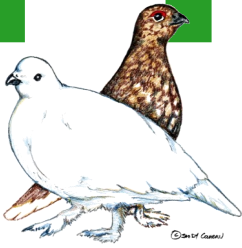


PTARMIGAN



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.

March 2019

Volume 50, Issue 3

FCAS Hosts

Erin Youngberg, Community and Outreach Biologist, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies

Presenting:

"A Gem in Our Own Backyard: The Baird's Sparrow at Soapstone Prairie"

Thursday, March 14

Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Dr.

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

For the past 11 years, the scientists at the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies (BCR) have studied the grasslands north of Fort Collins, including the natural area known as Soapstone Prairie. Located at the Wyoming-Colorado border, this amazing natural area has been home to a wide variety of grasslands and migratory birds. Last year, a state record was realized when it was discovered that the first Baird's Sparrow to ever nest anywhere in Colorado had chosen this area to do so. Erin Youngberg of the BCR will share the monitoring activities that the BCR has conducted in Soapstone, including some of the adjoining grasslands. Erin will discuss the grasslands species that BCR has encountered and all that they've seen



Baird's Sparrow by Andrew Bankert.

while working in the area.

Erin is the Community and Outreach Biologist for the BCR. She first found her way to the BCR as a volunteer intern for the Bald Eagle Watch Program in 2010. Originally from Jackson, Wyoming, Erin graduated with her degree in Wildlife Biology from CSU in 2009. Since then she has been the Project Manager of the Mountains to Plains project, conducting surveys for the City of Fort Collins on their grassland properties in northern

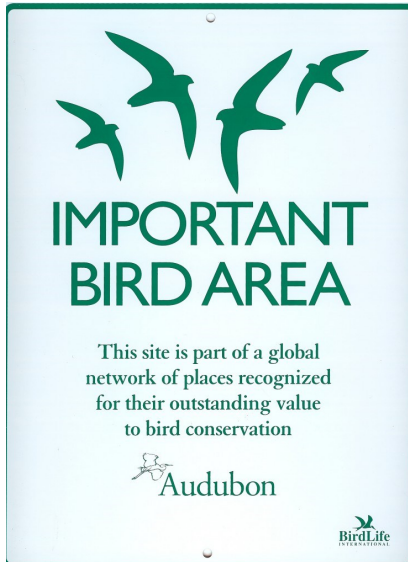
Colorado to aid in the conservation and management of those areas.

Join us for this program on March 14 at the Fort Collins Senior Center. It is free and the public is welcome.

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.

I'm happy to report that FCAS is well positioned for a successful 2019. First, I want to thank those of you who have recently joined FCAS or renewed your membership. Second, the "appeal letter" we sent to members in December was a big success. On behalf of the Board and the membership, my heartfelt thanks go to all our generous donors.



Each year, FCAS approves a budget that assumes we will have one major fundraiser to balance revenues with expenses. The appeal letter was our big 2018 fundraiser, and you more than met the Board's expectations. We finished 2018 with a small surplus for our rainy-day fund and once again avoided the need to raise membership dues.

This year, we hope to celebrate our newly-designated Important Bird Area, the Cache la Poudre Urban River Corridor in Fort Collins, with public events and signs posted at natural area kiosks. We're working on a new interpretive kiosk along the Mason Trail, collaborating with the City and

Audubon Rockies on a "Habitat Hero" project at the Fort Collins Senior Center, and we'll start to explore another possible Important Bird Area designation for the City of Fort Collins' Soapstone Prairie Natural Area and Larimer County's Red Mountain Open Space. These and other projects, along with our field trips and programs, should keep us busy throughout the year.



Cassin's Finch near Lory State Park
by John Shenot

Thank You New and Renewing Members

Diane Adams	Kristen Long
Dale Agger	Robin H. Long
Monica Brewer	Karen Marie Mancini
Joe Brummer	Jessie & Stanley
Lori Brummer	Meschievitz
Larry Caswell	Larry & Daria Moskowitz
Margaret Caswell	John Oberle
Susan Degutz	Elizabeth Pruessner
Kenneth Dunnington	Joanne Rankin
Elizabeth Edwards	John & Amy Shenot
Andrew C. Goris	David Sweeney
Sandra Hunter	Edith B. Thompson
Charles Knopp	H. Bruce Vigneault

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



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Visit us on Facebook:

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



“A lie doesn’t become truth, wrong doesn’t become right, and evil doesn’t become good just because it’s accepted by a majority.” —Rick Warren

Meaning of “Audubon”

There is much confusion among both members and non-members surrounding the term “Audubon” and what that refers to. I dare say that the majority of people associate the term “Audubon” with just the national organization involved with birds, specifically the National Audubon Society (NAS).

Audubon had its beginnings in 1905 when a federation of independent, state-level Audubon groups was established, calling itself the National Association of Audubon Societies for the Protection of Wild Birds and Animals. In 1940, the name was shortened to the National Audubon Society, and the organization began its work to give birds protection under the law. In 1960, Charles H. Callison came to NAS as an assistant to its president, Carl W. Buchheister. Callison realized that that the key to success in the preservation of wildlife

and natural resources was to build a strong political force and he set out to convert birdwatchers into activists. That was the birth of local Audubon chapters.

Transitioning from then to today, we still have the national organization, NAS. But over the years, NAS has evolved to include

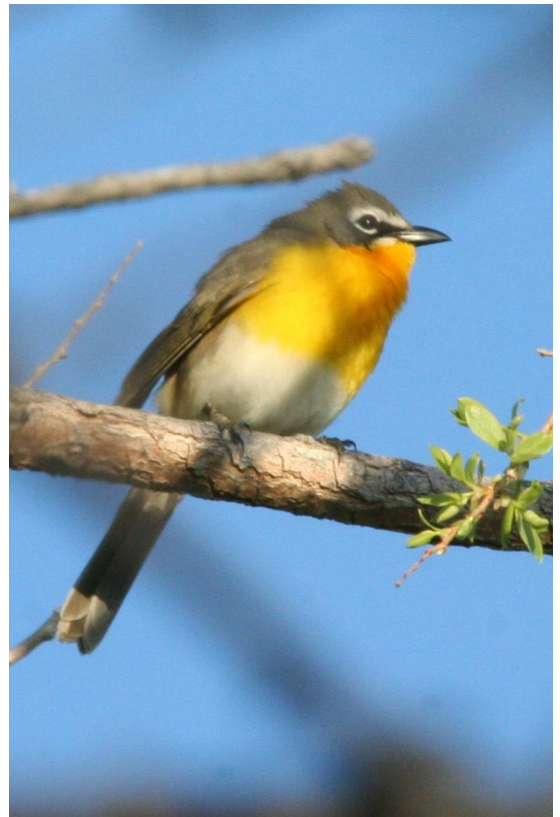
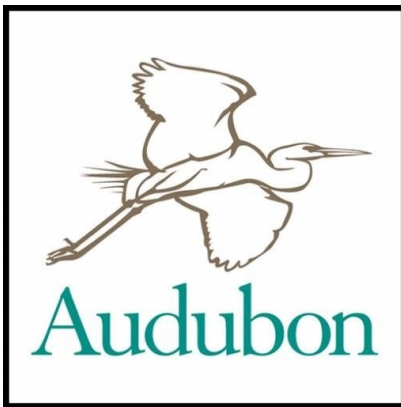
send their newsletter to the NAS members without requiring them to become a dues-paying chapter member.

The third element of the NAS structure is the Audubon Colorado Counsel (ACC). ACC’s board consists of four officers, four standing committee chairpersons, and

delegates from the 10 state chapters. All are members of local chapters and at-large candidates can self-nominate to stand for election to the ACC board. Like chapters, ACC is also an independent affiliate of NAS. The ACC board holds four board meeting per year, each hosted by one of the chapters.

The name Audubon was never copyrighted and there are a number of other organizations unrelated to NAS that include Audubon in their name. Such organizations include independent state-level organizations (e.g., Massachusetts Audubon), local ornithology clubs (e.g., Foothills Audubon in Berthoud), some wildlife sanctuaries, and even a business that deals primarily with golf courses (e.g., Audubon International, an organization that is legally incorporated as the Audubon Society of New York State, but which has no formal affiliation with the NAS or the 460 Audubon chapters).

The Audubon situation in Colorado is simple—if you understand it. I hope this epistle clears up your confusion and will simplify your effort to explain Audubon to non-members.



Yellow Chat by Bill Miller.

460 local chapters, 23 state and regional offices, 41 nature centers, and 23 sanctuaries. In Colorado there exist just three elements of the NAS structure.

The first such element of NAS is a regional office, Audubon Rockies, located in Fort Collins and working on behalf of chapters in both Colorado and Wyoming. Audubon Rockies staff members are paid NAS employees and promote the programs of NAS in both states. They also assist chapters in Colorado and Wyoming in a variety of ways. For example, under the broad umbrella of their conservation programs they hire and fund the only full-time environmental lobbyist working in Colorado’s state legislature.

The second element of the NAS structure consists of the 10 active Audubon chapters in Colorado. Audubon chapters are affiliates of NAS, share common values with NAS, but are essentially independent of the national organization. Dues-paying members of NAS are assigned to the nearest chapter by their zip code. It is up to the chapters to determine if they can afford to



Celebrating the WILD in Wildlife

Being face-bumped by a mountain lion while sleeping on a ridge in the Never Summer Wilderness was a startling baptism into a fervent passion for learning about the habits and habitat of this magnificent apex predator. For 14 years, David Neils has spent time in mountain lion country weekly and has developed a consistent method for capturing wild footage of completely wild lions in wild places. He holds workshops and provides presentations about his work through his company, Wild Nature Media (www.wildnaturemedia.com).

Although David is known for his images of apex predators, he also works with Scott Rashid, Director of Colorado Avian Research and Rehabilitation Institute (CARRI), to create and monitor raptor habitat, with a focus on Barn Owls and American Kestrels.

David brings an active citizen scientist mindset to his wildlife conservation efforts. His focus is always maximizing the health and habitat of the species of interest. Working with CARRI, he has learned that oversized nesting boxes for American Kestrels and Barn Owls lead to a higher survival rate and quicker acceptance of the box initially. Rather than trying to maximize the number of nesting boxes out of a sheet of plywood, the focus should be on what is best for the birds. For example, a successful nesting box for Barn Owls is 40-inches long by 15-inches high by 18-inches deep. Having more room in the box leads to a higher owlet survival rate.

David is eager for more people to become engaged with, rather than just exposed to, nature, realizing that it isn't until someone rolls up their sleeves and gets involved that they really start to lean in and become a positive force for wildlife. For example, by simply paying close attention to the annual cycle of Barn Owls in Colorado we can begin to understand how climate

change is affecting bird migration. Some Barn Owls are arriving in Colorado in late January rather than in March or April. This change has occurred in less than a decade, which is more than simply being statistically significant. For those of us who care about wildlife, it's a 911 call. We all can become involved in helping to provide healthier environments for birds. One way would be for FCAS to support and conduct research on bird diversity/sustainability at community supported agriculture (CSA) locales, versus the typical vast monoculture fields.



David Neils and juvenile Barn Owl by Scott Rashid.

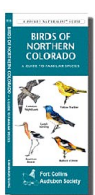


Juvenile Mountain Lion by David Neils.

Getting the public involved, hunters and non-hunters, men, women, and especially children, with wildlife conservation projects is a major goal for David; he also is creating a viral response. He supports Colorado Parks and Wildlife as the primary organization managing wildlife in the state and supports a mandatory annual fee of \$15,

possibly tied to vehicle registration, to support wildlife and the critical habitat they depend on.

To learn more about ongoing conservation projects, workshops, presentations, and scheduled hikes, visit www.wildnaturemedia.com or contact David Neils directly at davidneils@gmail.com.



FCAS Pocket Guide to local birds is available at the following retailers:

Wild Birds Unlimited, 3636 S. College, 970-225-2557
Jax Outdoor Gear, 1200 N. College, 970-221-0544
Jax Farm & Ranch, 1000 N. Hwy. 287, 970-481-2221
Jax Mercantile, 950 E. Eisenhower, Loveland, 970-776-4540



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. Inquire with the FCAS field trip coordinator (Sirena Brownlee) or the trip leader named below to borrow binoculars. 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 for more information and updates. RSVP strongly encouraged.

Sunday, Mar. 10, Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey. Leader: Denise Bretting, 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, Mar. 16, Running Deer and Cottonwood Hollow Natural Area. Leader: Robert Beauchamp, tyrannusb@gmail.com, 970-232-9296. Join Bob for a walk along the marshes and ponds of this nat-



Ringed-neck Duck by Ron Harden.

ural area to search for resident bird species. Plan for 1.5–2-mile walk on the trails. All levels are welcome. Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot.

Saturday, Mar. 30, Fossil Creek Reservoir Natural Area. Leader: Sirena Brownlee, sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com, 970-980-6184. Join Sirena for a walk along the Cattail Flats trail for waterfowl and maybe early migrant songbirds and raptors. Plan for a 2-mile walk on the trails. All levels are welcome and a spotting scope will be available. Meet at 9 a.m. in the parking lot.

Raising Funds

The FCAS board decided several years ago to have a rotating schedule of annual fund-raising efforts, currently consisting of a Birdathon, an Annual Auction and, most recently, our first ever annual appeal letter. Our expenses have increased considerably over the past



Belted Kingfisher
By Nick Komar.

10 years. We now have two paid contract individuals (newsletter editor and web master), a rented storage unit, and insurance to protect our board members from liability. While our newsletter expenses decreased considerably by replacing the majority of printed versions with digital emailed versions, we still pay for printing and mailing about 80 issues for some members and some complimentary subscriptions. Room rent and speaker honorariums, dinners, and mileage reimbursement all add up. Hospitality edibles at pro-

gram meetings are reimbursed—and the list goes on. The dues from our chapter-only members (~\$5,000) don't cover our total annual expenses (>\$10,000), which have been exceeding our total annual income by about \$2,000 for the past four or five years; hence the reason for a supplemental fund raiser each year.

The 2019 supplemental fundraiser will be, once more,

a Birdathon. A birdathon consists of a bunch of wacky birders, organized into teams of two to five members traveling in one vehicle, who will try to outdo the other teams by ticking off the greatest number of bird species in a 24-hour period. Hard-core teams go owling during the dark hours of that 24-hour period. Different this year will be that the count area will be limited to just Larimer and Weld counties.

The chapter raises funds by asking for pledges. We will pass pledge sheets around at meetings. Also, team members are asked to solicit pledges from family members, coworkers, soon to be ex-friends, and perfect strangers. Pledges may be a fixed amount or an amount based on a pledged amount per species. The pledges that specify an amount per species will be calculated on the species count of the team with the highest tally.

Details to include the length of the count period are still being developed and will be announced at future program meetings and in the April and May newsletters. Species must be tallied on the latest version of the chapter's species list for Larimer County, soon to be posted to our website. So, for a rollicking good time, start thinking about your team composition, who is driving, where you will count species, and so forth. Spring is coming!



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.

- ☐ 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.