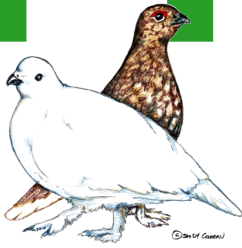


PTARMIGAN



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.

January 2025

Volume 57, Issue 1

FCAS Hosts Ted Floyd, Editor, Birding Magazine

**“The Story of the Cooper’s Hawk: How the bird has changed,
how our knowledge about the bird has changed, and how the bird has changed us”**

Thursday, January 9, 2025

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 is online using Zoom. Enter the following link at 7 p.m. to join the meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8215303844>

The Cooper’s Hawk occupies a very different place from where it did a half century ago. In the mid-1970s, it was a scarce, declining, persecuted “chicken hawk” of forested landscapes. It was a well-known challenge for field identification, and birders wondered aloud whether it would one day be lumped with a similar-seeming species, the Sharp-shinned Hawk. But in the mid-2020s, the Cooper’s Hawk is a common, increasing, and increasingly admired devourer of starlings and colored-doves in towns and cities nationwide. The species has recently been assigned to the genus *Astur*, more



Cooper's Hawk by Ted Floyd.

closely related to the Northern Harrier than to the Sharp-shinned Hawk. Now Cooper’s Hawks occupy an entire suite of places different from their 20th-century antecedents — in the environment, in books we write, and in the neurons and synapses of our prefrontal cortexes.

Ted Floyd is the editor of *Birding Magazine*

and author of more than 200 popular articles, technical papers, and book chapters on birds and nature. Join us for this informative presentation on Jan. 9. This program 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.

President's Corner

by John Shenot

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am excited to announce that Fort Collins Audubon Society will soon be changing our name to Northern Colorado Bird Alliance!

In October 2023, an overwhelming majority (69 percent) of FCAS members who cast ballots authorized the Board of Directors to present at least two potential new names for the organization to members and rename the organization to an option that garners broad support. That is exactly what we've done.

The Board formed an ad hoc Name Change Committee that spent months brainstorming and screening potential names, with input from members and the broader public. Members then had the opportunity in November 2024 to express their support for any of three potential names advanced by the Name Change Committee and to rank the names that they supported in order of preference. The results pointed clearly toward Northern Colorado Bird Alliance, which was supported by 89 percent of voters and was the most preferred option for 53 percent.

Changing our name will have no impact on our relations with the National Audubon Society. We will remain a local chapter of that outstanding national organization, but we are joining at least 28 other local chapters in 14 states that have recently changed their own names to some version of "Bird Alliance." In addition, our mission and the programs and services we provide to members and the

and the public will not change.

The final step in formalizing this momentous decision is to amend the organization's constitution and bylaws. The Board has drafted proposed amendments, which are available on our website at <https://fortcollinsaudubon.org/pdfs/ProposedBylawsAmendmentsFeb2025.pdf>. These amendments will not only rename the organization, but also create a new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee and correct errors in the current bylaws. Members who attend our February 13 program will be asked to approve the proposed bylaws amendments, and if a two-thirds majority approves we will officially become Northern Colorado Bird Alliance.



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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 2024, your membership is good through January 2025. Thank you to all those who have already renewed.



Renew

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Visit us on Facebook:

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

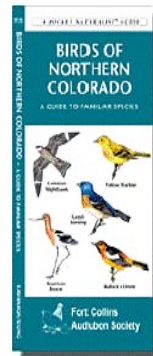
FCAS Pocket Guide to Local Birds

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
2665W. Eisenhower
(970) 667-7375

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



Shaping Conservation Together in 2025

As we welcome 2025, FCAS is excited to share our conservation goals for the year ahead. A major focus this year is our series of conservation-themed bird walks, each designed to highlight unique aspects of wildlife habitat conservation while engaging our community in hands-on learning.

The first walk, centered on conserving migratory bird pathways, will take place in the Running Deer and Riverbend Ponds Natural Areas. These walks aim to educate participants about the vital role northern Colorado plays in the journeys of migratory birds, emphasizing the need to protect riparian and wetland habitats that provide critical stopover points. Riverbend Ponds' aquatic habitats and Running Deer's prairie landscapes will highlight how migratory birds often have diverse needs along their travels, showcasing the importance of conserving and restoring a variety of habitat types and considering conservation at a regional scale.

Another walk will focus on raptors and human-wildlife coexistence, planned for Cathy Fromme Natural Area. Raptors serve as excellent indicators of ecosystem health, and this walk will showcase how habitat preservation and thoughtful urban planning can support these magnificent birds while reducing human-wildlife conflicts.



Western Sandpipers by Carrie Olson.

during a walk at Bobcat Ridge Natural Area. This walk will highlight recent fire and restoration activities, demonstrating the challenges and opportunities involved in restoring grasslands and other habitats. Participants will see firsthand how ecosystems recover from disturbances and the role humans play in

supporting these processes.

Finally, a walk focused on wetland conservation will take place at Cattail Chorus Natural Area. Wetlands are among the most productive ecosystems on Earth, providing critical habitat for birds and other wildlife, as well as essential services like water filtration and flood control.



Riverbend Ponds Natural Area by Joseph Webber.

This walk will highlight the importance of conserving and restoring these vital habitats.

These walks share a common goal: to inspire action by showcasing the beauty, complexity, and fragility of our natural world. By connecting our members to the landscapes and species that define northern Colorado, we hope to encourage active participation in conservation efforts.

Another cornerstone of our 2025 conservation strategy is building stronger partnerships with local conservation organizations. Collaboration is key to addressing complex environmental challenges, and we plan to work closely with groups like city and county natural resources departments, local land trusts, and wildlife advocacy organizations. These partnerships will help amplify our impact and provide opportunities for members to engage in meaningful conservation work.

To further empower our members, we also are prioritizing volunteer initiatives. This includes creating a volunteer sign-up page on our website to make it easier for members to engage with opportunities such as bird monitoring, habitat restoration, and educational outreach. These initiatives allow us to deepen our connection to nature while contributing to the health of our ecosystems. Whether it's monitoring migratory birds at key stopover sites or removing invasive plants to restore native habitats, we invite you to be a part of these vital efforts.

Together, we can make 2025 a year of meaningful conservation progress. By joining our bird walks, partnering with local organizations, and volunteering, you can help us protect the incredible biodiversity that makes northern Colorado so special. Let's take action for birds and the habitats they depend on — one step at a time.



Molt: How Birds Rejuvenate Feathers

Feathers are fascinating for many reasons, not least of which is the process by which birds replace them. This process is known as molt, or molting, and can be quite complicated. The first complication is regarding terminology. Different fields of study within ornithology use terminology that best suits their task. Those identifying birds at a distance often use different phraseology than bird banders when describing molt and plumage. The language used by bird banders is technically more accurate, so I will parenthesize it alongside the more common language.

While feathers are incredibly strong for their weight, they still wear out over time. Most feather damage is usually caused by ultraviolet radiation, though abrasion from daily use wears them down too. Molt functions to replace worn feathers and/or to alter the appearance of the bird. All birds molt at least once a year, known as a prebasic molt, which typically takes place in the fall



Blue Jay by Nick Komar.



Molting Blue Jay from <http://www.creativebirding.com>

here in the United States. During this fall molt (prebasic molt) all the feathers are replaced: flight and body feathers.

Many species undergo additional molts, such as their spring molt (prealternate molt) in which they transition into breeding plumage. This spring (or prealternate) molt is usually an

incomplete molt, unlike the fall (or prebasic) molt. It is incomplete because typically only the body feathers are being replaced at this time, not the flight feathers, which includes the tail feathers. Birds like the American Goldfinch have both a fall (prebasic) and spring (prealternate) molt, while the American Robin only have a fall molt.

There is one more type of molt birds can have: their juvenile (or preformative) molt. There are very few North American species that don't have a juvenile molt, some sea birds and one or two gulls. The first set of feathers a bird grows is not particularly strong, mostly meant to get the bird out of the nest and flying around on its own. Within around a month of leaving the nest, birds start to replace these weak, juvenile feathers for stronger ones that will last them until their next molt during the next spring or fall, depending on the species.

Molt is a considerably more complicated subject than I can adequately explain here. From different molt strategies, to which feathers are replaced during each molt, to using molt to determine a bird's age, there is so much to know! For those interested in learning more about this fascinating area of study, I recommend checking out field guides specific to molt and stopping by a bird banding station to get close-up, expert education on feathers and how they are rejuvenated.



From <https://www.freepik.com>



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 member emails sent out 1-2 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 (all you need is a desire to share your love of birds and/or nature!), please email fcasfieldtrips@gmail.com



Downy Woodpecker along the Poudre Trail
by Evan Lopez

Jan. 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 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 8 a.m. in Bobcat Ridge parking lot.

Thursday, Jan. 30, Lee Martinez Park. Leader: Amy Roush, canyonwren4@gmail.com or 512-993-0242. Join us for a short half-mile to mile-long trip around the Poudre River to look for resident waterfowl, song birds, and maybe spot a few of the winter raptors. Meet at the parking lot off of Sherwood Street at 8 a.m.



American Dipper jumping into the icy Poudre River
by Evan Lopez.

FCAS Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Dorothy L. Adel	Kim Dunlap	Patti Johnson	Jerry Partin
Dale Agger	Kenneth Dunnington	Nancy Jones	Judd Patterson
Stephen Armstead	Deborah A. Durand	Marilyn Kenny	Margaret Reek
Susan BarBour	Libby Edwards	Nick Komar	David J. Robertson
Mary Beck	Glenn Elmore	Linda Kotsides	David Sitzman
Hetty Bixby	Cooper Farr	Barbara Krupnik Goldman	K. Roxanne Squires
Mary Bledsoe	Randy Fischer	Alora LaVoy	Edward & Paula Stearns
Richard Brown	Neal Fuller	Cristie Lee	David Steingraeber
Elaine Burritt	William Gerk	Jane M. Low	John Stroup
Craig Busack	Paul Gibson	Kristi Magee	Ina Szwec
Grant Campbell	Alan Godwin	Judith Christy & Robert Mann	Bobbie Tilmant
Leslie Coleman	Kathy Cosgrove Green	Connie Marvel	Mira Valencia
Mark & Barbara Colvin	Kathleen Hardy	Margo Matthews	Danette Vassilopoulos
Karen Cruise	Clifford Hendrick	Andrew McFadden	Greg Vassilopoulos
Cynthia DeCrescentis	Nancy Hill	Linda McNamara	Karen Wheeler
James DeMartini	Judy Holt	Nancy Metzler	Sandra Winkler
Beth Dillon	Gina C. Janett	Sarah O'Keefe	Deanna Woodcock
Ann Donoghue	Aden Johnson	Connie Ohlson	

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
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.