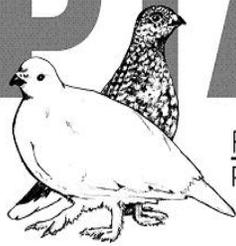


PTARMIGAN



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.

April 2015

Volume 46, Issue 4

Dave Leatherman
Birder, Entomologist, Writer
“The Sparrows of Colorado”
Thursday, April 9

Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Dr.
Social Time: 7 p.m.; Program 7:30 p.m.

Dave Leatherman will say that “sparrows are more than little brown jobs. It's not just a sparrow.” Colorado's diversity of habitats, likewise, leads to an assortment of sparrows unmatched by most of North America. As birders, we are lucky to have the challenge of identifying and observing them. Dave's presentation will extol the virtues of our 30-plus species of sparrows, stressing identification tips, strategies for finding them, and life histories. “It's time to slay sparrowphobia,” exclaims Dave.

Dave Leatherman was born and raised in central Ohio where his interest in nature began in childhood. He earned a biology degree from Marietta College and a master of forestry from Duke University. Dave served as the forest entomologist for the Colorado State Forest Service from 1974 to 2005 where his major responsibilities included teaching about, surveying, and other aspects of mountain pine beetle. He is an avid birder, active in



Savannah Sparrow by Dave Leatherman.

the Colorado Field Ornithologists, has identified 445 species in the state, and has been part of

finding three first state records. Dave contributes many insect specimens to the CSU Gillette Museum annually. In addition, Dave is the father of three boys, has four grandchildren, enjoys nature photography, and thinks microbrews combine nicely with jazz. He says his favorite bird is the Blackburnian Warbler—right up there also are crossbills, shrikes, Canyon Wren, vireos, pe-

lagic species, and the Merlin. Dave's latest passion is figuring out the food habits of Colorado birds, chronicled in “The Hungry Bird” column in the journal, “Colorado Birds.”

Join us on April 9 at the Fort Collins Senior Center for an evening dedicated to learning the virtues of Colorado sparrows as presented by Dave Leatherman. This program is free and open to the public.

President's Corner

by John Shenot

One of my goals as chapter president is to increase the number of young adults who are active FCAS members (while maintaining or increasing participation by those of us who are a bit older). I know that with today's technologies, young birders have lots of opportunities to find and connect with each other; FCAS is not their only outlet. So what do we as an organization have to offer young birders?

Well, first of all, I think there is a wealth of knowledge and experience among our membership and tremendous potential to mentor young birders. But I actually wanted to focus this column on another idea.

Today's job market is extremely competitive and challenging for young people of all education levels. Many students and recent college graduates end up in unpaid internships or volunteering to gain experience and build their resumes. That's where I think FCAS can help. FCAS is constantly in search of volunteers for a wide variety of activities, some of which might look great on a resume. Want to demonstrate leadership skills? We need field trip leaders and

we still have two vacancies on our board of directors. Want some real life experience with public education, accounting, fundraising,

organizing volunteers, or writing? We have new opportunities almost every month.

If you think FCAS might be able to help you or someone you know build their job and leadership skills, please contact a board member and we'll see what's possible!



Welcome National Members

FCAS welcomes new National Audubon Society members by sending one copy of our newsletter. 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 to receive the *Ptarmigan*, please support your local chapter and subscribe to the newsletter. See the details on the last page of the newsletter or on our website at 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



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Conservation and Social Media

A recent study published in Conservation Biology (January 2015) concluded that “conservation science needs to engage the general public to ensure successful conservation interventions.”

Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube—these online platforms serve to disperse knowledge rapidly to large audiences. Because public awareness is seen as a critical step toward change, combining social media with conservation news and issues can serve to increase awareness and effectiveness of conservation efforts. Additionally, online participants often become environmental advocates, spreading information throughout their social networks.

Numerous studies have shown that advocacy and citizen science boost public awareness and



From www.openplacement.com

environmental literacy, building public support for conservation. Audubon serves as the premier example of citizen science promoting conservation: “More than a century ago, Audubon pioneered the idea of citizen science with the first Christmas Bird Count. Today the longest-running wildlife census in the world continues to shape and inform our approach to conservation, providing vital information about bird populations and trends, data that alerts us to environmental threats not only to birds, but to the larger ecosystems we all depend on. As partners with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Audubon has helped transform citizen science into an everyday activity for tens of thousands of birders. Their observations, reported online anytime and from anywhere throughout North America, provide an ongoing assessment of bird populations that is fast becoming an invaluable resource for conservation.”

Social media offers conservationists a global platform to share their ideas and research, inviting others to join in dialogue. It’s also a powerful tool that can galvanize public support for specific actions, like saving species or ecosystems.

Conversely, with the power of social media, comes responsibility, especially in regards to conservation efforts. While appealing to the emotional side of conservation issues, there is the hidden danger of causing harm.

One recent example involved the slow loris, a small, threatened primate in



Slow loris from www.treehugger.com

South Asia. As reported by Joseph Castro in LiveScience (August 2013), a YouTube video of a pygmy slow loris went viral, garnering millions of views and thousands of comments. When researchers sifted through the comments, they were stunned to find many centered on people wanting to obtain a slow loris as a pet, fueling the illegal trade of this threatened species.

In response, researchers created a Wikipedia page devoted to the conservation of the species, and the BBC aired a program about its plight. As people became aware of the conservation issues surrounding the slow loris, their comments began reflecting this awareness and the comments section became a forum for conservation.

Perhaps the lesson to be learned is that for social media to be an effective tool for conservation, online messages must not only appeal to our moral and emotional aspects, but they need to include links to research and actual conservation issues involved. By engaging larger segments of the population, social media can help increase awareness and promote interaction for the benefit of conservation now and in the future.



It's a Starling, Darling!

A fuzzy picture of a dark bird with a yellow beak popped up on my Facebook yesterday.

“What is this bird?” a friend asked. At first glance, I said starling because it was dark all over with a bluish gloss. I began mentally going through all the dark birds that I could remember.



European Starling (Wikipedia).

But, I kept going back to starling because of the yellow beak. I could not find any other all-dark bird that had a yellow beak.

But, then there was the tail. A starling has a squared off tail whereas the tail on the pictured bird appeared to be heart shaped. Doesn't mean it was, just that it appeared so. By the time I answered, the friend had gotten confirmation that it was a starling. Yes—but that tail.

When you gain a reputation for knowing birds, you get involved with some interesting queries. I did not know flickers until I moved to Fort Collins. I had heard their spring mating calls and looked up the picture, but never actually saw one until my neighbor told me she had one of those Woody Woodpecker birds nesting in her tree. Excitedly I thought it was a Pileated Woodpecker. I had spent an afternoon in the Shenandoah Valley watching a Pileated Woodpecker adult continuously bring food for several nestlings in a tree cavity. The tree was next to an outdoor set-building project for a local theater. Every year, as the sets were built on the outdoor stage, the woodpeckers fed that year's young.

The woodpeckers did not flinch as the hammers flew. It was an afternoon that I will never forget.

I carefully staked out my neighbor's tree only to find a clearly different bird. It was the Red-shafted Flicker, a woodpecker, but not a Woody Woodpecker! In fact, I discovered that it is doubtful that Pileated Woodpeckers were ever in Colorado. On it goes as people call and describe birds that nature never intended to be hatched.

I've developed a few questions to focus inquiring people. What is the shape of the beak? What is the color of the beak? What colors are the legs and feet? And, most important, not just what is or are the colors of the bird, but where are the colors located? In other words, what is the pattern of the color or colors on the bird? And, if I cannot get to species, I can almost always get to genus.



Red-shafted Flicker by Bill Miller.

Then there is the photograph my son sent me of a gray blob high up in a tree. Yes, he wanted to know what it was. I explained that it was just too vague to know. “No problem,” he said, “here's the song—I recorded it on my phone.” Now the vague gray blob was accompanied by vague peeps sounding as far away as New Orleans where he lives. Guess I could always say, “It's a starling, darling!”

FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Dodi & Bob Adel
Robert Babbs
Libby Edwards
Fank Stermitz
Margaret Grant
Michelle Haelele
David E. Hartley

Gina Janett
Mike Knowles
Lauren DeRosa
Jane Low
Thomas Lynch
Pam Parish
Phil Phelan

Helmut Retzer
Anne Saunders
Mary Lou Selch
Jim Shafer
Jim Tolstrup
Barbara Turnbull
April Whicker

Thank you for your membership. Your support makes our programs and efforts possible.



Results from February's Great Backyard Bird Count — by John Shenot

The 2015 Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) was, to put it simply, a huge success. I want to thank all of our members and other local birders who participated. Over the four-day period from February 13 through 16, 100 different birders submitted 306 checklists of Larimer County observations to the GBBC and eBird websites. (It's possible a few more local checklists may yet be submitted.) A year ago, 239 checklists were submitted for Larimer County during the 2014 GBBC, so this year's total shows a 28 percent increase in participation! An impressive 98 species were observed in Larimer County (versus 84 in 2014). One person submitted 14 checklists!

Internationally, more than 147,000 checklists

Upcoming Field Trips

All field trips are free of charge (unless otherwise noted) and open to the public. All experience levels are welcome. Visit www.fortnet.org/Audubon for more information and updates. RSVP is recommended.

April 5, Sunday, Loveland Lakes. Leader: Nick Komar. The day will start at 8 a.m. at a location to be determined and last until approximately 4 p.m. We'll search the lakes in and around Loveland for waterfowl, gulls, and any migrants or rarities that might be in the area. This trip is limited to 10 people. Register at: quetzal65@comcast.net.

April 12, 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. All levels are welcome.

April 18, Saturday, CSU Environmental Learning Center "and Beyond." Leader: Austin Hess, outdoorlover1214@yahoo.com. This field trip will begin at the Environmental Learning Center (ELC) and continue on to one or two other local hotspots. The other spots will be decided on trip day. Meet at 7 a.m. at the north end of the Harmony Road Transportation Center for carpooling or contact Austin if you prefer to meet him at the ELC.

May 9, Sat., Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey. Meet at 7 a.m. See description and above for this recurring, monthly survey.



White-breasted Nuthatch by Andy Goris.

were submitted for the 2015 GBBC from more than 100 countries. That's a new record. An almost unbelievable 5,090 species were seen by participants in just four days, representing roughly half of all the bird species on earth. That's also about 800 more species than were observed last year on the 2014 GBBC!

Brazilian Birding Tour December 13-19, 2015

Discover the birds of Southeast Brazil's Atlantic Rainforest in a seven-day tour sponsored by

Quetzal Tours and led by Bradley Davis, an expert bilingual guide.

Hike through the rainforest and diverse habitats to spy

Spot-billed Toucanets, Crescent-chested Puffbirds, Slaty Bristlefronts, Pin-tailed and Blue Manakins, the handsome Shrike-like Cotinga, and much more.

The cost of \$2,500 includes lodging, meals, in-country transportation, and entrance fees. A portion of the fee is donated to FCAS. Contact Nick Komar to sign up or for more information: quetzal65@comcast.net.



Maroon-bellied Parakeets by Bradley Davis.



Fort Collins Audubon Society
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Membership Application

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

New or Renewing FCAS Chapter Member \$20
Receive the FCAS *Ptarmigan* by email

New or Renewing FCAS Chapter Member \$30
Receive the FCAS *Ptarmigan* by mail

Lifetime FCAS Chapter Member \$750
Receive the FCAS *Ptarmigan* by email or receive the FCAS *Ptarmigan* by mail

Additional Support for Alex Cringan Fund natural history education grants \$____

New NAS Member \$20
Receive the NAS *Audubon* by mail

Renewing NAS Member \$35
Receive the NAS *Audubon* by mail

Total Amount Enclosed: \$____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____

Phone # _____

Email: _____

May we send you FCAS email alerts if updates occur for field trips, programs etc.?
Yes or **No**

May we contact you if volunteer opportunities occur from helping at events to contacting legislators on important environmental issues?
Yes or **No**

Please make your tax-exempt check payable to **FCAS** and mail with this form to **FCAS, 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 31st extend through the following year. Applications can be completed at www.fortnet.org/Audubon