

PTARMIGAN



FORT COLLINS AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. Box 271968·Fort Collins,CO·80527-1968·www.fortcollinsaudubon.org

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

May 2024

Volume 56, Issue 5

FCAS Hosts Kate Boyd

Wildlife Rehabilitator and Zoologist, Reptile and Amphibians Center of the Rockies

“Conservation Close-Up: Connecting with Native Reptiles and Amphibians”

Thursday, May 16**

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

Door Prize Drawing (must be present to win)

Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Dr.

This program is also accessible on Zoom. Enter the following link at 7 p.m. to join the meeting virtually: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85852108098>

Join us for an interactive talk about local reptiles and amphibians throughout Colorado with the Reptile and Amphibian Center of the Rockies. Along with native species animal ambassadors, we will discuss local habitats that support these amazing animals, and learn about ongoing conservation efforts aimed at protecting their ecosystems and populations. Discover how you can make a difference by getting involved in conservation projects and initiatives in your community. From volunteer opportunities to simple actions you can take in your own backyard, you can become a steward of our local area's rich biodiversity. Don't miss this chance to connect with nature, meet native species ani-



Chorus frog by Kate Boyd.

mal ambassadors, and contribute to the preservation of these vital species.

Kate Boyd is dedicated to protecting the unique reptiles and amphibians of Colorado. With a background in zoology, animal rescue, and wildlife rehabilitation, Kate has spent 10 years working with and advocating for the preservation of these fascinating creatures. Join us for this free presentation featuring live reptile and amphibian native species. The program is open to the public.

**Due to the Senior Center closure May 9 – the regular second Thursday FCAS program evening – FCAS rescheduled the May program meeting to the following Thursday, May 16.

FCAS 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 FCAS. 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.fortcollinsaudubon.org.

As most of you know, FCAS does not publish newsletters or host chapter meetings in June, July, and August. This does not mean we “take the summer off.” Our Board of Directors meets monthly throughout the year, and we will always advocate for our members, as needed, on public policy issues that are relevant to our mission. We also offer field trips throughout the year. Elsewhere in this month’s newsletter, you will see all the spring and summer field trips we were able to schedule by our publication deadline. However, we are likely to announce additional field trips at a later date. To keep informed about the latest offerings, make sure we have your email address or follow us on Instagram or Facebook. That’s how we announce our trips and provide registration information.

FCAS also will participate in numerous festivals and community events throughout the spring and summer. In some cases, we may put out a call for volunteers to help us. Again, we use email and our social media channels to spread the word. For example, our conservation committee will be trying to recruit volunteers to help with conservation and habitat improvement projects in some of the communities we serve. We are currently seeking help from people who own small watercraft (e.g., canoes and kayaks) for pond cleanups in Fort Collins Natural Areas. Additional opportunities may arise. If

you are interested in things like cleaning up a natural area or planting native perennials for habitat improvement, please consider becoming a member of our conservation committee. To do so, just contact me or our committee chair, Jesse Gray.



Alex Cringan Memorial Grant

FCAS is now accepting applications for the Alex Cringan Memorial Grant for 2024-2025. The grant provides funding support to formal or non-formal educators or students involved in a project focused on teaching or learning more about our natural environment and issues of critical importance to protecting, preserving, and improving aspects of our natural environment. The project should have the goal of enhancing teaching or research skills; of promoting critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills; and sharing that knowledge with others to help provide a long-lasting benefit to all wildlife and the environment.

The due date for application is November 1, 2024. See <https://fortcollinsaudubon.org/> or [Cringan Grant Application-Final-2024](#) for more information. Contact Barb Patterson at barbarapatterson@frontrange.edu with any questions.

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www.fortcollinsaudubon.org

Visit us on Facebook:

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



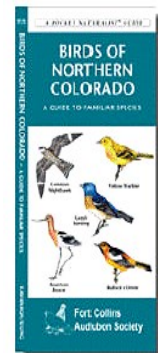
FCAS Pocket Guide to Local Birds

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 Loveland West
Outdoor Gear
2665W. Eisenhower
(970) 667-7375

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



Flourishing Together: Building Bird Sanctuaries in Our Backyards

Over the past four decades, Northern Colorado's landscapes have dramatically shifted from vast grasslands and agricultural fields to expanding suburban areas. In the 1980s, developed spaces in Fort Collins and Loveland spanned about 32 square miles, or 23 percent of the area between the foothills and I-25. By 2020, this figure surged to 91 square miles, consuming over 63 percent of the same land. This rapid growth, mirroring the region's vibrancy, faces the dual challenge of natural conservation and the pressing issue of affordable housing. Signs of further suburban sprawl are evident, with new development markers frequently appearing, signaling a continued shift in the landscape.

This expansion brings significant challenges for the birds we care about, notably habitat loss, fragmentation, pollution, and the hazards posed by suburban structures, making their survival increasingly difficult. Despite these challenges, the potential to foster bird-friendly environments through the cultivation of native vegetation remains strong. Native plants, integral to local ecosystems, provide essential support for birds, offering food, shelter, and nesting materials. Engaging in this effort can greatly bolster the resilience of our ecosystems against the pressures of urbanization.

First Steps in Planting Native Vegetation:

1. Research Local Native Plants: Use resources like the Colorado Native Plant Society, local extension offices, and the High Plains Environmental Center for information and guidance.
2. Evaluate Your Planting Site: Assess the conditions of your space — sunlight, soil type, moisture — to ensure the success of native species.
3. Start Small: Even limited spaces

can contribute to habitat support. Small gardens or balcony containers with native plants make a significant difference.

4. Visit Local Nurseries: Seek advice and plants from nurseries that specialize in native species.
5. Use Pesticides Sparingly: Birds need insects to

thrive. Avoid insecticides to protect their vital food sources and prevent harmful accumulation in the ecosystem.

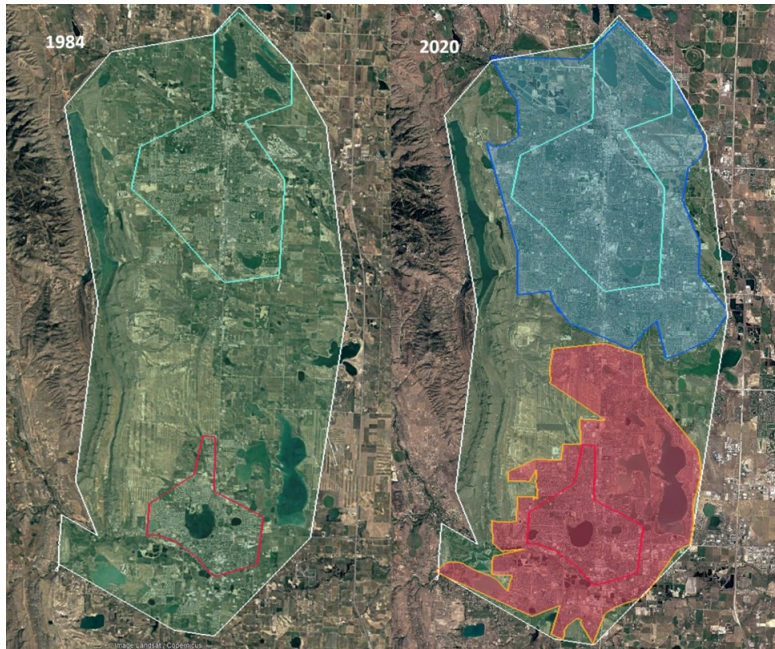
Additionally, educating and advocating within your community can enhance the impact on bird populations. We can combat habitat fragmentation by encouraging others to plant native and incorporate bird-friendly features like bird baths and nesting boxes, while avoiding insecticides.

Creating bird-friendly spaces is an ongoing journey, deepening our connection to

nature and strengthening community conservation efforts. The cumulative effect of individual actions can transform our urban landscape into thriving habitats

for birds and wildlife. Participation in local environmental groups like Wildland Restoration Volunteers and supporting policies that favor native plant use in public spaces further extends our conservation impact.

The movement toward planting native vegetation is a step in the right direction for addressing the ecological needs amidst urban development. By embracing these initial steps, we contribute to a broader conservation and sustainability effort, enhancing the biodiversity of our surroundings and securing a healthier environment for future generations.



Changes in urbanized areas around Fort Collins (green and blue outlines) and Loveland (red and orange outlines) from 1984 to 2020.

Maps prepared by Jess Gray.



Rocky Mountain Columbine. Photo from Denver Audubon.



Capturing our Beautiful Birds

When learning bird photography, the most important area to study is the birds themselves. Knowing the birds, their habitat, their tolerances, and especially their behaviors, will improve your bird photography more than any piece of equipment could. Studying bird behavior also is essential for practicing ethical bird photography, keeping disturbance to a minimum. For example, while most birds will fly away when a person gets too close, owls are less likely to do so. Owls show



Cedar Waxwing
by Joseph Webber.

signs of stress very differently than other groups of birds: taking a more camouflaged posture, staring directly at a perceived threat, and slow blinking, among others. Flushing an owl during the day puts them at significant risk of attack from other predators. Learning all you can about a species will help you to get better photos of it and ensure its safety.



Great blue heron reflected in a lake during sunrise
by Joseph Webber.

When it comes to equipment there are hundreds of options to choose from, all with their strengths and weaknesses. There are all kinds of bells and whistles that make one camera or lens better for one type of pho-

graphing over another, but you can get great images with practically anything, provided the conditions are right. The only gear I would recommend would be a lens of at least 400 millimeters, full-frame equivalent focal length if possible, that will provide suitable magnification for both large and small birds. Practically every other consideration regarding gear is going to come down to personal preference and budget – sensor size, resolution, autofocus, ISO range, image stabilization, focal length, zoom vs. prime lenses, aperture, weight, and many other factors will affect your ability to get an image that makes you happy. To balance all these things within your budget, you'll want to do lots of research to determine which factors are most important for the way you shoot. If you like to bird on-the-go, prioritizing equipment that is light weight and versatile might mean a lens with a smaller maximum aperture or shorter focal range. While using the biggest, brightest, longest lens around could get you a better picture, it also could require a tripod or monopod making it more cumbersome (and more expensive).

Photographing a bird that is darting all over the place, fairly far away, in and out of foliage, and in challenging environments can be intensely frustrating. However, overcoming these difficulties and getting an image you are proud of, makes the pursuit all the more satisfying. Have patience, take the time to learn the birds, learn how to use your equipment quickly, learn your cameras strengths and limits, and you'll have great shots from all your favorite birding experiences.

FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

- Charles V. & Sheila Baker
- Susan Barbour
- Brendan Beers
- Nolan Bunting
- Tom & Anne Butler
- Susan DeGutz
- Sara Eftang
- Dany Feig-Sandoval

- Susan Glenn
- Vince Griesemer
- Elizabeth Hardin
- Mark Hardin
- Nancy Hitchins
- Alecia Hunter
- Thomas Hunter
- Marilyn Kenny

- Sue Kenny
- Barbara Maynard
- Andrew Monson
- Hildegard S. Morgan
- John & Linda Sachs
- Karen Scott
- Amanda Shannon
- Dawn Wilson

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



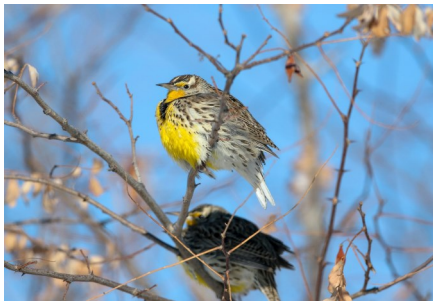
Upcoming Field Trips

All field trips are free and open to the public. All experience levels are 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/FortCollinsAudubonSociety or see member emails sent out 1-2 weeks in advance of each trip. Attendance may be limited. Bobcat Ridge surveys do not require registration. With questions, suggestions, or interest in leading trips about nature conservation topics, please email fcasfieldtrips@gmail.com.

May 12, Sunday, Bobcat Ridge Survey. Leader: Denise Bretting, 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 Bobcat Ridge parking lot.

Additional upcoming Bobcat Ridge Surveys on the second Sunday of each month: June 9 at 6:30 a.m., July 14 at 6:30 a.m., and August 11 at 7 a.m.

May 23, Thursday, CSU Environmental Learning Center. Leader: Sirena Brownlee, sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com, 970-980-6184. The ELC offers a variety of habitats along the Poudre River. Most migrants arrive by mid- to end of May and the evening is a great time to bird. Plan for 1.5–2 mile walks on the trails.



Western Meadowlarks
by Susan Hodgson.

We will be out until dark to look for Great Horned Owls nesting in the area and other nocturnal species. Meet at 6:30 p.m. in the parking lot.

May 29, May 29, Reservoir Ridge Natural Area. Leader: John Shenot, johnshenot@gmail.com, 802-595-1669. This Fort Collins natural area is the most reliable location in Larimer County to find Bobolinks. Reservoir Ridge also offers good habitat for grassland species such as Western Meadowlarks, Vesper and Grasshopper Sparrows, and Blue Grosbeaks. We'll start at 6 p.m. for an early evening bird walk.

June 1, Saturday, LGBTQIA+ and Allies at Running Deer and Cottonwood Hollow. Leader: Kit Gray, kit@kitgrayillustration.com. Come join us for a



Great Horned Owls by Doug Swartz.

relaxed bird walk with good company! Beginners are welcome, but bring binoculars if you have them. The walk will be from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. Registration is already open for this trip: https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C084CADAE2CA1FEC70-48142535-june#

June 2, Sunday, Pawnee National Grasslands. Leader: Sirena Brownlee, sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com, 970-980-6184. Carpool from Fort Collins at 6 a.m. and return by 2 or 3 p.m. Contact Sirena for details. The grasslands, 35 miles east of Fort Collins, are

a world-class birding area known for Burrowing Owls, Mountain Plovers, longspurs, and hawks. Carpooling is necessary and the trip is limited to 12 people (three cars).

Late summer trips will include a dragonfly walk by Dr. Thomas Schultz, tentatively scheduled for Aug. 18, Sunday, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m., and a photography walk by Joseph Webber, also planned for August. Keep an eye on your email and our social media pages for further announcements.



Mountain Plover
by Julio Mulero.



Blue Grosbeak
by Ron Harden.



Fort Collins Audubon Society
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Membership Application

Join Fort Collins Audubon Society (FCAS), National Audubon Society (NAS), or both.

- New or renewing FCAS Chapter Member \$ 20 Name: _____
Receive the FCAS *Ptarmigan* by email
- New or renewing FCAS Chapter Member \$ 30 Address: _____
Receive the FCAS *Ptarmigan* by mail
- Lifetime FCAS Chapter Member \$750 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Receive FCAS *Ptarmigan* by mail or email
- Additional support for FCAS programs \$ ____ Phone: _____
- Additional support for Alex Cringan Fund \$ ____ Email: _____
(natural history education grants)
- New NAS member \$ 20 May we send you FCAS email alerts if updates occur for field
Receive the NAS *Audubon* by mail trips, programs, etc.? Yes or No
- Renewing NAS member \$ 35 May we contact you for volunteer activities such as helping at
Receive the NAS *Audubon* by mail events or contacting legislators on important issues? Yes or No

Total Enclosed: \$ ____

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 31 extend throughout the following year. Applications can be completed at

www.fortcollinsaudubon.org