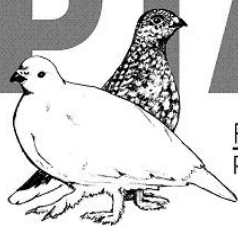


# PTARMIGAN



FORT COLLINS AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. Box 271968 • Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968 • [www.fortnet.org/Audubon](http://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 2010

Volume 41, Issue 4

## Save the Trees for the Birds



### Support a Paperless Ptarmigan

The FCAS needs your support in turning the Ptarmigan newsletter into an online publication.

Did you know that it costs over \$8100 per year to publish and mail nine issues of the Ptarmigan? That is over \$900 per issue!

Please help us cut our expenses and leave more in the budget for our mission of conservation, education, habitat preservation, and protecting birds and other wildlife.

We will send you a monthly email announcement when the newsletter is posted on the Web site.

We realize, however, that some of you still need to receive your Ptarmigan by mail. If you have already requested, or now request your Ptarmigan via U.S. mail, you will continue to receive it by post.

Please let us know your preference by one of the following:

1. EMAIL: [FortCollinsAudubonMembership@gmail.com](mailto:FortCollinsAudubonMembership@gmail.com)
2. PHONE: 970-490-2473

## Birds in Flight and How to Photograph Them

Rob Palmer has a passion for birds of prey, and has pursued that passion throughout his adult life. In college, he spent numerous hours studying the nesting territories of prairie falcons in northeastern Colorado, and additional time researching screech owls nesting along the Boulder Creek trail in the center of Boulder, Colorado.

Photography is a part of Rob's life. He began taking pictures with a Polaroid black and white camera when he was 12, then quickly moved on to a 35 mm SLR, *(Birds in Flight continued on Page 2)*



Snowy Owl by Rob Palmer

### Thursday Evening Program

April 8, 2010

Fort Collins Audubon Society

Social hour begins 7 p.m.

Presentation: 7:30 p.m.

Fort Collins Lincoln Center

Columbine Room

417 W. Magnolia, Ft. Collins

The event is free and open to the public.

## Revisit Wild Horses and Raptors of the Mongolian Steppe

If you missed Rick Harness' program on the wild horses and raptors of the Mongolian Steppe in January, you have another chance to hear his inspiring program on April 29. In Fall 2009, Rick teamed with National University of Mongolia and Mongolian Ornithological Society biologists to conduct raptor surveys in and around Hustai National Park, Mongolia. Hustai National Park is home to the wild Mongolian Takhi, or Przewalski's horse. Currently, biologists are managing the horse population to help it reach a self-sustaining level of approximately 500 horses.



**Black Kite of the Mongolian Steppe**

Hustai National Park, with the Tuul River running through it, is a must-see for any traveler to Mongolia. In addition to the horses, the area is an important stopover location for many migratory birds, including numerous raptors. Over 172 bird species have been observed in the park; 19 of these species are listed as globally threatened or endangered.

Rick Harness is a certified wildlife biologist working for the engineering firm, EDM International, Inc. located in Fort Collins.

Join us Thursday, April 29 at the Loveland Museum Gallery,

503 N. Lincoln Ave. in Loveland for a program on the Takhi and the birds of Hustai National Park. Social time begins at 6:45 p.m. and program begins at 7 p.m. Seating is somewhat limited, so arrive early, and enjoy some refreshments.

This program is free and the public is welcomed. Don't miss this program a second time!

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*(Birds in Flight continued from Page 1)*

and then became his high school's photographer. Rob taught life science and biology for seven years, and has since then spent most of his free time studying raptors and refining his photography techniques.

Rob's photo of a pair of bald eagles appeared in the January-February 2010 *Audubon* magazine, as the winner of the Grand Prize of the first Audubon Magazine Photography Award in association with Nature's Best Photography. His photos also have appeared in *National Wildlife*, *Wild Bird*, *Birder's World*, *BBC Wildlife*, *Living Bird*, *American Falconry*, *Defenders of Wildlife*, and the *North American Falconers Journal*.

Some of his photos were used for advertisements in *Business Week*, *Fortune*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and Sotheby's Auction House.

Join us Thursday, April 8, for "Birds in Flight," and enjoy this opportunity to learn how to photograph birds. This program is free and the public is welcomed.



## Education Corner

by Joann Thomas

### Fickle Spring

As I write today, the weather has been gorgeous! Blue skies, temperatures just right, not too cool and not too hot, combine to create the perfect spring day. However, a couple of weeks ago when I was out birding with a friend, spring proved to be fickle.

Bundled against the grey, cold day, we began at Riverbend Ponds. Hearing Red-winged Blackbirds confirmed spring was here, but the weather did not. We saw the usual early birds: Flickers, Blue Jays, Mallards, and Canada Geese. The walk was invigorating and without lots of birds to see, we chatted. Birding is also about meeting new friends. Birders flock together. Walking between the river and the pond, we heard geese overhead in large numbers. Flying toward the pond were more geese than I have ever seen at one time—hundreds, maybe



thousands.

Landing on the still ice-covered pond, they rested. After watching them for a while, we moved on. As we turned the corner around the pond, something spooked them. Lifting off, they flew to the south just a few feet

over our heads. It was spectacular! The squawking, the feeling of urgency, the sheer numbers—all combined to make the common feel very uncommon.

We moved on to Fossil Creek and some great waterfowl. But, the wind picked up, temperatures plummeted, and the sky grew dark. I find that as I age, I am more likely to

value warmth over identifying one more bird.

Driving home, I thought of the geese and myself. They were flying south to warmth—trying to find spring on a cold, grey, windy day. I too was driving home to find warmth by the fire with a cup of cocoa. I guess we are not so different, the birds and I.

### Equalizer Lake Nature Program

Join us each month for a program and scope viewing of Equalizer Pond. Come see migrating waterfowl, bald eagles, courting grebes (June), and grebes with young (July). Schedule for the next three months: Thursday, April 29, 8:00 a.m.; Thursday, May 27, 6:00 p.m.; and Thursday, June 24, 7:00 a.m.

Directions: Turn right (west) off I-25 at Hwy 34 (exit 257B). Take Hwy 34 to first street light (Rocky Mountain Ave). Turn right on Rocky Mountain Ave north around four roundabouts (Medical Center of the Rockies on your right). Turn left (west) into Rangview Office Building complex. Park by the building to the far right (north) of the development. Nature Program will meet on the trail by the bridge.

Call Joann Thomas at 482-7125 or 222-0741.

### 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

Bath Garden  
Center & Nursery  
2000 E. Prospect  
(970) 484-5022

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

Jax Farm & Ranch  
1000 N. Hwy. 287  
(970) 484-2221

Ranch-Way Feeds  
546 Willow St.  
(970) 482-1662

The Matter Book-  
Store/Bean Cycle  
Coffee  
144 N. College  
(970) 472-4284





## Springtime a Challenge for Wild Birds

Spring is one of the most difficult and stressful times of the year for wild birds. After surviving the long, barren winter, birds still face the challenge of finding food. Birds' natural food supply is at its lowest point of the year. Insect populations are low, and the few remaining wild fruits, berries, seeds and nuts are either hidden or undesirable.

"Providing food throughout the spring is as important as winter feeding," explained Lauren-DeRosa owner of the Fort Collins, Wild Birds Unlimited. "The birds are expending a great deal of en-

ergy migrating, courting, and building nests at this time of the year when their natural food supplies are close to being exhausted."

Food that is loaded with fat and calories is the best prescription for birds struggling to survive the gap between winter and spring. The best seeds for providing high-energy levels are black oil sunflower, striped sunflower, and safflower. Suet is also a high energy food that is invaluable when birds need many more calories to keep their bodies warm. These and mealworms are a beneficial substitute for the scarce insects many birds would eat if they could find them.



Red-breasted Nuthatch  
by Eric DeFonso.

### FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Elizabeth & Frank Amigo	Rick Kordes
John H. Baldo	Daniel Livinghouse
Aine Barrett	Jim Maltby
Ashley Butler	Matthew F. McLaren
Pamm Clements	Daria Moskowitz
Front Range	Kathy Muhlenbruck
Community College	Kim Peterson
Jean Corey	Ruth Potter
David Dyer	Becca Reid
Amada Favis	Clarice Rutherford
Rich Fisher	Kristine Scott
Vallice Foote	Erik Sonnenberg
Lili Francuz	Linda C. Stevens
Rituparna Ghosh	Carol Sullivan
David Gingerich	Rafael Tello
Linda M. Hadlow	Jim Tolstrup
James R. Hayes	Kate Trainor
Laura Johnston	Chris Wolf

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.

### Gunnison River 3-Day Trip

**Date: August 20 – 22, 2010**

FCAS is sponsoring a leisurely 31-mile canoe trip through the Escalante and Dominguez Canyons August 20 – 22 for a summer delight of birding, hiking, and photography. Guided by Centennial Canoe Outfitters, the trip is ideal for beginning and intermediate canoeists, providing lots of fun with various Class 1+ rapids along its course. Geologic sights abound as well as nesting sites of Blue Herons, hawks, and eagles.

Joann Thomas is the FCAS facilitator for the trip. Contact her at [jthomas91@aol.com](mailto:jthomas91@aol.com) for more information, or sign up for the trip and get all the details at [www.CentennialCanoe.com](http://www.CentennialCanoe.com). More information about the trip also will be posted on the FCAS Web site: [www.fortnet.org/audubon/leadership](http://www.fortnet.org/audubon/leadership).



## 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. For all field trips and surveys, please contact the trip leader for signup and trip details

**April 3, Saturday. Gull Identification Workshop.** Leader: Nick Komar, [quetzal65@comcast.net](mailto:quetzal65@comcast.net), or 416-7527. 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.

**April 11, Sunday. Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey.** Leader: Denise Bretting [dbretting@swloveland.com](mailto:dbretting@swloveland.com), work: 669-1185, or home: 669-8095. Meet at 7 a.m. FCAS performs a monthly bird census for the city of Fort Collins. All levels welcomed and encouraged!

**April 24, Saturday. Beginner Birding Trip.** Leader: Nancy Howard, [Nancy.Howard@state.co.us](mailto:Nancy.Howard@state.co.us). Meet at Cottonwood Hollow Natural Area in Fort Collins, TBA. Join Nancy for a low-key birding trip in town, in a great birding spot!

**April 25-30, Sunday through Friday, Colorado Grouse Tour.** Leader: Jess Brauch.

To reserve a seat or for more information, contact Nick Komar, 970-449-3645, [info@quetzalfoundation.org](mailto:info@quetzalfoundation.org). Join us for a 6-day tour of Colorado's resident gallinaceous birds. Tour target species include: Greater Sage-Grouse, Gunnison Sage-Grouse, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Dusky Grouse, White-tailed Ptarmigan, Greater Prairie-Chicken, Lesser Prairie-Chicken, Wild Turkey, Chukar, Gambel's Quail, Scaled Quail, Northern Bobwhite, and Ring-necked Pheasant (some of which require special permits or permission for viewing). Our route circles the entire state during spring migration, so we will see more than 150 species! Viewing and photographing the birds will take priority, so expect a relaxed pace while viewing the birds (but lots of driving each day). Trip is limited to six participants (including companions). Cost: \$1195 per person (or \$995 per person double occupancy) includes ground transportation, five nights lodging, viewing fees. Profits benefit FCAS and the Quetzal Foundation.

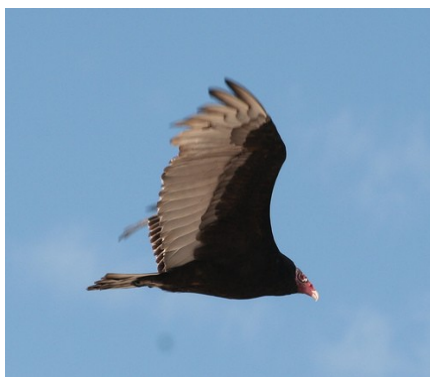
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## Fort Collins Bird Notes

by Eric DeFonso

*Fort Collins Bird Notes is a short summary of birdly goings-on around the Fort Collins area. Information is compiled from area listservs and word of mouth, and is not yet examined by the Colorado Records Committee.*

As the equinox arrived, so did the first Turkey Vultures of the year! *Turkey Vultures* often make for a good proxy for spring, as they return from their Central and South American wintering grounds usually around the second half of March. Interestingly, western U.S. migrants—"our" vultures—are more migratory than eastern ones, and are likely returning from as far south as Venezuela. They are gregarious on their roosting sites, and one of the places in Fort Collins they are known to roost is along Mountain Avenue near Washington, so as spring progresses, look for groups of *Turkey Vultures* taking wing in the morning near Old Town, or returning from a day's work of searching for carrion in the late afternoons.



Turkey Vulture by Eric DeFonso.

It took a while, but area lakes and reservoirs finally started thawing sometime around mid-March. With so many frozen over, there were a relative dearth of ducks and geese around town compared to other years. But as the ice melts, look for all sorts of migrant waterfowl currently present in good numbers, like *Lesser Scaup*, *Northern Pintail*, *Redhead*, *Canvasback*, *Bufflehead*, and even *Blue-winged Teal* and *Cinnamon Teal*, just to name a few. Now's the best time to see them, as many of these ducks will leave the area by late April and early May. Great places to look for these ducks include City Park Lake and Prospect Ponds on the east side of Fort Collins along the Poudre River, as well as Fossil Creek Reservoir, Timnath Reservoir, Windsor Reservoir, or virtually any body of water in the Fort Collins area.





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Join FCAS directly, or automatically become a member by joining the National Audubon Society (NAS). Choose one the following:

- ☐ **New or renewing member** of FCAS annual dues  
(Receive the *Ptarmigan* newsletter) \$15
- ☐ **New member** of NAS and FCAS \$20  
(Receive *Audubon* magazine and *Ptarmigan*)
- ☐ **Renewing member** of NAC and FCAS \$35  
(Receive *Audubon* magazine and *Ptarmigan*)

Did you know? Less than \$1 of your NAS dues goes to fund FCAS. 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: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

***Ptarmigan* is delivered via email unless otherwise requested.**

- ☐ I prefer to receive *Ptarmigan* via US mail.

Please make checks payable to FCAS and mail with this form to: Fort Collins Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 271968, Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968