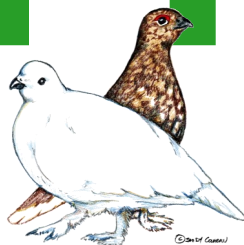


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FORT COLLINS AUDUBON SOCIETY

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 2023

Volume 55, Issue 3

FCAS Hosts

Eric DeFonso, Avid Birder, Bird Sound Recorder, Columnist
"The Snow Goose and Friends: Winter Geese in Colorado"

Thursday, March 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 virtually:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83305073390>

So many of our beloved birds in Colorado depart in the fall for warmer climes, but thankfully what we lose in overall species, we make up for in sheer numbers of geese, especially Snow Geese. Here in the Front Range, we tend to only see singles or small groups of Snow Geese amid large groupings of "white-cheeked geese" like the Canada and the Cackling, but further south and east one can encounter tens of thousands of Snow and Ross's. They create a dazzling spectacle for those making the effort to view them; but what do we know about their life histories, how to identify them, and where they live? Let's explore and dive into the world of winter geese in Colo-



Snow Geese by Jill White Smith.

rado, these numerous and familiar birds that we birders perhaps know less about than we first thought.

Eric DeFonso writes a column on Birding By Ear for the Colorado Field Ornithologists' quarterly journal, has led field trips for the Colorado Field Ornithologists annual conventions, currently serves on

the Colorado Bird Records Committee, and has done conservation and guiding volunteer work in South America.

Join us on March 9 at the Fort Collins Senior Center for this free program. The public is welcomed!

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.

In October, I moved to a new home adjacent to Red Fox Meadows Natural Area, where a male Northern Cardinal has been hanging out since the end of August. I've now seen this bird, whom my wife and I have named "Mr. Heidi" (it's a long story), dozens of times — but I still get excited each time. After all, in the past 15 years, eBird records suggest that only one other cardinal has been seen in Larimer County — a female who frequented a private residence in Wellington four years ago.

I also am amazed at the effect this one beautiful, locally rare bird is having on the human population. For starters, everyone in the neighborhood and all the frequent users of the natural area seem to know him. He's a celebrity, the topic of pleasantries and idle gossip, and a source of pride and social cohesion. Although elusive and unpredictable, Mr. Heidi has been seen and enjoyed not just by neighbors, but by dozens of birders visiting from far



Mr. Heidi by John Shenot.

and wide. He has "single-wingedly" turned Red Fox Meadows into one of the county's top birding hotspots, at least temporarily, with an average of three checklists per day submitted to eBird in the past few months. And that's just the people who use eBird. Every day I see people walking the trails with binoculars and big cameras, and I've talked to visitors from as far north as Laramie, east to Ault, west to Estes Park, and south to Colorado Springs!

I am so grateful for the chance to appreciate this beautiful bird and to bear witness to the power of nature to bring people together. That's what FCAS is all about. Here's to you, Mr. Heidi!

Thanking and Calling Volunteers

Fort Collins Audubon Society has great volunteers! Thank you for your help with the Family Birding Event at the CSU Environmental Learning Center on January 21.



The following are some of the events coming up for which we need your help with outreach and education:

1) Dunn Elementary chose us to be a featured event as part of their Dunn Film Festival. We will offer a presentation during the day on April 24 and host a booth on the evening of April 25.

2) We will celebrate World Migratory Bird Day on May 13 at Pineridge Natural Area.

3) We'll participate in the Poudre River Festival on August 12.

4) We will partner with the City of Fort Collins for the Wings and Wheels event on August 19.

It's exciting to be connecting with the community in so many ways and we can't do it without you. Times, dates, and details will be coming soon, but please email Volunteer Coordinator Barbara Patterson at Bpat-1957@gmail.com or Education Coordinator Sheila Webber at 13sheilaw@gmail.com with questions.

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Visit us on Facebook:

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



High Path Avian Influenza 2022

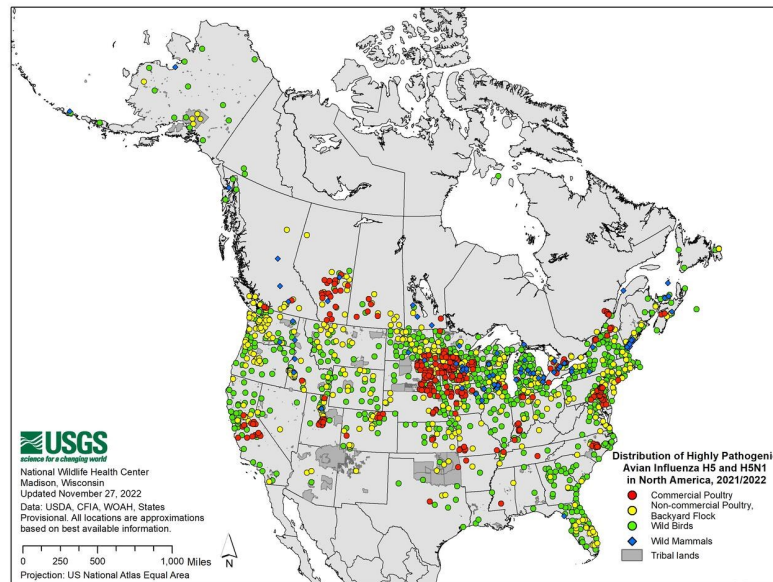
Following the ebbing of the Covid-19 pandemic, birds began to experience their own. The epizootic, an animal epidemic, of High Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) is a novel and emerging disease in North America. The HPAI specifically is an influenza virus, similar to the flu that affects wild birds, domesticated birds, and rarely mammals. The HPAI is not native to the United States, usually coming from Asia or Europe via bird migration, and is considered an exotic disease by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which can cause significant economic and environmental damages. This disease was last seen in 2015 when over 32 million poultry were lost over a three-month period. This current bout of the disease was first reported in January 2022 in South Carolina in wild American Wigeons. It is possible that it entered the population through European bird migrations. Starting from this isolated incident, it has spread west, following the migrations of wild birds to infect birds from Florida to Alaska.

The disease first appeared in Colorado in April 2022 at a backyard chicken farm in Pitkin County. Since its appearance, numerous wildlife facilities have been inundated with wild birds affected by this disease. The disease itself is highly fatal to



Early stage of HPAI in a goose showing the foggy eyes often seen. Photo donated by NOCO Wildlife Center.

Birds with this disease often are discovered deceased, but clinical signs include respiratory disease, cloudy eyes, torticollis (the twisting of the neck), and neurological signs including paralysis, pedaling, and tremors. Treatments are possible and have shown some positive



Current range map of HPAI in North America as of November 2022.

results in raptor species such as owls, though most cases result in death.

So how can you help? Speaking to veterinarians, wildlife rehabbers, and the USDA, the following recommendations were suggested:

1. Clean your shoes. Birders are stewards of the environment and travel across many different ecosystems and habitats, allowing us to ob-

serve and preserve nature. However, our movement can become an issue. The HPAI is passed from direct contact with individuals, and through fomites. Fomites are any object or material that can carry infection, including our shoes. Thus, we can reduce our impact simply by bleaching our shoes between adventures and avoiding stepping in goose poop.

2. If you find a bird with HPAI try calling the Northern Colorado Wildlife Center (970-283-7822) or Greenwood Wildlife Rehabilitation Center (303-823-8455). They report these birds and can often help. Due to the high quantity of reported birds, they are unable at this time to respond in-person to all calls, and will likely ask you to take the bird into their facility if possible. To do this, please wear gloves, a mask, and put the bird in a container you do not want returned. Once the bird is dropped off, deeply wash your mask with soap and then put in the washing machine. Disposable masks and gloves are preferred.

3. Do not feed wild and domesticated birds near each other. While it may be fun to see a crow interacting with a chicken, during this time it is recommended that backyard flocks not share food, water, or housing with any wild species.

Although this article is meant to be an introduction to the topic, more detailed information can be found on the USDA website: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-2022>.



Spring Break is Not a Break for Birds

As we look forward to the first day of spring, seasonal changes trigger migrating birds to prepare for their long flight to their breeding grounds by undergoing physical and metabolic changes.

Two weeks before birds take-off in spring, birds enter a natural phase called hyperphagia, which is controlled by hormones that alters the metabolism of birds. They



Bar-tailed Godwit from eBird.

change their diet by gorging on fruits, nuts, and berries, enabling them to store energy and build up flight muscles. The carbohydrates and lipids are converted to fat, which is lighter and easier for lift and sustained flight. (Carbohydrates provide a fraction of the energy and are more difficult to store). The amount of energy reserves differ between species. Some birds will stop on the way to refuel, while others will make the journey in a single flight. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds have one of highest metabolisms in the animal kingdom. Before migration, they double their body weight in grams that are burned in a steady release of energy during their 2,000-mile journey.

In addition to gaining weight, the fat must be distributed properly. Birds can alter or even consume parts of their organs. For example, the Bar-tailed Godwit, one of the world's most intense migrators, can perform a non-stop 11-day journey from Alaska to New Zealand. It

uses a process known as autophagy (which in Greek

means self-eating). This process allows the bird to absorb or "self-eat" about 25 percent of the tissues from the kidneys, liver, and digestive tract to make room for more fat storage. They also enlarge their heart and muscle structure to allow for greater energy and better oxygen distribution. Other birds expand their digestive tract to store more food and use it during flight. After migration, the bird then reabsorbs these tissues, and the organs convert back to breeding physiology.

How do they get the rest they need to make the flight?

Birds break standard physiological rules and change their time allotted for sleep. The Swanson's Thrush, like other thrushes, migrates mostly at night. It undergoes a neurological shift allowing it to take nine-second naps mid-flight. As the bird flies, it puts one-half of its brain to sleep while the other half remains alert to collisions, predators, and other hazards.

When they arrive at their breeding grounds, birds must immediately replenish their food supplies to start nesting, hatching, and rearing young. It is amazing to reflect on the changes that birds undergo to accomplish the magnificent feat of spring migration. We hope they arrive back safely to their breeding grounds.

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Swainson's Thrush from eBird.

FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Jeffrey Abrams
Diane Adams
Stephen Armstead
Eileen Baker
Nikki Berlin
Mary Bledsoe
Nolan Bunting
Marcee Camenson
Aimee Chlebnik
Morris Clark
Nancy Dalton
Libby Edwards
David Farmer
Jane Fine

Willard Flowers
Margaret Francia
Les Gehman
Vince Griesemer
Melannie Hartman
Vicki Helton
Barbara A. Jones
Charles Kopp
Barbara Krupnik-Goldman
David L. Landers
Alora LaVoy
Kristi Magee
Ted Manahan
Linda McNamara

Andrew Monson
Joyce Owens
Judd Paterson
Barbara Patterson
Phil Phelan
Dawn Wilson Photography
Timothy Priehs
Susan Quinlan
Ann Reichhardt
John Reichhardt
Laurie Sada
Anne Saunders
Andrea Scott
Amy Sugeno



Upcoming Field Trips

To register for any trip, go to Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/123106328705>), Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/fcaudubon/>), or fortcollinsaudubon.org. Registration will be posted one week before the scheduled trip. Attendance is limited to 12 individuals.

March 10, Friday, Fossil Creek Reservoir Natural Area. Leader: John Shenot, johnshenot@gmail.com, 802-595-1669. Registration required. This reservoir at-



Male and female Mallards by Glenn Upton.

tracts a fantastic variety of water birds in late winter and is a great place for birders of all ages and abilities to practice identifying duck species. Early migrating passerines are also possible. Bring a spotting scope if you have one, but we'll have at least one to share. Meet in the parking lot at 7:30 a.m.

March 12, Sunday, 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 little more than four-mile hike covers moderate to flat terrain. No registration required and there is no participation limit, but please email or text Denise that you plan to attend. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the Bobcat Ridge Parking lot.

March 25, Saturday, Arapahoe Bend Natural Area – Rigden Reservoir. Leader Robert Beauchamp, tyrannusb@gmail.com. This is a leisurely 1.5 – 2 mile walk where we will explore Rigden Reservoir and surrounding riparian and pond habitat for interesting spring birds. All levels are welcome. Meet at the parking area at Horsetooth Rd. and Strauss Cabin Rd. at 8 a.m.

Hotspot Highlight: Pawnee National Grasslands

This year's newsletter 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 Pawnee National Grasslands, which is an amazing ecosystem found east of I-25. This vast area has many different hotspots. Crow Valley Campground outside of Briggsdale houses some



Pawnee National Grasslands in late March by Nolan Bunting.

amazing songbird biodiversity, including Townsend Solitaire in the winter and Lark Buntings in the summer. The Pawnee National Grassland Birding Tour is a fantastic place to see some of the prairie specific birds such as longspur and Mountain Plover. Pawnee Buttes further east offers a beautiful hiking trail and the opportunity to find Burrowing Owls and Loggerhead Shrikes in the early spring.

Past Field Trips

On January 13, John Shenot led an amazing trip to Red Fox Meadows Natural Area. The group saw 24 species of birds — an impressive number for the winter in Colorado. Some of the highlights included Evening Grosbeak, Cassin's Finch, and Steller's Jay.

On January 22, Nolan Bunting led an adventurous trip east of Nunn to look for raptors and winter prairie birds. The group saw eight species of raptors and nine other bird species. Raptors included Merlin, Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Harrier, and American Kestrel. The group talked about ecology and fun facts about some of these amazing raptor species.

From left: Laurie Sada, Kathleen Branch, Jim Branch, Nancy Randa, and Jeff Randa joined Nolan Bunting on the Jan. 22 outing.



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.