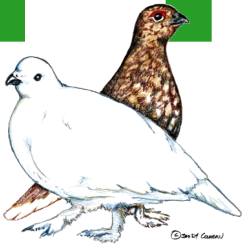


# PTARMIGAN



## 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 2024**

**Volume 56, Issue 2**

### FCAS Hosts

**Arvind Panjabi, Senior Research Scientist, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies**

**“Three Billion Birds Lost...and Counting: Can we stop the decline and bring them back?”**

**Thursday, February 8**

**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 will also be on Zoom. Enter the following link at 7 p.m. to join the meeting:**

**<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83890405859>**

Do you love birds? Whether it's the hummingbirds in your garden, the shorebirds running along the beach, or the swallows gracing the skies, birds bring joy to millions of people and play an important role in our ecosystems. Unfortunately, more than half of the bird species in the United States and Canada are declining and they could use your help. In this presentation you will learn about the science behind the recent estimated loss of almost 3 billion birds from North America, what kinds of birds were most affected, which have increased, and how patterns of loss vary across the biomes of our continent. You may be surprised at what you learn. Arvind



Panjabi will discuss what is contributing to these declines, what conservation groups like the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies and others are doing to help stop the declines, and how each of us in our daily lives can help make our shared spaces a healthy place for both birds and people.

Arvind Panjabi is a Senior Research Scientist at Bird Conservancy of the Rockies in Fort Collins where he works to conserve birds of western North America through an integrated approach involving science, education, and land stewardship.

Join us on Feb. 8 for this program

that is free and open to the public.

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



## President's Corner

by John Shenot

FCAS wants to thank all our members, volunteers, and board members for making 2023 another successful year, and helping us finish the year with a sizable surplus in our bank accounts.

Memberships are our life blood, and I hope you have already renewed your membership for 2024. Last year, membership dues accounted for about 50 percent of our annual revenue. We haven't raised our dues since before I joined FCAS in 2011. Our expenses have risen, but we've been able to keep membership dues affordable while increasing our program offerings and services through a combination of successful fundraising events and generous donations from individuals and organizations who contribute above and beyond their membership dues. We also rely on volunteers for everything we do, and we're grateful for merchandise donations and promotional assistance from area businesses.

On behalf of the Board and the entire organization, I want to thank all those in the following lists who made cash donations to FCAS in 2023, and humbly ask those who can afford it to consider a donation in 2024. Donations to our general fund would be much appreciated, or if you prefer you may contribute to our Alex Cringan Memorial Fund, through which we offer modest scholarships to students for conservation-related research and projects.

### FCAS CONTACTS

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

Visit us on Facebook:

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

### Memorial Donations and Tributes

Edwards Family Fund, in memory of Dr. Jean Sutherland; William and Sharon Farr, in memory of Dr. Jean Sutherland; Thomas Lynch and Sandra Pitcaithley, in memory of Dr. Jean Sutherland; and Cheryl Ann Orwig, in tribute to Bobbie Tilmant, Irene Fortune, and Ann Colpitts.



### Other Individual Donors

Anonymous donors

Mary Beck

Louise Bower

Sandra Bratlie

Jay Breidt

Barbara Case

Linda Cushman

Leslie Coleman

Beth Dillon

Patricia Ferlic

Robert Godwin

Michelle Haeefe &

Michael Knowles

Ron Harden

David Hartley

Carole Hossan

Tara Jewell

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Jane Low

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Joseph Polazzi

Elizabeth Pruessner

Kathryn Pruessner

John Shenot

Paula & Ed Stearns

Jeff Stewart

Henry Thode II

Aaron Varnell

John Waddell

### Business Donors

Jax Mercantile, New Belgium Brewery Dollar per Barrel Giving Program, and Wild Birds Unlimited.

### Donations from Charitable Organizations

The U.S. Charitable Gift Trust, Siegfried Kohen Charitable Giving Fund, and a donor-advised fund of Fidelity Charitable Donor Advised Funds.

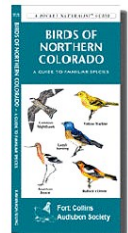
### FCAS Pocket Guide to Local Birds

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

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

Jax Loveland West, Outdoor Gear  
2665W. Eisenhower, (970) 667-7375

Jax Outdoor Gear, 1200 N. College  
(970) 221-0544



## Conservation at a Crossroads: Pinyon Jays versus Sage-grouse in the Colorado Plateau

The Colorado Plateau, a region of contrasts from arid deserts to alpine tundra, is witnessing an ecological convergence driven by climate change. Among its most distinctive avian inhabitants are the Greater Sage-Grouse and the Pinyon Jay, each emblematic of their ecosystems, yet caught in a conservation dilemma.

The sage-grouse, a bird akin to our own bird of paradise with its elaborate spring courtship displays, relies heavily on sagebrush landscapes. These birds prefer breeding grounds, called leks, to be free from tall trees that could harbor raptors. However, their habitats have been shrinking due to various factors, including road construction, energy development, and the northward migration of conifers like juniper and pinyon pine. Efforts by organizations such as the Bureau of Land Management and the Sage Grouse Initiative have focused on tree removal from sagebrush areas to prevent the sage-grouse from becoming endangered.

On the flip side of this ecological coin is the Pinyon Jay, a charismatic, social bird inextricably linked with the pinyon pine. As these trees have receded in the south, but expanded northward, they've brought the jays with them. This bird, known for its cooperative behavior and complex vocalizations, cannot survive without the pinyon pine, just as the pine depends on the jay for seed dispersal. Like the sage-grouse, Pinyon Jays face popula-

tion declines driven by habitat loss and are anticipated to be listed as an endangered species soon.

This situation poses a challenging question: how do we conserve both species when improving one's habitat could jeopardize the other? Fortunately, rigorous scientific observations of the behaviors of these birds offer a ray of hope for coexistence. Sage-grouse leks are semi-permanent, with breeding pairs returning annually to the same sites. Targeted tree removal at these known locations might be sufficient to support sage-grouse while accepting pinyon encroachment elsewhere. Meanwhile, Pinyon Jays are adaptable travelers, capable of covering large distances to find resources. This behavior could allow them to thrive even as conservation efforts focus on maintaining specific habitats for the sage-grouse.

As encouraging as this scenario is, it represents a broader challenge in the era of climate change. The shifting of ecosystems brings previously separated species into novel interactions, demanding innovative and flexible conservation strategies.

While some situations may allow for win-win solutions, others will inevitably require tough decisions, prioritizing some species over others. Thus, it becomes increasingly vital to minimize habitat loss from human activities, such as infrastructure expansion and energy development, to ensure a sustainable future for all species in this ever-changing landscape.



Greater Sage-Grouse  
from PublicDomainImages.

## Education Committee Volunteers

Hello wonderful FCAS volunteers, past and potential. Planning for this year's events is underway and we are excited to bring the wonderful world of birding to the community in 2024. Please get in touch with Volunteer Coordinator Barb Patterson, [bpatters1957@gmail.com](mailto:bpatters1957@gmail.com), or Education Committee Chair Sheila Webber, [13sheilaw@gmail.com](mailto:13sheilaw@gmail.com), if you would like to be notified of volunteer opportunities this year.



## It's Time to Renew Your 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](http://www.fortcollinsaudubon.org). Remember, your membership and contributions are tax deductible, and help make our programs possible.



**Renew**





## Accessible Birding

Enjoying nature through birding can improve our mental, physical, and emotional well-being. As birders, we can find camaraderie or solitude, tranquility or thrills, comfort in familiar patterns or excitement in new discoveries. Birding broadens our perspective while sharpening our focus. We experience and learn new things every year and every season. Birding is fun, even joyful, and it is good for us.

None of these benefits of birding require us to be expert birders, to have perfect vision, hearing, or mobility, or even to have brains wired like everyone else. We just need access to the outdoors where we can find wild birds.

But not all of us have equal access to the outdoors. Some who might benefit greatly from the joys of nature and birding may face high barriers to accessing those benefits. People with mobility challenges, low vision or blindness, hardness of hearing or deafness, intellectual or developmental disabilities, neurodivergence, chronic illness, or other health concerns may face accessibility issues that limit their ability to enjoy birding. Many of us have or will experience such limiting conditions at some point in our lives.

FCAS is working to improve the accessibility of our programs, following the lead of powerful advocates for access and inclusion in the outdoors. Freya McGregor at Access Birding ([accessbirding.com](https://accessbirding.com)) is an excellent source of information on creating a welcoming and inclusive birding community. Last year, FCAS hosted a

talk by Virginia Rose, founder of the nonprofit Birdability, who talked about the joys and empowerment of birding from her perspective as a manual wheelchair user. She emphasized the importance of detailed accessibility information, so that birders can

make their own informed judgments about accessibility issues and maintain as much independence as possible in their outdoor adventures.

FCAS is contributing to local accessibility information through the crowd-sourced Birdability Map (<https://gis.audubon.org/birdability/>), created by the National Audubon Society in partnership with

Birdability. FCAS also plans to provide more detailed accessibility information for its field trips.

Since the pandemic, FCAS meetings and programs have become more accessible than ever. They are freely available in-person and via Zoom, with closed-captioning to improve the experience for those with hearing impairments. Further, we now use detailed image descriptions and alt-text to make our social media accessible to people with blindness and low vision.

Finally, FCAS is beginning to offer outings that are designed to be accessible. Last summer, we partnered with Lory State Park in an accessible program aimed at those with mobility challenges. Our goal is to increase the number and variety of accessible outings. If you have any suggestions for improving the accessibility of FCAS activities, especially field trips, we would love to hear from you.



## FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Mary Albrechtsen  
Eileen Baker  
Diane Barrett  
Craig Benkman  
Nikki Berlin  
Denise Birdsall  
Hetty Bixby  
Mary Bledsoe  
Jay Breidt  
Denise Bretting  
Monica Brewer  
Grant Campbell  
Lisa Carp  
Aimee Chlebnik  
Morris Clark  
Patricia Cohn  
Larry DeMers  
Beth Dillon  
James Dolan  
Ann Donoghue

Kim Dunlap  
Kenneth Dunnington  
Robert Ellis  
Glenn Elmore  
Randy Fisher  
Thomas Flanagan  
Margaret Francia  
William Gerk  
Paul Gordy  
Ruth Grant  
Carrie Graves  
Larry Griffin  
Mike Knowles &  
Michelle Haefele  
Ron Harden  
Susan Hargis  
Janet Holley  
Carole Hossan  
Dorothy Hudson  
Andrea Jobe

Adam Johnson  
Kristin Joy  
Josephine Kerrigan  
Laurie Kleespies  
Tom Kleespies  
Dean & Loretta Klingenberg  
Diane Kristoff  
Kimberlee Dawn LaMothe  
David M. Landers  
Janet Larsen  
Phoebe Larson  
Kristi Magee  
Anna Makovec-Fuller  
Ted Manahan  
Andrew McFadden  
Michelle McKim  
Larry Moskowitz  
Kathleen Carty Mullen  
Joyce Owens  
Jerry Partin

Susan Peterson  
Joseph Polazzi  
Timothy Prihs  
Ann Reichhardt  
John Reichhardt  
Amy Rousch  
Laurie Sada  
Patty Shafer  
Allison Shaw  
Linda Squires  
Roxanne Squires  
Paula & Ed Stearns  
David Steingraeber  
Amy Sugeno  
Doug Swartz  
Danette Vassilopoulos  
John Vassilopoulos  
Kimberly Vercimak  
William West  
Dalia Zygas

**Thank you  
for your  
membership!**



## Upcoming Field Trips

All field trips are free (unless otherwise noted) and are currently open to the public. All experience levels are welcome. Bring snacks or lunch, water, binoculars, and spotting scopes. Changes to dates, meeting times, locations, and trip leaders are occasionally unavoidable. To register for any trip, please visit [www.facebook.com/groups/123106328705](https://www.facebook.com/groups/123106328705). Attendance may be limited. Waitlisted individuals for a trip will be sent a link for the next available trip before registration is open to the public. Bobcat Ridge surveys do not require registration. For questions or comments please email [fcasfieldtrips@gmail.com](mailto:fcasfieldtrips@gmail.com), or contact Amy Roush, [canyonwren4@gmail.com](mailto:canyonwren4@gmail.com) or 512-993-0242.

**Sunday, Feb. 11, Bobcat Ridge Survey.** Leader: Denise Bretting, [dbretting@swloveland.com](mailto:dbretting@swloveland.com) or 970-402-1292. The survey looks at bird populations and helps local scientists better understand bird dynamics. The



Red-tailed Hawk by Evan Lopez.

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 Bobcat Ridge parking lot.

**Saturday, Feb. 17, Saturday, Pawnee Grassland and Raptors.** Leader: Nolan Bunting, [nbunting@rams.colostate.edu](mailto:nbunting@rams.colostate.edu), 907-299-4625. This is a trip to one of the most amazing ecosystems on planet earth. The Pawnee during the winter is home to a large variety of birds, including



Rough-legged Hawk  
by Carolyn McDonald.

Lapland Longspurs, Rough-legged Hawks, and Northern Shrikes. Weather conditions permitting, this trip will cover some of the highlights of the grassland, including Crow Valley Campground, parts of the Pawnee Birding Trail, and Raptor Alley. The trip

begins at 8:30 a.m. and will likely go until 2–3 p.m. Please pack a lunch and be prepared for some driving and birding. A link to register for the trip will be sent a

week prior. Those who sign up will be notified where to meet.

**Sunday, Feb. 18, Red Fox Meadows Natural Area.** Leaders: John Shenot, [johnshenot@gmail.com](mailto:johnshenot@gmail.com) or 802-595-1669; and Amy Roush, [canyonwren4@gmail.com](mailto:canyonwren4@gmail.com) or 512-993-0242. This local natural area gets little attention from birders, but in recent winters some uncommon to rare species

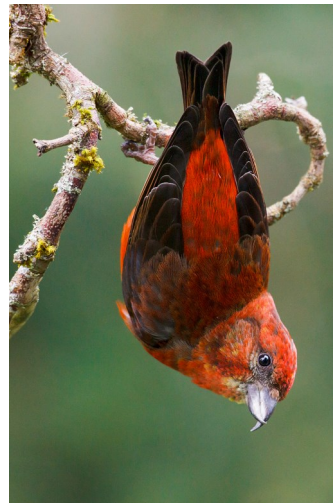
have been seen here. Some possible species include Virginia Rail, Red Crossbill, Bushtit, and Northern Shrike.

Trails are unpaved and mostly flat, but may be icy. The field trip will start at 7:30

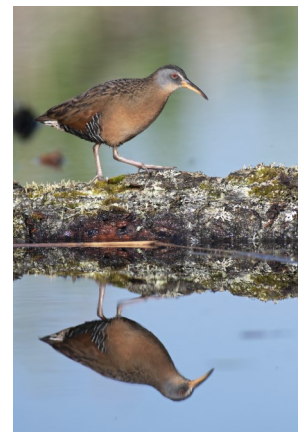
a.m., weather and trail conditions permitting. A link to register for the trip will be sent a week prior. Those who sign up will be notified where to meet.



Northern Shrike by Mick Thompson.



Red Crossbill  
By Ken Archer.



Virginia Rail  
by Debra Herst.



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