Colorado nuthatch, Chimney Swift, and even the hard-to-find Bohemian Waxwing in winter. The area also supports one Red-naped Sapsucker who is occasionally seen during the winter at the cemetery. Go and explore this area yourself, but please mind the graves. Oh, and be careful of ghosts.



Bohemian Waxwing
by John Shenot.

Upcoming Field Trips

To register for any trip, go to Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/FortCollinsAudubonSociety/>), or <http://www.fortcollinsaudubon.org/>. Registration for field trips will be sent out October 1 and posted one week before the scheduled trip. Attendance is limited to 12 individuals. We are looking for more field trip leaders and field trip ideas. If you are interested, please email Nolan Bunting at nbunting@rams.colostate.edu.

Wednesday, Oct. 4, Dixon Reservoir. Leader: Andrew Monson, a.s.monson@gmail.com or 970-795-2790. Meet at the Dixon Reservoir upper parking lot at 5:15 p.m. We will explore the Viewpoint Trail looking for regulars like White-crowned Sparrows, Black-billed Magpies, and Spotted Towhees, while also keeping our eyes peeled for Bald Eagles, Northern Goshawks, and Prairie Falcons. This outing will involve some hiking of uneven ground and a moderate incline (at a relaxed pace).

Sunday, Oct. 8, Bobcat Ridge Survey. Leader: Denise Bretting, dbretting@swloveland.com or 970-402-1292. The survey looks at bird populations and helps local scientists better understand bird dynamics. The hike is a little more than 4 miles covering moderate to flat terrain. No registration required for this trip and there is no limit in the



Great Horned Owl
by David Leatherman.

amount of people who can attend, but please email or text Denise that you plan to attend. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the Bobcat Ridge Parking lot.

Sunday, Oct. 29, Grandview Cemetery. Leader: Nolan Bunting and David Leatherman, nbunting@rams.colostate.edu or 907-299-4625. Prepare for a spooky trip just before dusk at Grandview Cemetery. The trip will take 1.5 hours and will include easy walking through one of Fort Collins' hidden birding locations. We will be looking for the resident Great Horned Owls, Brown Creeper, and perhaps stumble upon a murder of crows. Additionally, there will be stories about some of the well-known ghosts and hauntings that are said to happen in the cemetery. Meet at the Mountain Ave. entrance near City Park at 5 p.m. We will conclude at dusk. Please bring a headlamp and/or flashlight. Registration is increased to 15 participants for this trip.

September's Field Trips

Sept. 3 at Dixon Reservoir was a rainy evening and few birds were seen. However, highlights included a Yellow-rumped Warbler and Northern Flicker.

On Sept. 15 John Shenot and his crew of birders found 33 species at North Shields Pond Natural Area,

including one Chipping Sparrow, one Red Crossbill, three Clay-colored Sparrows, and two Western Tanagers.



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.