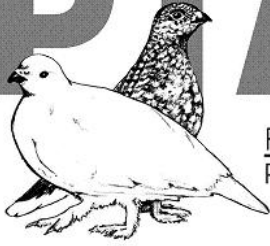


PTARMIGAN



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.

February 2009

Volume 40, Issue 6

Owls of the Northern Front Range and Adjacent Plains

Stephen Jones, Boulder County Audubon Society

Nine owl species nest in our region, ranging from the large and ubiquitous great horned to the fist-sized flammulated. Stephen Jones, Boulder County Audubon Society, will present a program that focuses on the recent local decline in numbers of burrowing and long-eared owls and the recent surge in number of barn owls. From 1985 to 1995, more than 100 Boulder County Audubon volunteers searched for and observed small cavity-nesting owls throughout Boulder County. By supplementing this research with nest records accumulated over 120 years, they were able to piece together a picture of owl habitat preferences and population trends.

Steve will also talk about where and when to observe owls and how to identify them by their calls. Steve organized the first comprehensive small owl and wintering raptor surveys in Boulder County and

helped plan and carry out the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas. His consulting work includes more than two-dozen breeding bird and resource inventories for city, county, and state open space programs. He has led



Stephen Jones - Barn Owl in Snag

field trips and taught nature classes for 28 years, and he taught in the Boulder Valley Public Schools for 33 years. Steve is author of *The Last Prairie*, a *Sandhills Journal* and *Owls of Boulder County*, and co-author of *The Shortgrass Prairie*, *Colorado Nature Almanac*, and the recently published *Peterson Field Guide to the North American*

Prairie. Recognized by the National Wildlife Federation as "one of ten volunteers who make a difference,"

Note also that a "Small Nocturnal Montane Winter Owls" field trip is being offered February 21. See more details in the "Field Trip..." section of this newsletter.

THURSDAY EVENING PROGRAM — February 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



February 2009

2/14/09, Saturday. Second Saturday Natural Area Tour. 8:00 - 10:00 a.m. Prospect Ponds. 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 8:00-10:00 am. For further information, contact Joann Thomas at 970-482-7125 or jthomas91@aol.com.

2/15/09, Sunday. Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey. Leader: Denise Bretting (dbretting@swloveland.com, work: 970-669-1185, or home: 970-669-8095). Meet at 7:00 am. FCAS performs a monthly bird census for the City of Fort Collins.

2/17/09, Tuesday. Photographing Denver Zoo Birds, Wild and Captive. Leader: David Leatherman (daleatherman@msn.com). Head to Denver Zoo for an all-day trip to look for wild birds on grounds, captive birds in exhibits, practice photography, and discuss what we can learn from viewing a "bird in the hand". Admission is \$9 for adults under 65, \$7 for adults 65 and over. If the weather is too cold to be outside for long stretches, we can retreat to Tropical Discovery or the Bird House when needed. Dress appropriately! Leave Fort Collins from the Transportation Center on the north side of Harmony, west of I-25 at 8:30a, returning to the Transportation Center at 4:30p. Bring a lunch or purchase one at the Zoo. Bring binoculars and handheld camera gear (digiscoping would probably be too cumbersome for the indoor exhibits).

2/21/09, Saturday. Small Nocturnal Montane Winter Owls. Leader: Nick Komar. Co-leaders: Eric DeFonso and Sue Riffe. We'll head out into the winter night to find Northern Saw-whet Owls in Rist Canyon and Boreal Owls up at Cameron Pass. Both begin their courtship calling in mid-winter, and should be easy to detect. We'll be looking and listening for them from the road primarily. We can't guarantee getting a visual on the birds, but our chances are improved if we can hear them. A great opportunity to learn new things about these mysterious birds which live near us year-round, yet few people actually experience. We'll meet at 8pm, at a location to be determined, and plan on returning to Fort Collins around 2am. Carpooling will be required, to reduce potential impacts on the owls as they enter their breeding season as well as simply ease transportation. If the weather is uncooperative, our backup day *may* be the following Saturday, February 28. To sign up, contact Eric DeFonso by email at yoericd@yahoo.com or by phone at 970-472-1761.

2/26/2009, Thursday. Beginning Birding: High Plains Environmental Center, Loveland. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at

the pier on the east side of Equalizer Pond by McWhinney corporate offices. For specific driving directions, call Joann at 482-7125 or email at jthomas91@aol.com.

2/28/09, Saturday. Earth and Sky Walk, 9:00 a.m. - noon, Reservoir Ridge Natural Area, Fort Collins. Leader: Eric DeFonso (yoericd@yahoo.com or 970-472-1761). This will be a variation on my usual quarterly weather walks. We will add a new component to the walk, and discuss the geologic history of Fort Collins and Colorado, and its influence on the weather and climate that we experience in the modern day. We will be interpreting the rocks and the clouds all on the same walk! Note: this is a somewhat more strenuous hike than my past walks at Nix, but not as strenuous as the hike at Coyote Ridge. If you've never been to this place, now's a great time - we will have wonderful views from the high point on the trail. Meet at the parking area at the trailhead, off Michaud Road near Overland Trail. Contact me if you need additional assistance finding this area.

March 2009

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 970-416-7527.

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?" For further information, contact Joann Thomas at 970-482-7125 or jthomas91@aol.com.

3/15/09, Sunday. Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey. Leader: Denise Bretting (dbretting@swloveland.com, work: 970-669-1185, or home: 970-669-8095). Meet at 7:00 am. FCAS performs a monthly bird census for the city of Fort Collins.

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.

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

CLIMATE DISRUPTION



Every day the news about the rates at which the earth's atmosphere and oceans are heating up becomes more ominous. The **majority** of scientists who have weighed in on the issue of global

number of environmental refugees produced solely by the potential rises in earth's oceans could exceed 20% of humankind.

Rising temperatures will also bode badly for agriculture. Heightened drought conditions and increased conversion of croplands to deserts foretell

warming and its impacts attribute the accelerated rate of warming to human activities, namely the emission of greenhouse

"I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use our natural resources, but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob by wasteful use, the generations that come after us."

-- Theodore Roosevelt, speech, Washington, D.C., 1900

gases over the past two centuries or more (when did the industrial revolution begin?). Unfortunately we have emitted such a large quantity of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere that we may have already passed the point of no return for the earth's atmosphere to not continue warming unchecked.

of the specter of widespread famine, far worse than already exists. The oceans have already absorbed so much carbon dioxide, which becomes

Even if we were to stop **ALL (100%)** of greenhouse gas emissions the atmosphere's temperature would

"I would feel more optimistic about a bright future for man if he spent less time proving that he can outwit Nature and more time tasting her sweetness and respecting her seniority."

-- E.B. White (1899-1985), Lost in the Woods

continue to rise by about 5 degrees F. over the next decade or so. Unfortunately, we are not able to turn the switch off on such emissions, and so things will continue to rise. Setting a limit of 80% of current emissions by the year 2020 will not have that much of an effect.

carbonic acid when combined with water, that all marine life that depends on shells and exoskeletons of calcium carbonate (think shellfish and corals) will probably go extinct within fifty years, resulting in a massive collapse of virtually all marine life.

The leaders of the world's countries need to act quickly within the next one or two years if there is any hope of saving

the planet. And the steps needed to do so are going to be expensive. But not as expensive as trying to cope with out-of-control climate changes that will occur without any positive action on our part.

The oceans have absorbed so much thermal energy that they are now melting the ice in both the Arctic and Antarctic Oceans. The Greenland ice sheet is melting at rates far faster than predicted even just three years ago. If the two miles of ice that covers Greenland totally melt the estimate is that the earth's oceans will rise by 20 feet. If the Antarctic ice sheets melt, they would contribute another 20 feet of rise in the oceans. Most of Florida, the Netherlands and other low countries of Europe, as well as much of England, Bangladesh, and other countries with oceanic shorelines will become inundated. The

Our leaders need to hear from us, NOW!, and LOUDLY! There are sites that you can explore and view for your own information, and there are other sites by which you can become involved and be part of the critical mass necessary for the right changes to happen. Please see:

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

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

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

Want to be a part of the solution to Global Warming? Take the Audubon Climate Action Pledge at:

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



2009 Legislative Forum on February 21

For the 2009 legislative session, all-out attacks are expected on Colorado's new oil and gas regulations. Particularly the ones that attempt to protect wildlife habitat, and on the legislation that enabled them. Find out what our legislators will be up to and meet the Audubon and Sierra Club legislative liaisons as well as some of the influential members of the Colorado General Assembly, on Saturday, February 21. We'll have a continental breakfast during registration, which starts at 8:30 a.m. and a pot-luck lunch with guest speakers from the Legislature. In between, Audubon lobbyist Jen Bolton and Sierra Club legislative director Gary Lindstrom will give us their latest reports on the session, followed by discussions of the really hot issues of 2009 with experts such as Mike King, Deputy Director of the Dept. of Natural Resources. The conference ends at 1:30 p.m. Make plans now to attend!

Cost: \$12 in advance, \$15 at the door. Some scholarships are available to people who will help with set-up and clean-up.

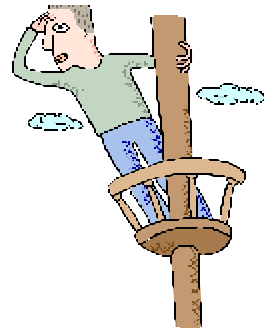
Location: First Plymouth Church, 3501 S. Colorado Blvd., Englewood
(Southwest corner of Colorado and Hampden Ave.)

Time: 8:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m.

To register: Call the Audubon Colorado office at 303-973-9530; or go online at: www.denveraudubon.org

Upcoming Programs

March: Co-meeting with Northern Colorado Native Plant Society.
Encore Presentation! Speaker David Showalter,
photographer and Colorado Book Award Winner for
Prairie Thunder: the Nature of Colorado's Great Plains



Kevin Cook's Upcoming Classes

Birds, Birding, and Colorado

Feb 3 – Bird Classification: Then and Now
Feb 10 – Geography: Which Birds Live Where
Feb 17 – Birding Skills 1
Feb 24 – Birding Skills 2
Mar 3 – Birding Colorado
Mar 10 – Connecting with Birds

Directions: All classes are held in the conference room of JAX Outdoor, 1200 N. College Ave. in Fort Collins and run from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. The room set-up includes tables and chairs; so if the early meeting time crimps your time between work and class, you may bring dinner with you.

Cost: \$6 per class session or \$34 if you pay for all six classes at once. Cash or checks only; no credit or debit cards. Make checks payable to "Wildlife Window."

Wildflowers, Wildflowering, and Colorado

Mar 23 – Plant Classification: Then and Now
Mar 30 – Geography: Which Plants Live Where
Apr 6 – Wildflowering Skills 1
Apr 13 – Wildflowering Skills 2
Apr 20 – Wildflowering Colorado
Apr 27 – Connecting with Plants

Registration: Room size limits the class size to about 20 people, so reservations are highly recommended. To reserve space, send the names of the people you are registering to kevin@wildlifewindow.com or call 223-8392 during afternoons or evenings.



Fort Collins Audubon River Trips for 2009

Fort Collins Audubon is offering two river trips for 2009: A canoe trip in May and sea kayak trip in August. These fundraising trips have been very popular with FCAS members. Details are available at www.fortnet.org/audubon and www.centennialcanoe.com.



The White River by Canoe

Date: May 29-31 (Fri-Sun), 2009

Cost: \$320 adult, \$280 child (age 6-16)

Level: Beginner / Intermediate

When you canoe Utah, you won't soon forget it. The White River, flowing westward 34 miles from Bonanza, Utah, near the Colorado and Utah border, has been referred to as the best canoeing in Utah. It is certainly the most remote wilderness area of any flat-water river stretch in the West. Few boaters have discovered the wild and secluded beauty of a Utah canoe trip through the White River Canyon. Wildlife abounds, including wild horse herds, antelope, deer and beaver. Fantastic hiking awaits you at the unusual geologic formations of Goblin City. Before or after your trip, you may wish to hike into Fantasy Canyon or Devil's Playground, featuring other unique rock formations. The water on the White River is generally smooth with occasional rapids up to Class I in difficulty. Excellent camping is found in the cottonwood groves along the river.

The Colorado River by Sea Kayak

Date: August 7-9 (Fri-Sun), 2009

Cost: \$335 adult, \$280 child (ages 6-16)

Level: Beginner

The sea kayak trip from Fruita, Colorado (about 13 miles west of Grand Junction, Colorado), covers a 30-mile stretch of the Colorado River to Westwater, Utah. This spectacular canyon country of the Colorado Plateau, including Ruby and Horsethief Canyons, features majestic walls of red sandstone and offers some of the best paddling in Colorado. The river is gentle with occasional small Class I+ rapids to add spice to the journey. Roads do not bound this portion of the river and the steep-walled canyons are

accessible only from the river, giving the area a true wilderness setting. This stretch of river can easily be navigated in a sea kayak.

These two-person sea kayaks are 16-feet long and are very comfortable and stable. Sleeker than a canoe, they will also travel faster. The only thing you'll need to carry in your kayak is a camera and water bottle. All of your camping and personal gear will be transported down river on the support raft.

You'll be amazed at stands of shiny granite sculpted by water through the ages while paddling or floating in your lifejacket past the remnants of ancient metamorphic rock called Black Rock. Camping along the river's banks, exploring a natural amphitheater with ancient Indian rock art or hiking into deep box canyons will leave you awed by the immensity of geologic time and the silence of the wilderness.

How to Sign Up

Centennial Canoe Outfitters www.centennialcanoe.com will provide all safety equipment, river guides, canoes and great food. The cost of each trip includes a \$50 donation to FCAS. You will need to bring a sleeping bag, tent and basic personal supplies. The trip size is limited, so sign up early to reserve your place. A deposit of \$100 per person must accompany your reservation request (Visa and Mastercard accepted), and the balance is due 30 days before the trip. For further details and to register for the trip, contact Centennial Canoe Outfitters, 1-877-353-1850 (toll free) and be sure to tell them you heard about it from Fort Collins Audubon Society.





Education Corner

By Joann Thomas - Education Chair

Naturally Speaking



As the year surges forward, faster than I'd like, an annual event occurs that warms me in the still cold winter. The dedicated staff of Fort Collins' Natural Areas department prepares to train another class of master naturalists. When I arrived here in 1999, wondering what the rest of my life held for me, I, in addition to bonding with my four year old granddaughter, went on as many Audubon field trips as I could. Meeting people with similar interests soothed the transition to the culture and the climate of the west.

Simultaneously, I began taking bird classes at Jax with Kevin Cook. Birding had always been a casual hobby as we moved around the country in the oil business. But, I now decided to take my interest more seriously. This led to noticing the city's advertisement for master naturalist training in the spring of 2001. The only commitment for the training was volunteering 40 hours of time giving tours or doing programs. And, I haven't stopped!

This spring the city again is taking applications for this important and fun responsibility and joy. When I look back on the path of my life, becoming a master naturalist shines as a light signaling a major shift in my life. My awareness of the natural world and my connection to it was raised exponentially.

Who do you reach with this work? Everyone! My two favorite stories span the ages. On a bird walk up at Pingree Park for a 6th grade class's EcoWeek, a young boy trailed behind his classmates as they rushed to get to the ropes course (a much more appealing adventure than birding to 6th graders). As we walked and talked about birds, we spied a chickadee. I showed him the difference between the mountain and the black-capped species and explained the dangers of leaving junk food crumbs around that immature birds scarf up



instead of more nutritionally valuable food.

We arrived back at the base and while packing the binoculars and bird books, I realized that he was standing in front of me just staring up at me. As I looked at him questioningly, he said with all his youthful enthusiasm, "That was so cool!" and ran off to join his class. To this day, that one moment validates all of my work. I'll never know what that young man went on to do in life, but whatever it is, I know he'll value the natural world.

After doing school programs for several years, I reached out to our retirement centers. I usually did one of two programs, Backyard Birds or Wildflowers. To bring hands-on into the wildflower experience, we would dissect large flowers and identify the reproductive parts of the flower. In a class of elders at a local retirement center, the participants worked in pairs exclaiming excitedly each time they found the deeper hidden parts of the flower. As we finished, one woman softly exclaimed, "I'll never paint flowers the same way again." Another "aha" moment!

Each one of these stories is testimony to human curiosity and the willingness to learn more about the natural world. For me this is a lifetime commitment. The continuing education, the energy of each incoming class which challenges me to learn more, the support from the superb staff in Natural Areas...all of these add to a quality of life here in Fort Collins that I'd never imagined when I moved here.

I invite you to become a part of this experience. There is a new class forming with training in March. I try to attend as many of the sessions as possible to refresh each year. Join us! You won't regret it!

Check out the web site at www.fcgov.com/naturalareas/vol-naturalists.php. For more information, or to have an application mailed to you when it's ready, email skenny@fcgov.com or call (970)224-6118.



Welcome new and renewing members!

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



Don & Linda O'Brien
 Linda L. Pirie
 Clyde Grundlach
 Cynthia L. McDonald
 Vicki Loseke
 Mrs. Robert F. Brady
 Libby Edwards
 Elyse Bliss
 John Thut
 Elizabeth Brunmeier
 Jana Pantano
 Denise L. Rue
 D. Swartz. & K. Spencer
 Cynthia Decrescentis
 Patricia Rapacz
 Lynn A. Davies
 Tom Hannon
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 Geraldine Holcombe
 Thao Le

Marjorie Halvorson
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 Patricia Prenter
 B.J. Gooley
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 Robert J. Clark
 Dave Dillman
 Jean Canaiy
 David & Linda Chadsey
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 Bob & Tracy
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For other FCAS contacts visit
www.fortnet.org/audubon/leadership.htm



Volunteers needed to:

1. Help membership chair send out renewal notices to local members. Can be done from home.
2. Help collect printer ink cartridges at program meetings and forward them to our sponsor to raise money for FCAS. Need to attend most program meetings.
3. Several people willing to write letters on conservation issues when contacted by conservation chair or state Audubon. Work from home.



“Oh, one more thing ...”: Joe Martin will be taking a new job in Great Britain in August. He needs to pass the newsletter baton to a new editor (or multiple editors) by mid-July. He’s most accessible via e-mail. Shoot him a note if you’re interested! joe3eagles@gmail.com

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: 697 (83.6%)

E-mail: 137 (16.4%)

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 Level: Beginner / Intermediate



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 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**