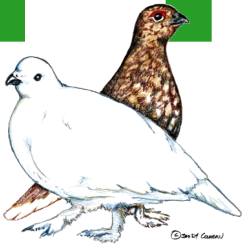


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FORT COLLINS AUDUBON SOCIETY

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 2024

Volume 56, Issue 3

FCAS Hosts Daly Edmunds Policy and Outreach Director, Audubon Rockies

Presenting:

“Sagebrush Country: What the Future will look like for the West’s Iconic Ecosystem”

Thursday, March 14

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 be accessible online using Zoom*****

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

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88114151985>

The sagebrush steppe is North America’s largest ecosystem, spanning 14 states and two Canadian provinces. This ecologically rich landscape has a long history of being overlooked, but politics and efforts to conserve it have elevated it to national attention. Learn what makes this ecosystem so important and how species like sage-grouse, Golden Eagles, ravens, mule deer, and pygmy rabbits will play



Photos by Daly Edmunds and Evan Barrientos of Audubon Rockies, Tom Koerner of USFWS, and Beth Waterbury of IDFG.

a role in determining its future.

Daly Edmunds is the director of policy and outreach for Audubon Rockies. She is responsible for furthering the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative on a regional scale and works with government representatives, conservation organizations, and community leaders throughout Colorado and neighboring states to do so.

Join us on March 14 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.



Late last year, I had the pleasure of attending National Audubon Society's 2023 Leadership Conference in Estes Park while representing all of us as the "host" local chapter for this hemispheric event. It was fun and inspiring, and I thought members might enjoy watching this three minute "highlight reel:"

<https://vimeo.com/885999220/1f840cbab8>.

The focal point for the conference was National Audubon's 2023–2028 strategic plan, *Flight Plan*: <https://www.audubon.org/about/welcome-flight-plan>. *Flight Plan* "orients all of Audubon toward achieving a singular Guiding Star: halting, and ultimately reversing, the precipitous decline of birds across the Americas." Representatives of Audubon chapters across the United States and affiliated organizations in other countries gathered to discuss the contents of the plan and how we can collaborate on its implementation.

I want to encourage our members to take a few minutes to look at *Flight Plan* and think about how our chapter, and how you individually, might contribute to its success. The challenge before us is of such a magnitude and urgency that success is only possible if we harness the collective energy and ideas of everyone who cares about birds. What more should FCAS



FCAS volunteer Barb Patterson led a Mindful Birding walk at the 2023 Leadership Conference.
Photo by Sydney Walsh/ Audubon.

be doing locally to promote habitat conservation, fight climate change, enact good public policies, and (especially) expand and diversify the number of people committed to our mission? Would you consider volunteering for our Conservation Committee? Might you ask a friend who is not currently an FCAS member to come with you to one of our great programs (or watch on Zoom)?

By all means, keep on enjoying birds and everything the great outdoors has to offer. But let's also commit to giving something back. The natural world is in crisis. Now is the time for action!



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Visit us on Facebook:

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

FCAS Pocket Guide to Local Birds

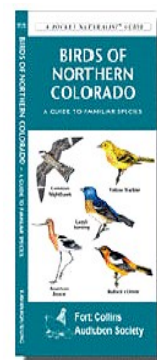
Is available at the following retail-
who support our
organization with the sales:

ers

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

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

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



Heaven's Door Ranch: A Gateway for Conservation

The recent purchase of Heaven's Door Ranch by Larimer County, in collaboration with the cities of Loveland and Fort Collins, reinforces the Coloradan commitment to natural landscapes. Spanning approximately 1,397 acres at the entrance to Big Thompson Canyon, Heaven's Door will be one of the largest public natural areas in the county. This acquisition is a cause for celebration among birding circles, especially in Loveland, where such natural spaces are less abundant compared to neighboring Fort Collins. Watchful observers have spotted a wide variety of species in this area, including Golden Eagles, Wild Turkeys, Pygmy Nuthatches, Violet-green Swallows, and many others. But beyond expanding opportunities to view birds, this property represents an important and rare opportunity for conservation. Realizing this potential will ensure sustainable, excellent birding in perpetuity, but will require thoughtful consideration and commitment to preserving wildlife habitat.

Heaven's Door is a rich mosaic of intact grasslands, foothills, shrub lands, riparian zones, and lower montane forests, each dominated by native plant communities. By all accounts, this diverse landscape is unusually well-preserved, making it ideal for local wildlife by providing resources for many species. As a part of a larger conservation priority area, Heaven's Door provides continuity, with minimal human infrastructure, between state and federal wilderness areas. This unique position safeguards key wildlife corridors, fosters population connectivity, and supports the diversity of regional ecosystems.

Heaven's Door is unlikely to open to the public until

after 2027. While this is sure to cause some impatience, this waiting period is essential for diligent planning. Since specific transition proposals have yet to be announced, we encourage the development of a comprehensive management plan that aligns primarily with conservation objectives. This involves conducting thorough resource inventories, ecological assessments, and implementing sustainable land-use practices. Effective conservation at Heaven's Door will require targeted actions such as habitat restoration, control of invasive species, and careful trail development to minimize ecological impact. Collaboration with academic institutions, conservation groups, and government bodies will be vital in pooling expertise and resources for these initiatives.

While conservation should be the primary goal, effective habitat management is sure to enhance birding opportunities and, in turn, contribute to citizen science and educational endeavors. The ranch's development could thus marry conservation with recreational use, offering a window into the region's rich biodiversity. The success of Heaven's Door as a conservation area is intrinsically tied to community involvement. Local residents, environmentalists, and stakeholders are encouraged to participate in the planning process. Public workshops, surveys, and volunteering programs can serve as platforms for community input, ensuring that the management plan reflects collective conservation goals. Opportunities for involvement may be opening soon. If you would like to get involved, please visit <https://www.larimer.gov/naturalresources/volunteer>.



Future entrance to the Heaven's Door Ranch Natural Area by Jess Gray.

FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Jim Branch
Kathleen Branch
Marcee Camenson
Barbara Colvin
Mark Colvin
Elizabeth Edwards
Mary Ellner
Suzanne Gausch
Ray & Joan Glabach

Kathy C. Green
Kathy Hartman
Melanie Hartman
Todd Johns
Barbara Jones
Carol Jones
Charles Kopp
Ginrtte Korngiebel
Cristie Lee

Marcia G. Maeda
Thomas Lynch
Barbara Morris
Jim Nachel
Judd Patterson
Sandra Pitcaithley
Lori P. Pivonka
Rich Roberts
Tom D. Schultz

David Sitzman
Richard A. Swaaback
Pamela Turner
Robert Umbreit
Sharon Visk
Joseph Webber
Paul West
April Whicker



Thank you for your membership!



Wonderful Woodpeckers

A reverberating drumming sound on a metal chimney, or nearby dead branch...Who could it be? Most likely, especially if it's spring, one of our wonderful woodpeckers is the culprit. Other sounds they make might be more pleasant to our ears; the cute, happy chirp note of the Downy Woodpecker, or the call of a Northern Flicker, which to me means spring has arrived.



Hairy Woodpecker
by Sheila Webber.

Of the 23 species of woodpecker native to North America, 13 have been recorded in Colorado. Not all of them have visited Northern Colorado, though they are certainly invited to do so! Ladder-backed Woodpecker anyone?

Woodpeckers are primary cavity nesters. They are the architects responsible for creating cavities in trees; cozy, sheltered nest sites in which to lay eggs and raise nestlings. Nest cavities are usually used only one season by the woodpecker who created it, however. Next season they find a new tree to excavate, leaving the cavity from last year available for birds who are secondary cavity nesters. These are the many bird species that nest in cavities, such as House Wren, Black-capped



Violet-green Swallow family (secondary cavity nesters) by Joseph Webber.

Chickadee, and Violet-green Swallows, who are not built to bang their face upon the tree to excavate their own cavity for nesting. The cavities woodpeckers create are also used by species other than secondary cavity nesting birds, such as small mammals.

The hammering by woodpeckers serves many purposes to the life needs of these species. The drumming on a

metal or wood structure signals territory, hammering into bark enables them to reach insects hiding underneath, and being able to chisel further into a tree with a soft, rotten inner core enables them to excavate nest cavities. Woodpeckers are vital to forest health due to their voracious appetites for insects, especially wood borers.

It has long been thought that spongy material in the skull of woodpeckers absorbs the impact of the chisel-like bill as it strikes a tree. New studies show that this would decrease the effectiveness of the blow. The birds' small size and effective energy transmission are now thought to be the reason these amazing birds don't suffer brain injury due to their work.

As is always the case in nature, there is a woodpecker with exceptional behaviors and plumage. Lewis's Woodpeckers have a beautiful green back, pink belly, and gray collar. They feed by method of flycatching, flying out from a perch to catch insects mid-air. They will enlarge or remodel existing cavities and holes, but due to lack of strong neck muscles, do not fully excavate their own cavities for nesting. Lewis's will also reuse nest cavities.

You can often hear a woodpecker before seeing them, Enjoy the drumming that gives away the location of these remarkable birds.



Northern Flicker
by Sheila Webber.



Lewis's Woodpecker by Joseph Webber.



Upcoming Field Trips

All field trips are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted. All experience levels are welcome. Bring snacks or lunch, water, binoculars, and/or spotting scopes. Changes to dates, meeting times, locations, and trip leaders are occasionally unavoidable. To register for any trip, please visit www.facebook.com/FortCollinsAudubonSociety. Signup links also will be sent out to members via email. Attendance may be limited. Waitlisted individuals will be sent a link for the next available trip before registration is open to the public. Bobcat Ridge surveys do not require registration. With questions or comments please email fcasfieldtrips@gmail.com.

March 2, Saturday, Sandhill Cranes. Leader: Lori Pivonka, lori.pivonka@gmail.com. Attendees will gather at 7:30 a.m. at the Jax on North College Ave. and car-pool north where they will try to find migrating



Sandhill Cranes by Ron Harden.

Sandhill Cranes. The trip will involve driving along agricultural fields to spot the cranes and will take about two to three hours due to travel time. Bring binoculars, a camera, and/or a scope if you have one. Lori will have a scope. Expect to learn about cranes and their behavior, and possibly get to watch their mating dance displays!

March 8, Friday, Lee Martinez Park. Leaders: Sheila Webber, 13sheilaw@gmail.com, and Joseph Webber. Join us for a short half-mile to mile-long trip



Long-tailed Duck by Robert Beauchamp.

around the Poudre River to look for resident waterfowl, song birds, and maybe spot a few raptors. Meet at the parking lot by the tennis courts at 8:30 a.m.

March 10, 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 with some steep sections.

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.

March 23, Saturday Running Deer and Cottonwood Hollow Natural Area. Leader: Robert Beauchamp, tyrannusb@gmail.com. Meet at the parking area on Prospect Road at 8 a.m. We will explore a few marshes and ponds during this 1.5 to 2-mile walk through the natural area. All levels are welcome.

Saturday, March 30, Fossil Creek Reservoir. Leader: Sirena Brownlee, sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com.



Common Goldeneye by Sheila Webber.



American Dipper by Sheila Webber.

This reservoir attracts 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. We'll meet in the parking lot at 9 a.m.



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.