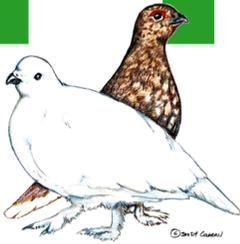


PTARMIGAN



Northern Colorado Bird Alliance

(formerly Fort Collins Audubon Society)

P.O. Box 271968·Fort Collins,CO·80527-1968·www.nocobirdalliance.org

Promoting the appreciation, conservation, and restoration of ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife through education, participation, stewardship, and advocacy.

May 2025

Volume 57, Issue 5

Northern Colorado Bird Alliance hosts

Dr. Stephanie Wheeler, Education Manager, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies

Presenting: "It Takes a Village: Avian Use of Villages in African Savanna"

Thursday, May 15

Social time with Refreshments: 7 p.m.; Announcements: 7:20; Presentation: 7:30

Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Dr.

(There is no door prize)

This program also is accessible using Zoom. Enter the following link at 7 p.m. to join the meeting virtually: <http://us02web.zoom.us/j/.83757942509>

Understanding the impacts of urbanization on bird populations is crucial for protecting them. Villages and other smaller human settlements may present similar benefits as urban areas without some of the same novel dangers. For some species, the resources in villages are abundant and have the potential to influence several aspects of their lives, including survival, reproductive success, and social interactions. Stephanie's study investigated the influence of village proximity on the ecology and behavior of Vitelline Masked Weavers, a human commensal, polygynous, and semi-colonial species.

Stephanie Wheeler grew up in the Chicago suburbs and fell in love with birds when she took an ornithology course in college. After working with



Vitelline Masked Weaver by Stephanie Wheeler.

birds in Illinois, Hawaii, Trinidad and Tobago, and Louisiana, Stephanie wanted to find a way to work more with people in conservation, so she spent two years as a Peace Corps volunteer in Guinea, West Africa. There she partnered with communities in search of sustainable solutions to farming and gardening. After Peace Corps, she earned her doctorate in biology at the University of Florida, where she studied the ecology and behavior of Vitelline Masked Weavers in Kenya, focusing on anthropogenic effects.

Join us on May 15 for this interesting program. It is free and the public is invited.

Northern Colorado Bird Alliance 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 Northern Colorado Bird Alliance. 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.nocobirdalliance.org.

I have several unrelated announcements to share with members. The first is just a reminder that we do not publish newsletters or host programs with guest speakers in June, July, or August. We're looking forward to our May program (see front page for details), but the next program and newsletter will be in September. Throughout the summer, we will continue to host field trips, offer educational events, and spread the word about bird conservation at local community festivals. Our Instagram and Facebook accounts will remain active.

Speaking of social media platforms, we have switched to our new name, Northern Colorado Bird Alliance, on Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. Following us on social media may be the best way to get timely information about what the chapter is doing. If you aren't already seeing our posts, look for us under the new names: <https://www.instagram.com/nocobirdalliance>, <https://www.facebook.com/NoCoBirdAlliance>, and <https://www.youtube.com/@nocobirdalliance>.

I'm going to repeat an announcement from last month's newsletter one more time: we can no longer cash checks made out to Fort Collins Audubon Society or FCAS. If you are renewing your membership or donating, please make checks out to Northern Colorado Bird Alliance.



Finally, I can report that the biggest (but not only) task remaining to complete our chapter's name change is to rebrand our website. We have been working on it behind the scenes and hope to have all the changes implemented this summer. Stay tuned for that!

Northern Colorado Bird Alliance Welcomes New and Renewing Members



- Denise Birdsall
- Jay Breidt
- Richard Brown
- Lisa Carp
- Sara Eftang
- Susan Emond
- Debbie Van Der Hyde
- Diane Kristoff
- Ed Miron
- David J. Robinson
- Pam Turner
- April Whicker
- Elizabeth Whitney
- Emily Wren

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.

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Membership Chair

Harry Rose

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Publications/Newsletter

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For other contacts visit

www.nocobirdalliance.org

Visit us on Facebook:

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

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



New Areas of Conserved Land in Northern Colorado

We are fortunate to live in communities that value and invest in open space and conservation of undeveloped land. Northern Colorado communities have placed conservation at the forefront of strategic planning for decades. Using grant funding from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) and specific tax measures passed multiple times by citizens of Larimer County (Help Preserve Open Space Initiative, extended through 2043) and Fort Collins (Building Community Choices and Open Space Yes!, approved through 2030), more than 68,000 acres of land have been conserved in Larimer County since 1994. The GOCO Initiative, passed by voters in 1992, sets aside Colorado Lottery proceeds for outdoor recreation, trails and open space, wildlife habitat, land conservation, and stewardship projects.



Arrowhead Trail Property purchase adds 196 acres to the future Red-Tail Ridge Open Space. Larimer County photo.

Communities submit applications for grant funding and Larimer County is the top recipient in the state because we have prioritized preserving open space. Since 1992, GOCO has awarded \$1.4 billion in grants, with Larimer County receiving \$70 million! Gems in Larimer County's open lands portfolio, such as Red Mountain Open Space, were purchased with the help of GOCO grants.

The county recently announced the purchase of two new areas for open space. Building on the legacy of previously conserved lands in Larimer County, the two newest acquisitions add 2,000 acres to expand areas of existing open space so that there is continuous and contiguous protection for wildlife across these landscapes. In northern Larimer County, 1,866 acres of land on the Quarter Circle Lazy H Ranch near Livermore will go into a conservation easement with multiple benefits. Although it will remain private land with no public access, the easement will preserve the ranching history of excellent stewardship through five gener-

ations, prevent future development, and keep wildlife corridors open across the working ranch within a landscape of foothills grasslands and shrublands, and views of Livermore Mountain nearby on U.S. Forest Service land. It is part of the Livermore Conservation Project that aims to protect 4,900 acres of ranch land through conservation easements in the area to connect land that includes Eagle's Nest Open Space, Colorado Parks and Wildlife Cherokee Park State Wildlife Area, and Roosevelt National Forest.

The second purchase of two farms in southern Larimer County adds 196 acres to the future Red-Tail Ridge Open Space, a 320-acre property adjoining the Boulder County line, which was purchased in 2000. The



Quarter Circle Lazy H Ranch near Livermore – conservation easements will preserve viewsheds and enhance wildlife corridors. Larimer County photo.

planned Red-Tail Ridge Open Space is near Boulder County's Rabbit Mountain Open Space. Putting together areas of continuously protected land increases the conservation value exponentially. The Arrowhead Trail and land located along the

Little Thompson River with senior water rights is part of the package. The cities of Berthoud and Loveland partnered with Larimer County, GOCO grant money, Colorado Open Lands, and a private donor to make the purchase of the two farms possible. This valuable area of significant wildlife habitat and natural resources will now be permanently protected.



Red Mountain Open Space. Larimer County photo.

Other partners for the two acquisitions include The Nature Conservancy, Gates Family Foundation, and Friends of Larimer County nonprofit. There is good news for conservation, even in this time of unprecedented challenges. Let's keep supporting open space, our smart city and county natural resource planners, and the tax measures that have funded preservation!

Wildlife Viewing While Hiking

Back in the day, Running Deer Natural Area had quite a bit of trash in it. I remember participating in group trash cleanups when multiple large trash bags were necessary to collect it all. Happily in more recent



From Go Hike Colorado.

times, when my partner Harry Rose and I visit Running Deer Natural Area, it has been quite pristine; I am fortunate to find very little detritus to put in to my small arc thrift store plastic bag to deposit in the trash can at the entrance. I particularly like Running Deer Natural Area due to being able to view both birds and mammals. I always feel especially lucky when I observe a Northern Harrier (the Northern Harrier is my favorite bird) cruising low above the ground in search of a victim. My usual sighting is of the brown female Northern Harrier; I have viewed the gray male Northern Harrier only on several occasions over many years.



Bald Eagle at Dixon Reservoir
by John Shenot.

Bald Eagles are occasionally seen on top of power poles at Running Deer Natural area; they are scanning the ground for edible victims such as Cottontail Rabbits as well as reptiles such as Garter Snakes and Gopher Snakes; however, the adult Gopher Snake can be rather large and possibly too heavy to carry away off the ground. Another interesting sighting there was seeing an Osprey chase two Bald Eagles off a telephone post much to the dismay of one of the Bald Eagles that made a cry that was similar to a giggle as it flew away. So much for nobility.

Another plus for Running Deer Natural Area is having a water source that makes for viewing water birds on occasion. And true to its name, we sometimes see Mule Deer, usually females.

The Environmental Learning Center is another loca-

tion where interesting birds are often observed. During a recent visit a male and female Northern Shoveler, and a male and female American Wigeon were observed in the ditch along the entry road. Years ago I would see the occasional Great Horned Owl there, but I haven't seen any for a long time.

My favorite bird memory that happened decades ago is my first ever viewing of a Golden Eagle as it flew over our hiking group at the appropriately named Eagles Nest Open Space. Another thrill was seeing cowboys on horses driving cattle; it made our hiking group feel like we were in a Western movie.

My most recent bird observations have been seeing a Red-tailed Hawk flying overhead, a male Downy Woodpecker feeding on insects, and a Black billed Magpie feeding in a pine tree during the late March hike at Horsetooth Mountain Park.



Northern Harrier
By Evan Lopez



Osprey by Evan Lopez.



Red-tailed Hawk
by Sharon Constant.



May and Summer Field Trips

All field trips are free and open to the public. Anyone at any experience level is 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/NoCoBirdAlliance or member emails sent out 1-2 weeks in advance of each trip. When announced, links will also be posted to the link-tree at <https://linktr.ee/fortcollinsaudubon>. Attendance may be limited. Bobcat Ridge surveys do not require registration.

May 11, 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 a.m. in the Bobcat Ridge parking lot. Other Bobcat Ridge surveys that will occur prior to our next newsletter: June 8, 6:30 a.m.; July 13, 6:30 a.m.; and August 10, 7 a.m.



Blue Grosbeak
by Ron Harden.

Conservancy of the Rockies. The diversity of plant life and associated insects that surround the reservoir offer an abundance of food for migratory birds. Expect a variety of warblers, flycatchers, grosbeaks and buntings, alongside numerous ducks, pelicans and other water birds. Maxwell is a picturesque prairie/foothills area where towhees and bluebirds can be found, with corvids playing in the breeze and raptors soaring high above. Meet in the parking lot for Maxwell Natural Area at 8 a.m. and cross the road into Dixon, where we will likely spend the majority of our time. Time permitting, we will cross back over into Maxwell and search for specialist foothills species. Total distance covered should be less than two miles over mostly flat, unpaved gravel trails with some short inclines/declines.

May 17, Saturday, Running Deer Natural Area. Leader: Sirena Brownlee, sirena.brownlee@hdrinc.com, 970-980-6184. Meet in the parking lot at 9 a.m.

May 22, Thursday, Reservoir Ridge Natural Area. Leader: John Shenot, johnshenot@gmail.com, 802-595-1669. This Fort Collins natural area is the most reliable location in Larimer County to find beautiful, bubbly Bobolinks. Reservoir Ridge also offers good habi-

tat for grassland species such as Western Meadowlarks, Vesper Sparrows, and Grasshopper Sparrows, and Blue Grosbeaks. We'll start at 6 p.m. for an early evening bird walk and cover about 2.2 miles round trip on a flat, soft surface trail. Meet at the parking lot on Overland Trail.

May 24, Saturday, LGBTQIA+ Community and Allies at Reservoir Ridge. Leader: Kit Gray, kit@kitgrayillustration.com. Join us for a relaxed bird outing where we'll work on finding some birds we haven't seen for a bit. We will keep our eyes and ears open for Bobolink, Blue Grosbeak, Yellow-breasted Chat, a variety of sparrows, and kingbirds. All levels are encouraged; please bring binoculars if you have them. Meet at 8 a.m. at the parking lot located at approximately 1425 N. Overland Trail Rd. (Bobolink spur trailhead). This outing will be a slow-paced 2-hour walk on a relatively flat trail. Sign up for the LGBTQIA+ walk has already been released and is available at: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C084CADA2CA1FEC70-55736341-lgbtqia#/>

June, date TBD: Lory State Park with Sirena Brownlee.

Summer Programs at Lory State Park:

Northern Colorado Bird Alliance will partner with Lory State Park to offer a series of educational walks over the summer, with themes such as birding by ear, mindful birding, and what birds eat in the wild. The first of these will be a "Birding 101" event led by Lori Pivonka on May 31 at 8 a.m., starting from the south end of the Eltuck picnic loop. This event will include an initial presentation followed by a shorter walk, which can continue into an optional longer walk. Further information about these programs will be shared on Northern Colorado Bird Alliance and Lory State Park social media and on flyers posted in the park (among other avenues).

Note: other trips will be added for May and especially for later summer months; however, the *Ptarmigan* is not published again until September.



Prairie Warbler
by Gary Robinette.



Printed on recycled paper

Membership Application

Join Northern Colorado Bird Alliance (the chapter), National Audubon Society (NAS), or both.

- New or renewing chapter member \$ 20 Name: _____
Receive the *Ptarmigan* by email
- New or renewing chapter member \$ 30 Address: _____
Receive the *Ptarmigan* by mail
- Lifetime chapter member \$750 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Receive *Ptarmigan* by mail or email
- Additional support for chapter programs \$ ___ Phone: _____
- Additional support for Alex Cringan Fund \$ ___ Email: _____
(natural history education grants)
- New NAS member \$ 20 May we send you chapter email alerts if updates occur for field
Receive the NAS *Audubon* by mail trips, programs, etc.? Yes or No
- Renewing NAS member \$ 35 May we contact you for volunteer activities such as helping at
Receive the NAS *Audubon* by mail events or contacting legislators on important issues? Yes or No

Total Enclosed: \$ ___

Make tax-exempt checks payable to Northern Colorado Bird Alliance and mail this form to Northern Colorado Bird Alliance, 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.nocobirdalliance.org.