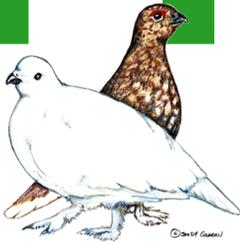


# PTARMIGAN



Northern Colorado Bird Alliance

P.O. Box 271968·Fort Collins,CO-80527-1968·[www.nocobirdalliance.org](http://www.nocobirdalliance.org)

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

April 2026

Volume 58, Issue 4

Northern Colorado Bird Alliance Hosts  
Harper Bovberg presenting: "Feathers Through Time"  
Thursday, April 9

Social time with Refreshments: 7 p.m.; Announcements: 7:20; Presentation: 7:30  
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/84217055396>

This talk will focus on how different cultures throughout history have portrayed birds and why they made the decisions they did in those portrayals. Mostly centering on visual art mediums, this discussion goes back thousands of years and around the world to look at the long-lasting human fascination with our feathered companions. Each section will discuss what birds are represented, how they're portrayed, why they're portrayed that way, and what it says about the culture that made the art.

Harper Bovberg has spent her life in Colorado around artists and historians. It was logical for



From the Aberdeen Bestiary, 13th century.

her to attend CSU and get a bachelor's degree in history. Her unique theatrical and visual focus means the subjects she explores are less about what something is and more about why it is that way. Despite not being a birder or birdwatcher herself, her knowledge of art and visual choices lends a unique perspective.

Join us on April 9 for this informative program that is free and open to the public.

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 Northern Colorado Bird Alliance. 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.nocobirdalliance.org](http://www.nocobirdalliance.org).





Decals to prevent collisions from Etsy.

Maybe you've seen the reports that there are about three billion fewer birds in the United States than there were in 1970. The number seems almost too big to be true, but the science is rock solid. There are many human-related causes for the catastrophic decline in bird populations, but I want to focus your attention on just one. The American Bird Conservancy estimates that about one billion birds die in the United States every year from collisions with windows. That's the bad news.

The good news is that practical, affordable solutions to reduce bird-window collisions exist. Our job is to educate people about those options and inspire hundreds or thousands of them to take action locally. We started this effort a year ago when we hosted Kaitlyn Parkins, an expert from the American Bird Conservancy, at one of our monthly programs (watch the recording on our YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ivfcn6cb168>).

Northern Colorado Bird Alliance would now like to form a dedicated team of volunteers to focus on reducing bird-

window collisions in Northern Colorado. We can use people with a wide variety of skills: educators, networkers and social media influencers, community leaders, advocates willing to speak at public meetings, citizen scientists, and more. Together, I believe we can save a lot of birds. If you would like to be part of this team, please contact me at [president@nocobirdalliance.org](mailto:president@nocobirdalliance.org). I hope to schedule a kickoff meeting with volunteers in April or May.

### Annual CFO Convention Coming to Loveland

This year's annual convention of Colorado Field Ornithologists (CFO) will be held in Loveland from May 28 to 31 and is open to members and non-members alike. The CFO is a non-profit organization devoted to the study, conservation, and enjoyment of Colorado's birds and an ally of the Bird Alliance. The convention will feature a picnic, lots of expert-led field trips, a science session, a silent auction, vendor booths, a banquet, and a chance to hang out with birders from around the state. Get more details and learn how to register at <https://cobirds.org/current-convention/>.

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Visit us on Facebook:

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



Burrowing Owls by Fi Rust.



NCBA Birdathon for Spring Migration

Spring is on its way and Northern Colorado Bird Alliance is celebrating the spring migration with a Birdathon Fundraiser from May 1–10. In a Birdathon, participants organize into two- to five-person teams, then go afield to count as many different species as possible in a 24-hour period that falls within the count period. Funds are raised from pledges solicited from chapter members, Birdathon team members, and from friends, families, and coworkers. Pledges may be made by donors either to a specific team or to the chapter. Pledges may be either a fixed amount or an amount per species observed by the team they support.

Teams are restricted to counting species in Larimer and Weld Counties. The Birdathon coincides with World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) on May 9 and shares the goal of bringing awareness to the conservation of migratory birds. The 2026 WMBD theme highlights the importance of citizen science to bird conservation: “Every Bird Counts — Your Observations Matter.”

Teams will use eBird to report the species they observe throughout their chosen 24-hour count period and will create an eBird trip report to summarize the results. (Help will be provided to create an eBird trip report.) Species checklists must be submitted by midnight Friday, May 15. The teams’ sightings will advance science and bird conservation. All participants will receive a tee-shirt and prizes will be awarded to teams in three categories: the highest



Wood Duck by Lori Pivonka.



Yellow-rumped Warbler by Lori Pivonka.



Yellow-headed Blackbird flock by Lori Pivonka.

species count, the largest number of unique species (species not counted by any other team), and the highest pledges collected. Registration and pledge forms will be available at our program meetings and online.

Teams should ride in just one vehicle and may not split up. Team leaders must register their team no later than April 24 and there is a \$50 team registration fee. Printed registration forms will be available at our April 9 program meeting. Team leaders can also register their team online at:

<https://forms.gle/sEnQPfgQFEzZh5rX8>.

Anyone wishing to participate can be assigned to a team. If you can't form a team of your own, but wish to join someone else's team, fill out a request at <https://forms.gle/ohShUSpn35YPWjRM7> and we will try to pair you with others.

Birdathon teams can collect donation pledges by sharing this link with their supporters: <https://forms.gle/rRnEBYS Cewv3e3jL8>. Anyone wishing to support the Birdathon effort as a whole, rather than supporting a specific team, can use the same form. Donation payments can be made by check or through the donations page on our website.

## The Story of Uncle Bob and Speciation

Have you ever had a family member — say Uncle Bob — that moved to a new state? Did he change during his time there, find a new favorite food, or start a new hobby? If so, congratulations — you witnessed speciation: the change of an individual species to another species through evolutionary pressures. Speciation is the basic tenet of evolution and a driving principle that we use in recognizing certain species. As birdwatchers, we are witness to this phenomenon all the time, but are more accustomed to identifying the species.

To consider two unique types of speciation evolution that occur in Colorado bird populations, it is helpful to journey with Uncle Bob and meet some of the species that play a major role. Let's say Uncle Bob decided to move to Florida. Maybe he became a better swimmer or a spelunker, and enjoyed Caribbean spices and barbecues on the back porch. This dichotomy of scenarios is what leads to divergent evolution, the accumulation of different traits between closely related species. In the case of Uncle Bob, he could have become a great swimmer or a spelunker, but he is no longer the same Uncle Bob.

New traits can be due to geographic isolation — allopatric speciation for distinct regions; parapatric for close, but divided regions — or a difference in environmental pressures (sympatric speciation). In Colorado, we see allopatric and parapatric speciation in the rosy finches (the Black Rosy-Finch, the Brown-capped Rosy-Finch, and the Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch). Much like Uncle Bob moving to Florida, the three species and numerous subspecies are thought to be in the early stages of parapatric and allopatric speciation, with the high peaks of the Rocky Mountains act-

ing as the geographic barrier preventing them from cross-breeding. An example of sympatric speciation in Colorado is the genus *Falco*, which contains five species: Peregrine Falcon, Prairie Falcon, Gyrfalcon, Merlin, and American Kestrel. These species diverged due to resource preference and hunting strategies, similar to Uncle Bob's choice in hobbies and foods. For example, Merlins forage primarily on birds and hunt prey midair. Kestrels ambush small prey using a vantage point. Prairie Falcons hunt mammals and songbirds low to the ground in near flat dives. Peregrines hunt birds using

dynamic dives, and Gyrfalcons surprise prey and flush them into the open. These different hunting habits allow all



Female Hairy Woodpecker by Gene Putney.

these species to exist in Colorado in the same geographical range.

Convergent evolution occurs when two distinct species evolve similar features due to environmental pressures. In Colorado, convergent evolution occurs on many scales. However, the most studied is the convergent evolution

between two unrelated woodpeckers, the Downy Woodpecker (*Dryobates pubescens*) and the Hairy Woodpecker (*Leuconotopicus villosus*). These species once thought to be closely related were found to have diverged over eight million years ago. Despite this long evolutionary time, the two species are near indistinguishable and share evolutionary traits that mimic each other across their geographical populations, including plumage, sizes, and foraging habits.

Though the research is still young, the studies suggest that environmental pressures from the ice age and interspecies competition have led the birds to look similar through the activation of the same parts of the genome.



Downy Woodpecker by John Shenot.



Brown-capped Rosy-Finch by Gene Putney.



## 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/NoCoBirdAlliance](http://www.facebook.com/NoCoBirdAlliance), our Instagram page, or member emails sent out one to two weeks in advance of each trip. When announced, links will also be posted at [lnk.bio/nocobirdalliance](http://lnk.bio/nocobirdalliance). Attendance may be limited. Bobcat Ridge surveys do not require registration. With comments or questions, contact Amy at [fieldtrips@nocobirdalliance.org](mailto:fieldtrips@nocobirdalliance.org) (new email address). Keep an eye on email and/or social media posts for updates or additional field trips.

**April 12, Sunday, Bobcat Ridge Survey.** Leader: Denise Bretting, [dbretting@swloveland.com](mailto: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 four-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 a.m. in the Bobcat Ridge parking lot. Signup not required for Bobcat Ridge. The trip may be cancelled, rescheduled or relocated if trails are closed.

**April 19, Sunday, LGBTQIA+ Community and Allies at River's Edge.** Leader: Kit Gray, [kit@kitgrayillustration.com](mailto:kit@kitgrayillustration.com). Join us for a relaxed and social bird outing in southeast Fort Collins. All levels are encouraged. Please bring binoculars if you have them. Additional details will be sent out with the sign-up.

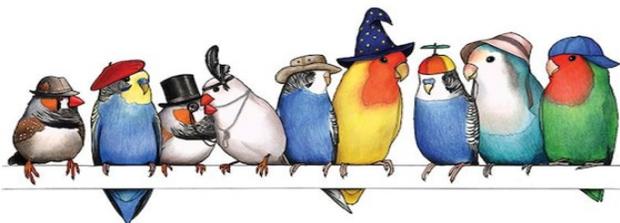
Female American Kestrel  
by Doug Swartz.



## Northern Colorado Bird Alliance Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Susan Blake	Diane C. Kristoff
Ellen Durkee	Dennis Lamb
Pat Ewert	Andi Lawlor
Kathleen Ganzer	Barbara McVeigh
Paul Gordy	Linda Pejchar
Andrew Goris	Naomi Piserchia
Patricia Hetrick	Amy Roush
Kitawna Hoover	Linda Swails
Pat Skrentny Lamb ITF	Jon Vermouth
Ardith Johnson	Susan Williams
Kimberly Jordan	Sandra Winkler

Your support makes our programs and conservation efforts possible and helps us achieve our mission of connecting people to the natural world.



Sharp-shinned Hawk by Bill Miller.



Printed on recycled paper

## Membership Application

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

- |                          |  |       |  |
|--------------------------|--|-------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | New or renewing chapter member<br>Receive the <i>Ptarmigan</i> by email        | \$ 20 | Name: _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | New or renewing chapter member<br>Receive the <i>Ptarmigan</i> by mail         | \$ 30 | Address: _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Lifetime chapter member<br>Receive <i>Ptarmigan</i> by mail or email           | \$750 | City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Additional support for chapter programs  | \$__  | Phone: _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Additional support for Alex Cringan Fund<br>(natural history education grants) | \$__  | Email: _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | New NAS member<br>Receive the NAS <i>Audubon</i> by mail                       | \$ 20 | May we send you chapter email alerts if updates occur for field trips, programs, etc.? Yes or No                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Renewing NAS member<br>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:** \$\_\_

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](http://www.nocobirdalliance.org).