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Northern Colorado Bird Alliance

(formerly Fort Collins Audubon Society)

P.O. Box 271968 • Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968 • www.nocobirdalliance.org

Promoting the appreciation, conservation, and restoration of ecosystems; focusing on birds and other wildlife through education, participation, stewardship, and advocacy.

April 2025

Volume 57, Issue 4

Northern Colorado Bird Alliance (formerly Fort Collins Audubon Society) Hosts

Tom D. Schultz presenting:

“The Hows and Whys of Bird Colors”

Thursday, April 10

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 will be online via Zoom. Enter the following at 7 p.m. to join the meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85913966797>

Birds exhibit a broad palette of colors that thrill our senses, but serve utilitarian purposes such as providing camouflage or communication. Conspicuous plumages exploit the exceptional color vision of birds and may be tuned to specific viewing conditions. In this talk, Tom Schultz will explore the mechanisms that produce bird colors, whether they are pigmentary or structural, and how they work to produce salient signals. In addition, he will examine the evidence for how bird coloration serves as a condition-dependent signal providing information about the health or fitness of a potential mate or rival.



**Olive-backed Sunbird in Queensland, Australia,
by Tom Schultz.**

Tom D. Schultz is an Emeritus Professor of Biology at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, where he taught Animal Behavior, Animal Communication, the Biology of Insects, and Ornithology. His research has concerned the utility of structural coloration in providing anti-predator defenses in tiger beetles, and mating signals in damselflies. He retired and moved to Fort Collins in 2019 with his wife Janet, where he spends his time engaged

with hiking, natural history, nature photography, and fly-fishing.

Northern Colorado Bird Alliance 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.



President's Corner

by John Shenot

I want to update everyone on three of the most important things we've done since changing our name to Northern Colorado Bird Alliance in February.

First, this newsletter now uses our new name. For perhaps a year, we will continue to note on the newsletter, the website, and in other appropriate places that Northern Colorado Bird Alliance was formerly Fort Collins Audubon Society. But in a year or so, we will drop that name completely.

Second, we have changed the name on our bank account. This means we can no longer cash checks made out to Fort Collins Audubon Society or FCAS. If you are renewing your membership or donating, please make checks out to Northern Colorado Bird Alliance. Otherwise, we will have to return your check uncashed and ask you to send a new one. (By the way, our mailing address has not changed except that it, too, is under the new name. We are told that mail addressed to FCAS will still be delivered for some time, but it's best to use the new name!)

Third, we have registered two new internet domain names, nocobirdalliance.org and northerncoloradobirdalliance.org. We intend to use the former and shorter version primarily, but registering both names prevents anyone else from using the latter/longer version. If you type either of these names into a web browser, you will go to our website. If you type the old

domain name, fortcollinsaudubon.org, you will still get to our website for some time, but eventually that address will no longer work. So, we advise you to start using nocobirdalliance.org right away.

Big things are still to come: We will be changing our social media accounts to acknowledge our new name, and we also plan to revamp our website. (Some of this may have already happened between the time I wrote this article and when you are reading it.) The Board is also discussing whether to create organizational email addresses, which would entail an ongoing cost, but would allow our volunteers to stop using their personal email addresses for chapter business.



Eastern Screech-Owl
by John Shenot.

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Visit us on Facebook:

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



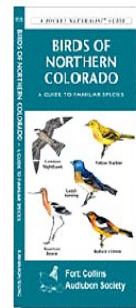
FCAS Pocket Guide to Local Birds

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 Loveland West
Outdoor Gear
2665W. Eisenhower
(970) 667-7375

Jax Outdoor Gear
1200 N. College
(970) 221-0544



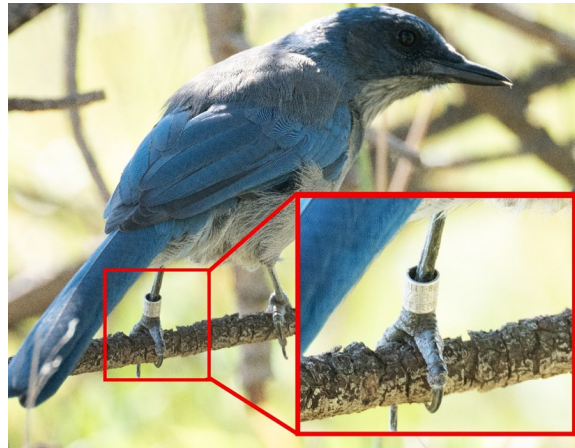
Bird Banding

If you've been watching the birds at your feeder, bird bath, or local natural area, you may have asked yourself questions about the individual life of a bird. Questions like: "how old is this House Finch?" or "do these Canada Geese overwinter here, or migrate to different wintering grounds?" Research is conducted through capturing and marking individual birds by placing uniquely numbered bands on their leg(s) to answer questions like these and more.

Capturing wild birds in a way that is safe for both the birds and the bander is no simple task. First, to band birds a person requires both a state and federal permit, as well as a specific project or purpose for banding. It also requires traps that are specific to the type of bird being studied. Most songbirds can be caught using a mist net: a nylon mesh net divided into several pockets, normally stretched between two or more



Female Broad-tailed Hummingbird held in a large band so its legs can be safely accessed for banding by Joseph Webber.



Banded Woodhouse's Scrub Jay, with the numbers 713 visible by Joseph Webber,

metal poles set in the ground in an area frequented by many birds. The net is thin enough that the birds (usually) can't see it until they fly into it, then drop into one of the pockets where a bander or assistant will untangle them. Larger raptors require more specific

traps, waterfowl can be caught by hand seasonally when they have molted their flight feathers, and shorebirds can be banded shortly after they hatch. The legs of most shorebirds grow in length but not circumference, so the band won't become too tight as the birds grow.

Once a bird is in-hand, a bander will place an aluminum band around the bird's tarsus. Unless for hummingbirds, a band has a unique series of nine numbers etched on it (hummingbirds get a letter and five numbers). The bander then measures and records data pertinent to the species. Typically, this includes the species, the sex of the bird, its molt pattern, wing, tail, and sometimes bill length, its weight and fat content, as well as skull pneumatization (progress of skull plates fusing together). Molt and skull pneumatization are strong indicators of a bird's age, whereas feather length, and weight can determine the sex of species that aren't sexually dimorphic.

Once released, the banded bird continues its life as normal, providing useful data along the way. Information provided by banding includes migration patterns, longevity records, nesting habits, species population estimates, and more. If you encounter a banded bird, living or not, and are able to read the band number, you can report your sighting to the banding laboratory at: <https://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBL/bblretrv/index.cfm> and receive a certificate with data about that individual bird. If you have questions, or would like help finding a banding station to visit, email Joe Webber at joe.webber26@gmail.com.

Northern Colorado Bird Alliance Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Jan Allen
Susan Atkinson
Diane Barrett
Kerstin Braun
Morris Clark
Catherine Curtis
James DeMartini
Brad Dobson
Danny Feig-Sandoval

Neal Fuller
Carla Johns
Barbara A. Jones
Kirvin Knox
Michael MacDonald
Barbara Maynard
Michelle McKim
Kathleen Carty Mullen
Barbara Patterson

Laurie Sada
Jeff Stewart
Guy Turenne
Ryan Twedt
Robert Umbreit
Trudy Verser
Joseph Visk
Dalia Zygas



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.



The Ravens of Arthur's Rock

At the southern end of Lory State Park, you'll find the trail that leads up 1,100 feet over 1.6 miles (one way) to Arthur's Rock. Along with excellent birding, Arthur's Rock offers wonderful views of Fort Collins and the foothills bridging the horizon. This, and the surrounding valleys and ridges, all belongs to a pair of Common Ravens. These year-round Colorado residents of the Corvid family are famed for their variety of vocalizations, broad diet, and uncanny intelligence. They can be discerned from the American Crow by their larger bill (as well as larger overall size), wedge-shaped tail, and hoarse croak call.

A number of species vie for territory at Arthur's Rock in the spring, including Prairie Falcons, Peregrine Falcons, and Golden Eagles. Though one species may win the prized nesting habitat on the cliffsides of the rock, they remain tenants, renting space from the ravens. Local wind patterns make Arthur's Rock a popular place for soaring birds, like raptors, to ride the ridge lift on breezy days. I've found the most reliable means of finding and watching raptors there is to keep track of the raven pair, which can often be found mobbing a passing eagle or hawk. Over the past two years of birding this ridge,

these ravens have helped me to record 12 raptor species as they climb in the wind before soaring off into the distance.



The Ravens of Arther's Rock by Joseph Webber.

Beyond being helpful indicators for raptor activity, the ravens are fascinating to watch themselves. They engage in a variety of curious and entertaining behaviors, often accompanied by equally interesting sounds. In one of the more prominent behaviors, a raven flies a series of vertical arcs, flipping upside-down and calling twice at the top of each arc.

Though I've observed this a number of times, I remain unsure if this is a greeting, territorial behavior, or a courtship ritual. A more subtle behavior is the raising

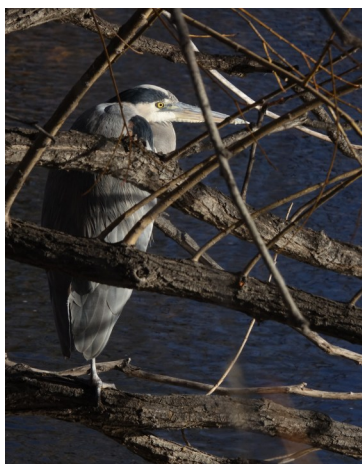
and lowering of their crown feathers, which seems to indicate they are either excited or agitated. Other fun observations include some of those fascinating sounds I mentioned before. Aside from their default croak, I've heard these ravens rattle, boom, and pop! In fact, ravens make so many different

sounds that ornithologists have organized them into 33 different categories.

The ravens of Aurthur's Rock have become two of my favorite birds owing to their bubbly personalities, reliable presence, and constant vigilance. They are a blast to watch and I encourage any birder to explore the wonderful world of their local corvids!



Common Ravens bothering a Golden Eagle by Joseph Webber.



(Left) Great Blue Heron near Lee Martinez Park by Doug Swartz.

(Right) American Goldfinch by Evan Barrientos.



Upcoming Field Trips

All field trips are free and open to the public. Anyone at any experience level is welcome. Bring snacks or lunch, water, binoculars, and/or spotting scopes. Changes to dates, meeting times, locations, and trip leaders are occasionally unavoidable. **To register for any trip, please see posts at www.facebook.com/FortCollinsAudubonSociety or member emails sent out 1-2 weeks in advance of each trip.** When announced, links will also be posted to the linktree at linktr.ee/fortcollinsaudubon. Attendance may be limited. Bobcat Ridge surveys do not require registration. With questions, suggestions, or interest in leading trips (all you need is a desire to share your love of birds and/or nature!), please email ncbafieldtrips@gmail.com.

April 12, Saturday, Fossil Creek Reservoir. Leader: Sirena Brownlee sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com. Join Sirena for a walk along the Cattail Flats trail for waterfowl and Bald Eagle viewing. Plan for a 2-mile walk on the trails. All levels are welcome, and a spotting scope



Osprey by Evan Lopez.

will be available. Time and place to meet will be in the sign up link. **April 13, Sunday, 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 little

more than 4-mile hike covers moderate to flat terrain with some steep sections. No registration required and there is no participation limit, but please email or text Denise that you plan to attend. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in Bobcat Ridge parking lot. The trip may be cancelled, rescheduled, or relocated if trails are closed due to muddy conditions.

April 20, Sunday, GBTQIA+ and Allies at Riverbend Ponds. Leader: Kit Gray, kit@kitgrayillustration.com. Join us for a friendly and social bird outing where we will be looking for Northern Harrier, Virginia Rail, sparrows, Osprey, and different kinds of waterfowl. All levels are welcome. Please bring binoculars if you have them. Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot on the north side of Prospect Road, located between Sharp Point Dr. and S. Summit View Dr. This outing will be a slow-paced, 2- to 2.5-hour walk on a relatively wide and well-maintained trail with occasional benches available. Sign up: www.signupgenius.com/go/10C084CADAEE2CA1FEC70-54791848-lgbtqia#.

April 26, Saturday, Photography Walk at Riverbend Ponds. Leader: Joseph Webber, joe.webber26@gmail.com. We will meet at 6 a.m. and walk along a fairly flat dirt path, working on settings, techniques, and practices to get results with whatever camera participants already have. The walk will last about 2 to 2.5 hours. Be sure to bring water, sun protec-

tion, and a snack!

April 27, Sunday, Raptors and Human Interactions: Balancing Coexistence; Fossil Creek Reservoir. Leader: Jes Gray, jes.e.gray@gmail.com. Join us to explore the fascinating and complex world of raptors and their relationships with human-altered landscapes. As spring migration unfolds, we're likely to see Bald Eagles, Red-tailed Hawks, Swainson's Hawks, Ospreys, Turkey Vultures, and American Kestrels, along with other resident and passing raptors. This event will be highly interactive, blending raptor spotting, discussion, and thought-provoking activities to engage participants in learning how raptors hunt, nest, and adapt to environmental changes. The trail is flat, with a slight downhill from the parking lot to the lake. It begins paved, and switches to a well-groomed gravel pathway about half-way through. Binoculars are recommended but not required. Time and place to meet will be in the sign up link.

May 26, Friday, Dixon Reservoir and Maxwell Natural Areas. Leader: Ryan Twedt twedt@outlook.com. Dixon Reservoir and Maxwell Natural Areas are two adjacent and wonderful places to view migrating pas-



Mountain Chickadee by Evan Lopez.

serines in a variety of habitat. Dixon Reservoir is a well known migrant trap with annual banding stations operated by Bird Conservancy of the Rockies. The diversity of plant life and the insects attracted to them that surround the reservoir offer an abundance of food for migratory birds. A wide variety of warblers, flycatchers, grosbeaks, and buntings have been seen throughout the years during spring migrations, alongside numerous ducks, pelicans, and other water birds. Maxwell is a picturesque prairie/foothills area where towhees and bluebirds can be found with corvids playing in the breeze and raptors soaring high above. Start time and signup for this trip will be in the May newsletter.



Northern Colorado Bird Alliance
PO Box 271968
Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968



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Membership Application

Join Northern Colorado Bird Alliance (the chapter), National Audubon Society (NAS), or both.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> New or renewing chapter member \$ 20
Receive the <i>Ptarmigan</i> by email | Name: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New or renewing chapter member \$ 30
Receive the <i>Ptarmigan</i> by mail | Address: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime chapter member \$750
Receive <i>Ptarmigan</i> by mail or email | City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Additional support for chapter programs \$ ____ | Phone: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Additional support for Alex Cringan Fund (natural history education grants) \$ ____ | Email: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New NAS member \$ 20
Receive the NAS <i>Audubon</i> by mail | May we send you chapter email alerts if updates occur for field trips, programs, etc.? Yes or No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Renewing NAS member \$ 35
Receive the NAS <i>Audubon</i> by mail | May we contact you for volunteer activities such as helping at events or contacting legislators on important issues? Yes or No |

Total Enclosed: \$ ____

Make tax-exempt checks payable to Northern Colorado Bird Alliance and mail this form to Northern Colorado Bird Alliance, 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.nocobirdalliance.org.