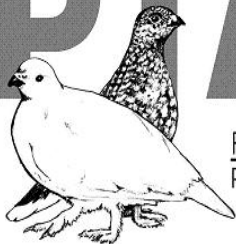


PTARMIGAN



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

October 2012

Volume 43, Issue 7

"Butterflies of the Colorado Front Range"

Presented by: by Janet R. Chu and Stephen R. Jones

Boulder County Nature Association

Thursday, October 11, 2012

Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Drive, Fort Collins

Social Gathering: 7 p.m. – Program: 7:30 p.m.

Stephen Jones and Janet R Chu, authors of *Butterflies of the Colorado Front Range*, will present a program on the most striking and interesting butterfly species found along the Front Range, including swallow-tails, fritillaries, blues, and many others featured in their book. This is an opportunity to learn about the miraculous transformations and unique adaptations of many colorful species.

Janet Chu taught high school biology for 38 years and has conducted butterfly population studies on Boulder County open space for 10 years, documenting nearly 200 species. Since 1983, she has organized the annual Fourth of July butterfly count at the Cal-Wood Education Center in western Boulder

County.

Stephen Jones is author of *The Last Prairie*, a *Sandhills Journal*, and co-author of *The Shortgrass Prairie*, the *Peterson Field Guide to the North American Prairie*, and *Wild Boulder County*. He works as a teacher and wildlife consultant.



Pale Swallowtail from Stephen R Jones.

Copies of *Butterflies of the Colorado Front Range* will be available for sale for \$12.50. In the book, striking photos and clear descriptions make it easy to identify common species. A month-by-month occurrence chart reveals when and

where to look for your favorite butterflies. Please join us at the Fort Collins Senior Center on Oct. 11 at 7:30 p.m.

This program is free and the public is welcomed!

FCAS welcomes new National Audubon Society members by sending complementary copies of our newsletter for one month. We invite you to 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 the newsletter, so if you'd like to receive the *Ptarmigan* after the complementary issue, please join FCAS. See the details on the last page of the newsletter or on our Web site at www.fortnet.org/Audubon.

"Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed."

--Mohandas Gandhi, quoted in *EF Schumacher, "Small Is Beautiful"*

Lesser Prairie Chicken Conservation Project

At the June meeting of the Audubon Colorado Board, a discussion ensued on the plight of the Lesser Prairie Chicken (LEPC) that resides mainly in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas, and in Colorado and New Mexico to a lesser degree.

You may recall the blizzard of December 2006 in southeast Colorado that caused high losses both cattle and wildlife. Three feet of snow blanketed the landscape for over a month, resulting in the deaths of many small animals and birds, including LEPC. The Colorado populations of LEPC took hits of upward of 50 percent, threatening the ability of the population to remain sustainable. Investigation by various agencies pointed out that a major cause of LEPC mortality arises when low-flying LEPCs fly into barbed-wire fences where they become entangled and

subject to predation if not killed outright. A project to mark the fences with pieces of vinyl cut out of house siding was proposed.



Section of fence with vinyl tabs attached.
Photo by Bill Miller.

Following the Sept. 8 Audubon Colorado Board meeting in Lamar, nine members of the Board, under the supervision of U.S. Forest Service (USFS) personnel, marked about four miles of fence around a LEPC lek. The lek is located about three miles north of the Oklahoma Panhandle, 19 miles west of the Kansas state line, and southeast of Campo,

Colorado, on the Comanche National Grasslands, which is managed by the USFS. The weather was fine, the company was great, and everyone took pleasure in hopefully helping this grasslands bird species survive in Colorado.

"KittyCam" Reveals High Levels of Wildlife Being Killed by Outdoor Cats

An interesting but discouraging article about the impact of cats on wildlife populations can be found at: <http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/releases/120806.html>.

A study was carried out by scientists from the University of Georgia and the National Geographic Society's Crittercam program. Cats wore special video cameras around their necks that recorded their outdoor activities. Based on the results of this study, the American Bird Conservancy and The Wildlife Society estimate that house

cats kill far more than the previous estimate of a billion birds and other animals each year.



KittyCam stills showing a captured chipmunk and an injured phoebe, National Geographic KittyCam Program.

Dr. George Fenwick, President of American Bird Conservancy, said: "If we extrapolate the results of this study across the country and include feral cats, we find that cats are likely killing more than four billion animals per year, including at least 500 million birds. Cat predation is one of the reasons why one in three American bird species are in decline,...."



Elusive Birding

The problem with being involved in the many birding adventures available here in Northern Colorado is that I have no time for birding. Every weekend in September and some weekdays have been involved in doing programs or meeting to plan events that revolve around birding. Ugh! No time to go in the field.

In September alone, we have the Birds in Art program in Loveland, the Northern Colorado Birding Fair at Fossil Creek, and a storytelling workshop to improve my storytelling. But, the program I did on Tuesday, Sept 18, was a treat. I toured a group of 20 graduate students from a CSU Environmental Education class; they came to Fort Collins from around the world and they were wonderful.

I chose to tour them through Lee Martinez Park to give them an idea of a park and then crossed the bridge over the Poudre to enter McMurray Natural Area, creating an opportunity to view the differences between the two. As we walked, I explained the beginnings of the natural areas program in Fort Collins, what it means to be a master naturalist, and what it means to me. The class, "Conflict and Communication," gave me an excellent opportunity to talk about some of the natural area issues that Fort Collins citizens have faced.

However, what struck me the most about these

students was their interest in birds. They wanted to know what birds we have here and what birds used the boxes on the trees that line the river's edge. I became conscious of birds becoming our common language. No matter what differences we had in language, culture, religious beliefs, we were united in our interest in birds.

They were especially interested in the story of the tree bird boxes. I explained that they remain from a research project on the river corridor and house Eastern Screech Owls. Finding one of these little (only eight- or nine-in. tall) guys can be difficult. They nest in tree cavities and readily use the nest boxes set out to study them. This owl is often the most common or only avian predator in wooded

suburban and urban habitats. As we walked, we looked overhead in hopes of spotting one.

I told them the story of two fellow master naturalists who were doing a program along the river with a school class. They happened to look up and there between two branches sat the owl. The camouflaged bird is almost invisible in the photos they snapped. The coloration matches the bark of tree perfectly.

It was a glorious morning, even though we did not see an Eastern Screech Owl. I felt such unity with these students from around the world who walked along the river and talked with me about birds.



Eastern Screech Owl

Upcoming Field Trips

Oct. 14, Sunday, Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey. Leader: Denise Bretting, dbretting@swloveland.com, work: 970-669-1185, home: 970-669-8095. Call for any change. Meet at 7 a.m. in the parking lot. FCAS performs a monthly bird census for the City of Fort Collins.

Oct. 20, Saturday, Riverbend Ponds Natural Area. Leader: John Shenot, johnshenoy@gmail.com, home: 970-682-2551. Meet at 7 a.m. at the parking lot on the north side of Prospect Road. All birders are welcome.

Oct. 27, Saturday, Fossil Creek and Timnath Reservoirs. Leader: Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO), Wild Birds Unlimited, and Legacy Land Trust. Call RMBO, 482-1707, for a reservation. Meet at 8 a.m. at the RMBO parking lot, 230 Cherry Street, to carpool. Focus on ducks, fall migrants, and residents of the area. Returning by 1 p.m.





FCAS Presents: A Special Colorado Birding Opportunity

Join FCAS for professionally guided day-trips that present the best of Colorado birding.

On either **Saturday, Oct. 27 or Sunday, Oct. 28**, John Drummond will lead participants in viewing arctic waterfowl at South Park reservoirs, which in late October is the best place and time in Colorado to see migratory, as well as rare loons and grebes, and enormous numbers of other waterfowl

species. You'll probably see many raptors as well; even Gyrfalcon has shown up in South Park in recent years.

John Drummond's world life list approaches 6,800 bird species, observed in 28 countries, covering six continents, and is co-owner of Partnership in International Birding.

On **Saturday, Dec. 1 or Sunday, Dec. 2**, guides will lead you to prime locations to view late fall migration birds with a focus on gulls. Front Range lakes in late fall attract a huge number of migrating gulls, grebes and loons, and



Surf Scooter by Nick Komar.

diving waterfowl. The trip will include the most active locations such as Hamilton Reservoir, Windsor Reservoir, Timnath Reservoir, Union Reservoir, Boulder Reservoir, etc., depending on recent reports. Expect to see species such as Bonaparte's, Lesser Black-backed, and Thayer's Gulls; Red-breasted Merganser; and Pacific Loon. In recent years, this is the season when rarities such as Red-throated Loon, Black-legged Kittiwake, Little Gull, and scoters may be found.

John Vanderpoel, who owns Peregrine Video Productions and is the creator of *The Advanced Birding Video Series with Jon Dunn* that includes "The Large Gulls of North America, The Small Gulls of North America and Hummingbirds of North America," will lead the Saturday group. FCAS's Nick Komar will lead Sunday's trip.

The cost per trip is \$80 for FCAS members and \$100 for non-members. Fee covers professional leader, van transportation, park entrance fees, and benefits FCAS. Checks should be made to FCAS. Participants should bring their own picnic lunch. Van departs Harmony Transportation Center at 6:30 a.m., returns before 6 p.m. Register for each trip with Nick Komar, quetzal65@comcast.net, 970-449-3645.

Andes of Ecuador Excursion, November 17-25, 2012

Join fellow Auduboners Nov. 17-25 in experiencing the mystique of Ecuador's Andean peaks and cloud forests. Quetzal Tours is offering an eight-day, relaxed-paced birding adventure to Ecuador, led by the bilingual Ecuadorian birding guide, Xavier Muñoz. Not only will this be a unique experience at a low price (just \$1,999 per person), but the event also serves as a fundraiser for FCAS, as a portion of the proceeds will be donated to our local chapter. Locations visited will include Mindo, Nanegalito, Papallacta Pass, and Guacamayos Pass. Birding highlights will include dozens of species of brightly colored tanagers, hummingbirds, and, of course, quetzals—many of which can be seen at close range for breathtaking photography.

Ecuador has the highest biodiversity in the world, hosting more bird species than any other country! The tour is

limited to six customers in order to guarantee a quality, personalized experience. Add-on guided birding excursions to the Amazonian rainforests or the unique Galapagos Islands also can be arranged for those who can stay longer. Reservations must be received by Oct. 10, 2012. FCAS will benefit from your participation in any of Quetzal Tours international excursions. Upcoming trips in 2013 include Nicaragua (January), Guatemala (February), and Costa Rica (March). For more information or to reserve your spot, contact Nick Komar at info@quetzal-tours.com, or 970-449-3645.




Chestnut-breasted Coronet, by Nick Komar.





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Membership Application

Join Fort Collins Audubon Society (FCAS), National Audubon Society (NAS), or both. Check all applicable::

Name: _____

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(Receive *Ptarmigan* by email)

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Phone #: _____

☐ **Additional Support for FCAS's Mission** \$_____

☐ **New NAS Member** \$20
(Receive *Audubon* magazine by mail)

Email: _____

☐ **Renewing NAS Member** \$35
(Receive *Audubon* magazine by mail)

Total Enclosed \$_____

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