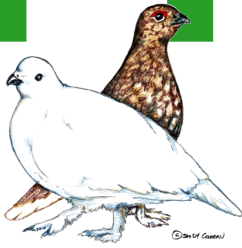


# PTARMIGAN



## 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.

September 2024

Volume 56, Issue 6

### FCAS Hosts Hilary Woodworth

Animal Care Specialist, Denver Zoo Conservation Alliance

**"Introduction to American Pika and the Colorado Pika Project's Research Initiatives"**

**Thursday, September 12**

**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 online using Zoom\*\*\***

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

**<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85151165855>**

American Pika, *Ochotona princeps*, are the smallest member of the rabbit family, yet one of the toughest creatures in North America as they spend their entire lives in an alpine environment. Pika have evolved to survive in the alpine, however their specialized adaptations also make the species vulnerable to the effects of warming global temperatures.

In 2010 the Colorado Pika Project was formed as a partnership between Denver Zoo Conservation Alliance and Rocky Mountain Wild, in collaboration with the White River National Forest; Rocky Mountain National Park; Colorado Parks and Wildlife; the University of Colorado, Boulder; and Colorado Mesa University. The Colorado Pika Project is a research project implemented by com-



Photo by Hilary Woodworth.

munity scientists across Colorado. Through collaborative long-term monitoring of pika populations, these partners are providing useful data to researchers and land managers, which also educates and engages Coloradans in conservation and the local impacts of climate change. The Colorado Pika Project includes 500 community science volunteers who conduct surveys at nearly 200 research sites.

Hilary Woodworth is a Colorado Pika Project Assistant and Animal Care Specialist-Carnivores at the Denver Zoo Conservation Alliance. Hilary has cared for animals in a zoo setting for 20-plus years. Join us on Sept. 12 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).

I'm excited to announce that FCAS received two grants this summer from the National Audubon Society (NAS) that will help make our chapter, and birding in general, more inclusive and welcoming to a wider audience. Every year, NAS invites local chapters to submit proposals in two categories: 1) collaborative grants of up to \$1,000 for small projects, and 2) Audubon in Action Grants of \$5,000 to \$15,000 for bigger projects. This year, for the first time, we applied for and received both grants — and for the maximum dollar amounts possible!

For the smaller collaborative grant, FCAS will purchase new gear that will better enable people with disabilities to participate in the field trips our chapter sponsors. We also will offer a special field trip in Fall 2024 targeted to people with disabilities. We are already testing some equipment that we think will make our field trips much more feasible and enjoyable for people who use a wheelchair, or have hand tremors or visual impairments.

For the larger Audubon in Action Grant, FCAS will share expertise we've developed in Mindful Birding practices with Audubon chapter leaders nationwide through online and in-person workshops. Mindful Birding combines the joy of birding with the restorative and grounding practice of mindfulness.

The idea is to slow down, live in the moment, engage all our senses, connect what we sense with how we feel, and appreciate the joy and peace that the birds we observe give us — even if we don't know or care what species we're observing or whether it is common or rare. A growing body of research (to which FCAS contributes) is beginning to reveal that this practice yields tangible and measurable physical and mental health benefits. Dr. Barbara Patterson, a former member of our Board of Directors and a stalwart within the national [Mindful Birding Network](#), will lead our efforts. The first workshop will be at Barr Lake outside Denver in early September.



From [fatbirder.com](#).

## FCAS Fall Fund Raiser

### Book and Art Sale at November Meeting

Fort Collins Audubon will be conducting a book and art sale fund raiser at our November 14 program meeting. The meeting will begin an hour early at 6 p.m. to provide plenty of time for shopping. We are seeking donations of



new and/or gently used bird guides, nature books, animal artwork, bird plates and figurines, your own home-crafted bird houses, and anything you no longer need and think other nature lovers would enjoy and treasure.

Clean out your home and support your chapter! Bring your donations to the September 12 program meeting at the Senior Center or contact Liz Pruessner to arrange the transfer of your donations. 970-215-3409; [lizpru@colostate.edu](mailto:lizpru@colostate.edu).



#### FCAS CONTACTS

##### President

John Shenot

802-595-1669

[johnshenot@gmail.com](mailto:johnshenot@gmail.com)

##### Vice President

Liz Pruessner

970-484-4371

[lizpru@colostate.edu](mailto:lizpru@colostate.edu)

##### Program Chair

Jessie Meschievitz

[jlmesch852@gmail.com](mailto:jlmesch852@gmail.com)

970-324-1550

##### Field Trip Coordinator

Amy Roush

[fcasfieldtrips@gmail.com](mailto:fcasfieldtrips@gmail.com)

512-993-0242

##### Membership Chair

Harry Rose

970-430-6731

[hlrose@toadaway.net](mailto:hlrose@toadaway.net)

##### Publications/Newsletter

Joe Webber

[Joe.Webber26@gmail.com](mailto:Joe.Webber26@gmail.com)

720-345-4757

For other FCAS contacts visit

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

Visit us on Facebook:

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



## Rising From the Ashes, Again and Again

The haunting glow of the Alexander Mountain Fire, coupled with little-faded memories of the Cameron Peak Fire, serves as a stark reminder of the intensifying wildfire season in Northern Colorado. As flames once again endanger our foothills, we should take time to consider how these fires impact wildlife populations and ecosystems they inhabit.

The immediate aftermath of a wildfire is a time of chaos and peril for wildlife populations. Fires ravage already limited resources, reducing the rugged vegetation they depend on to ashen landscapes. Birds, particularly those mid nesting or reliant on their declared territories, face displacement and mortality. Raptors, whose nests are often high in the trees, and songbirds, which depend on an abundant supply of insects and seeds, are the hardest hit. Their survival hinges on their ability to swiftly adapt or flee the encroaching devastation, leaving behind scorched earth and a void in the ecosystem.

Yet, within this destruction lies the seeds of renewal. Fire ecology reveals a world where flames are not merely destructive, but rejuvenative. Fireweed, the faithful emblem of recovery, Ponderosa pines, with their thick, fire-resistant bark, and Lodgepole pines, whose cones release seeds in response to heat and smoke, are prime examples of nature's adaptability and resilience. These habitat-forming plants pioneer the recovery process, stabilizing the soil and providing the foundation for new growth. As the first green shoots emerge from the blackened earth, they herald a new beginning, offering fresh habitats and food sources for the returning bird species.

Birds are remarkable in their adaptability as well. In

the wake of fire, early-successional habitats bloom, attracting species that thrive in such environments. Woodpeckers find ample nesting opportunities in the charred remains of trees, while ground-nesting species benefit from the newly illuminated understory and open spaces. These transformed landscapes, though initially

stark, become bustling with life.

However, the escalating frequency and intensity of wildfires pose unprecedented challenges. Climate change exacerbates these conditions, creating longer fire seasons and more severe

droughts. More variable weather pat-

terns result in wet seasons more frequently chased by dry ones, creating a frightening cycle of rapid fuel creation, drying, and burning — leading to more time that landscapes remain unable to support wildlife and limiting full bird population recovery. Even species evolved to cope with fire find their limits tested as their natural recovery mechanisms like seed banks are exhausted by the relentless onslaught of wildfires.

Navigating these challenges requires a delicate balance between fire management and conservation. Controlled burns and strategically placed firebreaks can mitigate the risk of catastrophic fires while maintaining ecological health. Success stories from local conservation projects, such as the ongoing Forest Service conifer thinning projects in Larimer County, demonstrate the potential for harmonious coexistence between fire management and habitat protection. Ongoing research and adaptive management strategies are increasingly important, as is the collaboration between fire management agencies and conservation organizations.



Conifers re-emerging on the heels of Cameron Peak, 2021 by Jess Gray.

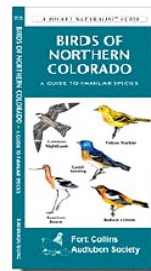
### FCAS Pocket Guide to Local Birds

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

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

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

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





## Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge

Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) was established in 1967 primarily to provide suitable nesting, rearing, and stopover habitat for migratory birds. The 25,521-acre refuge is in an intermountain glacial basin in north-central Colorado, 10 miles south of Walden, Colorado — the area that is commonly called North Park. The basin is 8,100 to 8,700 feet in elevation, making Arapaho NWR one of the highest refuges in the



**Swainson's Hawk chicks**  
by Gary Andrews.

United States. This refuge provides habitat for a variety of wildlife species, including at least 208 species of birds, 37 species of mammals, six species of reptiles, and 10 species of fish. Arapaho NWR consists of four diverse habitat types; wetlands (habitat for migratory birds), irrigated meadows (nesting for waterfowl, Greater Sage Grouse, Sora and Virginia Rails), riparian (Yellow Warbler and sparrows), and uplands (hawks, falcons, and Bald and Golden Eagles). Other wildlife species, such as moose, elk, mule deer, pronghorn, white-tailed prairie dogs, white-tailed jackrabbits, red fox, and coyotes also share these habitats with birds.

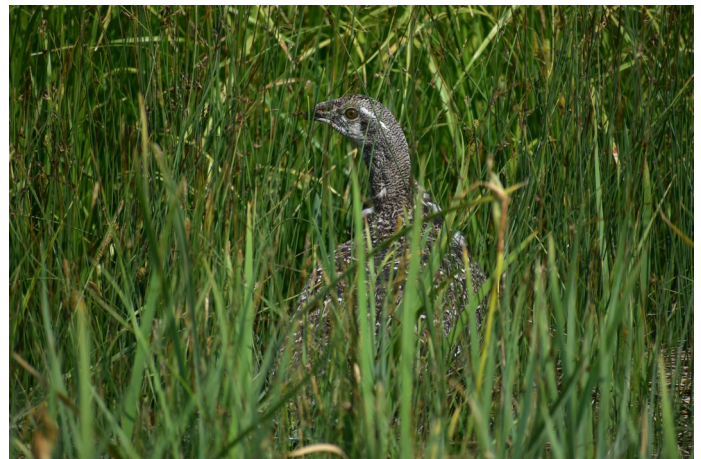


**Pronghorn on Arapaho NWR**  
from Trout Unlimited.

For birders, Arapaho NWR provides a large selection of species and is especially a treat in the spring and fall for migratory species. Since the late 1800s, North Park has been known for high waterfowl productivity, and Arapaho NWR continues to provide crucial breeding habitat. The habitats that Arapaho NWR provide help make North Park one of the most productive waterfowl areas in Colorado. Waterfowl nesting starts in April and proceeds through Au-

gust, after which, the migration south begins. Many species of shorebirds breed at Arapaho NWR and many more pass through refuge habitats during migration.

Arapaho NWR provides choices for optimal bird and mammal viewing in its four different habitats. The place to start is the Visitor Center that has wildlife exhibits, maps, restrooms, and helpful knowledgeable staff. From there, you can drive to Owl Ridge that offers the best view of the Illinois River and the wetlands. Next is the Moose-Goose interpretive one-half-mile nature trail where you will find wildflowers, birds, and an occasional moose. Then it is highly recommended to drive the “birding gem,” a six-mile auto tour route that takes you through the heart of the wetlands and ponds to view waterfowl



**Greater Sage-grouse** by Gary Andrews.

and migratory birds. There is also a “back road” for the adventurous that will take you back to Walden by going along the Illinois River through all the habitats. This six-mile back road starts at the Visitor Center and ends at Hwy 14 east of Walden and is suitable for two-wheel drive vehicles.

Now is a great time to visit Arapaho NWR (especially for birders) as we transition from nesting to fall migration. There is something for everyone of all ages. Bring your binoculars, spotting scopes, and lunch. Arapaho NWR is free for everyone. To see what we are currently viewing, check our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ArapahoNWR>. We hope to see you soon!



## Upcoming Field Trips

*All field trips are free and open to the public. 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 see posts at [www.facebook.com/FortCollinsAudubonSociety](https://www.facebook.com/FortCollinsAudubonSociety) or see member emails sent out one to two weeks in advance of each trip. Attendance may be limited. Bobcat Ridge surveys do not require registration. With questions, suggestions, or interest in leading trips about nature conservation topics, please email [fcasfieldtrips@gmail.com](mailto:fcasfieldtrips@gmail.com).*

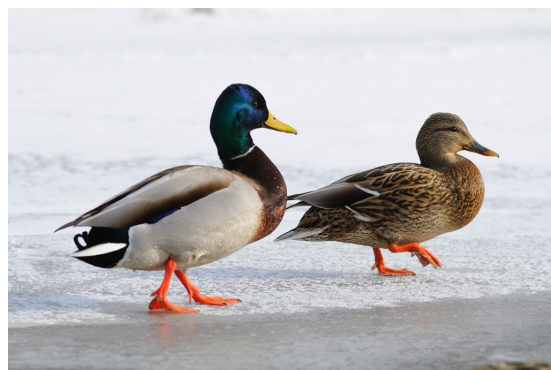
**Sept. 8, Sunday, Bobcat Ridge Survey.** Leader: Denise Bretting, [dbretting@swloveland.com](mailto:dbretting@swloveland.com) or 970-402-1292. The survey looks at bird populations and helps local scientists better understand bird dynamics. The little more than four-mile hike covers moderate to flat 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 a.m. in Bobcat Ridge parking lot.



Red-tailed Hawk and American Kestrel  
By Kate Davis.

**(Tentative) Sept. 18, Thursday, Well Gulch Trail at Lory State Park.** Leader: Amy Roush, [can-yanwren4@gmail.com](mailto:can-yanwren4@gmail.com) or 512-993-0242. Come join us to

see the variety of birds attracted to the sheltered area and stream, including lingering summer species and possible migrants. The trail is steep and rocky. Meet at the Eltuck Picnic Area across the road from the trailhead at 7 a.m. For those without a state park pass, there is a daily vehicle



Mallards by Glenn Upt.

pass fee of \$10 or individual day pass of \$4 for those entering without a vehicle.

**Sept. 22, Sunday, Watson Lake.** Leader: Sheila Webber, [13sheilaw@gmail.com](mailto:13sheilaw@gmail.com). Watson Lake is well-known as a raptor and waterfowl viewing area, but it is also an incredible place to see several species of flycatchers, swallows, and if we are lucky, some migratory wood warblers stopping over.

Have new or old ideas for great field trip locations? Let Amy know at [fcasfieldtrips@gmail.com](mailto:fcasfieldtrips@gmail.com). Keep an eye out for updates on Facebook or email.

## FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Steve Armstead  
Anson Call  
Lori Coyle  
Joyce Dempsey  
Michael Donnelly  
Kathleen Dowd  
Brandee Eide  
Susan Emond  
Dylan Engle  
Richard Ferguson

Chloe Gluklick  
Ted Huston  
Deb Katz  
Laurie Kleespies  
Thomas Kleespies  
Tad (William) Leeper  
Ginny Maillet  
Edward Miron  
Frank Morgan  
Sarah O'Keefe

Nancy Odom  
Philip Ogle  
Carla Pasetti  
Susan Quinian  
Rosemary Rader  
Barbara M. Sanders  
David Shurna  
Bill Smith  
Jen Strating  
Guy Turenne



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



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