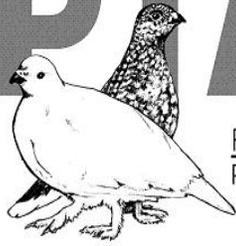


# PTARMIGAN



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.

December 2012

Volume 43, Issue 9

**Join FCAS for a Very Special December Member Slideshow Program**

**And**

**To Honor Bill Miller, Our Retiring Chapter President**

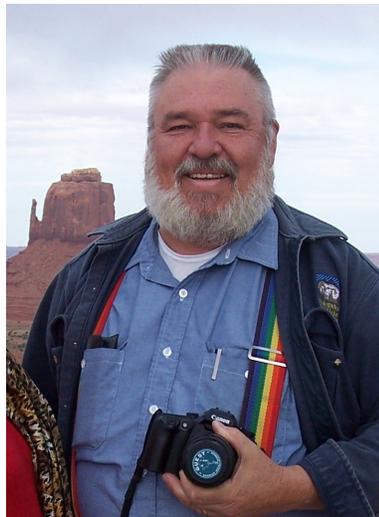
**Thursday, Dec.13, 2012, 6:30 p.m.**

**Fort Collins Senior Center—1200 Raintree Drive, Fort Collins**

**Presented by: You and Members**

**(Guests Invited too)**

Join us for a very special December meeting on Thursday, Dec.13 at 6:30 p.m. In addition to our usual potluck dinner and great slide shows from members, (remember the 10 minute time limit on your slide presentation), we will be bidding goodbye to Bill Miller as president. Bill has served FCAS and many other environmental endeavors in northern Colorado for many years. We decided it's time to say "Thank You" in a big way.



Bring any memories and photos you might wish to share about Bill's passion for the environment.

FCAS will provide coffee, tea, water, and two entrée selections (one vegetarian and one meat dish). Members please bring a side dish for 10 people and your own place setting with eating utensils.

We are looking forward to a fun, festive evening of good humor and toasting Bill with honor, along with enjoying your great slides and conversation.

## **A Sneak Peak at Programs Being Planned for FCAS in 2013**

**January 10:** Reesa Conrey of Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Research on burrowing owls, black-tailed prairie dogs, habitat conservation projects, and short-grass prairie bird species.

**February 14:** Paul Opler and Evi Buckner-Opler, "Nature Touring China, 2011: from Tienamen Square to Giant Pandas to Shangri-la."

**March 14:** Arvind Panjabi, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, "Ecology and Conservation of North American Grassland Birds in the Chihuahuan Desert."

**April 11:** Eric Defonso, Galapagos Islands.

**May 9:** Doug Ouren, USGS, Gunnison Sage Grouse.

## President's Corner

by Bill Miller

"A man's country is not a certain area of land, of mountains, rivers, and woods, but it is a principle; and patriotism is loyalty to that principle." -- George William Curtis

"A society that is in its higher circles and middle levels widely believed to be a network of smart rackets does not produce men with an inner moral sense; a society that is merely expedient does not produce men of conscience. A society that narrows the meaning of "success" to the big money and in its terms condemns failure as the chief vice, raising money to the plane of absolute value, will produce the sharp operator and the shady deal. Blessed are the cynical, for only they have what it takes to succeed." -- C. Wright Mills - *The Power Elite* (1956)

### Whew! Survived Another Election Season

Regardless of your political viewpoint, I'm sure that I will receive no opposing views when I say that I am glad that this last national election is finally over. The interesting thing that I noticed is that, even though millions, if not billions, of dollars were thrown into the election fray by those who thought they could "buy" the outcome, the citizens of the country had a strong tendency to see through that ploy and voted for who I considered to be the candidates that espoused a more common-sense approach to our nation's ills. I turn ill when I think of all the money that went

to support TV stations and not have any positive effects on the economy or the citizenry.

This does not mean that we can all sit back and relax until the next election cycle begins (tomorrow?). There are still those at the federal level who will try to trash environmental laws and regulations as well as those pieces of legislation that appeared to have a majority of popular support. Unfortunately, the one issue that was never pushed into the light of day by either political party during the campaigns is that of Global Climate Disruption. This is the one phenomenon that has become more widely accepted, yet is being avoided almost universally by everyone who thinks that other pressing issues are all that matters.



The financial implications of being unemployed or having an astronomical national debt are obviously more important to people in the short term, in contrast to a phenomenon that will affect everybody's survival in the long term. It has been pretty well demonstrated that global climate disruption will have severe impacts on the planet by causing climatic extremes that will produce increased desertification, drought, potable water shortages, increased sea levels, more frequent and severe storm events (i.e., witness the recent storm events that hammered the east coast of the United States), and food shortages. But humans have a tendency to ignore foresight in favor of hindsight. C'est la vie.



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"As we peer into society's future, we—you and I, and our government—must avoid the impulse to live only for today, plundering, for our own ease and convenience, the precious resources of tomorrow. We cannot mortgage the material assets of our grandchildren without risking the loss also of their political and spiritual heritage."

-- Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890 - 1969); *Farewell Address to the Nation, Jan. 17, 1961*

"We can no longer afford to consider air and water common property, free to be abused by anyone without regard to the consequences. Instead, we should begin now to treat them as scarce resources, which we are no more free to contaminate than we are free to throw garbage into our neighbor's yard."

-- Richard Nixon (1913 - 1994); *Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union, 1970*

### So Many Issues and So Little Space, or Time....

Every month I face the dilemma of, "What do I write about this month?" It's not that there is a dearth of conservation topics, rather it's a problem of there being too much to write about with only limited space in the *Ptarmigan*. So, I am going to adopt a new tactic: What do you want to read about?

To help you out, I am listing some general topic areas for you to choose from or feel free to ask for more specific details within one of those areas. General topic areas, and some sub-sets of those, would include but not be limited to: 1) Global climate disruption effects: upon sea level rises, upon food supplies, upon drinking water, threat



to economies. 2) Oil and gas drilling: fracking, pollution caused by. 3) Deforestation: effects of species threatened by, creation of forest monocultures. 4) Rivers, lakes, and streams: drinking water sources. 5) Wildlife: endangered species act, war on predators, impacts of global warming, state of birds, loss of habitat. 6) Oceans: impacts of global warming, plastics and impacts on marine life, over-fishing. 7) Land misuse: loss of wetlands, impacts of development.

I would love to hear back from you as to what topics pique your imaginations and for which you would like some information. Email me at [5mcorp@comcast.net](mailto:5mcorp@comcast.net) or call me at 970-493-7693.

### In Memory of Dr. Alexander T. Cringan

Alex Cringan, age 86, died Oct. 30, 2012, at Poudre Valley Hospital. Alex was a founding member of FCAS, a past president, and frequent field trip leader.

He and his wife, June, moved to Fort Collins in 1970 from their native Canada when Alex assumed a position with Colorado State University as Professor of Wildlife Biology. After retiring from the university, Alex was an active volunteer,



working on many projects including the Poudre River Trust, the early development of the Gustav Swanson Nature Area, the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas project, and Operation Osprey.

Alex is survived by his wife, June, two sons, and four granddaughters. (from the *Coloradoan*, 11/2/12).

FCAS has established a memorial fund in his name. Donations may be sent to FCAS, Box 271968, Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968.



*Meleagris gallopavo*

What? You don't know what this is? But, if you are an omnivore, you might eat one each year on Thanksgiving: Turkey!

Not a bird that demands respect except when it's exquisitely prepared and served on a platter. In fact, it's so ugly that I often find it difficult to imagine eating it. Many tables today feature fish, ham, or standing rib roast. After many years of chaotic Thanksgiving dinners with seven children and the assorted relatives as guests, my dad announced that he did not eat turkey. He stopped the conversation at the table. For years, no one had noticed, but from then until he died, we had ham or standing rib roast along with turkey for T-day dinner!

Apparently, no one outside of the family noticed Dad's dilemma because more than 45 million turkeys are cooked and 525 million pounds of turkey are eaten during Thanksgiving. In fact, more turkeys are eaten at Thanksgiving than for Christmas and Easter combined. Ninety percent of American homes serve turkey on Thanksgiving Day and 50 percent serve turkey on Christmas. North Carolina produces 61 million turkeys annually, more than any other state. Minnesota and Arkansas are number two and three.

Turkeys are one of only two native American birds to be domesticated—Muscovy Duck being the other. American Indians hunted Wild Turkey for its meat as early as 1000 A.D. They made turkey "callers" out of turkey wing bones. The feathers were used to decorate ceremonial clothing. The spurs on the legs of Wild tom Turkeys

were used on arrowheads and the feathers were used to stabilize the arrows. The turkey was domesticated in Mexico and brought to Europe in the 16th century.

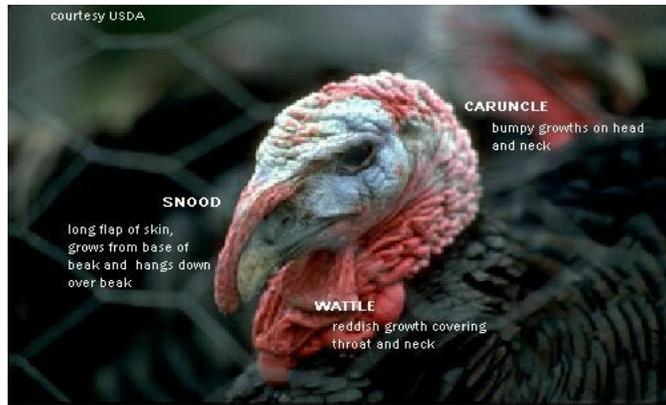
Wild Turkeys began to disappear in the early part of the 20th century due to over-hunting. Stricter hunting guidelines along with rehabili-

tation efforts have allowed their numbers to increase steadily over the past 100 years. It is estimated that more than seven million Wild Turkeys now live in 49 of the 50 states, giving it unquestionable national presence.

In 1784, Benjamin Franklin criticized the choice of the Bald

Eagle as our national bird. He felt that the Wild Turkey would have been a much more respectable and representative emblem for our nation. He wrote: "For my own part I wish the Bald Eagle had not been chosen the representative of our country. He is a bird of bad moral character. He does not get his living honestly. You may have seen him perched on some dead tree near the river, where, too lazy to fish for himself, he watches the labor of the fishing hawk; and when that diligent bird has at length taken a fish, and is bearing it to his nest for the support of his mate and young ones, the Bald Eagle pursues him and takes it from him.

"With all this injustice, he is never in good case but like those among men who live by sharpening and robbing he is generally poor and often very lousy. Besides he is a rank coward. The turkey is in comparison a much more respectable bird, and a true original native of America"



**Fort Collins Audubon Society Welcomes New and Renewing Members**

Irene Briggs	John Shenot	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.
Vyvyann Brunst	Leslye J. Sherman	
Frances Lipp	Henry Thode	
Jessie L. Meschievitz		



## Christmas Bird Counts



The 113th annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will take place from Dec. 14, 2012, through Jan. 5, 2013. There is a specific methodology to the CBC, but everyone can participate. Counts take place within 15-mile diameter "count circles," which focus on specific geographical areas. Each count is organized by a count compiler; therefore, if you are a beginning birder, you will be able to join a team that includes at least one experienced birdwatcher. In addition, if your home is within the boundaries of a count circle, you can stay home and report the birds that visit your feeder once you have arranged to do so with the count compiler. Starting in December 2012, there will be no fee to participate. To learn more, please see <http://birds.audubon.org/faq/cbc>. If you have never been on a CBC before, your first step is to locate and contact your local count compiler to find out how you can volunteer. This is a great way to become more familiar with your area's wintering bird species.



Great-horned Owl  
by Bill Miller.

The CBC summary, "American Birds," previously funded by participation fees, will no longer be printed and mailed; rather, it will be available on line.

FCAS sponsors two CBCs each year. The Fort Collins CBC will take place on Saturday, Dec. 15, and be coordinated and compiled by Tom Hall, [redbear44@msn.com](mailto:redbear44@msn.com); 970-419-5535. The Loveland CBC will occur on Tuesday, Jan. 1, 2013, and be coordinated by Nick Komar, [quetzal65@comcast.net](mailto:quetzal65@comcast.net); 970-449-3645. If you are interested in participating in either CBC, please send an email or call the appropriate compiler.

Another CBC in Larimer County is the Rawhide Count. This will take place on Monday, Dec. 31, and will begin at 8 a.m. at the Rawhide Power Plant overlook.

The count compiler will be Doug Kibbe, [dpkibbe@msn.com](mailto:dpkibbe@msn.com); 303-910-9476. They only had seven participants last year and could really use some more eyes.

### Friend FCAS on Facebook

We invite you to "friend" us on our new Facebook page. Newly created this week with the expert guidance of United Way volunteer, Cristel Gray, we now need as many friends as possible to make the page active and accessible. Friend us and invite as many of your Facebook friends to friend us also! Hopes for the future include getting posts from birders about their adventures, their sightings, their thoughts about birding, and any photos they wish to post.

Find us at: <http://www.facebook.com/FortCollinsAudubonSociety>



Find us on  
**Facebook**

### Upcoming Field Trips

*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 \$3.00 (unless otherwise specified) contribution per passenger to the driver is suggested. Visit [www.fortnet.org/Audubon](http://www.fortnet.org/Audubon) for more information.*

**December 10, Sunday, Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey.** Leader: Denise Bretting, [dbretting@swloveland.com](mailto:dbretting@swloveland.com), work: 970-669-1185, home: 970-669-8095. Call for any change. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot. FCAS performs a monthly bird census for the City of Fort Collins. All levels welcome.



## Mountains and Plains of South Park Provided Great Birding — By Nick Komar

The October field trips in the Colorado Birding series targeted the high plains and reservoirs of South Park, one of the most spectacular regions of the Rocky Mountains. On the weekend of Oct. 27 and 28, two groups made the three-hour trek, hoping to find rare scooters and several species of loons.

John Drummond, an experienced tour leader who is a partner in the tour company known as the Partnership in International Birding, took us on a circuit of high lakes starting about 30 miles west of Colorado Springs at the hamlet of Lake George. Here we found an enormous flock of more than 500 Ring-necked Ducks, with about 10 other species of diving and dabbling ducks hidden among the throng. From there, we motored through rolling hills of pine forest where juncos and corvids (Steller's Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, Black-billed Magpie) predominated. Unlike the dying forests of Northern Colorado, these forests were all green, with no sign at all of beetle infestations.

Dropping down out of the hills, we were met with views of the snow-covered peaks of the Presidents Range, and the massive Eleven-Mile Reservoir. Despite high winds, we did get good looks at several flocks of Eared Grebes and Ruddy Ducks, and a lone Clark's Grebe near the shore. Unexpected was a misplaced McCown's



McCown's Longspur by John Drummond.

Longspur (first record for Park County) with Horned Larks along the roadside (see photo). John Drummond pointed out a prairie dog town near the Spinney Mountain State Park entrance where he monitors breeding Mountain Plovers in the summer months.

At Spinney Mountain Reservoir, we found our first Common Loon, but the highlight was watching the gulls playing in the gusts along the shoreline. Three species were present: Ring-billed, California and Herring. In the distant shallows across the stormy reservoir, hundreds of Buffleheads mingled among thousands of American Coots. Our last stop at Antero Reservoir

featured less wind, but alas no rare arctic waterfowl. Apparently the warm fall had delayed their migration. Even Common Goldeneyes were absent! Good views of Golden and Bald Eagles and a very cooperative Rough-legged Hawk hovering overhead was adequate consolation.

Watch the *Ptarmigan* and the FCAS website for future outings in this fundraising series, which seeks to introduce FCAS members to the best birding destinations in Colorado, led by professional guides. We hope to see John Drummond again in the spring, when he will lead us through the best spring migration trap in the state, at Chico Basin Ranch in El Paso County.

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## Guatemala—Tikal Excursion, Feb. 16 - 24

This February, join fellow Auduboners in experiencing the mystique of Guatemala's highland volcanoes and rainforests at the breathtaking Mayan ruins of Tikal National Park. Quetzal Tours is offering an eight-day, relaxed-pace birding and nature photography adventure, led by Guatemala's premier bilingual birding guides, Knut Eisermann and Claudia Avendaño, authors of the *Aves de Guatemala*, an Annotated Checklist. Not only will this be a unique experience at a low price (just \$2100 per person), but the event

also serves as a fundraiser for FCAS. Visit locations such as Los Tarrales Reserve and Antigua, as well as Tikal. Expect to see Toucans, Motmots, Trogons, Woodcreepers, Sabrewings, and hundreds of other species in the land of the Ma-



yan indigenous peoples. The tour is limited to six people. For more information, contact Nick Komar at [info@quetzal-tours.com](mailto:info@quetzal-tours.com), or 970-449-3645.



## Upcoming Chapter Elections and Slate of Officers for 2013-2015

The FCAS Board of Directors is currently attempting to identify chapter members to serve on the FCAS Board of Directors for the year 2013. When a board position can't be filled it generally means that someone else already serving has to pick up an additional set of responsibilities, which can lead to premature burnout. Please consider taking a role in the operation of your chapter.

For more information about serving in a board position, please contact Joann Thomas, nominating committee chair, at: [jthomas91@aol.com](mailto:jthomas91@aol.com) or at 970-482-7125. Elections will be held at the January FCAS meeting.

### Officers and Directors

President: Joann Thomas  
Vice-President: Louise Parker  
Secretary: Scott Cobble

Treasurer: John Waddell  
Director-at-Large: Susan Cottingham  
Director-at-Large: Ron Harden  
Director-at-Large: Hildy Morgan  
Director-at-Large: John Shenot  
Two Director-at-Large seats are vacant  
**Standing Committee Chairs:** (Appointed by FCAS Board)  
Conservation: Bill Miller  
Education: Joann Thomas  
Field Trips: John Shenot  
Membership: Liz Pruessner  
Programs: Jessie Meschievitz  
Public Relations: Louise Parker  
Finance: John Waddell  
**Contract Members:**  
Newsletter: Carol Jones  
Web Master: Scott Miller

## Welcome New National Members

FCAS welcomes new National Audubon Society members by sending complimentary 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 printing and mailing the newsletter, so if you'd like to keep receiving the *Ptarmigan* after the complimentary issue, please join FCAS. See the details on the last page of the newsletter or on our website at [www.fortnet.org/Audubon](http://www.fortnet.org/Audubon).

### 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 Mercantile  
950 E. Eisenhower  
Loveland  
(970) 776-4540

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

Jax Farm & Ranch  
1000 N. Hwy. 287  
(970) 481-2221



Great for stocking stuffers!





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 Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968

Printed on recycled paper 

### Membership Application

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**New or renewing FCAS Chapter Member** \$20  
 (Receive *Ptarmigan* by email)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**New or renewing FCAS Chapter Member** \$30  
 (Receive *Ptarmigan* by mail)

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

**Lifetime Chapter Member** \$750  
 Receive *Ptarmigan* by email \_\_\_\_  
 Or receive *Ptarmigan* by mail \_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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** \$\_\_\_\_\_

Please make your tax exempt checks payable to FCAS and mail with this form to:  
 Fort Collins Audubon Society, P.O. Box 271968, Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968.  
 Membership applications may be completed online at: [www.fortnet.org/Audubon](http://www.fortnet.org/Audubon)