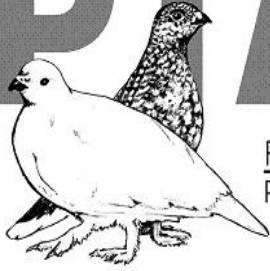


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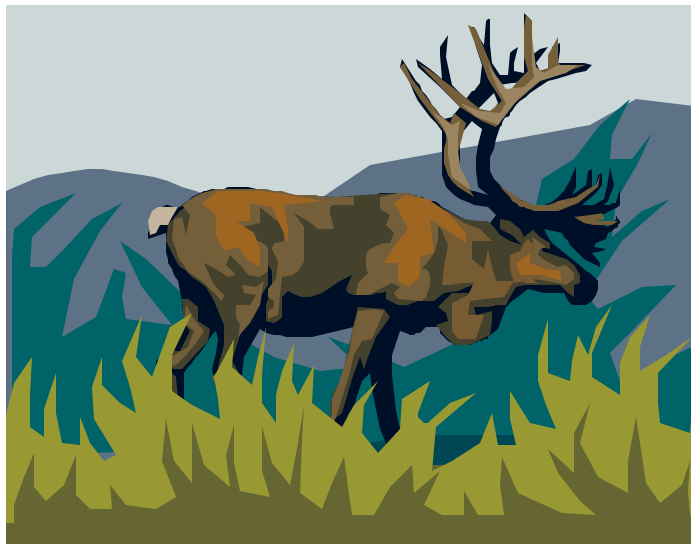
Promoting the appreciation, conservation, and restoration of ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife, through education, participation, stewardship, and advocacy.

November 2006

Volume 38, Issue 3

Backpacking the Brooks Range and the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

In June of 2006, Mark Easter joined his wife and three other friends for the wilderness trip of a lifetime. They traveled by air from Coldfoot, Alaska, to the Jago River in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. From their drop-off point on the Jago, they backpacked a twelve-day circuit that took



them out onto the Coastal Plain, along the contested 1002 study area, then up the Aichilik River and through the Brooks Range

back to the Jago. Along the way they saw caribou, grizzly bears, moose, and a proliferation of nesting waterfowl, shorebirds, songbirds, and flowering plants.

Join Mark for a presentation of their route and slides from the journey, along

with a discussion of the quest for oil in the 1002 study area and the importance of the region for migrating birds and mammals.

THURSDAY EVENING PROGRAM—November 9, 2006
Ludlow Room, Fort Collins Lincoln Center, 417 W. Magnolia Street
Social Gathering: 7:00 p.m., Program: 7:30 p.m.

FORT COLLINS AUDUBON SOCIETY PROGRAMS AND FIELD TRIPS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

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N O V – D E C F I E L D T R I P S

All field trips are free of charge unless otherwise noted and open to the public. All experience levels are welcome. Participants should dress appropriately for the weather. Bring snacks or lunch, water, binoculars, and spotting scopes (if you have them). Carpooling is encouraged. A \$3.00 (unless otherwise specified) contribution per passenger to the driver is suggested. Visit www.fortnet.org/Audubon for more information. For all field trips and surveys, please contact the trip leader for signup and trip details.

A triple asterisk (***) within a field trip description indicates that the field trip will likely include Colorado Division of Wildlife-owned lands. Colorado state law requires all visitors to these lands to possess a Habitat Stamp while on the property. Purchase a stamp online, at a CDOW service center, or wherever hunting and fishing licenses are sold for \$5 with a previously purchased license, or \$10 if purchased separately. Visit <http://wildlife.state.co.us/ShopDOW/AppsAndLicenses/HabitatStamp/> for more information, including exceptions.

11/04/06, Saturday. Larimer Lacustrines. Leader: Eric DeFonso at yoericd@yahoo.com or 970-472-1761. 7:00 a.m. to noon. Lacustrines? That's just a 2-dollar word for birds of lakes and reservoirs. We'll look for and study waterfowl (geese, ducks, loons, swans, scoters) in particular, but also note gulls and raptors and anything else in and around various Fort Collins/Loveland area hotspots. Beginners welcome. Meeting location to be determined. Limited to 12 participants.

11/11/06, Saturday. Birding and Brunch. Leaders: Jessie Meschievitz and Beth Dillon at 970-490-2610. Join us for a morning of birding at Windsor Reservoir in Weld County followed by a brunch hosted by Jessie, who lives adjacent to the reservoir. We will search for birds on the east side of the reservoir, which contains grasslands, shrublands, trees, and a prairie dog town. We then return to Jessie's house for brunch. Birding at her home should be equally interesting with the diverse landscape and feeders to watch. 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Meet at the Harmony Transfer Station at the northwest corner of Harmony and I-25. Limited to 6 participants.

11/12/06, Sunday. Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey. Leader: Sol Miller at eagleeye1029@yahoo.com. Meet at 7:00 a.m. FCAS performs a monthly bird census for the city.

11/18/06, Saturday. Larimer/Weld County Lakes. Leaders: Gary Lefko and Larry Griffin from Ft. Collins (lefkogt@coloradobirding.org), and Barb Gorges from Cheyenne (bgorges2@juno.com or 307-634-0463). A joint birding trip with our friends from High Plains Audubon in Cheyenne; we will visit numerous lakes in both counties in search of waterfowl, gulls, and winter rarities. 8:00 a.m. to late afternoon. Meet at the Rawhide Power Plant visitor overlook on Larimer County Road 82. Limited to 15 participants.

11/19/06, Sunday. Fossil Creek Reservoir Bird Survey. Leader: Nick Komar at quetzal65@comcast.net or 970-416-7527. FCAS performs a monthly bird census for the county. Limited to 5 participants.

12/02/06, Saturday. Winter Raptors. Leader: Phil Friedman at 970-493-2959 or phifri@frii.com. 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.. Meet at the southwest side of the Harmony Library parking lot (Front Range campus @ Harmony & Shields). Travel to city-owned natural areas in search of wintering raptors. We will begin with basic raptor identification and the birds found here this time of year. Plan on carpooling. Limited to 8 participants.

12/09/06, Saturday. Poudre River. Leader: Roger Sleeper at sleep796@hotmail.com or 970-232-5152. 8:00–late morning. Meet at North Shields Pond Natural Area on North Shields Street in Fort Collins. We will walk and search for birds along the Poudre River. Limited to 8 participants.

12/10/06, Sunday. Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey. Leader: Sol Miller at eagleeye1029@yahoo.com. Meet at 7:00 a.m. FCAS performs a monthly bird census for the city. All levels welcomed.

12/16/06, Saturday. Fort Collins Christmas Bird Count. Leaders: Nick Komar and Sue Riffe. Details will be published in the December Ptarmigan.

12/17/06, Sunday. Fossil Creek Reservoir Bird Survey. Leader: Nick Komar at quetzal65@comcast.net or 970-416-7527. FCAS performs a monthly bird census for the county. All levels welcomed. Limited to 5 participants.

April 2–6, 2007. Colorado Grouse. Leader: Sue Riffe at sheflew2@comcast.net or 970-232-4539. Our trip will take us from the eastern prairies of Colorado to the Rocky Mountains and western slope of the state. We will cover about 1500 miles in search of our target species: Greater & Gunnison's Sage-Grouse, Sharp-tailed & Blue Grouse, and Lesser & Greater Prairie-Chicken. Other species of interest include White-tailed Ptarmigan, Mountain Plover, Brown-capped Rosy-Finch, McCown's & Chestnut-collared Longspur, and many others. Cost is \$1,200, which includes a \$100 donation to Fort Collins Audubon, four nights lodging, entry fees, transportation, guide, and taxes (no meals). Trip limited to 7 people so sign up early.

Reports from FCAS Scholarship Winners

Here is the second installment of excerpts from the reports from the FCAS Scholarship recipients (pages 3 and 4). Please look on the FCAS website for more from Jeanna Dolezal, the teacher who attended the Rocky Mountain Nature Association classes.

Name: Nathan Berryman

Age: Senior, Loveland High School

Experience: Colorado River Ecology Trip

The Colorado River Ecology Trip this summer was an amazing, once in a lifetime kind of trip. It was such a great opportunity to expand my knowledge, and really get hands on with the Ecology of the Colorado River.

We learned about the history of the river, and what the river was like before all the dams were built along the river. Surprisingly it was much different than it is today. As we were floating down the river in the rafts, we would stop along the bank to each lunch. There is where a lot of discussions of the water rights of the river would come up. Who gets to use the water? How much water is given to each city? How much is used for agriculture? These are just a few of the questions that would arise during these riverside discussions.

We learned a lot about the native Colorado river fishes, and how some are now disappearing and becoming endangered because of all the dams that have been built over the years. We were also able to observe a lot of the wildlife along the river, such as all the different species of wild birds that rely on the Colorado River to survive.

At the end of a long day of paddling the rafts down the river, we would find a nice spot to set up camp alongside the river. We would make dinner and later have a group activity, such as role playing a mock town meeting to discuss the water rights of the river and the best usage of Lake Powell, a lake that is in fact fed by the Colorado River. The group would start the mornings off with a nice breakfast, and a little nature hike before getting back in the rafts to head down the river.

There was so much to see, do, experience and learn about on this trip but one of the main goals of the trip was to just have FUN, and that's exactly what we did.

Name: Jera Ruiz

Age: 4th grade

Experience: CSU ELC day camp – Hydro Hysteria and Close Encounters

Hi, my name is Jera. I had a lot of fun at summer camps. My favorite thing to do during water camp was looking for water insects. I learned that only 2% of earth's water is non-salt. If you want to find salt, go to the beach. The ocean is filled with salt.

In survival camp, I played a lot of survival games. One game we used 3 boards to cross water to get pretend food. It was kind of hard because it took a lot of thought to figure out how to use the 3 boards to get across.

I think this is one of the best camps to go to because you learn things you would need to know if you were stranded on a desert island.

(Jera also drew a picture of the water camp, with "all the water insects and crawdads in algae stuff.")



Name: Jeanna Dolezal

4th Grade Teacher, Cottonwood Plains Elementary School

Experience: RMNA Classes – Beaver, Elk and Willow—the Complex Web they Weave; Uppity Women of the Rockies; Ute People and Plants; and Reading the Landscape of the Rockies.

Please go to the FCAS website for Jeanna's other reports.

Beaver, Elk, and Willow in Rocky Mountain National Park

At one time, over 300 beaver made their home in Moraine Park in Rocky Mountain Park. Now there are none, said Bruce Baker of the U.S. Geologic Survey and the U.S. Department of the Interior. Baker spoke to a group of nature enthusiasts August 5 at the Seminar Center during a class he taught called, Beaver, Elk and Willow.

In this field seminar, Baker described the vital interaction between beaver, elk, and willow in Rocky Mountain National Park and the importance of beaver as essential ecosystem engineers. When the first Europeans journeyed across the massive Great Plains to Colorado they found over 400 million beaver in the west. Soon the beaver market skyrocketed, beaver pelts were bartered like dollars, and by the late 1700s the beaver was nearly completely exterminated as a result of the demand.

On the other side of a ridge from Moraine Park, Baker led the group to view an active six foot tall beaver dam at Hollowell Park, hiking through tall grasses and wet, thick mud. The soft tops of tall willow bobbed as the group snaked behind Baker. The ground in this area is carved with deep river channels made by the beaver and hidden by the thick grass. Visitors to this beaver habitat must watch their steps to avoid a sudden drop and twisted ankle.

As an ecosystem engineer, beaver have a large effect on their environment relative to their numbers, explained Baker. When beaver build a dam on a river or stream, water becomes blocked up. Considerable sand, silt, and mud build up in front of the dam as it is washed down the river, and stopped at the site of the beaver dam.

When the beaver dam collapses because of poor construction, too much sand and silt buildup in the dam, or old age, the force of the water pushing through the broken dam quickly throws the sand, silt, and mud out in a fan-shape area above the banks of the river and on either side of the river. This creates a new, higher level terrain on the river, rich in sand, silt and mud. This new rich river bed nurtures new seed growth for future plant growth along the river. Most often, new willow wetlands are created. Many broad, flat valleys in the Rocky Mountain region were originally created by this beaver activity.

In this way, the beaver benefits willows and wetlands and the willow mutually benefits the beaver, said Baker. Willow is a main food and construction source for the beaver. Baker reached high to bend over the top of a tall willow growing nearby. The tip of the willow branch was well over six-feet high. Beaver eat the willow leaf and stem as an herb in the summer and the inside wood of the willow as a food source in the winter. The hard, long woody parts of the willow are used for weaving the dam.

But the willow is also a favorite for another species in the park—elk. "In regions heavily browsed by elk," said Baker, "this mutualism collapses." Baker pointed out the well browsed, short willow brush on the edges and peripheral vegetation surrounding the beaver area. Most of this elk-browsed willow brush had many dead, gray branches poking out from them. The willow bushes were only a couple of feet tall. In a beaver habitat, long and tall willow is needed to weave for construction, said Baker. This is why beaver choose areas with low elk populations to live.

Ponds in the park freeze deep in the winter, said Baker. "A bunch of little willow, heavily browsed, do not feed the beaver well," said Baker. To survive, the beaver need a high volume of willow, enough for each member of the colony. When elk in the region browse the top of a willow shrub, they are cutting off the plant before it can go to seed and regenerate. Also, when the elk browse the tips of the willow, instead of sending new tall shoots up, the willow will fan out in a hand-shaped growth that is not useful for the beaver.

By example, Baker said a small stout, heavily browsed willow shrub in Moraine Park could be over 20 years old, while a 3 year, young willow in Hollowell Park, where elk rarely browse, could be over eight feet tall.

Intense elk browsing in a region excludes beaver from thriving, said Baker. While elk enjoy the willow, they do not depend exclusively on this vegetation to survive. The beaver, on the other hand, must have tall, thick patches of willow to thrive.

"If we lose the beaver wetlands, we will lose the willow that both the beaver and the elk enjoy," summarized Baker. "With an abundant willow food source, beaver can occupy an area for hundreds and hundreds of years."

Better Living, Better Birding

Lynne Hull, Education Chair

Our FCAS participation in the 2nd annual Northern Colorado Birding Fair was a success—dozens of kids ran around wearing their newly created “bird headdresses” (they had to learn some things about our local birds to do the activity) while their parents browsed our FCAS booth and picked up copies of our new “Birds of Northern Colorado” field guide. For those of you with youngsters that you’d like to introduce to birding, a new website was brought to our attention, www.fledgingbirders.org. It’s full of tips for introducing young people, even toddlers, to birdwatching.

.....

My political radar went off like lightning when I heard the KRFC radio coverage of an event featuring Marilyn Musgrave and Richard Pombo, of the House of Representatives Resource Committee. The pair sponsored the Oversight “Hearing” on September 18th at the Weld County Courthouse. The event was called “Abuses of the Endangered Species Act: The So-Called ‘Preble’s Meadow Jumping Mouse.’ ” Does that give you a clue about the balance and neutrality of the “hearing?”

Richard Pombo, with Musgrave, recently got “TESRA,” The endangered species “recovery act” passed through the House. TESRA, like most of the Bush administration’s environmental rulings and actions, is actually about economic development for a select few at the expense of species’ conservation and environmental health. It removes habitat protection for endangered species. Odd how, with 86% of the American people expressing support for the Endangered Species Act, which works quite well, our Colorado representative feels free to make debilitating changes to it.

Invited witnesses for the hearing opposed the listing of the PMJ Mouse as an endangered species. Most speakers represented water companies, irrigation companies, the farm bureau, or housing development corporations. Nearly all the arguments were based on questioning whether the mouse is a genuine subspecies or whether it is closely related to other jumping mice. The assumption seemed to be that we can destroy the population here in Wyoming and Colorado on behalf of various types of development in

the mouse’s riverside habitat if there are populations elsewhere. All arguments were laid out in black-and-white, either-or choices, as if there were no alternatives to radically increasing water storage facilities and developing every square inch of our Colorado landscape. Since the mouse impedes economic development, it should be removed from the endangered species list.

One lone representative of an environmental organization spoke as a witness in favor of maintaining the unique mouse and the act; interestingly, Ms. Musgrave neglected to thank him for speaking at the hearing when she thanked all the others.

Why do we need the mouse? What is it doing in our riparian areas? In the years since we noticed it was threatened, apparently we didn’t find that out. While reading the documentation of the testimonies, I was also reading an article in my WEEK news magazine

...(W)ith 86% of the American people expressing support for the Endangered Species Act, ... our Colorado representative feels free to make debilitating changes to it.

by one of the passengers on the small jet that was clipped by the large passenger jet that went down recently in the Amazon, killing all aboard. While his small jet frantically searched for and found a place to land, the writer watched, horrified, as rivets popped and the wing of the plane peeled back. It vividly brought to mind my favorite metaphor for all those small and “threatened” species: that of planet earth as an airplane, carrying all of us through space. The loss of each species is one of those rivets popping out: Preble’s Meadow Jumping Mouse, Pop! Passenger Pigeon, Pop! Snail Darter, Pop! Ivory-billed Woodpecker, Pop! Which one is the last one before the wing comes off?

And let’s look at that mouse. Riparian habitat is absolutely essential to survival for many wildlife species of the dry west. It will be even more critical as global warming makes relocation necessary to many species that have the capacity to migrate to cooler altitudes or whose alternate water supplies dry up or are taken over for human use. If I were writing a children’s book, the grumpy, scruffy little mouse might be the hero, saving the lives of all the other species who also depend on his riverbank, defending them against Mean Marilyn and Drill the Arctic, Sink the Species Pombo.

CONSERVATION CORNER — Bill Miller, Acting Conservation Chair

NATIONAL PARKS – IN DANGER, OR NOT?

George Catlin (1796–1872), an artist who sketched and painted scenes from daily Indian life, worried about the impact of America’s westward expansion. He envisioned a “national park” when he wrote that Indian civilization, wildlife and wilderness may be preserved in “... A nation's park, containing man and beast, in all the wild and freshness of their nature's beauty!"

Yellowstone National Park was established by Congress in 1872 as the nation’s first national park, signifying that public lands were to be set aside and administered by the federal government "for the benefit and enjoyment of the people." In August of 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Organic Act creating the National Park Service (NPS). *The service thus established shall promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations hereinafter specified by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purposes of the said parks, monuments, and reservations, which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as **will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.***

Our national parks have been administered under a basic management policy document that evolved over time but stayed true to the fundamental principle of leaving the parks unimpaired for future generations. Unfortunately, a secret draft revision of the basic management policy document has recently been circulating within the Interior Department, the parent agency of the NPS. The draft was prepared, without consultation of NPS, by Paul Hoffman, a deputy assistant secretary at Interior who once ran the Chamber of Commerce in Cody, Wyo., who was a Congressional aide to Dick Cheney, and who has no park service experience.

This rewrite of park rules, which essentially undermines the protected status of the national parks, has been met with profound dismay by NPS personnel. The document makes it perfectly clear that this rewrite was not prompted by a compelling change in the park system's circumstances but by an opportunity to craft a vision of the national parks that suits the Bush administration. Some of the changes appear trivial

but may have serious impact. For example, changing "protect" to "conserve" will weaken the standard used to judge the environmental effects of park policy.

The rewrite is a frontal attack on the idea of "impairment." According to the Organic Act, preventing impairment of park resources, including the landscape, wildlife, and intangibles such as the soundscape of Yellowstone, is the "fundamental purpose." Mr. Hoffman's rewrite would open up nearly every park in the nation to off-road vehicles, snowmobiles, and Jet Skis, the use of which would now become one of the parks' purposes. To allow such activities, Hoffman redefines impairment to mean an irreversible impact. To now prove that an activity is impairing the parks, you would have to prove that it is doing so irreversibly—a very high standard of proof.

Mr. Hoffman’s rewrite replaces the emphasis of protecting parks for the future with an emphasis on the present, on what he calls "opportunities for visitors to use and enjoy their parks." Furthermore, Mr. Hoffman’s rewrite would allow the sale of religious merchandise; remove any reference to evolutionary processes; strip away scientific basis for park management; subordinate the management of parks to local and state agendas; and it would also permit a much wider range of commercial activity within parks.

We go to national parks to use and enjoy them. But part of the enjoyment of being in a Yosemite or a Grand Canyon is knowing that, no matter how much it changes by natural processes over time, it will continue to exist substantially unchanged. What Mr. Hoffman has produced is a road map of what could happen to the parks if Mr. Bush's political appointees are allowed to have their way.

It is clear by now that Mr. Bush has no real intention of living up to his campaign promise to fully finance the national parks. Suddenly, many things—like the administration's efforts to force snowmobiles back into Yellowstone—seem very easy to explain.

In short, this is not a policy for protecting the parks. It is a policy for destroying them.

A nation behaves well if the natural resources and assets which one generation turns over to the next are increased and not impaired in value.
—Theodore Roosevelt

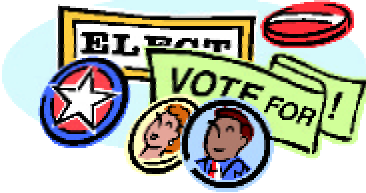
Welcome to our newest members! We look forward to seeing you at our meetings!

- | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| K. Coombes | Raelyn Donahue | Susan Dullman | Karen Friesen | Ellen J. Frommhold |
| R. S. Gier | James R. Hayes | Geraldine Holcombe | Sharon Holland | Bill and Marie Hurmence |
| Lila P. Klingenberg | Arielle Long Kukafka | Judy Robertson | Jessica Rubado | Jean Owens Schaefer |
| Gina Singleton | Lloyd and Bev St. Croix | Joann M. Thomas | Guthrie Zimmerman | |

TAKE ACTION

"A time comes when silence is betrayal. Men do not easily assume the task of opposing their government's policy, especially in time of war. We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak. For we are deeply in need of a new way beyond the darkness so close around us.... We are called upon to speak for the weak, for the voiceless, for the victims of our nation, for those it calls enemy, for no document from human hands can make these humans any less our brothers."

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1967, during the Vietnam War, when he spoke up at the Riverside Church in New York City, against the flag-wavers and public opinion polls of the day.



You may think that it isn't too important to vote this year, being that it is just a mid-term election between presidential elections. On the contrary, this may be one of the most important elections in the history of our nation. Up for election are ALL of the seats in the U.S House, 33 senatorial seats, and 36 governors.

In writing for the AARP Bulletin (www.aarp.org/bulletin/yourlife/seven_reasons_to_vote.html), Elaine S. Povich quoted, "This election is about 'Do you like the direction of the country, or do you want a change?'" More specifically, she listed issues that are on Americans' minds that will be affected by the outcome of the Nov. 7th election. The war in Iraq seems to be on the top of almost everyone's list. Beyond that she gave these seven reasons to vote in 2006:

Social Security – do we shore up the current system, replace it with a system of personal retirement accounts, delay the age for receiving benefits, or increase payroll taxes?;

Medicare – the system is about to be inundated by the baby boom generation while also being beset by increased prescription costs;

Long-Term Care – there is no comprehensive system;

Economic Security – retirement, pensions, minimum wage, affordable energy while protecting the environment and conserving resources without slowing economic growth;

Health Care Reform – access to affordable health insurance and care;

Integrity in Government – corruption and excessive influence by lobbyists;

Presidential Power and Congressional Oversight – what is the appropriate balance between congressional and presidential powers?

Other issues floating in the mix include immigration, stem cell research, education, medical malpractice and identity theft, to name just a few. The next leaders in both Congress and in statehouses will determine how to allocate finite resources. You have the opportunity to decide who those leaders will be.

PLEASE VOTE!

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PROPOSED BYLAW CHANGE:

Each year, we have a difficult time identifying volunteers to serve in each office or position on our Board of Directors. This year, the nominating committee has found only one person willing to serve as President, and that is our current President, Joel Hurmence. However, our bylaws currently prohibit a president from succeeding himself/herself. The Board of Directors hereby proposes the following change to the bylaws, to be voted on by those members present at the program meeting on November 9, 2006.

Shall Section 1 of Article V of the Society's bylaws be amended by deleting the provision that the President "... shall not succeed himself/herself."?

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- Receive regular news posts on FCAS events
- Get timely monthly meeting reminders
- Hear of volunteer opportunities as they arise



Go to www.fortnet.org/Audubon/fcaudubon.htm to learn more and to subscribe to the *fcaudubon* e-mail news service.

Membership Application

Join the Fort Collins Audubon Society (FCAS) directly, or automatically become a member by joining the National Audubon Society (NAS). *Choose one below:*

- New or Renewing Member of FCAS** (annual dues) **\$15**
 (Receive the *Ptarmigan* newsletter)
 FCAS may share my name with NAS
- New Member of NAS & Chapter** **\$20**
 (Receive *Audubon* magazine and *Ptarmigan*)
- Renewing Member of NAS & Chapter** **\$35**
 (Receive *Audubon* magazine and *Ptarmigan*)

Did you know? Less than \$1 of your NAS dues is left for FCAS funds. FCAS serves NAS members through its own fundraising efforts. We appreciate your financial support!

Additional donation to FCAS \$ _____
Total enclosed \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: ____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

- I prefer to receive the *Ptarmigan* via the FCAS website. Please e-mail me when posted.**

Please make your check payable to **FCAS** and send along with this form to: **Fort Collins Audubon Society, PO Box 271968, Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968**

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