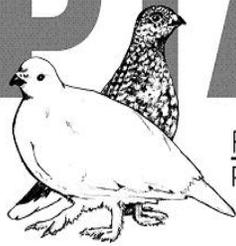


# PTARMIGAN



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.

May 2014

Volume 45, Issue 5

## “Owls, Owls, Owls”

Rob Palmer, Naturalist and Professional Wildlife Photographer

and

## “Birds of the Tropical Honduras Wilderness”

Fi Rust, Professional Nature Photographer

Thursday, May 15\*

Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Drives

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

Naturalist and wildlife photographer Rob Palmer has a long-time passion for birds of prey. Over the years, Palmer has photographed many owls, mainly burrowing owls, but he also spent time researching Screech Owls nesting along the Boulder Creek trail. Rob's work has ap-



Burrowing Owls by Rob Palmer.

peared in various local and national magazines and journals. He is co-photographer for the book, *Raptors of the West*, and author of a photo book, *Prairie Owl*.

British-born Fi Rust has traveled throughout the United States since moving here in 1990. Her wildlife and nature images have been published in various magazines, books, calendars,

and appear at art galleries in Boulder and Estes Park. Rust will present photos taken during a trip to Honduras' Pico Bonito National Park—



Scrub Euphonia by Fi Rust.

her prize for winning the professional division in the 2012 Audubon photography contest. Rust feels that very often, our

glimpses of wildlife are so fleeting that only through photographic images are we truly able to appreciate the beauty that nature has to offer.

**\*Please note** that this program is being held the third Thursday of May (May 15) due to a temporary closure of the Senior Center. Please join us May 15. The program is free and open to the public.

## President's Corner

by Joann Thomas

One of the joys of working with FCAS is knowing that, in some small way, we make a difference. During the week of April 1, a situation involving the Forest Service's proposed Pawnee National Grassland (PNG) Prairie Restoration Project was brought to FCAS's attention. FCAS learned the Forest Service was planning to use an herbicide called Picloram, or Dow Chemical's Tordon 22K, to reduce prickly pear cactus to its "historic range" on the PNG, even though the Forest Service did not define the historical range.

The Forest Service's document requesting citizen comments outlined many reasons why spraying would be beneficial. However, according to the EPA's website, Tordon 22K can leach or seep through soil and contaminate groundwater, especially in soils with high permeability such as loamy sand, or in areas of shallow water tables and fractured limestone, all of which exist on the PNG.

The proposed spray area is habitat for many birds, including Horned Lark, McCown's Longspur, and Lark Bunting, and these species could

suffer from spraying. While the Forest Service proposal indicated its concerns for sensitive species like the Mountain Plover, plovers don't preferentially use sites with cacti, rather, cactus are indicative of broken sod, which is what plovers seek for both nest sites and food items.



As emails flew among board members, Barb Adams researched the topic and wrote a letter of comments and concerns, which FCAS approved and sent to Tristram S. Post, Acting District Ranger.

Our voice is only one of many, but together we can make a difference. Thank you, Barb, for your dedication to the principles of National Audubon and FCAS, and to making a difference to the environment— that's what it's all about!

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**Save The Date!**  
**3rd Annual**  
**Yampa Valley Crane**  
**Festival**  
**Sept. 12-15, 2014**  
**Locations:**  
**Steamboat Springs**  
**and Hayden, CO**



Four days of free events, including daily crane viewings, expert speakers, children's and family activities, and more. Speakers include Ted Floyd, editor of Birding magazine and Dr. Richard Beilfuss, President and CEO of the International Crane Foundation. Please visit [www.coloradocranes.org](http://www.coloradocranes.org) for a complete festival schedule. Questions? Email [colorado-cranes@gmail.com](mailto:colorado-cranes@gmail.com).



### Water Conservation...Now and For the Future

Water is perhaps the most precious resource on Earth. As we head into summer, many people start thinking about ways to conserve water, but water conservation should be an essential practice year-round, with benefits to both users and the environment.

Along Colorado's Front Range, yearly rainfall<sup>1</sup> ranges from 13.8 inches (Trinidad) to 20.7 inches (Boulder), with Fort Collins averaging 15 inches per year. With less than one percent of all water on Earth actually usable<sup>2</sup>, it's important we learn to use water wisely!

Water conservation not only saves money on utility bills, it also helps prevent pollution in lakes, rivers, and watersheds. When wastewater systems are overloaded, untreated wastewater can flow into nearby waterways. Efficient water use also results in more water left in our environment to support wildlife and outdoor recreation. Unfortunately, many people underestimate how much water they actually use.

According to the EPA, "a typical household uses approximately 260 gallons of water every day." Toilets account for almost 30 percent of indoor consumption, and can be a major source of wasted water due to leaks or inefficiency. By flushing less or switching to WaterSense-labeled toilets<sup>3</sup>, the EPA estimates "...nearly 2 billion gallons per day across the country" could be saved.

Other ways to reduce water usage inside the home include detecting and fixing leaks in faucets and pipes, insulating water pipes and water heaters, installing low-flow showerheads and faucet aerators, and taking shorter showers. Don't run the water while brushing teeth, shaving, or washing dishes. Only run clothes washers and dishwashers when fully loaded, and don't

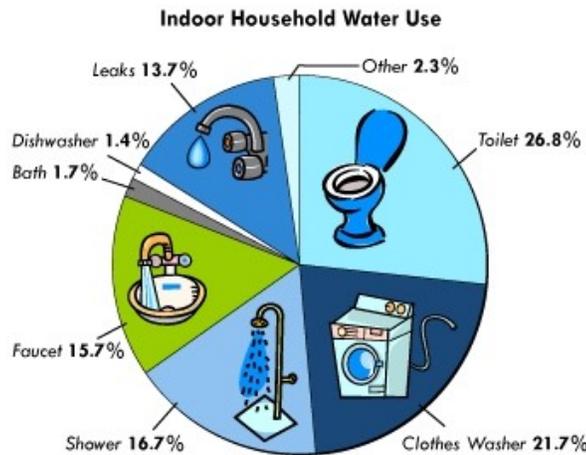
pre-rinse dishes. Consider replacing older appliances with more efficient models if you can afford it. Store drinking water in the refrigerator rather than running tap water to cool it down.

Outside, check for and fix leaky faucets. Water lawns and gardens in the early morning or evening, and don't water when it's windy. When planting a new lawn, use drought-resistant or native grasses. Choose native plants or xeriscape for a low-maintenance, drought-resistant yard. Group plants according to water needs and mulch them. Add organic matter to soil.

Use drip irrigation in gardens and ensure sprinkler systems are working properly. Adjust mowers to allow grass to grow to three inches to promote water retention in the soil. And during hot, dry spells, stop watering and let your lawn go dormant. It will revive when cooler, wet weather returns.

Also, use a carwash or pail of soapy water and a spray nozzle to wash/rinse your car at home. Better yet, try a waterless car wash like Eco Touch. And don't use a hose to clean driveways or sidewalks—brooms work well.

Remember, if water is life, then conservation is our future!



Source: Awwa Research Foundation (1999)



Image from: [bronaghhealey.blogspot.com](http://bronaghhealey.blogspot.com)

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.currentresults.com/Weather/Colorado/average-yearly-precipitation.php#b>  
<sup>2</sup> <http://www.epa.gov/greenhomes/ConserveWater.htm>  
<sup>3</sup> <http://www.epa.gov/watersense/products/toilets.html>



Did you know?

I said I wouldn't do it, but I lied. As spring awakens the birds, I am conscious of my backyard birds, which leads me to wish that my all-time favorite birds would visit more often: Hummingbirds—any variety.

And that leads me to my trip to Ecuador. While there is some dispute, hummers number about 300 species in the world with 135 species present in Ecuador. And, they are a true wonder of color and activity.

Did you know that hummingbirds typically consume more than their own weight in food each day, and, at any given moment, they are only hours away from starvation.

The hummingbird is the only bird with the ability to fly deliberately backwards or vertically, and to maintain position while drinking from a flower.

The normal flight speed of hummingbirds is between 25-30 mph. During display dives, wing beats may be as high as 200 beats per second and birds reach speeds of up to 65 mph.

Almost everything about these birds is superlative! We have three species that we can depend on seeing each year: Rufous, Broadtail, and Calliope. But their numbers are nowhere near those that live year round in Ecuador. North America

has only 16 species of hummingbirds.

Hummingbirds are true wonders of the bird world with their adaptations to gathering nectar from flowers. We watched one afternoon as a hummingbird with a four-inch long beak flew up a large trumpet-shaped flower. It completely disappeared inside. I always wonder what evolutionary advantage a creature gets from developing such an odd trait. But, he was the only bird that entered the flower. His beak was so long that he had to sit with his head tilted upward when he landed on a branch, and he could only use the feeder by hovering four inches away.

Then, I smile when I think of my little friend, the Velvet-purple Coronet. He sat on a large curved leaf each evening at the lodge when we arrived for dinner. For three nights he

shown deep purple in the light and for some reason he focused on me. He would come and fly closely around my head each evening as if to say hello. He would feed, then return to the large curved leaf he claimed as his territory.

I have decided that, if reincarnation is an option, I will definitely become a hummingbird!



Velvet-purple Coronet by Joann Thomas.

**FCAS Welcome New and Renewing Members**

Bill Franzen	Carol Seemueller
Graham Harrison	Anne T. Stewart
Brian &	April Whicker
Marlene Myres	Sandy Winkler

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

**Welcome New National Members**

FCAS welcomes new National Audubon Society members by sending one complimentary copies 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 newsletter costs, so if you'd like to keep receiving the *Ptarmigan*, 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.fortnet.org/Audubon](http://www.fortnet.org/Audubon).



## Upcoming Field Trips

All field trips are free of charge (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](http://www.fortnet.org/Audubon) for more information and updates. RSVP is recommended.

**May 10, Saturday, Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey.** Leader: Denise Bretting, [dbretting@swloveland.com](mailto:dbretting@swloveland.com), work: 970-669-1185, home: 970-669-8095. Call for any change. Meet at 7 a.m. in the parking lot. FCAS performs a monthly bird census for the City of Fort Collins. All levels are welcome.

**May 16, Friday, Soapstone Prairie Natural Area.** Leader: Aran Meyer, City of Fort Collins Biologist. Reservation required; space is limited



Soapstone grasslands by Nick Komar.

to 12 people. Soapstone Prairie is a local treasure encompassing 28 square-miles of remote country and uninterrupted scenery. These nearly pristine grasslands are home to many species of wildlife, such as pronghorn, elk, swift fox, Burrowing Owls, Golden Eagles, and rare and threatened plants. Note: Be prepared for wilderness conditions (no services), lots of walking, and potentially harsh weather conditions. This trip will begin on-site at 9 a.m. and end at approximately 2 p.m. Additional details will be provided to those who make a reservation. Contact John Shenot, [johnshenot@gmail.com](mailto:johnshenot@gmail.com), 970-682-2551, to reserve your spot.

**May 17, Saturday, Gateway Natural Area.** Leader: Bob Righter, [rorighter@earthlink.net](mailto:rorighter@earthlink.net), 303-908-1667. Gateway is one of the premier foothills riparian habitats close to Fort Collins. Experience the pulse of spring migration in the Poudre Canyon as well as birds engaging in earlier breeding activity. This trip will begin at 8 a.m. at the parking area just past the tollbooth. Gateway is a fee area (\$5/vehicle); consider car-

pooling. Bring a lunch and expect to walk at least a mile. Note: The bridge at Gateway is expected to re-open in mid-May. Last minute changes to this trip may be necessary, so check with the trip leader a day or two in advance for any changes.

**May 23, Friday, Phantom Canyon Preserve.** Leader: to be determined. Reservation required for this special trip to an area not open to the public; space is limited to 12 people. Phantom Canyon, 30 miles northwest of Fort Collins, is one of the last remaining roadless canyons on the Front Range. The Nature Conservancy manages this 1,700 acre preserve for rare and endemic plant species, large carnivores, and of course birds! Note: Prepare for wilderness conditions (no services), lots of walking, and potentially harsh weather conditions. This trip will begin on-site at 7 a.m. and end at approximately 2 p.m. Additional details will be provided to those who make a reservation. Contact John Shenot, [johnshenot@gmail.com](mailto:johnshenot@gmail.com), 970-682-2551, to reserve your spot.



Burrowing Owl by Nick Komar.

**May 31, Saturday, Sylvan Dale Guest Ranch.** Leader: Denise Bretting, [dbretting@swloveland.com](mailto:dbretting@swloveland.com), work: 970-669-1185, home: 970-669-8095. Sylvan Dale Guest Ranch was hit hard by last year's floods, but is still very much in business. This trip, which starts at 8 a.m., will provide an interesting look at resilience and the recovery process in both the built and natural environments. Space is limited to no more than 15 or 20 people. Directions, details about where to park, etc., will be provided to those who RSVP.

*Upcoming Field Trips continued on Page 7.*



## Andes of Ecuador Excursion, August 2-10, 2014

This August, join fellow Auduboners in 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 experience at a low price (just \$2200 per person) also serves as a fundraiser for FCAS as a portion of the proceeds will be donated to FCAS.



Crested Quetzal by Nick Komar.

Locations to visit include Mindo, Nanegalito, Papallacta Pass, and Guacamayos Pass. Birding highlights will include brightly colored tanagers, hummingbirds, and

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 Galapagos Islands also can be arranged for those who can stay longer. For information or reservations, contact Nick Komar at [info@quetzal-tours.com](mailto:info@quetzal-tours.com) or 970-449-3645.



Andean Cock-of-the-Rock by Nick Komar.

### FCAS Pocket Guide to Local Birds

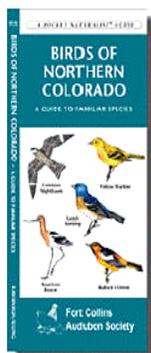
Is available at the following retailers who support our organization with the sales:

Wild Birds Unlimited  
3636 S. College Ave  
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(970) 225-2557

Jax Mercantile  
950 E. Eisenhower  
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Jax Outdoor Gear  
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(970) 221-0544

Jax Farm & Ranch  
1000 N. Hwy. 287  
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in September.

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Contact Tia Brown at (307) 587-2777  
[www.springintoyellowstone.com](http://www.springintoyellowstone.com)



Field Trips continued from Page 5.

**June 8, Sunday, Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey.** Meet at 6:30 a.m. See description and contact details on Page 5 about this recurring, monthly survey.

**June 14, Saturday, Sunrise Ranch.** Leader: Michael Costello, [mcostello@emnet.org](mailto:mcostello@emnet.org). Meet at Sunrise Ranch, located in the foothills between Loveland and Masonville on County Road 29. Contact Michael or check newsletter for meeting time. Take advantage of a rare opportunity to look for Wild Turkeys and other birds on this 350-acre private property, with the ranch's Director of Operations (and birder) Michael Costello as your guide.

**June 21, Saturday, Pawnee National Grasslands.** Leader: Bill Miller, [5mcorp@comcast.net](mailto:5mcorp@comcast.net), 970-493-7693. This trip will leave from Fort Collins at 6 a.m.; contact Bill for details. The grasslands, 35 miles east of Fort Collins, are a world-class birding area. Join Bill for a special day in search of Burrowing Owls, Mountain Plovers, McCown's Longspurs, and Ferruginous Hawks. Carpooling is necessary and riders will be asked to contribute \$3/person to their driver for fuel costs.

**Oct. 11, Saturday, Soapstone Prairie Natural Area.** Leader: Aran Meyer, City of Fort Collins Biologist. Reservation required; space is limited to 12 people. To reserve a space on this special trip, contact John Shenot, [johnshenot@gmail.com](mailto:johnshenot@gmail.com), 970-682-2551. See description from May 16 trip on Page 5.



Snapping turtle at Cottonwood Hollow Natural Area, Fort Collins, by John Shenot.



Wild Turkey on the road by Alex Avery.



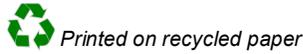
Left: Western Meadowlark by Nick Komar.



Right: Townsend's Solitaire at Pawnee National Grasslands by Nick Komar.



Fort Collins Audubon Society  
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- New or Renewing FCAS Chapter Member**    \$30  
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 or receive the FCAS *Ptarmigan* by mail
  
- Additional Support for Alex Cringan**  
**Fund natural history education grants**    \$\_\_\_\_
  
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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

May we send you FCAS email alerts if updates occur for field trips, programs etc.?  
**Yes** or **No**

May we contact you if volunteer opportunities occur from helping at events to contacting legislators on important environmental issues?  
**Yes** or **No**

Total Amount 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 31st extend through the following year. Applications can be completed at [www.fortnet.org/Audubon](http://www.fortnet.org/Audubon)