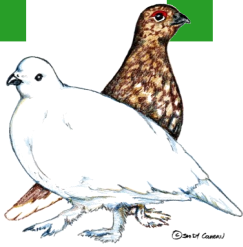


PTARMIGAN



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.

November 2023

Volume 55, Issue 8

FCAS Hosts Heather Reider

Program Manager Colorado Avian Health, CSU Veterinary Diagnostic Lab

"Understanding Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza: Where We Are Today"

Thursday, November 9

Social time with Refreshments: 7 p.m.; Announcements: 7:20; Presentation: 7:30

Door Prize Drawing (must be present to win)

Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Dr.

*****This program also will be accessible online using Zoom*****

Enter the following link at 7 p.m. to join the meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82816844650>

Heather Reider, has a deep understanding of disease response, prevention, and surveillance testing for poultry and other avian species. She will present an overview of the history of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). The talk will delve into the intricacies of the 2022 HPAI outbreak, detailing the challenges encountered and the response measures implemented. Concluding with a forward-looking perspective, the discussion will explore potential



Flocked Sandhill Cranes and Canada Geese by Luke Franke.

future developments in HPAI and their implications for both avian health and broader public health concerns.

Heather Reider is the Program Manager for the Colorado Avian Health Program at Colorado State University's Veterinary Diagnostic Lab. Join us on Nov. 9 to learn more about the 2022 avian flu outbreak.

FCAS welcomes new National Audubon Society members by sending one complimentary copy of our newsletter. 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 printing and mailing the newsletter, so if you'd like to keep receiving it, please support your local chapter and subscribe. See details on the last page of the newsletter or on our website at www.fortcollinsaudubon.org.

The theme of my column this month is member input. We are a little different from many of the national environmental groups that take dues and donations from “members” and use the money to do good deeds without the members’ direct involvement. FCAS strives to engage our members as partners and directly provide services to them. We are an all-volunteer organization, and I view every member as a partner in achieving our mission. That’s why every so often I like to take the temperature of our members through feedback and ideas. If you have thoughts about any or all of the following questions, I hope you will contact me at

johnshenot@gmail.com.

- Have you attended an FCAS program, field trip, or community event in the last year? Was it a good use of your time?
- What is FCAS not doing that you think we should?
- What are we already doing that you think we can do better? How might we improve?
- Is there anything FCAS does that you think we shouldn’t spend time/energy on?
- Do you have suggestions for topics or speakers that you’d like to see at one of our monthly programs?
- Have you been to any recurring local community events where you thought that FCAS should have had a booth/table/display?

FCAS CONTACTS

President

John Shenot

802-595-1669

johnshenot@gmail.com

Vice President

Liz Pruessner

970-484-4371

lizpru@colostate.edu

Program Chair

Jessie Meschievitz

jlmesch852@gmail.com

970-324-1550

Field Trip Coordinator

Nolan Bunting

nbunting@rams.colostate.edu

970-669-8095

Membership Chair

Harry Rose

970-430-6731

hrose@toadaway.net

Newsletter Editor

Carol Jones

970-481-5213

cjones@cowisp.net

For other FCAS contacts visit

www.fortcollinsaudubon.org

Visit us on Facebook:

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

- Is there a local birding hotspot where we haven’t recently taken a field trip that you want us to put on the schedule?
- If we offered workshops or classes on birding skills, bird identification, bird photography, or other nature appreciation topics, would you consider attending? How much would you be willing to pay?
- Do you have any ideas to share for how we can better connect with a wider/more diverse demographic, including younger audiences?



Feathered Frolic Fundraiser at The Lyric: Join us for Bird Call Karaoke and Bird Trivia

Calling all bird enthusiasts and nature lovers! The FCAS is thrilled to invite you to an avian adventure like no other on November 2 from 6 to 8 p.m. We will be perched at The Lyric for an event that's bound to have you soaring with excitement. Get ready for an evening of Bird Call Karaoke and Bird Trivia that's sure to make you tweet with delight!

Ever wondered if you could chirp like a canary? Now's your chance to find out! At Bird Call Karaoke, you can take the stage and attempt to mimic your favorite feathered divas.

Whether you're a seasoned birder or just a casual observer, it's a hoot to see who can get the closest to the real deal.

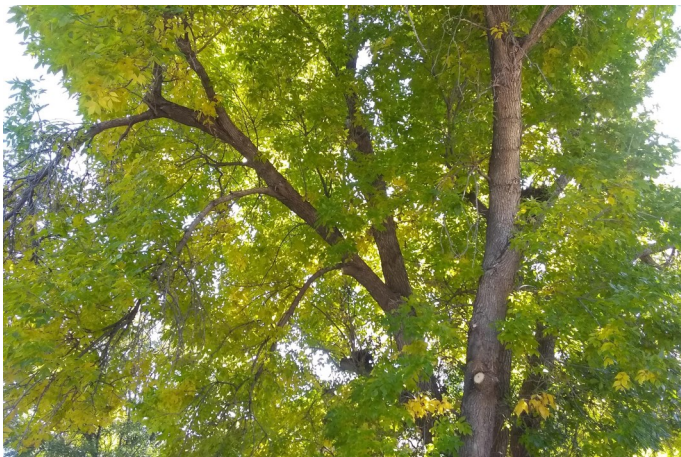
You also can test your ornithological knowledge with our Bird Trivia challenge. We'll have a beak-load of questions for fledgling enthusiasts and experts alike. Prizes await the trivia maestros among us!

Besides the bird-themed activities, The Lyric offers a variety of delicious snacks and beverages for purchase. All proceeds from this event will go directly to FCAS, helping us continue our important work in bird conservation, education, and habitat preservation in Northern Colorado. We are suggesting a \$10 donation for the event.



Urban Forestry: An Important Conservation Tool

For the first time, the City of Fort Collins is developing a strategic plan for the urban forest, taking the view that our trees are an important component of the city's infrastructure and a conservation tools to strengthen community resiliency in this time of climate change. Trees add so much value to a community by providing natural habitat for birds, insects and wildlife, shading and cooling our homes, improving air quality, creating a cooling microclimate effect across the built environment, enriching parks and playgrounds and, of course, beautifying our world. People love trees and plant them wherever they live. In the water-parched west, cities



Green Ash tree by Liz Pruessner.

are tree islands creating oases for birds and wildlife, enabling the spread of many species across the Great Plains. With the increasing fragmentation of natural ecosystems, habitat loss, expansion of agriculture and land conversion, it is vital to preserve every bit of usable habitat. Urban forests can serve as reservoirs for conservation and provide spaces for wildlife to live alongside us. There is growing awareness of the value of connection to nature and its' positive effect on human health and well-being. You can participate in helping develop the strategic plan for urban forestry by providing input: <https://ourcity.fcgov.com/rooted-in-community>.

Fort Collins forestry division has led the way to creating diverse urban forests by planting a wide variety of tree species in parks and public spaces. This is especially true in City Park, which has 220 different species over the 76 acres of this officially designated urban arboretum. Grandview Cemetery, a well-known birding hotspot, is also home to a rich variety of trees, including several state champions. The city has created a self-guided tree tour of the City Park Arboretum, which can be found at the Parks Department office or on the city

website: <https://www.fcgov.com/forestry/pdf/2015cptreetour.pdf>.

In addition to the parks, the natural areas and trails provide ample opportunity to enjoy our urban forests. Larimer County and the cities of Fort Collins and Loveland have been leaders in embracing the concept of natural areas, and citizens have supported them every step of the way by voting to fund this land preservation movement.

Thousands of acres have been purchased and conserved in the cities and county, much of it along the Cache la Poudre and Big Thompson rivers, creating a continuous riparian corridor of tremendous value to birds and wildlife. As these areas are restored, the focus is on planting native species of trees and shrubs, and the management is driven by allowing natural processes to flourish. Ideal habitat is created when nature is in charge and the plants and trees go through the cycles of life and death.

Maintaining the health of our urban forest is important. During this time of uncertainty brought on by climate change there are many emerging threats to trees, including pests such as the Emerald Ash Borer; all true ash trees are at risk. There are many resources for homeowners on the forestry section of the city website: <https://www.fcgov.com/forestry/emerald-ash-borer>.



Maple tree by Liz Pruessner.



Larch tree in City Park from City of Fort Collins.



The Mystery of Owl Canyon

According to CoBirds.org, “Pinyon Jays (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*), iconic members of the pinyon-juniper woodland community, are declining across the intermountain west, including Colorado.” They are a communal species with a diet largely comprised of pinyon pine nuts. Population levels have declined by an estimated 83.5 percent in the last 50 years. This decline is linked to long-term drought and increasing temperatures that cause the tree to produce fewer fruits. Another factor causing this decline is forest management practices designed to reduce wildfire risk.

Pinyon Jays and pinyon pine are dependent on each other for survival. The jays forage for pinyon nuts in dense forests in the fall and winter, then cache them in more open areas. This keystone species has a far-reaching impact on forest regeneration. The Pinyon Jay is uniquely adapted for seed dispersal of



Pinyon Jay from Pinyon Jay Working Group – Partners in Flight.

this tree. They have a long bill that acts like a chisel to pry open the cone and remove the nut. Their esophagus can store up to 50 nuts, and because they are strong fliers, they can spread the seeds over a long distance.

They remember where they store

the nuts in time to feed their young in the spring. The jays do not retrieve all their cached seeds, allowing the seeds to germinate and replenish the woodlands.

Now for the mystery of Owl Canyon. The pinyon pine (*Pinus edulis*) tree is a small stout tree with a bundle of two tightly clinging needles and a woody cone. Pinyon



Pinyon Jay from East Cascades Audubon Society.

Jay habitat covers five million acres in Colorado at about 4,900 to 8,000 feet in elevation. This forest type accounts for 21 percent of Colorado forest types and is primarily located in southwestern Colorado. In Larimer County, at the intersection of Hwy 287 and just north of Owl Canyon Road lies the most northerly pinyon grove in all of North America. The next grove of pinyon is one hundred miles south, which is too far for the seeds to

have been carried by wind or animals. The theory is that the oldest trees in this relic grove were purposely cached by Native Americans over 500 years ago, creating a seed source for these delicious nuts. Throughout history, Indigenous peoples across the West foraged for pinyon nuts and relied on them as a critical food supply during the winter and lean years. When the Spanish arrived in the southwest in the 1500s, they also began gathering the protein-rich seeds that we use to this day in our delicious pesto. It would be a tragic loss for birds and people if these woodlands are lost.

What is not a mystery is that the Pinyon Jay is understudied, and more information is needed. The Pinyon Jay Working Group was formed in 2017 to develop and share the best available science to better conserve and manage this bird and its habitat. To learn more and contribute to the citizen science project, go to <https://cobirds.org/pinyon-jay-project>.

FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Craig Busack
Barbara Case
Judith Christy
Paul Gibson
Andrew Goris

Jesse Gray
Adam Johnson
Patti L. Johnson
David Leatherman
Sheila Lee

Robert Mann
Kelli McKay
Cheryl Orwitz
Thomas Schultz
Kimberly Vercimak

Your support makes our programs and conservation efforts possible and helps us achieve our mission of connecting people to the natural world.



Hotspot Highlight: Boyd Lake

This year's newsletters will include a Hotspot Highlight. The highlight will include a description of a birding hotspot, the kinds of birds you can see, and will be related to the time of year. Want to submit a suggestion or photo?

Email nbunting@rams.colostate.edu.

This month's highlight is Boyd Lake. Boyd lake is an artificial reservoir that was constructed near Loveland between 1905 and 1909 and has hosted over 250 bird species since. These birds range from passerines such as Black-capped Chickadees to nearly 35 different species of waterfowl



Boyd Lake from Reserve America.

that have been sighted in the last five years. November is a great time to view the last remnants of the migration season as well as our winter resident waterfowl that are migrating from as far north as the Arctic Circle, including Bufflehead and Common Goldeneye. The area is also host to some of the greatest biodiversity of gulls within Larimer County, the most common being the Ring-billed Gull.

Others, however, sometimes make rare appearances, including Sabines, Iceland, and Herring gulls. So keep an eye out and think about bringing your bird book and a camera.

Upcoming Field Trips

To register for any trip, go to Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/FortCollinsAudubonSociety/>), or <http://www.fortcollinsaudubon.org/>. Registration for field trips will be sent out November 9 and posted one week before the scheduled trip. Attendance is limited to 12 individuals. We are looking for more field trip leaders and field trip ideas. If you are interested, please email Nolan Bunting at nbunting@rams.colostate.edu.

Saturday, Nov. 18, Saturday, Fossil Creek Reservoir Natural Area. Leader: Sirena Brownlee sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com. Join Sirena for a 2-mile walk along the Cattail Flats Trail for waterfowl and Bald Eagle viewing. All levels are welcome and a spotting scope will be available. Meet at 10 a.m. in the parking lot.



Bald Eagle by Ron Harden.

Sunday, Nov. 12, Bobcat Ridge Survey. Leader: Denise Bretting, dbretting@swloveland.com or 970-402-1292. The survey looks at bird populations and helps local scientists better understand bird dynamics.

The hike is a little more than 4 miles covering moderate to flat terrain. No registration required for this trip and there is no limit in the amount of people who can attend, but please email or text Denise that you plan to attend. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the Bobcat Ridge Parking lot.

Friday, Nov. 24, "Larimer Black Friday Bird Frolic." Leader: Robert Beauchamp, tyran-nusb@gmail.com. Looking to work off those Thanksgiving calories? Join us Friday morning for our annual Larimer Black Friday Birding Frolic. We'll meet at Rigden Reservoir (Arapahoe Bend Natural Area) at 8 a.m. and take a leisurely 1.5- to 2- mile walk where we will explore the reservoir and nearby riparian habitat. Further field trip for the Larimer Black Friday Bird Frolic may become available and will be announced via email to the club members.

It's Time to Renew Your Membership

It is time to renew your annual membership. FCAS chapter memberships run for the calendar year from January through December. Dues are \$20 to receive the *Ptarmigan* electronically or \$30 for a printed copy through the mail. Please use the form on the back page of the newsletter to renew by mail or renew at a program meeting. You also can renew online at our website: www.fortcollinsaudubon.org. Remember, your membership and contributions are tax deductible, and help make our programs possible.



Renew



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
Receive the FCAS <i>Ptarmigan</i> by email | \$ 20 | Name: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New or renewing FCAS Chapter Member
Receive the FCAS <i>Ptarmigan</i> by mail | \$ 30 | Address: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime FCAS Chapter Member
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
(natural history education grants) | \$ _____ | Email: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New NAS member
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
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.