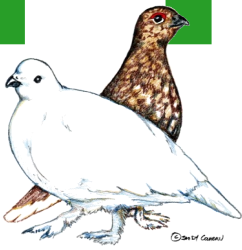


# PTARMIGAN



## FORT COLLINS AUDUBON SOCIETY

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

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

**February 2019**

**Volume 50, Issue 2**

### FCAS Hosts

**Dr. Daniel Thompson, School of Life Sciences, University of Nevada**

### Presenting

**“A Tale of Differing Time Scales: Bristlecone Pine, Clark's Nutcracker, Catastrophic Fire, and the Impact on an Endangered Butterfly of Southern Nevada”**

**Thursday, February 14**

**Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Dr.**

**Social Time: 7 p.m.; Program 7:20 p.m.**

Dr. Daniel Thompson will take us to Nevada to share his research on the Spring Mountains of southern Nevada that harbor ancient bristlecone pine forests and numerous Clark's Nutcrackers, whose caching behavior facilitates tree establishment on ridges and slopes above 9,000 feet. These high elevation slopes also are inhabited by the endangered Mount Charleston Blue Butterfly, an endemic alpine species with larvae that feed on several cushion plants typically found in open areas within bristlecone forests. Because the butterfly occurrence is inversely related to tree density, critical habitat of the endangered butterfly has been restricted by tree establishment, facilitated by Nutcrackers on the slopes of Mount Charleston. The catastrophic fire in 2013 reversed this trend, burning 40 square miles of forest. All of the trees burned within the 700- to 1,000-year-old Bristlecone pine forest and the first plants to recolonize were the food plants of the en-



Clark's Nutcracker by Brian E. Small

dangered Mount Charleston Blue Butterfly; consequently, fire opened up potential habitat for the butterfly. At the same time, Clark's Nutcrackers have begun to cache seeds on the open burned slopes, starting the slow process of tree and forest regeneration that centuries from now, will once again encroach on butterfly habitat.

Dr. Daniel Thompson is an Evolutionary Biologist with the School of Life Sciences at the University of Nevada. His research addresses a variety of topics in

ecology and evolution including evolution of phenotypic plasticity and morphology of grasshoppers, spatial ecology of desert shrubs and rodents, quantitative analysis of bighorn sheep behavior, and molecular evolution of gene families. It is our pleasure to host Dr. Thompson, son of long-time Fort Collins Audubon Member, Edie Thompson. Join us on Feb. 14 for this program that is free and open to the public.

## President's Corner

by John Shenot

At the FCAS annual meeting on January 10, the membership elected a slate of officers and directors-at-large. Following our bylaws, the president is elected to a two-year term and all others to one-year



terms. Following my election, and with the approval of the newly elected Board of Directors, I appointed several people to chair some of our standing committees. I'm delighted

that the volunteers listed below will join me in leading FCAS throughout 2019.

Please contact me or the listed chairperson if you would like to serve on one of our committees: President, John Shenot; President-elect, vacant; Vice President, Liz Pruessner; Treasurer, Joe Polazzi; Secretary, Lori Pivonka; At-large Directors, Scott Cobble, Alan Godwin, Ron Harden, Bill Miller, Harry Rose, Sheila Webber; Conservation Chair, Bill Miller; Membership Chair, Harry Rose; Education Chair, Barb Patterson; Finance Chair, Joe Polazzi; Program Chair, Jessie Meschievitz; Field Trip Chair, Sirena Brownlee; Publications Chair, vacant; Public Relations Chair, vacant; Hospitality Chair, Chandriee Davis; Audubon Colorado Council Delegate, Bill Miller; and Volunteer Coordinator, Barb Patterson.

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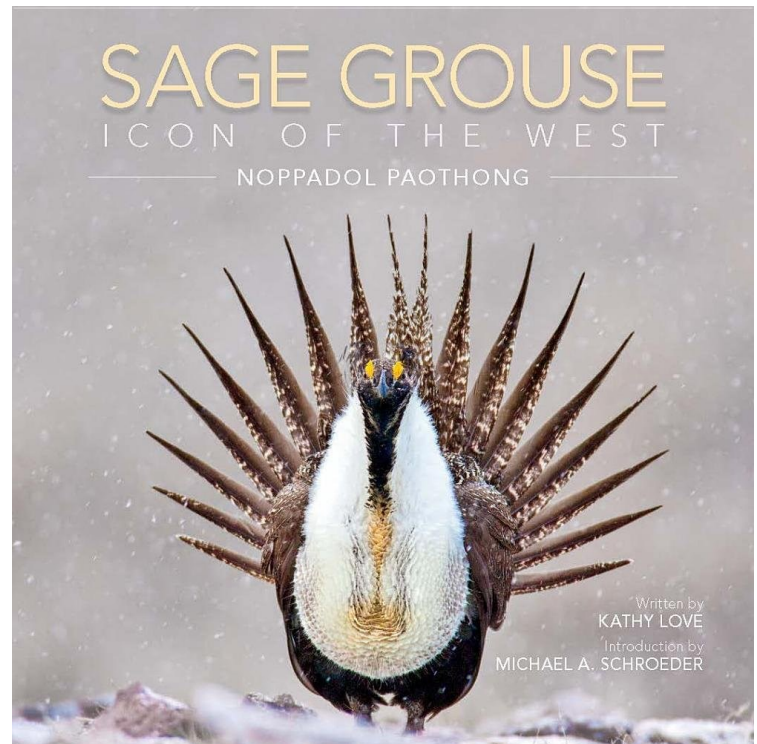
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For other FCAS contacts visit

[www.fortcollinsaudubon.org](http://www.fortcollinsaudubon.org)

Visit us on Facebook:

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



## Sage Grouse: Icon of the West

Bird Conservancy of the Rockies is hosting a presentation by award-winning photographer Noppadol Paothong on the extraordinary story of the life, natural history, and unique spring courtship behaviors of sage grouse on Monday, February 11 from 7 to 9 p.m. The program will be offered at Wolverine Farm, 316 Willow Street, Fort Collins, on Monday, Feb. 11 from 7 to 9 p.m.

Tickets are \$5 and can be purchased at <https://campscui.active.com/orgs/BirdConservancyoftheRockies?orglink=camps-registration#/selectSessions/2587705>.

### FCAS Pocket Guide to Local Birds

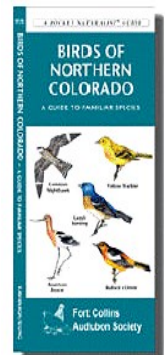
Is available at the following retailers who support our organization with the sales:

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





## Have you been in a "Goose Jam" recently?

Even if you're not a bird watcher, chances are you recognize Canada Geese. Love or hate them, there are many of them: in parks, on golf courses, and crossing streets. Surprisingly, in recent history these birds were on the brink of being wiped out in North America. Canada Geese are a native species whose decline was thanks to human effects on the landscape. Overhunting, egg collecting, and development of wetlands were among the causes of the decline.

Most Canada Geese used to be migratory, although in Colorado, we historically never had large numbers of breeding Canada Geese. To combat over-harvesting, in the 1930s, efforts to restore their numbers led to government-sponsored, local breeding populations in the upper Midwest and the East, or "resident populations."

Enter "Father Goose." The thousands of year-round Canada Geese who call Fort Collins home are not, in fact, a migratory population. Our resident population was started by Gurney Crawford, who is fondly known as Northern Colorado's "Father Goose." Crawford worked for the Colorado Game, Fish, and Parks Department (now Colorado Parks and Wildlife) in Fort Collins from 1938-1972. In 1957, the bird lover was a district wildlife conservation officer when he was given a batch of kidnapped

goose eggs and asked to "hatch" a resident population. Using his Bantam hens as foster moms, the hens got a big surprise when fuzzy little goslings emerged.

At nine weeks old, the city's first group of Canada goslings were released at College Lake on CSU's Foothills Campus.

Canada Geese are a protected species under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. This protection applies to both resident and migratory geese. Canada Geese are one of the few bird species that can digest grass, so they do well on the large expanses of lawn in parks, backyards, golf courses, and farm fields and, of

course, a myriad of scattered ponds and reservoirs in the area. Since 1960, three years after the first gosling release, Fort Collins' human population has grown from 25,027 people to an estimated 161,000 in 2015. With human population growth, we are seeing more human-geese conflicts.

Known for their intelligence and strong family ties, geese mate for life and flocks stick together. The original birds on College Lake got to know Crawford so well they could single out his truck as he drove up to see them.

In 1985, one year after Crawford's death, a stone marker was erected at College Lake. "In memory," it reads, "of G.I. (Father Goose) Crawford." Every

year you can spot Canada Geese on College Lake who raise families nearby.



Photo by Ross Michaels via [Birdshare](#).



Photos of Gurney Crawford and his geese in the late 1950s, from the archive at the Fort Collins Museum of Discovery.



## Doing Nothing, Is for The Birds!

Almost 30 years ago, “Seinfeld” hit the airwaves and added a new dimension to contemporary American comedy. The “show about nothing” proved that great humor is often found in the routines of everyday life. We just need to shift our perspective to see it. The same might be said for problem solving. Some solutions are in plain sight, we just need to shift our perspective to see them.



Green-tailed Towhee by Scott Streit.

The problems facing birds today are immense, yet there is a solution we can all participate in that takes no effort, no money, and doesn't require leaving home. That action is to do nothing!

Before you say, “This is a lot about nothing,” and turn the page, let's clarify. Doing nothing means shifting our perspective to taking a more hands-off, bird-oriented approach to landscaping. It involves taking a second look at how we tend to our yard, or even the flower boxes on our deck, and deciding what we can let go to benefit the birds. What spot can we let get a little messy to become a micro-habitat? For some of us, this may be difficult. Covenants and our own personal level of comfort may restrict this to small things, like leaving the spent flowers in planter boxes whose seeds attract goldfinches and chickadees, leaving fall leaves in one corner of the yard to provide cover and food for a variety of invertebrates on which birds feed, or ignoring a dead bush or tree to provide opportunities for woodpeckers and flickers. Adopting a bird-oriented perspective, even when applied to a very limited area, will result in a greater variety of birds, as well as save money, time,

and effort. Doing nothing can be a good thing for us and for the birds!

This issue hit us recently. Before we knew it, a chain-saw wielding crew from the landscaping company that maintains our greenbelt had removed the lower branches of many of our beautiful mature evergreen trees. They decided the trees needed to be raised and opened up, exposing the trunk. Within a few hours, the preferred ground habitat of feeding Swainson's and Hermit Thrushes and Green-tailed Towhees, all of whom had been seen feeding there and all declining species, had been forever destroyed. Making matters worse, extra time, energy, and money are now needed to mow under those trees to keep things neat. One wonders how such a perspective on what constitutes good landscaping practices ever came about.

The “do nothing” approach to yard maintenance for



Swainson's Thrush by John Schwarz.

birds may sound silly, but it's an easy way to help troubled bird species. For those who want to be more proactive, the internet is full of advice. Landscaping for the birds also will be the topic of a future article. It all starts, however, with shifting perspective and recognizing that good landscaping practices incorporate the needs of birds, and that such practices sometimes include letting go and doing absolutely nothing.

### Fort Collins Audubon Society Annual Membership Renewal Reminder

The 2019 annual membership renewal drive is still in full swing. FCAS chapter memberships run for the calendar year from January through December. Thank you to all the members who have renewed. Please renew today if you have not already done so. You can take care of it right now by renewing online at [www.fortcollinsaudubon.org](http://www.fortcollinsaudubon.org) or via U.S. mail using the form on the back of the *Ptarmigan*.

Thank you for supporting our mission of conservation, education, stewardship and habitat restoration, focusing on birds and other wildlife.





## Upcoming Getting Green Laws Workshop

The 2019 Getting Green Laws meeting is set for Tuesday, Feb. 19, from 6:15 to 9:30 p.m. at Bethany Lutheran Church, 4500 E. Hampden Ave., Denver (southwest corner of S. Dahlia and E. Hampden Ave, approximately 0.75 miles west of I-25). The workshop is hosted by Audubon Society of Greater Denver (ASGD), will be held in the evening to entice more legislators to attend. Decaf coffee and cookies will be served, but no full dinner.

The tentative agenda is: 6:15, check in; 6:30–7:30, briefing by Audubon lobbyist Jen Boulton on upcoming environmental bills; 7:30–8:30, meet and greet with legislators; 8:30–9:30, review tips on how to lobby your legislators; 9:30, adjourn and cleanup.

Cost is \$8 per person. Please register in advance on the ASGD website, <http://www.denveraudubon.org/>, or pay at the door, but please bring exact change. Please send Bill Miller ([bill5mcorp@gmail.com](mailto:bill5mcorp@gmail.com)) any questions you have about this meeting. An official schedule will be posted soon, but it will be mostly as stated in the previous paragraph.



Gyrfalcon by Nick Komar.

## FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Dorothy L. Adel  
Susan Barbour  
Fredrick Barry  
Denise & Mark Bretting  
Sirena Brownlee  
Anne & Tom Butler  
Barbara Case  
George Chimonas  
Morris Clark  
Constance K. Daley  
Susan Degutz  
Larry DeMers  
Beth Dillon  
Georgia Doyle  
Kim Dunlap  
Danny Feig-Sandoval  
Carole Ferrand  
Ruth Grant  
Larry Griffin

Melannie Hartman  
Jane Hawk  
Pat & Joel Hayward  
Clifford Hendrick  
Janet Holley  
Joel Hurmence  
Cynthia Jacobson  
Barbara A. Jones  
Carol Jones  
Monique Jorgensen  
Jonathan & Janice Kershner  
Loretta & Dean Klingenberg  
Diane Kristoff  
Dave Landers  
Lark Latch  
Debra K. McGuinn  
Michelle McKim  
William & Sue Miller  
Jim Nachel  
Linda O'Brien

Robert & Pamela Parish  
Jerry Partin  
Thad & Willa Pawlikowski  
Phil Phelan  
Chris & Joe Polazzi  
Timothy J. Priehs  
Judith Putnam  
Rosemary Rader & Ted Huston  
Margret Reek  
Rich Roberts  
Gary Robinson  
Amy Tamlin  
Daniel Teska  
Hank Thode  
Dave Wade  
Kay Ward  
Daniel & Sheila Webber  
Robin Welsh  
Walter Wehtje  
Bob Willhour

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



## Upcoming Field Trips

*All field trips are free (unless otherwise noted) and open to the public. All experience levels are welcome. Changes to dates, meeting times or locations, and trip leaders are occasionally unavoidable (check the FCAS Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/FortCollinsAudubonSociety> for cancellations due to inclement weather). Contact the listed trip leader prior to the day of the trip or visit [fortcollinsaudubon.org](http://fortcollinsaudubon.org) for updates. RSVP strongly encouraged.*

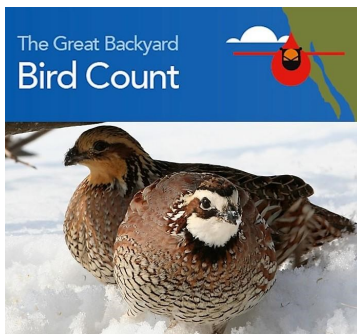
**Sunday, Feb. 10, Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey.** Leader: Denise Bretting, [dbretting@swloveland.com](mailto:dbretting@swloveland.com), 970-669-1185 or 669-8095. FCAS performs a monthly bird census for the City of Fort Collins on the second Sunday of each month. All levels are welcome. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot.

**Saturday, Feb. 16, CSU Environmental Learning Center.** Leader: Robert Beauchamp, [tyranusb@gmail.com](mailto:tyranusb@gmail.com), 970-232-9296. Join Robert for a walk on the ELC trails to search for resident bird species. Plan for 1.5–2-mile walks on the trails. All levels are welcome.

**February 16–17, Great Backyard Bird Count at Fort Collins Senior Center/Roland Moore Park.** See article below. Meet by the bird feeders behind the senior center on the west side, any time from 9–10 a.m. RSVP not necessary. Contact John Shenot with ques-

## Mark Your Calendar for the Great Backyard Bird Count

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is an annual birding and citizen science event for people of all skills. This year, it runs from Friday, Feb. 15 through Monday, Feb. 18. Participants are asked to watch for birds at any-



location for at least 15 consecutive minutes, then submit a checklist of their observations on a website. More information about the GBBC can be found at <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/about/>. Last year, more than 100 people submitted GBBC checklists from Larimer County, recording 101 different species. We're hoping

to see even bigger participation and results this year.

FCAS also is planning a special field trip in conjunction with this year's GBBC. FCAS volunteers will be counting birds at the new "backyard" feeders at the Fort Collins Senior Center from 9 to 10 a.m. on both Saturday, February 16 and Sunday, February 17. Anyone interested can drop by for any part of the hour and join in the fun. A walk around Roland Moore park may be added to the itinerary if the weather is favorable. All data collected will be submitted to the GBBC website.

## Mixed Weather Led to Mixed Results for Local CBCs

FCAS helped promote four local Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) this year. The Fort Collins CBC was conducted on Dec. 15, a pleasant day. This was the 72nd consecutive count in Fort Collins, the longest consecutively run count in Colorado. We had 88 field participants (a new high over the previous 82) and six additional feeder watchers. The count had a new species high of 103 over the previous 100, along with four additional count week species. Rarities for the Fort Collins CBC included one new species for the count: a female Northern Cardinal. Other rarities included California, Iceland (Thayer's), and Lesser Black-backed Gulls;



Marsh Wren by Nick Komar.

Barn, Northern Pygmy-, and Long-eared Owls; a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker; an American Three-toed Woodpecker; Peregrine Falcons (2); Winter Wren; Gray Catbird; Brown Thrashers (2); Lesser Goldfinches (4); Green-tailed Towhee; Harris's (2) and Swamp Sparrows (5); and Yellow-rumped Warblers—both forms. High counts were recorded for 15 species, with the populations of Bushtits and Wild Turkeys much higher than most previous counts. Finally, noticeable drops included American Coot and Rock Pigeons.

The Nunn CBC was held on Dec. 22 and the Rawhide Power Plant CBC on Dec. 31. Full reports on these CBCs were not available at press time. Conditions were especially windy and cold for the Rawhide count, resulting in lower than average species diversity and overall numbers.

The Loveland CBC was held Jan. 1 in frigid temperatures. We had a record high number of participants (66) and observed 100 species (plus eight additional species during count week). New high counts were established for Green-winged Teal (80), Wild Turkey (229), Ferruginous Hawk (8), Herring Gull (300), Brown Creeper (30), American Dipper (29), and Song Sparrow (142). Three new species for the count were Gyrfalcon, Peregrine Falcon, and Carolina Wren. Other rarities included: Mexican Duck, Glaucous Gulls (2), White-winged Dove, Barn Owl, two Northern Pygmy-

*(CBCs continued on Page 7)*





(CBCs continued from Page 6)

Owls (2), Long-eared Owls (2), Short-eared Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owls (3), Rock Wrens (2), Marsh Wren, Eastern Bluebirds (4), Northern Mockingbird, American Pipit, Yellow-rumped Warblers (6), Harris's Sparrow, and Lesser Goldfinch.

Our thanks go to the CBC coordinators: Tom Hall (Fort Collins), Gary Lefko (Nunn), Doug Kibbe (Rawhide), and Denise Bretting and Nick Komar (Loveland).



Green-tailed Towhee by Nick Komar.



American Kestrel by Nick Komar.

## Upcoming FCAS Education Events

The mission of FCAS is to promote the appreciation, conservation, and restoration of ecosystems. Foremost, in that mission, is education. The educational events that we participate in throughout the year cannot take place without the time and expertise of the chapter members. Please consider volunteering for these winter/spring events:

**Project FeederWatch at the Habitat Hero Garden at the Senior Center.** Time commitment: 1/2–1-hour count of feeders for two consecutive days weekly from January to

April 5. Training provided.

**Wild-life camera monitor-**



**ing at the Senior Center.** Time commitment: twice a month, training provided.

**Two FCAS guided bird hikes at the Senior Center and Rolland Moore Park.** Time commitment: May 8 and May 29 from 9–11 a.m. There are two beginning birding classes scheduled on May 15 and May 22.

This summer we plan to participate in three community festivals, lead three workshop/hikes at Lory State Park, do a presentation for the Sierra Club, and teach fifth graders at the Montessori School. Stay tuned for more birding!



Herring Gull by Nick Komar.  
One of 350 counted in the Loveland CBC.

## Welcome New National Members

FCAS welcomes new National Audubon Society members by sending one complimentary 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 publishing 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 the last page of the newsletter or on our website at [www.fortcollinsaudubon.org](http://www.fortcollinsaudubon.org).



Fort Collins Audubon Society  
PO Box 271968  
Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968



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## Membership Application

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

- |                          |   |          |  |
|--------------------------|---|----------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | New or renewing FCAS Chapter Member<br>Receive the FCAS <i>Ptarmigan</i> by email | \$ 20    | Name: _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | New or renewing FCAS Chapter Member<br>Receive the FCAS <i>Ptarmigan</i> by mail  | \$ 30    | Address: _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Lifetime FCAS Chapter Member<br>Receive FCAS <i>Ptarmigan</i> by mail or email    | \$750    | City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Additional support for FCAS programs  | \$ _____ | Phone: _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Additional support for Alex Cringan Fund<br>(natural history education grants)    | \$ _____ | Email: _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | New NAS member<br>Receive the NAS <i>Audubon</i> by mail                          | \$ 20    | May we send you FCAS email alerts if updates occur for field trips, programs, etc.? Yes or No                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Renewing NAS member<br>Receive the NAS <i>Audubon</i> by mail                     | \$ 35    | May we contact you for volunteer activities such as helping at 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](http://www.fortcollinsaudubon.org).