

APRIL 2004

# ptarmigan

Vol 35 Num 7



**Fort Collins Audubon Society**

*The mission of FCAS is to promote the appreciation, conservation and restoration of ecosystems—focusing on birds and other wildlife—through education, participation, stewardship and advocacy.*

## VERACRUZ, MEXICO World's Largest Raptor Migration

In the season of migration, Larry Maynard, bilingual librarian with the Glendale Public Library, will take us to Veracruz, Mexico to witness the world's largest raptor migration.

Swirling in a geographical bottleneck between the Gulf of Mexico and the coastal mountains, four million-plus birds of prey create a spectacular display. This migration route was unknown to North Americans until fairly recently. "Until you see it for yourself and experience that many birds, you have no idea how difficult it is to count or even comprehend the magnitude of the migration," Larry says.

Larry's PowerPoint slides provide a look at 21

different raptor species seen in this migration, what it takes to count their numbers and how community collaboration promotes environmental awareness.

Larry discusses the struggle for maintaining a healthy environment in a country where the people's greatest concerns are the basics of survival. An organization, Pronatura, which Larry worked with, recognizes this and has made efforts to provide

environmental conservation as an method for locals to generate a profit from sustainable resource use and tourism. Children educated by Pronatura, have gone on to become biologists and are hired to work as counters and tour guides.



**THURSDAY EVENING PROGRAM — April 8, 2004**  
**Ludlow Room, Fort Collins Lincoln Center, 417 W. Magnolia Street**  
**Social Gathering - 7:00 PM, Program - 7:30 PM**

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**REMINDER!** The follow-up field trip to Hayden, CO for Rick Hoffman's March presentation on the Columbian Sharp-Tailed Grouse will be on April 17-18, 2004. Please see this month's field trip schedule on page 2 for more details and contact information.

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Visit our website at [www.fortnet.org/Audubon](http://www.fortnet.org/Audubon)



# APRIL/MAY FIELD TRIPS

All field trips are free of charge and open to the public, regardless of experience level. Attendees should dress appropriately for the weather. Bring snacks, water, and binoculars and/or spotting scopes if you have them. Carpooling is encouraged. A \$2.00 (unless otherwise specified) contribution per passenger to the driver is suggested. Visit <http://www.fortnet.org/audubon> for more information. Contact the leader for the field trip in which you are interested or Field Trips Coordinator, Gary Lefko at [lefkogt@greatpikespeakbirdingtrail.org](mailto:lefkogt@greatpikespeakbirdingtrail.org) or 970-897-2454.

**04/10/2004 Saturday - Early Spring Migrants of Weld County.** Leader: Bill Miller at [5mcorp@verinet.com](mailto:5mcorp@verinet.com) or call 970-493-7693. 7:00 AM to 4:30 PM. A field trip to Loloff Reservoir, Crow Valley Campground in Briggsdale, and Murphy's Pasture, as road and weather conditions permit. Beginners welcome. Contact leader to learn meeting time and location. Carpooling required \$4 to driver is suggested. Participation limited to 15 plus leader.

**04/17/2004-04/18/2004 Saturday and Sunday - Sharp-Tailed Grouse Viewing.** Leader: Rick Hoffman. For details call (before Apr 8<sup>th</sup>) Jackie Boss at 970-472-4353 or [jboss@frii.com](mailto:jboss@frii.com) or (after Apr 8<sup>th</sup>) Diann Johnston at 970-207-1766 or [rodnej5252@aol.com](mailto:rodnej5252@aol.com). As a follow-up to Rick Hoffman's March 11th Fort Collins Audubon Society presentation, "Declining Numbers of Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse", Rick has agreed to lead a trip to view grouse leks. April 17<sup>th</sup>: Spring birding at Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge and Nature Conservancy's Nature Preserve near Hayden, CO. April 18<sup>th</sup>: Meet at Red Stone Motel in Hayden for a tour of grouse leks. Birding stops will be made on the trip back to Fort Collins. 14 signed-up for the Grouse Trip at the FCAS March 11th meeting, which fills up the rooms reserved for our group at the Red Stone Motel in Hayden. Others signing up will have to arrange for their own accommodations. All will be responsible for their own food. Limit 20 total.

**04/18/2004 Sunday - Fossil Creek Reservoir Bird Survey.** Leaders: Chuck & Nancy Bell at [bellbird@jymis.com](mailto:bellbird@jymis.com) or phone 970-484-8791. Monthly bird survey led by FCAS. All levels welcomed. Fossil Creek Reservoir is a Colorado Important Birding Area.

**04/24/2004 Saturday - Hawkwatching at Dinosaur Ridge with Jason Beason.** Leader: Gary Lefko at [lefkogt@greatpikespeakbirdingtrail.org](mailto:lefkogt@greatpikespeakbirdingtrail.org) or call 970-897-2454. This is a great opportunity to join a top-notch hawk observer at Colorado's premier migratory raptor site. Jason's hours are 9:00 AM- 4:00 PM, but he may show up as early as 6:00 AM! Songbirds come through early. 16 raptors are possible. Sharp-shinned, Cooper's hawks are

common and goshawk possible. All of the buteos, including broad-winged hawk, osprey, turkey vulture, four falcons and harriers. Songbird include broad-tailed hummingbird, white-throated swift, all the swallows, blue-gray gnatcatcher, rock wren, and many others.

**05/01/2004 Saturday - Spring Migrants - Larimer County.** Leader: Beth Dillon, 970-490-2610. We will visit a number of sites to look for migrating waterfowl, shorebirds, and land birds. We will be out about two thirds of the day. Limited to 10 participants; call to register and learn meeting time and location.

**05/02/2004 Sunday - Wellington State Wildlife Area.** Leader: Gary Lefko at 970-897-2454 or [lefkogt@greatpikespeakbirdingtrail.org](mailto:lefkogt@greatpikespeakbirdingtrail.org). Morning trip. Meet 7:00AM at Texaco at Wellington exit. Visit the small but very active ponds of the wildlife area. If there is interest we can take short trip to WCR 124 ponds.

**05/02/2004 Sunday - Pawnee Herpetology Trip.** Leader: Brad Lambert at [georgiad@lamar.colostate.edu](mailto:georgiad@lamar.colostate.edu) or 970-491-6477. 5PM - 8/9PM. Meet at Cottonwood Hollow Natural Area (5PM) parking lot west of Colorado Welcome Center on Prospect Rd. Come listen for frogs and hunt for other amphibians and reptiles. Brad Lambert is a zoologist/herpetologist with the Colorado Natural Heritage Program. Bring rubber boots/waders but only if you have them (not required). No sightings guaranteed but it should be fun looking!

**05/08/2004 - International Migratory Bird Day Trip.** Leader: Phil Friedman, 970-493-2959 or [phifri@frii.com](mailto:phifri@frii.com). Visit Larimer County foothills/riparian sites. Targeted areas include Watson Lake, Rist Canyon, Dixon Res., Riverbend Ponds, etc. Limit 12.

**05/09/2004 - Pre-Birdathon Trip to Pawnee National Grasslands.** Leader: Nick Komar at [quetzal65@comcast.net](mailto:quetzal65@comcast.net). Prepare for annual Birdathon next week. Visit Pawnee National Grasslands, Crow Valley Campground and other Weld County hotspots. All levels welcomed. Limit 12.

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## **INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY – Phil Friedman**

To help celebrate International Migratory Bird Day (Saturday, May 8th), Fort Collins Audubon has IMBD T-shirts, posters, and migration maps. These will be available for sale at our program meetings in April and May.

The artwork is by this year's IMBD artist, Ram Papish ([www.rampapish.com](http://www.rampapish.com)), who now lives in Fort Collins. Ram (pronounced Rom) draws upon his experiences as a biologist and birder to produce beautiful and accurate wildlife paintings. Ram has worked for various research organizations and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Though Ram has been working as an illustrator for years, 2003 marks the release of his first fine art prints. He is best known for his complex designs, featuring a wide variety of plants and animals. His styles, however, range from scientifically exact field guide plates to simple cartoon line drawings to unique fine art interpretations.

Ram will be signing his artwork at the May meeting, and should also be able to autograph the T-shirts at that time. He will give a presentation on colonial nesting birds for FCAS in the fall.

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## **GOOD SAMARITAN PROGRAM MEETINGS RIDE SERVICE—Bill Miller**

Here is an opportunity for you to earn some brownie points. Cynthia Melcher made the observation at the last program meeting that there are some long-time members of FCAS who no longer feel comfortable driving at night. Cynthia commented that it would be nice if we could identify volunteer members who would be willing to pick up other members who no longer drive at night but who would like to attend our program meetings. If you would be willing to bring someone to our meetings who otherwise wouldn't attend, or are someone who would appreciate a ride, please call Bill Miller at 493-7693. If you would like to coordinate this effort please let me know.

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## **CONSERVATION CORNER - Carol Fiore**

With Spring just around the corner, it is particularly important to remember the words of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. This federal law makes it illegal to mess with baby birds. Let's all remind well meaning neighbors and friends to leave those babies alone. If you do find an injured bird, get it to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator but do not try to care for the bird yourself. One of the things you can do to make it easier for mom and dad bird to raise those babies is by keeping cats indoors. Next month I will have information about cats and birds.

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## **The 2004 May Birdathon is Fast Approaching Saturday May 15th**

### **The Annual Spring FUNdraiser for Fort Collins Audubon**

The Birdathon happens in the 24-hour period beginning late Friday afternoon, May 14th through Saturday, May 15th. This time should be the peak of spring migration on the plains and the foothills.

**Birdathon teams** will be formed in early May and on Birdathon day team members will search for as many species as can be seen *or* heard in a 24-hour period. Expect at least 100 species with as many as 150 for the most skilled team--more than 250 species are possible.

**Team members** will obtain pledges based on the total number of birds the team sees. Those who want to commit a pledge that are not on a team or associated with a team member may also pledge.

### **There are 4 ways to participate in this year's Birdathon**

Personal Pledge: **CONTRIBUTE**, per species, to support a team of counters; or pledge a fixed amount.

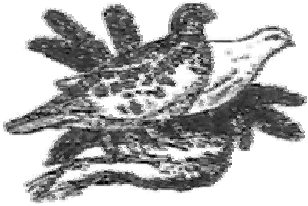
Team Leader: **TEAM LEADERS** count birds and raise pledges. Detailed information prior to the count.

Team Member: **TEAM MEMBERS** count birds and raise pledges. Detailed information prior to the count.

Business Pledge: **BUSINESSES** pledge based upon the high-count tally; or pledge a fixed amount.

For more information, contact Phil Friedman, Birdathon Coordinator at 493-295 or [phifri@frii.com](mailto:phifri@frii.com).

You can visit <http://www.fortnet.com/Audubon/birdathon.htm>.



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**Birdathon:**  
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**National Audubon Society Chapter  
 Membership Application**

YES, I'd like to join.  
 YES, I'd like to renew (by phone 1-800-274-4201)

Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and of my local chapter. Please send Audubon Magazine and my membership card to the address below.

My check for \$20 is enclosed.  
 STUDENTS/SENIORS My check for \$15 is enclosed  
 Or charge my credit card: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Expiration date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your check payable to **Audubon** and send along with this form to:

**National Audubon Society  
 Chapter Membership Data Center  
 PO Box 51001  
 Boulder, CO 80322-1001**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_  
 State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Local Chapter Fort Collins Audubon Society D06  
 Local Chapter Code: 7XCHA

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## **PRESIDENT'S CORNER – Bill Miller**

**NATURE CENTER UPDATE – Time Flies:** As I was writing this piece I realized that the Fort Collins Audubon Society (**FCAS**) has been exploring the possibility of establishing a “nature center” in the Fort Collins area for three years. It has been almost two years since we’ve updated FCAS members on this effort. The nature center idea was a spin-off from National Audubon’s *2020 Vision*, which envisioned 1000 nature centers across the USA by the year 2020, and would reach 1 out of every 5 school children.

The first meeting of the Nature Center Committee (**NCC**) was held on March 12, 2001, at Vern’s Café in LaPorte. Only two of the original five FCAS people who met that day are still involved with the effort (Nick Komar and Bill Miller). After just a few meetings in the spring and summer of 2001 our efforts became more energetic in January, 2002.

In early 2002 the Rocky Mountain Raptor Program (**RMRP**) was notified that they would eventually have to move from their location at the CSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital on Drake Ave. In March Judy Scherpelz, executive director of RMRP, inquired about partnering with FCAS in its effort. We had our first joint meeting on April 1, 2002. Later that same month we approached the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (**RMBO**) about joining forces with us. Our involvement with RMRP has been continuous and unwavering since April 2002. RMBO’s involvement fell dormant following the resignation of its executive director.

The **NCC** has held monthly meetings since early 2002. Committee members representing FCAS and RMRP have struggled with numerous issues ranging from site location to determining public acceptance and support of the project, and organizational structure. Initially (and prematurely) we looked at potential sites. We felt that a site along the Poudre River corridor would provide the most varied opportunities for interpretation as well as restoration projects. We also recognized early on that finding a feasible site would be difficult because of flood plain issues.

In June 2003 the NCC conducted a Focus Group meeting in order to get a sense of community support for the project. 19 attendees, including Bill Palmer, newly hired Executive Director of RMBO, and 6 NCC members attended the Focus Group session. Invitees were mostly environmental educators and representatives of organizations with environmental education programs. After a presentation of the project participants were asked to make comments. A widely voiced concern of participants was that success of a nature center would be more likely if it addressed a specific “niche” or focus, rather than all aspects of environmental education..

Since the Focus Group meeting several important developments have occurred. We identified migratory birds as being the focus of the center and have tentatively proposed that the center be named the “Rocky Mountain Migratory Bird Center” (**RMMBC**). We have generated a draft business plan to further explain the project to potential participants and funders. We’ve conducted extensive outreach to the City of Fort Collins’ Natural Resources Department. In February 2004 RMBO became the third official “charter” member of the NCC, and the NCC now consists of six representatives from FCAS, three from RMRP, and Bill Palmer from RMBO. We will be exploring the feasibility of partnering with the Larimer County Humane Society and its wildlife rehabilitation program, Wildkind, as well as with CSU’s College of Natural Resources, which manages the Environmental Learning Center (**ELC**).

The three charter organizations (FCAS, RMRP and RMBO) wish to retain their own identities. Therefore it is proposed that a new organization (RMMBC) be created, with its Board of Directors consisting of representatives of the charter organizations, other organizations, and the public. The Board of Directors would be responsible for hiring staff and developing policy for the center. Efforts are currently underway to generate and submit Articles of Incorporation and an application for an IRS 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. A detailed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be crafted to fully identify the roles and responsibilities of the charter organizations in the RMMBC. Briefly, we envision the roles of the current charter organizations to be as follows:

- (a) FCAS would be involved in designing the programming of the Center, possibly play a part in its delivery, and be a source of volunteers;
- (b) The RMRP would continue its work of raptor rehabilitation and education, as well as releasing birds back to the wild, except that its programs would now have much greater public visibility than before; and

(c) RMBO would continue to play its important role of providing bird monitoring and conservation work.

Needless to say, there is still a long way to go to bring this effort to fruition. Sooner or later we will need to raise some serious money for startup expenses. Eventually we will need to conduct a capital campaign to for the purposes of constructing the necessary buildings and providing the necessary infrastructure. Somewhere in all of that the hiring of staff and raising monies for their salaries will have to be addressed.

Members of the NCC are motivated to establish the Migratory Bird Center by knowing that they will be creating a unique opportunity for visitors to experience environmental education that will also include raptor rehabilitation and avian research, all at the same location. The charter organizations will each be making their own appropriate contributions to the educational programming of the Center. And, hopefully, there will be collaborative efforts involving other organizations.

Stay tuned for more information!