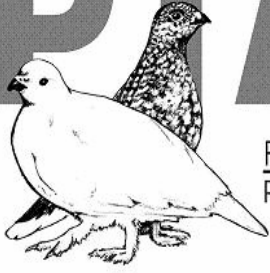


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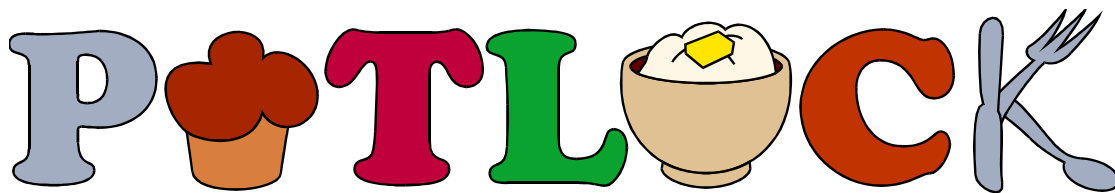


FORT COLLINS AUDUBON SOCIETY
P.O. Box 271968 • Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968 • www.fortnet.org/Audubon

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

December 2007

Volume 39, Issue 4



Annual December Potluck and Slide Show

Join us

for our annual potluck and traditional member slide show on December 13, at the Foothills Unitarian Church, 1815 Yorktown Avenue. Set-up is at 6:00 p.m. and the potluck starts at 6:30 p.m. YOUR slide show begins at 7:00 p.m. Please plan to arrive at 6:00 p.m. and bring your favorite dish or dessert to share (four to eight servings), and any necessary serving utensils. Beverage containers and drinks will

be provided. You, our members, provide the program on varied topics of wildlife and nature. For the sake of time, please limit yourself to no more than 15 slides. Prints of your favorite pictures can also be passed around while the lights are still on. Laptop, PowerPoint, digital projector, and spare slide trays will be made available. You can bring your own digital media or Kodak Carousel-compatible tray. Feasting will commence by 6:30 p.m. and the show will be underway by 7:00 p.m.

December Potluck and Slideshow — December 13, 2007
Foothills Unitarian Church, 1815 Yorktown Avenue, Fort Collins
Potluck: 6:30 p.m., Slideshow: 7:00 p.m.

Fort Collins Christmas Bird Count—December 15
Loveland Christmas Bird Count—January 1
See Page 9 for details

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

Visit our website at www.fortnet.org/Audubon or call 970-490-BIRD.

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DECEMBER - JANUARY FIELD TRIPS

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. 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 sign up and trip details. Field Trip Coordinator: Eric DeFonso, yoeric@yahoo.com or 970-472-1761.

December 8, Saturday. Coyote Ridge Weather Walk.

Leader: Eric DeFonso (yoericd@yahoo.com or 970-472-1761). If you like to talk about the weather, and I mean really talk about the weather, then this is for you! Come along as winter approaches for an Audubon trip of a different sort as we interpret the sky conditions during a pleasant walk up the hogbacks between Fort Collins and Loveland. We'll also explore what makes Colorado weather and climate the way it is, and how it affects the land and animals around us. All levels and experiences welcome. 8:00 to 11:00 a.m. Meet in the Coyote Ridge Natural Area parking lot.

December 8, Saturday. Second Saturday Natural History Walk.

Leader: Joann Thomas (970-482-7125). 7:45 to 10:00 a.m. Join us for our yearlong series of nature walks along the Poudre River each month. Meet at Nix Farm Natural Area, 1745 Hoffman Mill Rd. From Lemay (between Riverside & Mulberry), turn east onto Poudre River Dr. just north of the RR tracks. Follow Poudre River Dr. as it curves, changes names to Hoffman Mill Rd., and eventually dead-ends at Nix Natural Area. Our walks and studies will focus on birds, wildflowers, mammals, river morphology, and the effects of time and human habitation on the riparian area. Dr. Gigi Richard, a hydrologist and river expert from Grand Junction, will join us to discuss the formation of rivers. Along the way we'll check out the special spots we observed on our previous trips. Bring a notebook, binoculars if you have them, and your enthusiasm. Call for details about location and parking. Open to everyone; handicapped accessible; no registration required.

December 9, Sunday. Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey.

Leader: Sol Miller at eagleye1029@yahoo.com. Meet at 7:00 a.m. FCAS performs a monthly bird census for the city of Fort Collins. All levels welcomed.

December 14, Friday. North Park Christmas Bird Count. Contact: Deb McLachlan at deb.mclachlan@state.co.us.

December 15, Saturday. Fort Collins Christmas Bird Count. Contact: Sue Riffe at sheflew2@comcast.net or 970-232-4539. See details on Page 9.

December 15, Saturday. Rocky Mountain National Park Christmas Bird Count. Contact: Scott Roederer at osprey@estesvalley.net.

December 17, Monday. Nunn Christmas Bird Count. Contact: Jim Sedgwick at empidonxj@netzero.net or 970-495-9970.

December 26, Wednesday. Rawhide Christmas Bird Count. Contact: Ron Ryder at ronr@lamar.colostate.edu.

January 1, 2008, Tuesday. Loveland Christmas Bird Count. Contact: Connie Kogler at 970-622-9710 or zblueheron@gmail.com. See details on Page 9.

March 31–April 5, 2008, Colorado Grouse Trip. Join Fort Collins Audubon member Sue Riffe on her third trip across Colorado in search of grouse species. Our trip will take us to all four corners of the state and cover about 1500 miles in search of our target species: Greater and Gunnison's Sage-Grouse, Sharp-tailed and Dusky Grouse, and Lesser and Greater Prairie-Chicken. We also hope to see White-tailed Ptarmigan, Mountain Plover, Brown-capped Rosy-Finch, McCown's and Chestnut-collared Longspur. We had a fabulous group last year that spotted 139 species, including Northern Goshawk and great looks at Red Crossbills and White-tailed Ptarmigan at 20 feet! Cost is \$1,200, and includes a \$100 donation to Fort Collins Audubon, four nights lodging, entry fees, transportation, guide and taxes. No meals are included. Trip limited to 7 people. Contact Sue Riffe at www.coloradolektours.com, 970-232-4539, or sue@coloradolektours.com.

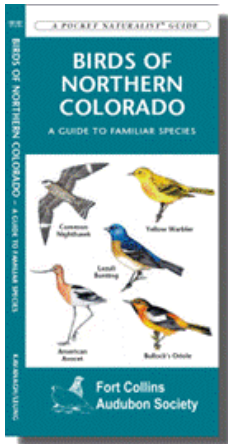
WATCH FOR OUR UPCOMING SURVEY

FCAS would like to know what you think about our organization and where we should be going. We will be conducting a survey of the membership over the next few months and hope as many of you as possible will participate. We will try to make it as easy as possible by starting with an online survey form that will take only a few minutes and can be done at your convenience. We will follow this up with a telephone survey of selected members that will allow us to have a more in-depth conversation.

More information about the survey will be available in the upcoming issues of the *Ptarmigan* and by e-mail for those of you for whom we have addresses. Watch for it and help us out!



Looking for Just the Right Gift?



FCAS Pocket Guide to Local Birds
is now available at the following retailers,
who are supporting our organization with the sales:

Wild Birds Unlimited
248 E Monroe Drive
(970) 225-2557

Ranch-Way Feeds
546 Willow Street
(970) 482-1662

**The Matter Bookstore/
Bean Cycle Coffee**
144 N College Avenue
(970) 472-4284

Jax Farm and Ranch
1000 N Highway 287
(970) 484-2221

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

Bath Garden Center & Nursery
2000 E Prospect Road
(970) 484-5022

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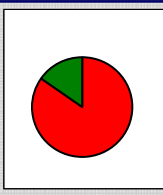
Walk your environmental talk—Get your newsletter online!



Would you like to reduce the amount of mail you receive? Use less paper? If you have access to the Internet, you can choose to receive e-mail notification when the *Ptarmigan* is available on the Fort Collins Audubon Society's website! The current issue of the newsletter is available online to members only, is available a week or two earlier than the paper copy, AND is in COLOR! If you'd like to receive an e-mail notification, please e-mail your **name and address as it appears on your newsletter's mailing label** and

the e-mail address you wish to use to shelagh.tupper@gmail.com. Please indicate whether you want just e-mail or if you would prefer both e-mail and the paper newsletter. We'd be happy to accommodate. Here's an opportunity to practice what we preach! A BIG thanks to those who have made the switch!

November newsletter distribution



Paper: 620 (85%)
E-mail: 112 (15%)

**Do you really need
the paper version?**

Conservation Corner

Bill Miller - Conservation Chair

FINDING THE SPIRIT IN NATURE

There was a time when our species lived close like this to the land and its inhabitants, when there was less stuff between us and the natural order of things, when we were less estranged and our dependence upon the natural world was so much more obvious. It was essential to watch the comings and goings, paying attention to signs and seasons. Because of this, those deepest ancestors—intimate with the geography of their existence—saw in the landscape something more, something within the rock, on the wind, in the sky, in the look of a deer, that is today forgotten or ignored, disregarded as being unscientific and unsophisticated. But those years in the woods reminded me how natural it is to perceive the world as being infused with spirits or gods, deities or the divine. Our forebears saw the divine in radiant sunsets, the spiritual in the flight of a hawk, God in a starry sky. Now I, too, began to look for signs of the creator in creation.

— **By Kerry Temple, from *Finding the Spirit in Nature - Coming Home to the Land***

“Anything else you’re interested in is not going to happen if you can’t breathe the air and drink the water. Don’t sit this one out. Do something. You are, by accident of fate, alive at an absolutely critical moment in the history of the planet.”

— **Carl Sagan**

“The price of apathy towards public affairs is to be ruled by evil men.”

— **Plato**

GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE CONSERVATION EFFORTS

Recently, I learned of two efforts that support Gunnison Sage-Grouse conservation efforts.

1. The purchase of a 1,600-acre ranch by the Colorado Division of Wildlife in Gunnison County.
2. Efforts to restore sagebrush in Gunnison Sage-Grouse habitat.

DOW PURCHASES RANCH, KEY WILDLIFE HABITAT IN GUNNISON COUNTY

In a news release from the Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW) on November 7, 2007, it was announced that the DOW, in its continuing effort to maintain important wildlife habitat throughout the state, had purchased a 1,600-acre ranch in Gunnison County.

The ranch, previously owned by the Miller family, is located about 10 miles north of Gunnison in the Ohio Creek Valley. The ranch has been owned and operated by the Miller family for more than 100 years. During this time, the Millers took great care to maintain wildlife habitat on the property.

As a result, the ranch provides critical habitat for the Gunnison Sage-Grouse, and winter range and a key migration corridor for deer and elk.

“This ranch is possibly the most important purchase the DOW will ever make to maintain Gunnison Sage-Grouse habitat,” said Tom Spezze, southwest regional manager for the DOW. “The Ohio Creek Valley is the heart of the core population for the bird. This is a very important area for the DOW to continue its work on Gunnison Sage-Grouse conservation. I consider it an honor that the Millers wanted to preserve the wildlife values on the ranch and to hold it in public trust with the Colorado Division of Wildlife.”

During the last couple of years, the family has had offers from real estate developers who wanted to divide the ranch into 35-acre parcels. In order to preserve the land and the wildlife, the Millers decided instead to sell the ranch to the DOW. “We didn’t want to see it sold to developers,” Carl Miller said. “This is what we grew up with, this is what we love and this is what we want it to continue to be. This ranch has been in our family for seven generations. We know the

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DOW will sustain the beauty of the land for generations to come.”

Support for purchase of the property was overwhelming from the Gunnison-area community, and state and regional leaders. “People recognized the importance of this property and supported the efforts of the Millers and DOW to protect it,” Spezze said.

DOW staff had been working on this project for 18 months. At first a conservation easement on the property was proposed, but the family decided that a fee-title purchase was best to secure the long-term integrity of the ranch. Half the funding came from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) through Lottery funds and the other half came from the DOW's Habitat Stamp program. GOCO has invested heavily in preserving agricultural properties in Gunnison County because of the wildlife habitat and scenic viewsheds they provide. To date, GOCO has awarded grants totaling \$15 million for land preservation in the Gunnison area. Since June 2006, the DOW has spent about \$14 million on securing wildlife habitat throughout Colorado.

“The DOW promised sportsmen and the people of Colorado that we would secure important parcels for wildlife with the Habitat Stamp money. Now we're starting to deliver on that promise,” Spezze said. J. Wenum, area wildlife manager for the DOW in Gunnison, worked closely with the Miller family during the process. He said that the family's land stewardship has long been recognized in the region. “The reason there is such important wildlife habitat on this ranch is because of the management of the property by the Millers over the last 100 years,” Wenum said. “They've not only done things for wildlife, they are contributing to open space and ranching heritage in the Gunnison area.”

Before the end of the year, the DOW will begin working on a management plan for the ranch. The DOW will look at a variety of management options including, enhancing sage-grouse habitat, maintaining big game winter range and migration corridors, agricultural production, livestock grazing, and public access. Until that plan is completed and approved by the Colorado Wildlife Commission, the ranch will remain closed to the

public. “We're going to take our time to develop a meaningful management plan so we can maintain what the Millers have done for so long,” Spezze said.

=====

SAGEBRUSH RESTORATION EFFORTS

On November 9, 2007, Cheryl Day of the Black Canyon Audubon Society shared with the other Audubon chapters in Colorado some correspondence from Jim Garner, Area 18 Wildlife Conservation Biologist with the DOW, concerning the collection of sagebrush seed and propagation of sagebrush in Dry Creek Basin State Wildlife Area. Black Canyon Audubon Society has been administering the annual chapter collaborative funds received from National Audubon Society. The collaborative funds only amount to \$4600 annually but, by pooling their shares, the chapters are able to make significant positive impact on one of the nation's most endangered bird species. Cheryl thought she would share with the other chapters the reasons why \$1400 in collaborative funds were expended on the collection and propagation of sagebrush in Dry Creek Basin State Wildlife Area, located south of Naturita, in San Miguel County, second only to Gunnison County in supporting populations of sage-grouse.

Cheryl,

The desire to collect and propagate sagebrush in Dry Creek Basin is presently driven by two issues. The first is the overall loss of Wyoming sagebrush to "plow & seeding" treatments that were conducted on the Dry Creek Basin SWA prior to the DOW taking possession of the property in the late 1970s. These treatments completely removed the sagebrush component and replaced it with a near monoculture of non-native crested wheatgrass. Experiments designed to reintroduce a native component of grasses and forbs to these areas have to date proven unsuccessful. In addition to the lack of native understory, the sagebrush is just barely reestablishing at the margins of the treated areas. It is our hope that seeding and/or direct transplanting sagebrush will dramatically push

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forward the time it will take to at least partially recover these sites and make them useable GuSG habitat.

The second issue involves the lingering effects of the 2002 drought. Transects conducted in the winter of 2003-04 indicated that approximately 90% of the black sagebrush plants in western Dry Creek Basin were either dead or completely defoliated. It was hoped the majority of these plants had simply gone dormant and would recover in subsequent years. Unfortunately, this has not been the case and losses (depending on the particular site) range from 50% to well over 90%. Radio tracking studies have demonstrated that the black sage dominated areas are heavily utilized by GuSG and form a key habitat component. Although these stands will eventually recover in time, it is our desire again, to push forward this recovery process.

How we proceed in the coming months will depend entirely on how much seed we can collect this fall. Although sagebrush seed can be purchased commercially, the source of this seed, its' adaptability to the site, and potential genetic issues are all cause for concern. These issues form the basis of our desire to utilize seed from adjacent areas in our efforts. By following this course of action, we know the plants will be adapted to the site and that we are not (potentially) affecting the gene pool.

If the collection effort yields only a small amount of seed, we will use it to grow transplants that will be planted in the spring of 2009. If larger quantities can be gathered, some will still go for transplants, but the excess will be broadcast over the problem areas from an airplane. The results of direct seeding are always unpredictable, and it is likely that this effort may continue for 3-5 years. Spring conditions (good moisture and no late frost) must be conducive and any further efforts will depend on a sufficient seed crop the prior year. In short, the stars have to align properly before a new stand can be established.

At some point, we will need further monetary assistance to continue collection and seeding efforts. As agency funding can be erratic, we will most likely need outside assistance to continue this effort over the long term. So any assistance you can provide is much appreciated.

If you have any further questions, please let me know!

JG

Jim Garner
Area 18 Wildlife Conservation Biologist
Colorado Division of Wildlife
2300 South Townsend Ave
Montrose, CO 81401
(970) 252-6016

Election Slate for FCAS Offices 2008

By Heman Adams - Nominations Committee Chair

Elections for the Fort Collins Audubon Society officers and directors for 2008 will take place at our program meeting on January 10, 2008. As of November 12, the slate consists of:

Officers

PRESIDENT: Joel Hurmence
VICE-PRES: Ruth Grant
PRES.-ELECT: VACANT
SECRETARY: Scott Cobble
TREASURER: John Waddell

Directors

DIRECTOR: Eric Defonso
DIRECTOR: Heman Adams
DIRECTOR: Ron Harden
DIRECTOR: Lynne Hull
DIRECTOR: VACANT
DIRECTOR: VACANT

As you can see, the key position of president-elect is still vacant, along with two director positions. The Nominations Committee welcomes suggestions from the membership. Contact Heman Adams at hempurdy@aol.com or 970-484-8634.



Welcome to these new and renewing members!

We hope to see you at our
programs and field trips.

Larry M. Bilsing
Diana A. Jules Mehofer
Rebecca Kuri
Jamie Terrill
Alex Daniels

Madeleine Effner
Charles A. Haley
Lisa Hoyer
Brian A. Rutledge
Robert A. Evelyn, Scherl

Mary C. Foster
Teresa Alcorn
Mary Beck
Julie Perry Nelson
Jessie L. Meschievitz

Education Corner

Joann Thomas - Education Chair



Uplift

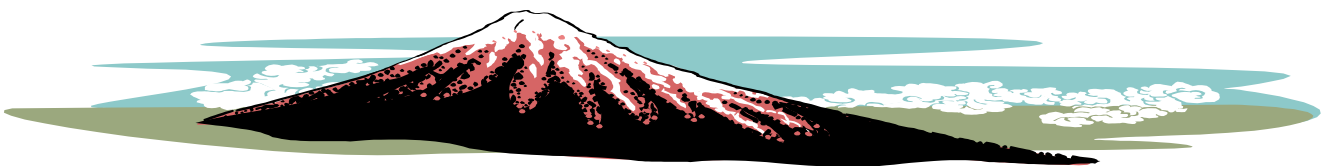
Everyone talks about the weather, but on November 10th, we did something about it. We learned about it from Eric Defonso, a climatologist. Now a neat fact about Eric is that he's married to a climatologist. So, he says, in their house, they talk about weather a lot.

And so we walked and talked about the weather. Have you ever heard of orographic uplift? Or, continentality? I had not before November 10th. Orography, according to Mr. Webster, is a branch of physical geography that deals with mountains and uplift and means "to rise above adjacent areas." So we have wind that rises and comes over the mountains from the west. Curious thing is the second definition of uplift: "to improve . . . the intellectual condition of." And that's really what was occurring that day.

Learning about continentality came as Eric explained that while Fort Collins shows slowly rising temperatures over the 100 years of record keeping, Lamar, in eastern Colorado, does not. This fact is attributed to Lamar's location, or its continentality. That's how far it's located from a major body of water. It's curious to imagine that the interior of the continent will maintain a more even temperature than coastal regions as we face global warming.

There was a noticeable lack of the noisy flocks of birds we had on the October walk, but we did see a Red-tailed Hawk. Each month the view becomes more open as leaves continue to fall. We had two pairs of Gadwalls on the pond at Cattail Chorus Natural Area. Two deer, a doe and a young buck, raced across the open space just before the bridge at Timberline. And, a beaver obviously had been actively chewing on two tree stumps along the trail. I always marvel at how much wildlife can be seen in Fort Collins. However, for the first time during this walk, I noticed the quietness of winter settling in. Less natural noise; less movement; colder temperatures.

Don't forget December 8th. Fluvial geomorphologist, Gigi Richard, will be walking and talking about rivers. Join us for some "uplift!"



Thank YOU!
Thank YOU!

FCAS Programs 2007 - From your Programming Chairperson—Jessie Meschivitz

Here we are at the end of 2007, and I want to thank YOU for your attendance and support this past year. A special thank you to Ruth Grant and Diann Johnston for serving on the Program Committee and the consistent energy they put into coordinating and publicizing our schedule of speakers in 2007.

Now it is time to plan for 2008 and I want to continue to work at providing informative programming for your interest and enjoyment. This is an invitation for your input. Please take a moment to answer the questions below. Drop me an e-mail at jmesch@slbbi.com or call me at 686-1424 with your feedback on programming for 2007 and any suggestions you have for 2008. Your feedback and input is important to me!

- Did you find 2007 programs interesting, educational, and within our mission of "...promoting the appreciation, conservation, and restoration of ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife...?"
- Do you have a program subject matter of interest or speaker recommendation?
- Do you have a fundraising suggestion for a program (this year we replaced the silent auction with the November program that suggested a donation)?
- The annual potluck traditionally offers members the opportunity to show their personal slides—do you have any additional and/or alternative suggestions for the potluck event?

Looking Ahead

to FCAS Programs in 2008

January 10: Rick Harness will speak on **Raptors of the Central Mongolian Steppe**. Mr. Harness is a certified wildlife biologist for the engineering firm, EDM International, Inc. In the fall of 2007, Rick teamed with the National University of Mongolia and Mongolian Ornithological Society biologists to visit remote Mongolian power lines in order to develop conservation measure to protect raptors. This program will present a travelogue of the Mongolian steppes along with measures needed to prevent the unnecessary loss of raptors.

February 14: Gigi A. Richard presents **Colorado's Last Free-Flowing River: The Yampa**. Associate Professor Richard teaches water science and environmental geology classes at Mesa State College in Grand Junction. Dr. Richard will present an overview of Colorado's water resources and will include discussion of the challenges we face in the semi-arid west to provide water for our growing population.

March 13: A joint meeting with the Native Plant Society of Fort Collins. David Leatherman, former Forest Entomologist of the Colorado State Forest Service, will speak on **Colorado Bark Beetle Interactions with their Host Trees and Birds**. In this presentation, the current situation with bark beetle outbreaks will be discussed and how this affects birds, future forests, and other wildlife species.

April, May, September–December 2008: TBA

Watch for more program information at www.fortnet.org/Audubon or the current issue of the *Ptarmigan*.

Fort Collins Christmas Bird Count Saturday, December 15, 2007

The 108th annual Christmas Bird Count season is upon us, with numerous counts planned for the period December 14 to January 5. The Fort Collins CBC will take place on Saturday, December 15. This year, we expect as many as 100 participants to count all the birds (about 100 species) during daylight hours (plus some nocturnal owling). Data collected by volunteer observers among more than 2000 CBCs are crucial to understanding long-term trends in bird populations. All those interested in participating are welcomed. E-mail Sue Riffe at sheflew2@comcast.net or call 970-232-4539. For more information on the Fort Collins Christmas Bird Count, visit the FCAS website www.fortnet.org/Audubon/activities/christmas_bird_count/christmas_bird_count.htm

For general information on the Audubon Christmas Bird Counts, visit www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/index.html. Past results are available at http://audubon2.org/cbchist/count_table.html

Dates and contact information for other Christmas Bird Counts including Rawhide, North Park, and Nunn are available on the Colorado Field Ornithologists website (www.cfo-link.org/birding/cbc.php).

Loveland Christmas Bird Count Tuesday, January 1, 2008

The Loveland Christmas Bird Count welcomes all who are interested in participating. The date is Tuesday, January 1, 2008. We will meet at the Starbucks on SW14th and Taft in Loveland at 7:00 a.m. There will be a compilation dinner and meeting afterward. For more information, please e-mail Connie Kogler at zblueheron@gmail.com or call 970-622-9710.

FCAS CONTACTS

Audubon@fortnet.org

President

Joel Hurmence
970-481-2124

jhurmence@hotmail.com

Conservation Chair

Bill Miller
970-493-7693

5mcorp@comcast.net

Membership Chair

Shelagh Tupper
970-490-BIRD

Shelagh.tupper@gmail.com

Education Chair

Joann Thomas
970-482-7125

jthomas91@aol.com

Field Trip Coordinator

Eric DeFonso
970-472-1761

yoeric@yahoo.com

Birdathon Coordinator

Heman Adams
970-484-8634

hempurdy@aol.com

Newsletter Editor

Joe Martin
970-412-2481

joe3eagles@gmail.com

Address Changes

Shelagh Tupper
970-490-BIRD

Shelagh.tupper@gmail.com

For other FCAS contacts visit

www.fortnet.org/audubon/leadership.htm

Better Living, Better Birding

By Lynne Hull

A Christmas Challenge: How can we make our holiday shopping, celebrations, and travel have a positive impact on birds and other wildlife? Here are some clues below, and we'll have some questions and answers at the December potluck meeting and in our January newsletter. Connect

these clues with your consumer and travel choices: Carbon offset, shade grown coffee, fair trade shopping, alternative giving, Heifer International, share cards, gifts of service, electronic gadgets, and cell phones.



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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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