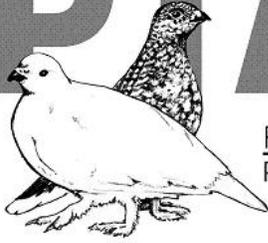


PTARMIGAN



FORT COLLINS AUDUBON SOCIETY
P.O. Box 271968 • Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968 • www.fortnet.org/Audubon

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

March 2009

Volume 40, Issue 7

Prairie Thunder - The Nature of Colorado's Great Plains

Presented by Photographer and Author Dave Showalter

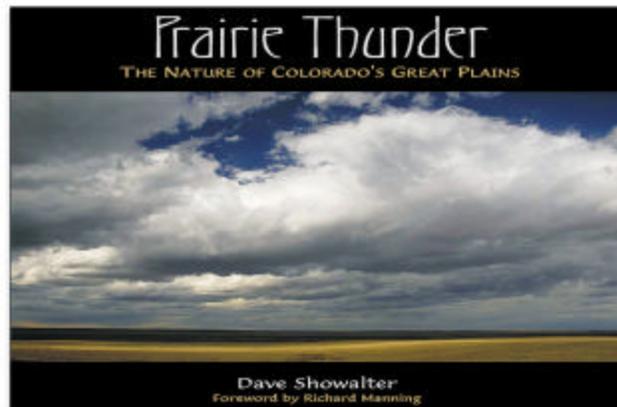
Co-Sponsored by Fort Collins Audubon Society AND Colorado Native Plant Society

Colorado so often is photographed for its majestic mountains, but in Dave Showalter's award-winning book, *Prairie Thunder – The Nature of Colorado's Great Plains*, he explores the often overlooked beauty of Colorado's eastern plains. Celebrating the beauty of his first book, Dave takes us on an epic journey into the heart of Colorado's vast grasslands. From the wind-swept Pawnee Buttes, home to pronghorns and birds of prey, to the Comanche Grasslands area in southeastern Colorado, Dave details the diversity of land, birds and wildlife that make these areas so incredibly special, and addresses their legacy and conversation challenges.

At the heart of his book is Showalter's volunteer work at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge. Once described as "the most contaminated tract of real estate on planet Earth, it is now a landscape abundant in raptors,

wildlife and healthy lakes. Dave's photography in the Refuge, captures many of its new images.

He also addresses the threats to the most endangered landscapes, and alerts us to the severe reduction in bird populations on the Colorado prairie, as detailed by the Colorado Audubon Society's recent report, *Common Birds in Decline*. Many conservation success stories are to be told, generated through partnerships between conservation groups, government agencies and private land owners, and Dave includes them in his book also. For more info on Dave Showalter visit his website at:



www.daveshowalter.com

Join Colorado Native Plant Society and Fort Collins Audubon Society for an "encore" evening with Dave Showalter, featuring a diverse collection of his photographs and inspiring narration. Books will be on sale for \$20.00.

THURSDAY EVENING PROGRAM — March 12, 2008

**Columbine Room, Fort Collins Lincoln Center, 417 W. Magnolia Street
Social Gathering: 7:00 p.m., Program: 7:30 p.m.**

FORT COLLINS AUDUBON SOCIETY PROGRAMS AND FIELD TRIPS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Visit our website at www.fortnet.org/Audubon or call 970-490-BIRD.

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Field Trips, Programs, Classes, and Events



3/7/09, Saturday. Gull Identification workshop. Leader: Nick Komar. Meeting place and time TBA. Join us as we take a closer look at the numerous gulls that grace our area in the cold season. Gulls can be challenging to identify, but they have the benefit of being easy to find and generally cooperative. We may visit one or several lakes and reservoirs, depending on recent gull activity. Contact Nick at quetzal65@comcast.net, or 416-7527.

3/08/09, Sunday. Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey. Leader: Denise Bretting (dbretting@swloveland.com, work: 669-1185, or home: 669-8095). Meet at 7:00 am. FCAS performs a monthly bird census for the city of Fort Collins. All levels welcomed.

3/14/09, Saturday. Second Saturday Natural Area Tour. 8:00 - 10:00 a.m. Lee Martinez Park/McMurry/Salyer River Tour. Exploring nature continues with a new schedule of 2nd Saturday adventures. This year we will explore twelve of Fort Collins' natural areas. Each tour will be led by a master naturalist who will explain "What's special about this place?" All tours are from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. For further information, contact Joann Thomas at 970/482-7125 or email at jthomas91@aol.com.

3/21/09, Saturday. 9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Leader: Rick Harness (rharness@edmlink.com or call at 204-4001). Join us to view bald and golden eagles and their active nests. This trip begins at 9:00 AM and will last approximately 3-1/2 hours. The trip includes a visit to a state wildlife area requiring a Colorado Division of Wildlife Habitat Stamp. This stamp is automatically obtained with your fishing or hunting license purchase or can be purchased as a stand alone stamp (for \$10.25 per individual) which includes the Colorado Search and Rescue fee, access to state wildlife areas (SWA) or state trust lands (STL) and helps fund additional habitat for wildlife. This stamp must be purchased prior to the trip and can be purchased from this site: <https://www4.wildlifelicense.com/co/start.php> Note:

participants over the age of 65 do *not* need to purchase a Habitat Stamp to enter a State Wildlife Area. Car pooling will be needed and please bring a spotting scope to share, if you have one. Email Rick or call him at the number above to reserve your spot on the trip.

3/28/09, Saturday. Birding Trip to Lory State Park. Leader: Connie Kogler. Meet at Cups Coffee 1033 S Taft Hill Road at 8:00 a.m. We will explore all the different habitat areas of Lory looking for birds. This will be a walking trip so please be prepared for the weather, water and snacks recommended we should be done by noon or 1:00 p.m. State Parks Pass needed for cars entering the park. Contact Connie at ZBlueHeron@gmail.com.

4/11/09, Saturday. Second Saturday Natural Area Tour. 8:00 - 10:00 a.m. Arapaho Bend Natural Area. Exploring nature continues with a new schedule of 2nd Saturday adventures. This year we will explore twelve of Fort Collins' natural areas. Each tour will be led by a master naturalist who will explain "What's special about this place?" All tours are from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. For further information, contact Joann Thomas at 970/482-7125 or email at jthomas91@aol.com.

4/12/09, Sunday. Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey. Leader: Denise Bretting (dbretting@swloveland.com, work: 669-1185, or home: 669-8095). Meet at 7:00 am. FCAS performs a monthly bird census for the city of Fort Collins. All levels welcomed.

4/25/09, Saturday. Birding trip to Southwest Loveland Lakes. Leader: Connie Kogler. We will meet at the Starbucks on 1317 Eagle Dr. Loveland at 8:00 a.m.. From there we will carpool and explore lakes and some river spots in this area of Loveland. Larimer County Parks Pass needed for cars. Bring lunch and water, and be prepared for the weather. Contact Connie @ ZBlueHeron@gmail.com.

All field trips are free of charge (unless otherwise noted) and open to the public. All experience levels are welcome. Participants should dress appropriately for the weather. Bring snacks or lunch, water, binoculars, and spotting scopes. Carpooling is encouraged. A \$3 (unless otherwise noted) contribution per passenger to the driver is suggested. Visit www.fortnet.org/Audubon for more information. Please contact the trip leader for sign up and trip details. Field Trip Coordinator: Eric DeFonso, yoericd@yahoo.com or 970-472-1761.



Conservation Corner

By Bill Miller - Conservation Chair

BIRDS TELL IMPORTANT CLIMATE CHANGE STORY



On February 10, 2009, National Audubon Society released its 14-page report on the status of birds, *Birds and Climate Change: Ecological Disruption in Motion*. What are birds trying to tell us about climate change? They are all

telling us that **climate change is here, now**. They are telling us **we must act now** to address this urgent problem. They are showing us a **pattern of ecological disruption** that tells an alarming story. The full report can be found at: <http://www.audubon.org/news/pressroom/bacc/pdfs/Birds%20and%20Climate%20Report.pdf>

The report is based on a careful analysis of citizen-gathered data from the past 40 years of Audubon's Christmas Bird Count (CBC). The analysis revealed "that 58 percent of the 305 widespread species that winter on the continent shifted significantly north since 1968, some by hundreds of miles. Movement was detected among species of every type, including more than 70 percent of highly adaptable forest and feeder birds. Only 38 percent of grassland species mirrored the trend, reflecting the constraints of their severely-depleted habitat and suggesting that they now face a double threat from the combined stresses of habitat loss and climate adaptation."

Birds are strong, early indicators on the health of our environment. They've often been likened to the canary in the coal mine. Now, however, they are more like the thermometer in the oven, and are responding to the increasing temperatures of the earth's atmosphere. This evidence of ecological disruption is a yet another warning that global warming is an urgent problem, one that demands bold action now.

"We're seeing compelling signs that climate change has been with us and having serious biological consequences for the past 40 years. Little else could explain this kind of spectacular movement across such a wide range of birds."

"I'd put my money on the sun and solar energy. What a source of power! I hope we don't have to wait till oil and coal run out before we tackle that."
-- Thomas Edison

Global climate disruption is now being recognized as proceeding much more rapidly than scientists had predicted. The rate at which warming is occurring is faster than most wildlife can react to. Birds are already migrating earlier than previously, and could be arriving at breeding territories before vegetation and insect populations are ready to sustain both adults and young. Population crashes are likely to occur due to starvation of hatchlings.

Our elected leaders need to hear loudly and clearly from each of us that countering Global Climate Disruption needs to be placed on the top of their priority list. Suggestions for you include:

Stay informed, write letters to your leaders and voice your support for new approaches that will deliver a clean energy future through increased energy efficiency and expanded use of

renewable energy.

Contact your Colorado U.S. representatives today and ask them to support the new American Renewable Energy Act, which will boost the country's use of renewable energy to 25%, and the Save American Energy Act, which will improve energy efficiency by 15% by 2025.

- Learn more about global warming threats and solutions specific to Colorado by visiting <http://www.auduboncolorado.org>
- Join Audubon's activist team and urge our policy-makers to make climate change a top priority by signing our petition at <http://www.birdsandclimate.org>.
- Streamline your own energy profile. There are many things you can do to make a difference. Visit <http://www.audubon.org> for ideas.

Please see:

<http://www.wecansolveit.org/>;

<http://www.repoweramerica.org/>;

<http://audubonaction.org/Audubon/home.html>; and

<http://audubonaction.org/campaign/climateactionpledge>



IS IT TOO LATE?

Every week it seems like the news on the Global Climate Disruption front seems more frightening. Now, as I write this article on Sunday, Feb. 15th, the latest predictions are saying that global warming is occurring more rapidly than scientists had predicted. Examples are given below.

USGS: **Abrupt Climate Change: Will It Happen this Century?**

The United States faces the potential for abrupt climate change in the 21st century that could pose clear risks to society in terms of our ability to adapt.

“Abrupt” changes can occur over decades or less, persist for decades more, and cause substantial disruptions to human and natural systems.

A new report, based on an assessment of published science literature, makes the following conclusions about the potential for abrupt climate changes from global warming during this century.

- * Climate model simulations and observations suggest that rapid and sustained September arctic sea ice loss is likely in the 21st century.
- * The southwestern United States may be beginning an abrupt period of increased drought.
- * It is very likely that the northward flow of warm water in the upper layers of the Atlantic Ocean, which has an important impact on the global climate system, will decrease by approximately 25–30 percent. However, it is very unlikely that this circulation will collapse or that the weakening will occur abruptly during the 21st century and beyond.
- * An abrupt change in sea level is possible, but predictions are highly uncertain due to shortcomings in existing climate models.
- * There is unlikely to be an abrupt release

of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, to the atmosphere from deposits in the earth. However, it is very likely that the pace of methane emissions will increase.

Climate change will be more devastating than predicted, top scientist warns



In England, Professor Chris Field, said that global warming is likely to accelerate at a much faster pace and cause more environmental damage than previously anticipated. Professor Field was a coordinating lead author of the report released last year by the Nobel-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The landmark report warning of rising sea levels, expanding deserts, more intense storms and the extinction of up to 30 percent of plant and animal species.

Professor Field added: "We now have data showing that from 2000 to 2007, greenhouse gas emissions increased far more rapidly than we expected, primarily because developing countries, like China and India, saw a huge upsurge in electric power generation, almost all of it based on coal."

Higher temperatures mean that more carbon dioxide and methane are being released from arctic tundra as the permafrost thaws. The addition of these two greenhouse gases to the atmosphere will produce a rise in atmospheric temperatures which will, in turn, produce even more out gassing from the tundra, a self-perpetuating cycle.

For the full article, see: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/7890988.stm>

“Water is essential for all dimensions of life. Over the past few decades, use of water has increased, and in many places water availability is falling to crisis levels. More than eighty countries, with forty percent of the world’s population, are already facing water shortages, while by year 2020 the world’s population will double. The costs of water infrastructure have risen dramatically. The quality of water in rivers and underground has deteriorated, due to pollution by waste and contaminants from cities, industry and agriculture. Ecosystems are being destroyed, sometimes permanently. Over one billion people lack safe water, and three billion lack sanitation; eighty per cent of infectious diseases are waterborne, killing millions of children each year....”

-- World Bank Institute — WATER POLICY REFORM PROGRAM - Nov. 1999



Youth Scholarship Program Shifts Gears for 2009

by Lisa Evans, Scholarship Chair



The FCAS Youth Scholarship Program is changing to better reach youth in need and to expand its scope. Over the past 3 years, it has been difficult to recruit enough kids to use the funds available, and particularly to reach

those children who need us most. Enter the CSU Environmental Learning Center (ELC).

Several of our past Youth scholarships have been for CSU summer day camps. Having worked with ELC on a variety of projects, I was aware of their successful outreach to low income and Hispanic youth, as well as their positive support for Poudre School District groups. FCAS funding will now provide more opportunities for local youth to attend ELC Summer Camps, and will help to fund a more comprehensive effort to reach local students who might not otherwise have a chance to connect with nature. FCAS funds will be combined with those from the ELC, City of Fort Collins Natural Areas and Poudre School District to provide experiences in nature multiple times throughout a year for a number of students.

Based on this collaborative funding, every child in Irish and Putnam Elementary Schools (where there is a high percent of lower income and minority students) will have two field trips annually during the 2nd to 4th grade years, an overnight experience in 5th grade, and multiple opportunities to experience nature in informal settings throughout that time (e.g., summer camps, after school programs, community events, etc.)

Specifically, FCAS funds will support:

Picnic on the Poudre: An event for families, scheduled for fall 2009 that models outdoor family activities and encourages interaction with nature. This event was sponsored in fall 2008 with great success. This will reach 100+ people – youth and their parents.

Community Events to build awareness about ELC programming for underserved audiences, including the Putnam Elementary Science Carnival and the annual Cinco de Mayo Celebration in Old Town. The ELC provides hands-on learning booths at these events. This will reach 400+ people.

Half-day Program for Youth: Provide a half-day program for elementary students during a teacher in-service day when youth are out of school. The program will be based at the CORE Community Center, which serves low-income and minority families. This will reach 15 students.

Summer Camps: Provide up to eight scholarships for students to attend ELC summer camps. While the Audubon Society has typically managed these scholarships, the ELC would now allocate the scholarships to low-income and minority students internally. This will reach 6-8 students.

The ELC staff will provide a comprehensive report back to FCAS about their efforts, specifics of each activity, and number of students reached.



Educator Scholarships Available for 2009



helps them pass the learning on to their students.

Scholarships are available for a variety of classes or workshops, including those sponsored by FCAS, the Division of Wildlife, Rocky Mountain Nature Association, or any other recognized provider. Funding can be used to pay course fees, tuition, transportation or supplies costs.

FCAS will again be offering Educator Scholarships for 2009. These scholarships are designed to help local teachers learn about birds, wildlife, nature and the environment, in a way that

Awards are given for up to \$250. Applications for a portion of the total cost of a class are encouraged.

For applications and a partial list of eligible workshop and camp providers, please see the FCAS website. Click on "Scholarship Fund."

If you are an educator, please apply! If you have friends or colleagues who might be interested, please pass this information on to them. Educators don't need to be FCAS members to be eligible for a scholarship.





Education Corner

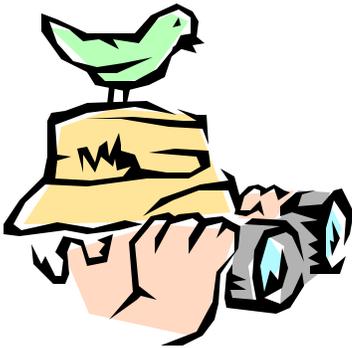
By Joann Thomas - Education Chair

The Joy of Birding

After moving here in 1999 and throwing myself into birding, a clear fact emerged. I do not have great eyesight. Even with new glasses and a good binocular, I do not see the detail that others see. My determination to enjoy birding, however, is undaunted.

On a field trip one Saturday, I expressed my frustration at not being able to identify the exact species of swallow. My friend laughed and told me that I already knew more than most people because I knew it was a swallow. Several weeks later I watched swallows diving for flying insects above the alluvial fan in Rocky Mountain National Park. Taking a deep breath, I patted myself on my back. At least I knew they were swallows and I knew they ate flying insects. Watching the swallows in their swooping dives and hearing their high pitched chatter was my joy of birding.

On the February 2nd Saturday Nature Walk, master naturalist Bob Babbs and seven intrepid birders walked Prospect Ponds and amassed an impressive bird list for a cloudy, cold, snowy day in February. The list included Geese, Coots, Widgeon,



Mallards, Nuthatch, Junco, House Finch, Chickadee, Sparrow, Robin, Starling, Gulls, Blue Jay, Crow, Kestrel, dark morph Red-tailed Hawk, two Cooper's Hawks, and a mating and nesting pair of Red-tailed Hawks. It just doesn't get much better than that on a

cloudy, cold, snowy day in February!

And, I missed it all.

After watching the assembled group of birders jump back as I coughed my way through introductions, I left. When I read Bob's e-mail report of their list, my first thoughts were: What sparrow? Which gull? And, I remembered my swallows. It really didn't matter. The joy of finding that many birds on a cloudy, cold, snowy day in February is what it's all about. And, my joy includes imagining their excitement in finding a nesting and mating pair of Red-tailed Hawks. What a treat! The list for this day is the best one we've had on any 2nd Saturday Nature Walk. Good job, birders!!!

The next day my husband and I drove to Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space to look for eagles. The ice-frosted trees stood starkly against the blue sky as a large dark bird flew across our field of vision in the distance. All I could see was a large dark bird as my husband exclaimed, "It's a Bald Eagle!" He said he could see the white head and white tail. I focused my eyes intently and tried with all my might to see white at both ends. I could not. My birding excursions always will include a keen sighted companion.

The joy of birding can take many forms. It is about so much more than specifically identifying a bird. It's about the joy of being outdoors and the camaraderie of fellow birders and hearing birding stories about being out on a cloudy, cold, snowy day in February and finding a pair of nesting and mating Red-tailed Hawks!



WildBird's 2008 Birder of the Year: Connie Kogler

In each November/December issue, *WildBird* subscribers have the chance to crown one of their peers as "Birder of the Year". The candidates appear as Forum Birders and Backyard Birders in each issue through the year. The contest is open to everyone who responds to the questions posed in Birder's Back Yard and Lister's Forum. See pages 23 and 27 in the March/April issue for the current questions.

**This year, it's our own Connie Kogler!
Congratulations, Connie!**

Read the full article online at: <http://wildbirdonthefly.blogspot.com/2009/02/wildbirds-2008-birder-of-year-connie.html>



Welcome new and renewing members!

We hope to see you at our programs and field trips.



Frederick A. Johnson
 Carolyn J. Robison
 Debbie Moors
 Michael O'Grady
 Kevin Yannutz
 The Jobst Family
 USDA Aphis Ws
 Gina C. Janett
 FRCC Technical Services
 Claudia Young
 Terry Whitaker
 Rheta & David Heine
 Joshua Bruening
 CSU Lbrs
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 Mark Lucks
 Casey Meschievitz
 Wes Ortolano
 Dr. Helen R. Norton
 Jean R. Paquelet
 Theora Hoppe
 Judith Ann Balice
 Sarah M Bexell



Looking Ahead to April Programs

April 9: Participate with Fort Collins Audubon Society in this opportunity for information and understanding of the "Elk Management Plan adopted by the Rocky Mountain National Park," presented by John Mack, National Park Service. Event to be held at the Fort Collins Lincoln Center-Columbine Room.

Social time beginning at 7:00 p.m., Program at 7:30.

April 23: Fort Collins Audubon Society sponsored program, "Nebraska Sandhills: Sea of Grass," presented by Stephen Jones, Boulder County Audubon. This program combines striking images of birds, wildlife, music, natural sounds, stories, and Plains Indian mythology. Event to be held at the **Loveland Museum**, Foote Gallery, in Loveland. Social time beginning at 6:30 p.m., Program at 7:00 p.m.

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www.fortnet.org/audubon/leadership.htm

Want less paper mail? Get your newsletter online!

The current issue of the newsletter is available online to members only. If you'd like to receive an e-mail notification, please e-mail your **name and address as it appears on your newsletter's mailing label** and the e-mail address you wish to use to shelagh.tupper@gmail.com. Please indicate email only or both e-mail and paper.

Monthly Newsletter Distribution

Paper: 739 (85.3%)

E-mail: 127 (14.7%)



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The White River by Canoe
 Date: May 29-31 (Fri-Sun), 2009
 Cost: \$320 adult, \$280 child (age 6-16)
 Level: Beginner / Intermediate



The Colorado River by Sea Kayak
 Date: August 7-9 (Fri-Sun), 2009
 Cost: \$335 adult, \$280 child (ages 6-16)
 Level: Beginner

Membership Application

Join the Fort Collins Audubon Society (FCAS) directly, or automatically become a member by joining the National Audubon Society (NAS). *Choose one below:*

New or Renewing Member of FCAS (annual dues) **\$15**
 (Receive the *Ptarmigan* newsletter)
 FCAS may share my name with NAS

New Member of NAS & Chapter **\$20**
 (Receive *Audubon* magazine and *Ptarmigan*)

Renewing Member of NAS & Chapter **\$35**
 (Receive *Audubon* magazine and *Ptarmigan*)

Did you know? Less than \$1 of your NAS dues is left for FCAS funds. FCAS serves NAS members through its own fundraising efforts. We appreciate your financial support!

Additional donation to FCAS \$ _____
Total enclosed \$ _____

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: ____ Zip: _____
 Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

I prefer to receive the *Ptarmigan* via the FCAS website. Please e-mail me when posted.

Please make your check payable to **FCAS** and send along with this form to: **Fort Collins Audubon Society, PO Box 271968, Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968**