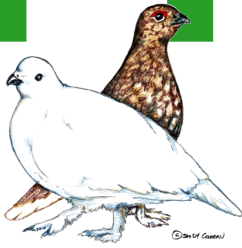


PTARMIGAN



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.

November 2024

Volume 56, Issue 8

FCAS Hosts Nicholas Komar

2024 Recipient of Colorado Field Ornithologist Director's Award

"A Big Year in the USA and Its Territories"

Thursday, November 14

Fundraiser Book and Art Sale, and Social Time with Refreshments: 6 p.m.

Announcements: 7:15; Presentation: 7:30

Door Prize Drawing (must be present to win)

Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Dr.

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

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81933296789>

Nicholas (Nick) Komar, recipient of the Colorado Field Ornithologist 2024 Director's Award, will share his 2023 adventure, experiences, and conservation challenges in his program, "A Big Year in the USA and Its Territories." He served as the Colorado Field Ornithologist president from 2019 to 2023.

Though retired from his 25-year career as a biologist with the Centers for Disease Control, and Protection, Nick continues to work as a birding guide and tour leader through his ecotourism company,



Nick Komar spotting a Brown Booby on Rota Island. Photo by his son, Nicholas A. Komar.

Quetzal Tours. He is working on a book describing his 2023 "Big Year" that he hopes to finish this year. Nick's motto is "work hard — play hard," and he enjoys birding every day, as well as hiking, biking, and playing sports with family and friends.

Join us for this special evening — FCAS's annual fundraising event — on Nov. 14. Book and art items will be on display for purchase along with refreshments and a door prize drawing. This event is free and open to all.

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.

Last month, FCAS named a Nominations Committee (Amy Roush, Lori Pivonka, Barb Patterson, and me) that is responsible for recruiting candidates to serve on our Board of Directors in 2025. The committee has already identified many willing and qualified candidates to serve as officers, directors, and standing committee chairs, but we are still looking to fill at least three vacancies: Programs Committee Chair, Hospitality Committee Chair, and Director-at-Large. Additional vacancies may yet arise.

Our most urgent need is to find a new Programs Committee Chair. This person will lead a small team that plans our monthly programs and finds compelling guest speakers to educate, inspire, and entertain us. They also will write a short (half-page) article for each of our newsletters promoting the upcoming program. Chairing the Programs Committee provides a great opportunity to contribute to perhaps the most important function our chapter serves. If there is a topic or a particular speaker you've been dying to hear, you can make it happen! It's also a great way to meet, network, get involved, and learn. And rest assured, experienced committee members will help you be successful as the chair.

Our Hospitality Committee Chair arranges for refreshments to be provided at monthly programs. We

have limped through 2024 with a vacancy in this position, but may have to stop offering refreshments if we can't find a new chair. Directors-at-Large serve on the

Board of Directors and contribute to all decisions made by the Board, but have no specified duties.

Contact any member of the Nominations Committee to learn more about volunteering for the Board of Directors generally or to learn about any of the specific vacancies mentioned above.



It's Time to Renew Your Membership

It is time to renew your annual 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: <https://www.fortcollinsaudubon.org>. Remember, your membership and contributions are tax deductible, and help make our programs possible. If you renewed September – December 2023, your membership is good through January 2025. Thank you to all those who have already renewed. We appreciate your support!



Renew

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www.fortcollinsaudubon.org

Visit us on Facebook:

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

FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Ian Bonner

Richard Brown

Barbara Case

Linda Cashman

Jean Christman

Lucas N. Gillis

Ann Harrold

Robin Kepple

Peter L. Mattisson

Katie Salter

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.



Woven Mosaics: Conserving the Migratory Path of Sandhill Cranes

As the cooler winds of autumn sweep through Colorado, one of nature's most iconic sights returns to our skies: the graceful migration of Sandhill Cranes. These magnificent birds are embarking on their southward journey, leaving behind their northern breeding grounds for the more hospitable wetlands and prairies of the southern United States and Mexico. Watching their V-shaped formations and hearing their distinctive, ancient calls even at great distances is a reminder of the intricate dance of seasonal migration that has been occurring for millennia.

But beyond their impressive spectacle, the journey of the Sandhill Cranes is a story of interdependent habitats. Their migration path depends on a complex mosaic of resources, ranging from stopover wetlands to expansive grasslands. Key staging areas, like the Platte River in Nebraska, provide crucial resting and refueling points. Here, cranes gather by the thousands to feed on leftover grains from the fields, small invertebrates, and plants. The wetlands offer a much-needed respite, providing both protection from predators and energy-rich food sources that sustain them during their long flights.

In Colorado, places like the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge and the San Luis Valley are critical stopover points for migrating Sandhill Cranes. These areas offer wetlands and agricultural fields that provide food and shelter during their journey. Protecting these key habitats is essential to ensuring that cranes have the resources they need throughout their migration.

As they move southward, Sandhill Cranes seek out other rich environments: shallow marshes, prairies, and

agricultural fields all play a part in their survival. These varied habitats provide the cranes with a diet that changes with the seasons, from grains to aquatic

plants and insects. It's a reminder that habitat conservation is not just about preserving a single place, but about maintaining a chain of connected ecosystems across regions. The loss of even one link in their migratory route can have cascading impacts on the cranes' ability to thrive.

To protect the future of these magnificent birds, we need to think beyond isolated conservation sites. We need a regional approach to conservation, considering and protecting interconnected habitats across municipal boundaries to ensure that cranes

and other migratory species will always have the resources they need throughout their journey. Formalizing efforts to maintain these interconnected conservation areas would further benefit migratory birds by providing a cohesive support system across landscapes. By working together across states and regions, we can ensure that these birds have the resources they need at every stage of their journey.

This fall, as you watch these iconic birds glide overhead, consider the efforts it takes to conserve these habitats, each essential to their remarkable journey. The work done to protect wetlands and prairies doesn't just benefit the Sandhill Cranes; it supports entire ecosystems and helps ensure that these awe-inspiring migrations will continue for generations to come.

Next time you're out in one of our local natural areas, keep an ear open for the rolling trumpets of the cranes, and think about the mosaic of habitats they rely on — each one a vital stop on their ancient path.



Sandhill Cranes by John Shenot.



Sandhill Cranes by Joseph Webber.



Fall and Winter Goose Watching



Canada Goose
by Sheila Webber.

Long V-shaped formations of Canada Geese in August are the most visible sign that fall migration is underway, even if much of our goose population is simply moving around the city. In the fall, Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) that breed in the high Arctic migrate south for the winter, joining resident geese that live in Northern Colorado year-round. Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*), a species that looks very similar to the Canada Goose, winters here as well.

Canada Geese did not historically reside here throughout the year.

Geese used to travel through to winter in the southwest. In the 1950s, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (formerly Colorado Division of Wildlife), wanting to combat overharvesting, asked Gurney Crawford, who worked for the agency, to hatch Canada Goose eggs and rear the chicks. The project was quite successful, and the reliable food supply of lawns and their natural food supply encouraged them to stay in the area.

Cackling Goose, once regarded as a subspecies of Canada Goose, arrive in Northern Colorado from their breeding grounds in the high Arctic in late October through early November. They head north again around early April. Cackling Geese are smaller in general than Canada Geese, have shorter necks and legs, a more petite bill, and a rounded crown. They have a

higher pitched call than Canada Geese too, another helpful tip to tease the two species apart.

Goose watching can be very interesting and rewarding. Not only are they more docile in the non-breeding season — so much so that they let you practically become one of the flock — but I love their fierce parenting style in the breeding season too. Their body language, head movements and vocalizations make them interesting to watch. They are known for their intelligence, strong family ties, and they mate for life.

My son and I worked on getting a band number from a Canada Goose last fall to turn into the U.S. Geological Survey Banding Lab. We used a long lens so as not to disturb

them. The geese wandered over to us, making the task much easier. The last number had worn off the band, so no luck after all. It was fun hanging out with the geese, though.



Brant by Joseph Webber

Another fun aspect of goose watching in the fall and winter is looking out for the rarities or goose species that aren't as common in Northern Colorado, such as Brant (*Branta bernicia*), Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*), Snow Goose (*Anser caerulescens*), and Ross's Goose (*Anser rossii*).

Keep a lookout for interesting behavior and species among the geese this winter. You may be rewarded with some fun experiences.

Book and Art Sale November 14

FCAS Fund Raiser



Join FCAS for a fun evening of shopping, refreshments, and a special program by master birder Nick Komar, detailing his adventures on a birding big year.

Our meeting will start an hour early at 6 p.m. for plenty of shopping time before the program. Browse a beautiful selection of nature themed art, bird guides, original notecards, prints, photos, and nature books. There are local, regional, national, and international birding field guides to help you prepare for your next big birding trip. Get a jump on your holiday shopping for all the nature lovers on your list at this fundraiser and support FCAS!

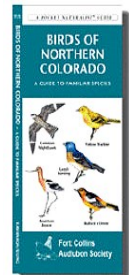
FCAS Pocket Guide to Local Birds

Is available at the following retailers:

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



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 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.

Nov. 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 4-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.

Nov. 15, Friday, Douglas Reservoir Stare Wildlife Area. Leader: John Shenot, johnshenot@gmail.com, 802-595-1669. Dress warmly for this trip to one of the best spots in Larimer County for migrating waterfowl. Douglas Reservoir is an excellent place to look for scoters and loons in November. We'll meet in the parking area at the South end of the reservoir at 8 a.m. Bring a spotting scope if you have one. Note: Though the requirement is seldom enforced, all visitors to State Wildlife Areas are responsible for obtaining or having a valid Colorado State Wildlife Area access pass, or a valid Colorado fishing or hunting license. Passes and licenses can be purchased at: <https://www.cpwshop.com/purchaseprivilege.page>.

Nov. 17, Sunday, LGBTQIA+ and Allies at Red Fox Meadows. Leader: Kit Gray,

kit@kitgrayillustration.com. FCAS is committed to providing a safe space where queer birders and allies of all ages can connect with each other and learn about local bird species.

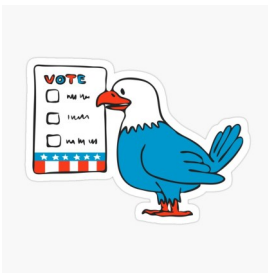
Come join us for a relaxed bird walk with good company! Meet at 8 a.m. at Red Fox Meadows. The walk will last about two hours. Sign up for LGBTQIA+ walk at Red Fox Meadows: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C084CADAEE2CA1FEC70-52310524-lgbtqia>.

Nov. 23, Saturday, Dixon Reservoir. Leaders: Amy Roush, canyonwren4@gmail.com or 512-993-0242 and Alan Godwin. Expect to walk the approx. 2.1-mile loop around Dixon Reservoir on a fairly level trail. This is a good place to see birds on and around the water in cooler months, as well as a birding hotspot year-round! The walk will begin at 8 a.m. and last for about two hours.



White-winged Scoter by Mark Schroeder.

URGENT: Vote this Month on our New Name!



From:
patrimonio - <http://www.apatrimonio.co>

The members of FCAS voted in October 2023 by a majority (69 percent) to rename the organization. The FCAS Board of Directors then created a Name Change Committee that worked to brainstorm and screen potential new names, with input from our members and the broader community.

The Board is now ready for your input on the best alternatives identified by the committee. We invite all members in good standing to fill out a ballot so we can determine which alternative has the broadest support. The three potential names are: 1) Northern Colorado Bird Association, 2) Northern Colorado Bird Alliance, and 3) Northern Colorado Bird and Nature Alliance

On or about November 10, members for whom we have a current email address will receive an email with

the following heading: From: OpaVote Voting Link noreply@opavote.com. Date: Sun, Nov 10, 2024, and Subject: Ballot for Choosing New Name of Fort Collins Audubon Society.

The email will include a link to a secure webpage where you can rank the potential new names according to your preference. The vote will remain open until November 23, but members can vote only once; non-members are not able to vote. The Board will be able to see who has voted and who has not, but not how the person voted. If you don't vote right away, you may receive reminder emails. If you do not receive an email by November 12 and want to vote, contact John Shenot no later than November 18.

For more information about the October 2023 vote to change our name, and the process used to identify potential new names, visit our website at <https://fortcollinsaudubon.org/pages/namechangeupdate.php>.



Fort Collins Audubon Society
PO Box 271968
Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968



Printed on recycled paper

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.