

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 2013

Volume 44, Issue 2

**"From Ancient Capitol to South of the Clouds:
A Naturalist's Tour of China"**

Presented by:

**Dr. Paul Opler, CSU Professor
and Evi Buckner-Opler, Artist/ Nature Photographer**

Thursday, Feb. 14, 2013

Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Drive, Fort Collins

Social Gathering: 7 p.m. – Program: 7:30 p.m.

Paul Opler and Evi Buckner-Opler travelled to China with a small group of naturalists in May 2011. They visited six provinces while observing Chinese landmarks and society as well as many birds, butterflies, mammals, and plants. The country has more than 1,000 species and birds abounded even in the large cities. They saw more than 100 species including Red-billed

Blue Magpie, Black-necked Cranes, and Golden Pheasants. More than 100 kinds of butterflies were spotted and most were photographed by Evi. Their presentation will cover the highlights, including birds, butterflies, mammals such as the Giant Panda and Red Giant Flying-Squirrel, plants, the Wall of China, Terracotta soldiers, and Shangri-la.



Hoopoe by Evi Buckner-Opler.

In addition to being a former FCAS board member, Paul Opler is a professor at CSU and oversees the extensive butterfly and moth collection at the C.P. Gillette Museum of Arthropod Diversity. Evi Buckner-Opler is an artist and expert nature photographer. Paul and Evi have travelled extensively in Europe, Mexico, Costa Rica, and South America. They have photographed butterflies and birds extensively on their travels and made presenta-

tions to dozens of groups. Paul has authored many books on butterflies and moths. Paul will have some of his books for sale and will be pleased to sign them.

Join us on Feb. 14 at 7:30 p.m. at the Fort Collins Senior Center. This program is free and the public is welcomed.

President's Corner

Thank you for electing me president of FCAS. Following in Bill Miller's footsteps is a daunting task; he was president for eight of the past sixteen years. My comfort is knowing that he will still be on the FCAS board and will continue to shape and guide our future.

On Nov. 17, 2012, Liz Pruessner, Membership Chair, and I travelled to Denver for a meeting of the Audubon chapters in Colorado. It's hard to take an all day trip like that during the holidays, but it was worth it. It was exciting to meet everyone and to learn what each chapter is doing. We discovered that they all face the same challenges for 2013 that we face: recruiting inspiring volunteers,



Joann Thomas at the December 2012 Pot Luck .

by Joann Thomas

raising money, and creating interesting programs. But more than that was the inspiration I felt as we worked together to create a group that will guide the Audubon state lobbyist in choosing where to put our time, energy, and money during this year's legislative session. Our next meeting is on March 3 in Denver during which we will learn from our lobbyist what issues and challenges await us in 2013.

In future newsletters, I plan to introduce each member of the board and create a model of each board member's specific function with the intention of inspiring you to join us in this important work.

For now, stay tuned, stay committed, and stay warm!



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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
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(970) 225-2557

Jax Mercantile
950 E. Eisenhower
Loveland
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1200 N. College
(970) 221-0544

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



"Every right is married to a duty, every freedom owes a corresponding responsibility."

-- *Russell Kirk (1919 - 1994) - Redeeming the Time (1996), page 33*

"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, January 17, 1961*

It's Time to Stop the Pebble Mine

The problem with a monthly conservation newsletter is that it is impossible to cover the large number of environmental issues that keep popping up wherever there is human involvement. Alaska has its own set of problems that include: 1) proposed oil drilling in the Arctic Na-



Spawning sockeye at Katmai National Park.

tional Wildlife Refuge (ANWR); 2) proposed oil drilling in the Arctic Sea with the potential of oil spills in conditions where it would be impossible to contain, let alone clean up; and now (3) an enormous copper, gold, and molybdenum mining proposal that places the world's largest salmon hatchery at risk.

The Pebble Mine, proposed by a consortium of global mining giants, would gouge out a spectacular untamed wilderness above Alaska's Bristol Bay. Selling points for the mine are large economic benefits to the state of Alaska and jobs for about a thousand workers. The negative aspects of the mine include billions of tons of waste material produced from an open pit about two miles across and 1,700 feet or more in depth. The waste rock, with a high sulphide content that produces acid mine drainage when in contact with water, would be stored in two large "ponds" trapped behind huge dams, the largest of which would be about 740 feet high and four miles long.

Tailings, which result from the refining of the ore that generally uses chemicals, would be piped to these same tailings ponds. Both the dams and the pipelines are candidates for failure due to harsh environmental conditions and the fact that the region lies in an active earthquake zone.

This project threatens the livelihood of about 14,000 full- and part-time workers currently in the salmon industry in the area. It also would severely impact the livelihood of local Alaskan natives as well as wildlife that live in the region and are dependent upon the waters and terrestrial landscape for their survival. A collapse of the local salmon fishery would have a negative impact on the considerable salmon processing industry in Seattle, Washington.

In September 2012, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a long awaited study that confirms that the Pebble Mine—along with its estimated 10 billion tons of mining waste—would spell disaster for Bristol



Bristol Bay
National Geographic photo.

Bay, its legendary salmon runs, its pristine environment, and its people. The time has come for President Obama to take the next crucial step: direct the EPA to use its authority under the Clean Water Act to stop the Pebble Mine. Please consider signing a petition asking President Obama to stop the Pebble Mine at: <https://secure.nrdonline.org/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=2951&JSessionIdr004=fxsg4i0ua2.app306a>. References for this article are found on Page. 6.



No, it's Not Spring Yet, But...

No, it's not spring yet, but... Have you heard the birds? Just before this latest cold snap, birds filled my two ash trees—singing like it was spring! Then on a trip to King Soopers on College, there was a flock of robins eating red berries in two trees just out from the front doors. Remembering that we have resident robins and migrating robins and several sub-species, I stopped under the trees to check them out. Mixed in with the robins were some lighter smaller birds, and I was really curious.

I moved around to get a better view, as the birds kept moving away from me. By the time I identified the robins' companions, I realized that a crowd had gathered to see what I was doing. The birds were Cedar Waxwings, so I decided to share my knowledge with the gathering. I am always amazed at how interested people are in birds: What kind are they? What are they eating? What are they doing here in the middle of winter?

There is always so much to learn about birds. For example, recently I learned that House Finches are the only birds to feed their chicks seeds. There is something new to learn every

day, so I am sharing with you a great opportunity to learn more. Kevin Cook is beginning a birding series that will run from January 22 through February 26 in Loveland, and from January 23 through February 27 in Fort Collins.

All classes are held at the prospective city's local Jax Mercantile from 6 to 7:45 p.m.

This set of classes is definitely for beginners, but as those of you who've taken Kevin's classes before know, you always learn something new in his classes, besides being highly entertained.

Then, we have Quetzal

Tours—local or international, you choose. FCAS in partnership with Quetzal Tours is sponsoring six one-day trips this spring to very special areas. Each trip is led by an experienced interpretive guide. You can visit little known places, learn what birds' songs mean, see the elusive ptarmigan, and lots more. Be quick to sign up as only five people will go on each trip in the new seven person van. Check on Page 7 for more information on these exciting opportunities.

Internationally, Quetzal Tours has a trip to the cloud forest of the Andes in Ecuador during the first week in August (see below).



Cedar Waxwing

Ecuadoran Excursion and Fundraiser

This summer, join fellow Auduboners in experiencing Ecuador's Andean peaks and cloud forests. Quetzal Tours is offering an eight-day relaxed birding adventure to Ecuador, led by the bilingual Ecuadorian birding guide, Xavier Muñoz. This unique, low cost experience (\$2000 per person) also serves as a fundraiser as a portion of the proceeds will be donated to FCAS. Locations to be visited include Mindo, Nanegalito, Pallacta Pass, and Guacamayos Pass. Birding highlights will include dozens of species of brightly colored



Giant Antpitta by Nick Komar.

tanagers, hummingbirds, and, of course, quetzals, many of which can be seen at close range for breathtaking photography. Ecuador has the highest biodiversity in the world, hosting more bird species than any other country. The tour is limited to six customers in order to guarantee a quality, personalized experience. Add-on guided birding excursions to the Amazonian rainforests or the unique Galapagos Islands also can be arranged. For more information or to reserve your spot, contact Quetzal Tours, at info@quetzal-tours.com, or Nick Komar at 970-449-3645.



"All A-Bird" for FCAS Field Trips – and Call for Volunteers

By John Shenot

As the new field trip coordinator for FCAS, I hope to schedule more field trips in 2013 than we offered in 2012. We will continue to schedule some special outings to Colorado's best birding spots, led by experienced and skilled birders. But at least once each month, I also want to offer an "All A-Bird" field trip that will be in or very near Fort Collins, last roughly two hours, and be focused more on fun and camaraderie than finding rare birds or tallying a long species count. I especially want these trips to be inviting to new members, non-



Western Meadowlark
by John Shenot.

members, and beginning birders. To make this vision a reality, I need volunteers who are willing to lead one field trip at a time at a location of your choosing. I'll help with the rest. Expert birding skills are not required of trip leaders; we just need people who want to spend time in the field with fellow birders and have fun. Please contact me at johnshenot@gmail.com or 970-682-2551, or if you want to see what I have in mind, join me for the Feb. 23 All A-Bird field trip to Old Town Fort Collins!

Upcoming Field Trips

All field trips are free (unless otherwise noted) and open to the public. All experience levels are welcome. Bring snacks or lunch, water, binoculars, and spotting scopes. Visit www.fortnet.org/Audubon for more information.

Feb. 10, 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 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot. FCAS performs a monthly bird census for the City of Fort Collins. All levels are welcome.

Feb. 16 & 17, Saturday and Sunday, Winter Owls Fundraising Trip. Leaders: Scott Rashid (Sat.), Nick Komar (Sun.), quetzal65@comcast.net or 970-449-3645. This is part of the Colorado Birding Series (Page 7). Begin at 4 p.m. in the prairie and end on Cameron Pass; home by midnight. Cost is \$80 for FCAS members; \$100 for nonmembers.

Feb. 23, Saturday, "All A-Bird" in Old Town Fort Collins. Leader: John Shenot, johnshenot@gmail.com, 970-682-2551. Meet at 10 a.m. at the head of the Hickory Trail adjacent to the Fort Collins Museum of Discovery, 408 Mason Court. Our goals for this trip are to meet fellow birders, have fun, and build a greater appreciation for common urban birds. We will walk a portion of the Poudre River trail and see some of the adjacent parks and natural areas like Lee Martinez, Gustav Swanson, and Udall. Although this trip emphasizes common birds, birders have seen Northern Shrike, Bald Eagle, and Common Redpoll in this urban area this winter. An optional, post-trip "debriefing" will be held in the tasting room at New Belgium Brewery.



Long-eared Owl
by Nick Komar.

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. 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 support your local chapter and subscribe to the newsletter. See the details on Page 8 or at www.fortnet.org/Audubon.



FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

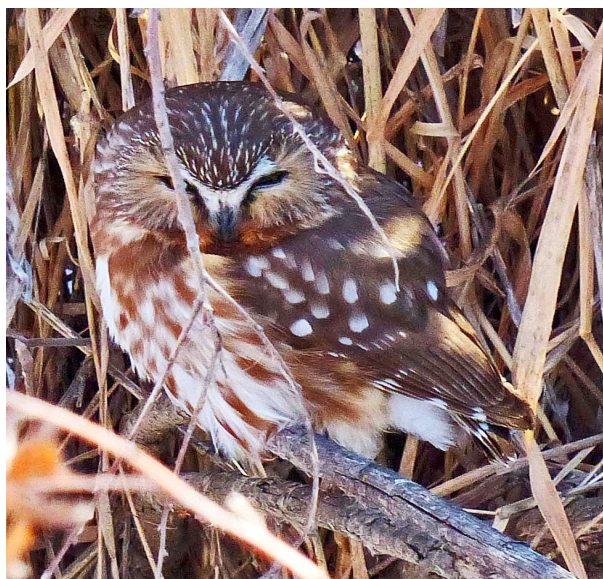
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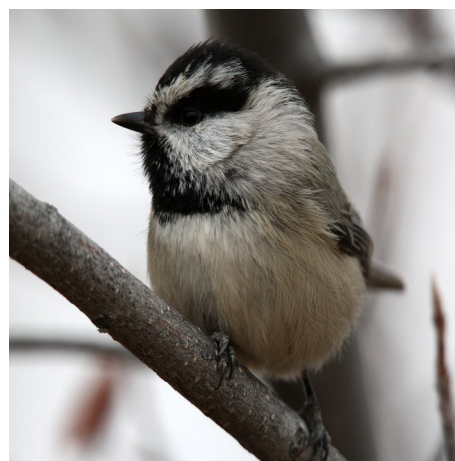
Thank You for Your Membership!

Your support makes possible our programs and conservation efforts.



Saw-whet Owl by Chuck Hundertmark from the Jan. 1 Loveland CBC (left).

Mountain Chickadee by Cole Wild taken near Wellington during the Dec. 15 Fort Collins CBC (right).



References for Pebble Mine article on Page 3.

- 1) <http://readersupportednews.org/opinion2/271-38/15526-focus-its-time-to-stop-the-pebble-mine>
- 2) <http://alaskaconservation.org/conservation-issues/bristol-bay/?gclid=CJS2hNLv5rQCFQhyQgodGnEApq>
- 3) <http://www.alaskawild.org/our-issues/blm-campaign/>
- 4) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pebble_Mine
- 5) <http://www.savebiogems.org/stop-pebble-mine/>
- 6) <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2012/11/121116-bristol-bay-alaska-salmon-gold-pebble-mine-science-nation/>
- 7) <http://wilderness.org/update/pebble-mine-voted-down-bristol-bay-still-looms-threat>
- 8) http://seattletimes.com/html/opinion/2019258811_guestliffmanorrxml.html
- 9) <http://www.epa.gov/ncea/pdfs/bristolbay/Final-Peer-Review-Report-Bristol-Bay.pdf>

Don't Forget—Renew Your FCAS Annual Membership

It is not too late to renew your FCAS annual membership. Please use the form on the back page of the *Ptarmigan* to renew by mail or at a program meeting. You also can renew online at our website: www.fortnet.org/audubon.

Dues are \$20 to receive the *Ptarmigan* electronically or \$30 for a mailed, printed copy. Your membership and contributions are tax deductible. Keep the *Ptarmigan* coming by renewing today. Thanks to all who have already sent in





FCAS Offers Colorado Birding Series



Join us for an exceptional opportunity to learn about the birds of Colorado from birding professionals. FCAS has partnered with Quetzal Tours to presents a series of six one-day educational field trips. This program allows you to learn from the experts while traveling through Colorado's various life zones. Each trip is limited to five participants along with a leader and a driver. Trips are scheduled for the third weekend of each month. Proceeds benefit FCAS.

Feb. 16/17: Winter Owls

Late winter is an ideal time to find owls in Colorado. This outing starts at 4 p.m. in the prairie and ends in the dead of night on Cameron Pass. Home by midnight. **Target Birds:** Great Horned Owl, Long-eared Owl, Northern Pygmy-Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Boreal Owl, Eastern Screech-Owl. **Leader:** Scott Rashid (Sat.), Nick Komar (Sun.).

March 16/17: Early Spring Migration

In mid-March, many species of migratory waterfowl are on the move and passing through Colorado en route to boreal breeding areas. Visit lakes of Northern Colorado that serve as stop-over sites for ducks, grebes, loons, and gulls.

Target Birds: Bonaparte's Gull, Thayer's Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Red-breasted Merganser, Horned Grebe, Long-tailed Duck. **Leader:** John Vanderpoel (Sat.), Nick Komar (Sun.).

April 20/21: Ptarmigan Run

White-tailed Ptarmigan (our FCAS mascot) epitomize the tundra habitat of the Rocky Mountain Front Range.

We will seek these secretive mountain chickens still in the snow-white plumage of winter near Brainard Lake in the Indian Peaks of Boulder County.

Birding stops nearby will seek other mountain specialty species. **Target Birds:** White-tailed Ptarmigan, Three-toed Woodpecker, Red Crossbill, Evening and Pine Grosbeak, Brown-capped Rosy-Finch. **Leader:** Christian Nunes, City of Boulder Ecologist.



White-tailed Ptarmigan
by Nick Komar.

May 4/15: Chico Basin Ranch

Migrating passerine birds of the east and west mix together at Chico Basin Ranch, perhaps Colorado's premier migration hot spot created by a series of small forest oases in an enormous grass sea in El Paso and



Yellow Warbler by Nick Komar.

Pueblo counties. This tour features a visit to Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory's spring migration banding station where you will see birds in the hand. **Target Birds:** Flycatchers, vireos, warblers, tanagers. **Leader:** John Drummond, Partnership in International Birding.

June 15/16: Rocky Mountain Chorus

Over 100 species of birds sing up a storm during nesting season. Boulder area ornithologists will interpret them in the canyons and hillside above Boulder. **Target Birds:** Virginia's, MacGillivray's and Hooded Warblers, Ovenbird, Yellow-breasted Chat, Lazuli Bunting, Western Tanager, Olive-sided, Dusky, Cordilleran and Hammond's Flycatchers, Veery, Hermit and Swainson's Thrushes. **Leader:** Ted Floyd, Birding Magazine (Sat.); Christian Nunes, City of Boulder Ecologist (Sun.).

July 20/21: High Plains of North Park


Water bird nesting in the High Plains is no more interesting than in North Park (Jackson County). Also expect encounters with a variety of mammals. **Target Birds:** Eared Grebe, American White Pelican, Willet, Wilson's Phalarope, California Gull, Marsh Wren, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Greater Sage-Grouse, Sage Thrasher and Brewer's Sparrow. **Leader:** Chuck Hundertmark, President, Denver Field Ornithologists.

Cost and registration: \$80 per trip for FCAS members, due 1 week in advance. \$100 per trip for non-members. \$450 for FCAS members signing up for all six trips, due by Feb 10. For more information and/or reservations, contact Nick Komar, quetzal65@comcast.net or 970-449-3645.





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Membership Application

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

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